

Zeitschrift:	Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie
Herausgeber:	Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft
Band:	76 (2022)
Heft:	2
Artikel:	Forbidding the reading of the Kashshf : clarifying the Mamluk era reception of Zamakhshar's Qurn commentary
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1035026

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Forbidding the reading of the *Kashshāf*: clarifying the Mamluk era reception of Zamakhsharī's Qur'ān commentary

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2022-0009>

Received April 29, 2022; accepted August 17, 2022

Abstract: The Qur'ān commentary of Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), his *Kashshāf*, gained wide acclaim shortly after being written, and was widely used in research and teaching throughout the Islamic world. This favourable reception was largely due to its new rhetorical insights on how ideas are articulated in the Qur'ān through specific linguistic constructions. The work was also critiqued for its *Mu'tazilī* content, the work viewed with suspicion for championing – surreptitiously at that – the heterodox interpretations of that theological school. Appraisal and critique formed much of the basis for scholarly engagement with this work in the form of teaching and commentary writing, especially the form of super-commentary writing (*hawāshī*) the *Kashshāf* initiated. That Mamluk scholarly culture had an overly negative response to the *Kashshāf* for theological reasons has been vastly overstated in recent scholarship, possibly due to a tendency to view theology as a sufficient impetus driving past intellectual activity. This general portrayal derives from specific Mamluk scholars being depicted as warning against the book, forbidding its study, calling for it to be banned, and undermining or disparaging others for supporting it. This negative reception has also served to justify the transition in the Islamic world to the *tafsīr* of Bayḍāwī, a work which largely excised the *Mu'tazilism* of the *Kashshāf*. This article reconsiders the evidence for an overall negative Mamluk era reception of the *Kashshāf*, with specific reference to the activities of those scholars whose depiction contributes to an inaccurate portrayal of a crucial moment in *tafsīr* history, both for the activities of Mamluk era scholars themselves, as well as the subsequent shift to the use of Bayḍāwī.

Keywords: Bayḍāwī; *hāshiyā*; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī; *Kinalizade Ali Çelebi*; *tafsīr*

This article draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

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1 Introduction

God's neighbour, as Abū-l-Qāsim, Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) would come to be known, wrote what was easily one of the most popular of Qur’ān commentaries in Islamic history, his *al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl* (*The Unveiler of the Realities of Revelation and Selected Opinions on Aspects of Interpretation*).¹ This work would be taught in formal and informal pedagogical settings and used in research throughout the Islamic world. It would also generate a new type of scholarly production, a tradition of super-commentary (*ḥāshiya*; *ḥawāshi*) writing. It would further give rise to another Qur’ān commentary, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Baydāwī’s (d. 719/1319) *Anwār al-tanzīl* (*Lights of Revelation*), a work that would also be serviced in the form of its own tradition of *ḥāshiya* writing. This set of *ḥawāshi* would also be taught, studied, and used in the production of further Qur’ān commentaries across the Islamic world, to the present day. A significant reason for the outsized impact of Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf* on the trajectory of Islamic scholarly production had to do with two aspects related to its content. It was the first work to integrate linguistic concerns, specifically from the still developing field of *balāgha* through the works of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), into Qur’ān commentary. A focus on the communicative import of the Qur’ān and the way it articulated itself earned the *Kashshāf* wide scholarly acclaim, and gave rise to a new type of discourse in the field. The *Kashshāf* was also controversial for its content. The author was a staunch Mu’tazilī, and was often quite harsh in his attacks on fellow Sunnis who did not adhere to his theological school. How his Mu’tazilism was reflected in his work, especially in a way that was implicit, was a major concern of the later super-commentary tradition. The *Kashshāf* was thus, in terms of its reception in scholarly culture, in a curious place. It heralded a new type of focus on the language of the Qur’ān and was thus widely championed, but it was simultaneously a work that was at odds theologically with, and a sharp critic of, the very scholarly community that had largely embraced it.

It is sometimes assumed that the divergent theological positioning of the *Kashshāf* from the non-Mu’tazilī majority of the Sunni world had a determining effect on the reception of the work. Part of the reason for this assumption is the tendency to overstate the role of theology in Muslim societies and scholarly discourse. In the case of the *Kashshāf*, this did not exactly come to bear. Despite the curious place of the *Kashshāf*, the work was widely adopted, and rapidly at that. Its theological heterodoxy, so to speak, was dealt with through summaries and

¹ Printed numerous times; for example: al-Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar, *al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2008.

commentaries in the form of notes, glosses, and super-commentaries. It is not the case that the theological school of its author, or its heterodox theological opinions, were cause for the censure of the work by way of, for instance, banning it formally or in practice. By and large, it was seen as a legitimate scholarly enterprise to engage with the *Kashshāf*, not to censure its study or use.

The assumption I have described above, in that the work was subject to this form of censure for theological reasons, has nevertheless persisted, and has coloured how some scholars have depicted the Mamluk reception of the *Kashshāf*. Specifically, many Mamluk era scholars have been read as warning against, forbidding, or calling for the banning of the study of the *Kashshāf*. Others have been read as reacting to contemporaries poorly on account of their championing of the book. In this study, I push back on the accuracy of these depictions, and argue that foregrounding the importance of theology in our understanding of past Muslim societies had led to a misrepresentation of how a heterodox work like the *Kashshāf* was received. The purpose of this paper is not to argue that there were no theological concerns with the *Kashshāf*, nor to argue that there was no scholar, Mamluk or otherwise, who disapproved of the study of the *Kashshāf* and/or would much rather that others did not read it. It is certainly the case that both of those scenarios did occur, as I will show below. Instead, the purpose of this paper is to recalibrate our understanding of Mamluk era scholarly concerns, especially the over-exaggerated role that is often accorded to theology in determining the reception of a given idea or work in Islamic scholarly circles. I do this by showing that for the vast majority of scholars to whom this type of positioning is attributed – not to mention Mamluk scholarly society as a whole – this was certainly not the case.

There are many scholars who have been implicated in this negative reception in some way. They include scholars such as Ibn Abī Jamra (d. 695/1296), Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī (d. 704/1304), Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344), Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 756/1355), Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā‘ī (d. 885/1480), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). This constitutes an impressive list of noteworthy Mamluk era scholars. Even though the actual charges against them, which I detail below, are varied in nature, they are similar in kind, in that their activities have been viewed as somehow anti-*Kashshāf*; or, alternatively, that they were impugned because they were not sufficiently anti-*Kashshāf*. Because of the pervasiveness of this type of depiction in secondary scholarly literature, and the prominent nature of the Mamluk scholars involved, cumulatively one is left with the impression that Mamluk society had a strong current of anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment. This is, however, simply not the case. Tracing the reception of the *Kashshāf* and the literature it left in its wake is a large project, which has only recently begun. The contribution of this paper is to rectify this

aspect of that larger story. This has consequences, as I will show at the end of this paper, for explaining the replacement that would occur in Islamic scholarly culture of the *Kashshāf* by Baydāwī's *Anwār*.

2 Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī's warning against the *Kashshāf*

It is possible that the idea that some Mamluk era scholars were anti-*Kashshāf* goes back to Andrew Lane. Lane was the first to write a book on Zamakhsharī and the *Kashshāf* in the languages of western scholarship.² This book, as well as a chapter³ and an article⁴ were important for filling in many of the important details that were missing on someone who, despite his importance to the field, had gone (and remains) relatively unstudied in western academia. In this regard, the criticisms below are not meant to detract from the fact that Lane's work did a remarkably extensive amount of difficult lifting in primary sources and biographical material, and remains foundational for further Zamakhsharī studies.

In Lane's works, two scholars, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) are used as foils to indicate opposition in Muslim orthodox scholarly culture to the *Kashshāf*, so I will begin this study by assessing these two cases. The Damascene hadith scholar and historian Dhahabī, speaking of Zamakhsharī, is portrayed by Lane as warning people to “be wary of his *Kashshāf*.⁵ Lane uses this warning to show that there was opposition to the work specifically on account of its Mu‘tazilī content.⁶ It is true that Dhahabī writes in his *Mīzān al-i‘tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl* (*Just Balance in Critiquing Men*), “be on guard against his *Kashshāf* (*fa-kun ḥadhiran min Kashshāfihi*).”⁷ His statement, however, requires some qualification, which complicates an understanding of him being opposed to the *Kashshāf*. The main reason for some circumspection in drawing too general a conclusion from his statement has to do with the genre of his *Mīzān*. This work of Dhahabī is meant to be critical; the genre the work falls within, *al-jarḥ wa-l-ta‘dīl* (*impugning and certifying*), is primarily to critique the reliability of transmitters of hadith using various markers of accreditation. Advocating what are considered

² Lane 2006.

³ Lane 2005.

⁴ Lane 2012.

⁵ Lane 2005: 348–9; Lane 2012: 48.

⁶ Incidentally, Lane unconvincingly argues that the presence of this mu‘tazilī content is more medieval hearsay than an accurate assessment of the work itself.

⁷ Al-Dhahabī 1963: 4:78.

heretical beliefs – which Zamakhsharī certainly does, from the perspective of a traditionist like Dhahabī, or any Sunni scholar at the time for that matter – is due cause for criticism in this type of literature. This is likely what Dhahabī is criticizing him for in the short entry for Zamakhsharī; most entries in this work are similarly cursory, as they are wont to be in works of this genre. The entirety of the entry is: “Mahmūd b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, exegete, grammarian. Righteous, but called towards Mu‘tazilism – may God protect us –⁸ so be on guard against his *Kashshāf*.” Even if it is technically true to say that he warned people against the *Kashshāf*, this entry is hardly a stinging rebuke of the work, and does not constitute a call to not read the work. Instead, the phrasing found here, of calling towards something considered unorthodox, is specific to this genre of transmitter criticism, in which promoting unorthodox belief is different from and worse than simply holding them. A person who advocates said beliefs is thought to be more prone to either fabricate narrations, or more susceptible to passing along material that support their pre-existing theological commitments. It is in this context that Dhahabī is assessing Zamakhsharī and his *Kashshāf*. It is also worth noting in this regard that Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*, apart from anything to do with Mu‘tazilism, made use of narrations of suspect origins, or those which hadith scholars considered outright forgeries, usually in the context of various virtues attributed to a given sūrah or portion of the Qur’ān. That the *Kashshāf* made use of narrations considered spurious would also serve as sufficient cause for criticism the work would receive in later scholarship. The same could be said for Baydāwī’s *Anwār*, which followed the *Kashshāf* in the use of narrations of questionable authenticity related to the virtues of the Qur’ān. The use of such narrations constitutes another hadith-related reason for Dhahabī to criticize the work.

While there is indeed some warning here in the *Mīzān*, it likely does not mean anything beyond what I have outlined above. Even were it to be granted that the *Mīzān* was critical in a way that is above the nature of its genre, it would still be unclear that this constituted a reasonable summary of Dhahabī’s overall view of Zamakhsharī and his work. Dhahabī’s much longer entry for Zamakhsharī in his *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’* (*Biographies of Notable Figures*) – a work that is not in the hadith genre – is not very critical. Dhahabī also ends his entry in this work with, “He used to advocate Mu‘tazilism, God pardon him.” However, he also lists a number of favourable things about Zamakhsharī, noting for example that he was a leading figure in linguistic and rhetorical sciences, and listing the accounts of previous scholars praising him.⁹ The same can be said for Dhahabī’s *al-‘Ibar fi*

⁸ In Arabic, *may God protect us* (*ajāranā Allāh*) is an obvious pun on *God’s neighbour* (*Jār Allāh*), Zamakhsharī’s nickname.

⁹ Al-Dhahabī 1996: 20:151–156.

khabar man ghabar (*Lessons from Accounts of those Passed*), also a work of biography, in which he says in the same breath that Zamakhsharī “was a promoter of Mu’tazilism, of numerous virtues,”¹⁰ which is hardly stinging criticism. In his *Tārikh al-Islām wa wafayāt al-mashāhir wa-l-a'lām* (*History of Islam and Death Accounts of Famous and Notable People*),¹¹ again a work of biography, his relatively long entry for Zamakhsharī is similarly generally one of praise, and does not betray overt condemnation against him or his *tafsīr*, even though he does end the entry with a curt, “He used to promote Mu’tazilism and bid‘a.”¹²

It certainly would not be surprising if Dhahabī were to hold strong feelings about the *Kashshāf* or its author. He was a Shāfi‘ī traditionist and fairly conservative in many of his views and approach to Islamic sciences, even criticizing Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), with whom he had a tendentious relationship, for dabbling in sciences he considered foreign to core Islamic sciences. On the subject of *tafsīr* specifically, Dhahabī also criticized his fellow teachers in Damascus for flipping through Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *tafsīr* in preparation for their lectures on the subject. That work, in his view, contained extraneous and even harmful material. Dhahabī preferred a method of *tafsīr* teaching that was uncluttered by the accretion of other sciences into it. This calls to mind, in some sense, the more famous attempt of his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah to revamp *tafsīr* in his *Muqaddima*. Dhahabī complains that,

There is hardly anyone who gives *tafsīr* its due today. Instead, instructors peruse Rāzī’s *tafsīr*, which is full of problematizing and doubt raising that really ought not to be listened to, since it is all just confused, obstinate, and back and forth argumentation, none of which serves to satisfy the reader one bit – we ask God for mercy! The opinions of the early scholars are easy to listen to, but they are often more than three or four, and so the truth ends up getting lost in the midst of them – the truth cannot attain from two different perspectives at the same time – although it is possible for an expression to have two meanings.¹³

¹⁰ Al-Dhahabī 1985: 2:455.

¹¹ A curious anecdote about Zamakhsharī is recorded by al-Dhahabī under the entry for Abū al-Faḍl al-Maydānī: apparently Zamakhsharī came across a copy of Abū al-Faḍl al-Maydānī’s *Amthāl*, the famous collection and explanation of proverbs, and was driven by jealousy to add the letter *nūn* to the beginning of al-Maydānī’s name, rendering it *al-namīdānī*, meaning in Persian a know-nothing. Maydānī, coming across this, got ahold of one of Zamakhsharī’s works and changed the *mīm* in it to a *nūn*, rendering it al-Zanakhsharī, apparently meaning in Persian one who sells his wife. See al-Dhahabī 2003: 11:287.

¹² Al-Dhahabī 2003: 11:699.

¹³ Al-Dhahabī 2012: 278. In another edition, the editor Qūnawī uses a manuscript (Berlin 5570) which he argues was written later than other copies, and which reflects Dhahabī making some corrections to his previous treatise. Above I have cited what Qūnawī argues is his previous opinion (and is recorded in the rest of the manuscript tradition). Qūnawī’s edition, relying on the Berlin manuscript reads here instead: *The opinions of the early scholars are easy to listen to, but they are*

This reflection from Dhahabī shows the kind of vision he had for how *tafsīr* ought to be taught and practiced. His statement is also noteworthy for providing internal evidence that scholars were using Rāzī's *tafsīr* as a teaching tool in the preparation of lessons in Damascus; the work may have been used as the basis for *tafsīr* lectures by itself, or used as a supplementary tool in the teaching of other texts that had by then gained renown as base teaching texts, such as Baghawī's *Ma 'ālim al-tanzil* (*Signposts of Revelation*) or Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf*. In light of this kind of opinion, it would not be altogether surprising if Dhahabī had a negative opinion of the *Kashshāf*, even if that work does not contain the level and type of problematizing found in Rāzī's *tafsīr*. This, however, is speculation, because Dhahabī does not say so. Ultimately, the warning discussed above, especially when viewed in light of the genre of literature in which it is found, cannot constitute strong evidence for a negative reception of the *Kashshāf*. It certainly would not be an attitude representative of the larger reception of the work. Lane himself acknowledges this; out of a list he had consulted of nearly three dozen biographical entries spanning seven centuries,¹⁴ he did not find any of them critical of the *Kashshāf*, other than Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar.¹⁵ It is to the latter that I now turn.

3 On Ibn Ḥajar repeating Dhahabī's warning

Anti-*Kashshāf* sentiments have been attributed to Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), another major Mamluk era scholar, in two ways. One has been in assessing Ibn Ḥajar's own directives regarding the *Kashshāf*; another has been through the claim that he appeared to impugn others because of their involvement with that work. I aim to show through the following sections that the attributions of this sentiment to him is not only ill-founded, but that the opposite is likely true.

The first attribution has to do with Ibn Ḥajar in connection to Dhahabī. The former, Lane has argued, repeated the same warning as Dhahabī about the *Kashshāf* as detailed above, and “practically tells his readers not to touch the book.”¹⁶ Lane further alleged that Ibn Ḥajar said that “the *Kashshāf* was off limits to all who wished to study it unless they were aware of its dangers,”¹⁷ and that he

often three or more, and so the truth ends up getting lost in the midst of them. Rather, if a phrase admits two or more meanings, each one of them just articulated one of them, so there is nothing wrong with that. See Al-Dhahabī 2013: 85, and fn. 2; 21–23 on the manuscript used.

¹⁴ A long list of biographical sources on Zamakhsharī can be found in Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995: 6:651–652.

¹⁵ Lane 2012: 85, fn. 99.

¹⁶ Lane 2005: 348–349.

¹⁷ Lane 2012: 48.

“forbad people to touch the *Kashshāf*.¹⁸ These claims are due for reconsideration. It is certainly true that Ibn Ḥajar repeats Dhahabī’s warning. However, this is not noteworthy. Ibn Ḥajar’s work, his *Lisān al-Mīzān* (*The Tongue of the Balance*) uses Dhahabī’s *Mīzān* as its base. Ibn Ḥajar’s stated aim for his own work, which he articulated in his introduction, is to remove some of the material from the *Mīzān* and add some other material that could not be found in another contemporaneous work, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī’s (d. 742/1341) *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmā al-rijāl* (*Refining the Complete Book of the Names of Men*).¹⁹ That Ibn Ḥajar would include material from the *Mīzān* is thus hardly significant – it is in fact entirely expected – and does not by itself tell us anything about Ibn Ḥajar’s opinion of Zamakhsharī’s *Kashshāf*. The citation of Dhahabī’s entry for Zamakhsharī in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Lisān* is also clearly demarcated by the *intahā* end quote abbreviation, which is to say that it is clear that Ibn Ḥajar is quoting Dhahabī at the beginning of his entry on Zamakhsharī, not necessarily giving his own opinion. Other evidence is required to ascertain his own opinion.

4 Ibn Abī Jamra’s opposition to the *Kashshāf*

What is interesting about Ibn Ḥajar’s entry on Zamakhsharī,²⁰ and what could constitute this other evidence, is that he includes in it a summary of a harsh assessment of the *Kashshāf* by Ibn Abī Jamra (d. 695/1296). Ibn Abī Jamra was an Andalusian then Cairene ascetic hadith scholar known for both his abridgement of the hadith collection of Bukhārī and his *Bahjat al-nufūs* (*Splendour of the Soul*). The latter was an extended commentary on his selections from Bukhārī, with a decidedly pietistic focus. Ibn Abī Jamra served as a major source for Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fath al-bārī* (*Inspiration of the Creator*), his own commentary on Bukhārī’s hadith collection. This familiarity may be the reason why Ibn Ḥajar uses him here, even though Ibn Abī Jamra is not known as a *tafsīr* scholar. Lane had been aware that Ibn Ḥajar makes use of Ibn Abī Jamra in this entry, but did not explain the cited argument. However, he did conclude that,

Through his source, Ibn Ḥajar says basically that the *Kashshāf* is off limits to all who wish to study it, whether such a student is cognizant of the author’s intrigues (‘ārif bi-dasā’ihi) or not. A little later, after commenting on a number of al-Zamakhsharī’s other works, Ibn Ḥajar returns to the *Kashshāf* but this time he seems to allow some leeway, saying that those who have their feet planted firmly in the Sunna and who are aware of the *Kashshāf*’s dangers may study it.²¹

This is an inaccurate depiction of what is happening in the *Lisān*, one of a handful of inaccurate depictions of Ibn Ḥajar’s relationship with the *Kashshāf*. In part

¹⁸ Lane 2012: 82–83.

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002: 1:191.

²⁰ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002: 8:8–9; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995: 6:651–653.

²¹ Lane 2006: xx.

because of Ibn Ḥajar’s outsized importance in Mamluk era scholarship, this is an important piece of evidence that appears to support the notion of widespread discontent with the work in that period. It is thus in need of clarification.

Ibn Ḥajar summarized in this work Ibn Abī Jamra’s complaint in his *Bahjat* about the *Kashshāf*. Ibn Abī Jamra had found it blameworthy that some scholars thought it permissible to peruse the *Kashshāf*, even preferring it to Ibn ‘Atīyya’s (d. 542/1148) *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘azīz* (*Accurate and Concise Exegesis of the Noble Book*), a work he thought was superior and safer. The two contemporaneous *tafsīr* works, written in the east and west of the Islamic world, respectively, have had a long history of being compared to each other. The latter has long been considered in some circles, as it is by Ibn Abī Jamra, a safe Sunni alternative to Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilī *Kashshāf*. Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) would make a similar comparison in his *Muqaddima*, a prolegomena of sorts to *tafsīr*, as well as in a fatwa related to *tafsīr*.²² Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344) would do the same²³ in his *tafsīr*.²⁴ Much later, this comparison would be expanded upon by Muḥammad al-Fāḍil b. ‘Āshūr in his *al-Tafsīr wa rijāluhu* (*Qur’ān Commentary and its Men*).²⁵ It is probably no mere coincidence that the comparison has mostly been promoted by Mālikīs from North Africa and Spain, Ibn ‘Atīyya being a Mālikī from Granada.²⁶ Possibly the oddest effect of this long-standing comparison came through Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567), the Shāfi‘ī jurist, citing Ibn ‘Arafa (d. 803/1400), the Tunisian Mālikī scholar. Ibn ‘Arafa had apparently turned the argument made above on its head: because Ibn ‘Atīyya was known to be the safe Sunni alternative, his work’s hidden Mu‘tazilism was even more dangerous to the novice than the Mu‘tazilism in the *Kashshāf*. The hidden Mu‘tazilism of the latter had by then become well known, such that people were already on guard against it, and it had already led to numerous refutations. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Atīyya was a well known Sunni, and the Mu‘tazilī interpretations he approvingly included in his *tafsīr* without pointing out their theological bent would be thought by the unaware reader to be an acceptable Sunni interpretation.²⁷

²² Ibn Taymiyyah 2004: 13:361, 13:388.

²³ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī mentions that part of the long comparison in the *Bahr* is a citation by Abū Ḥayyān from the Andalusian biographer and scholar Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183); however, this appears rather to simply be Abū Ḥayyān’s opinion. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī 1995: 1:443.

²⁴ Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī 2010: 1:20–22.

²⁵ Ibn ‘Āshūr 1970 [1966]: 60–64.

²⁶ Walid Saleh has discussed this comparison of Ibn ‘Āshūr, and argued that it was not mere regionalism that led to this comparison between the two works. Saleh 2011: 303.

²⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī n.d. [1346 AH = 1927]: 172.

Ibn Abī Jamra did not argue as Ibn ‘Arafa does; to him, preferring the *Kashshāf* to Ibn ‘Aṭīyya has more obviously negative consequences. A reader of the *Kashshāf*, he argued, can either be aware of its surreptitious Mu‘tazilī insinuations or not. If one is aware of them, it would be impermissible for him to read it because he could not be sure that he would always remain alert to these implications; these hidden insinuations could then seep into his own thinking without him realizing it. Moreover, he might cause other people who are themselves uneducated to read it because he aggrandizes the work. More still, such a person would be giving priority to the *Kashshāf* when there are superior options to it available. A scholar, he reasons, should desist from being the cause for the infiltration of Mu‘tazilī thought. He cites in support of this latter argument that the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said, “Do not call a hypocrite master, for that angers God.” The alternative, Ibn Abī Jamra goes on to argue, is that a person is not aware of these insinuations. In such a case, it would also be impermissible to read the *Kashshāf*, as these insinuated meanings would become part of his own thought without him knowing it, such that he would also end up a Mu‘tazilī (and a *murji‘ī* too, for good measure). Thus ends Ibn Ḥajar’s summary of Ibn Abī Jamra’s position.²⁸ The latter’s longer argument, which is far more cogent than Ibn Ḥajar’s summary, is derived from a section in his *Bahjat* in which he blames contemporary scholars for a variety of ills, the reliance on the *Kashshāf* being but one of them.²⁹

There is a certain allure to the simple logic of Ibn Abī Jamra’s airtight reasoning; it takes all possibilities into account, yet leads to the same conclusion that studying the work is prohibited. Despite its allure, however, this form of reasoning gained no currency in the history of the exegetical tradition; Ibn Abī Jamra’s approach was not representative of the general trend in *tafsīr* scholarship. By the time of Ibn Abī Jamra, scholars had already eagerly taken up the *Kashshāf*, as evidenced by Ibn Abī Jamra’s unsuccessful attempt to stem the tide. The use of the *Kashshāf* as a major text of *tafsīr* and other disciplines of Islamic scholarship would continue until the modern period. If there were any scholars who considered Ibn Abī Jamra’s type of reasoning authoritative, history has not recorded much information about them. On the assumption that there were scholars like Ibn Abī Jamra, that is, of the opinion that it was impermissible or better to not read the *Kashshāf*, they may, like him, have had a combination of pietistic and theoretical

²⁸ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002: 8:8; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995: 6:651–653. The Mar‘ashlī edition contains a line that is unclear, but does not affect comprehension of the overall argument. The editor is aware of this, noting that there is some lack of clarity here in the manuscripts used; see the Mar‘ashlī edition, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995: 6:652, fn. 2. The Abū Ghuddah edition renders the line and argument fully comprehensible; see the Abū Ghuddah edition, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002: 8:8.

²⁹ Ibn Abī Jamra 2004 [1972; 1929]: 1:46.

concerns in mind. It is, on this note, unclear to me if Ibn Abī Jamra, who was not a *tafsīr* scholar, was even familiar with the *Kashshāf*. He protests scholars who read “the book of al-Zamakhsharī,” and “call it the *Kashshāf* to aggrandize and promote it.”³⁰ This may be rhetorical on his part, but it remains an odd protest, for it does not evince any familiarity with the work; that was the author’s chosen title for the book, not something later scholars came up with.

Ibn Abī Jamra’s line of reasoning was not taken up by Ibn Ḥajar, as has been argued by Lane. Rather, the opposite occurred: it was cited so that it could be explicitly rejected. After Ibn Ḥajar gave the summary above, he went on to discuss Zamakhsharī’s participation in other disciplines. He eventually returned to *tafsīr*, and wrote,

With respect to his exegesis, people have fallen in love with it, have read it closely, and clarified its Mu’tazili insinuations, even writing monographs on this topic. Anyone whose feet are well grounded in the Prophetic way, and knows enough about various scholarly opinions, would benefit from his *tafsīr*, and would remain unharmed by whatever is to be feared of its Mu’tazili insinuations.³¹

It is, according to Ibn Ḥajar, permissible for some to read and benefit from the *Kashshāf*. This, in essence, is a rejection of his summarized version of Ibn Abī Jamra’s position. Moreover, for our purposes, this is precisely the opposite of what has been claimed. It is not the case that Ibn Ḥajar “practically tells his readers not to touch the book.”³² He also had not “forbad people to touch the *Kashshāf*,” nor had he indicated that “the *Kashshāf* was off limits to all who wished to study it unless they were aware of its dangers.”³³ The latter description is formulated in such a way as to effectively portray Ibn Ḥajar as advocating a default prohibition (*x* is prohibited unless *y* entails), which implies a negative positioning towards the *Kashshāf*. On the contrary, Ibn Ḥajar’s choice of phrase is in fact formulated to express wide approval for the use of the work.

5 On hidden Mu’tazilism, and the term *Dasā’is*

That Ibn Ḥajar is responding to Ibn Abī Jamra, or anyone else who might argue against using the *Kashshāf*, is perhaps even clearer in Arabic, mostly because of the repetition of the term *dasā’is*, which I have translated above as (Mu’tazili)

³⁰ Ibn Abī Jamra 2004 [1972; 1929]: 1:46.

³¹ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 2002: 8:9; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1995: 6:653.

³² Lane 2005: 348–349.

³³ Lane 2012: 48, 82–83.

insinuations. There is a long history of scholars using this term to point out or complain, with varying degrees of credibility, about the hidden Mu‘tazilī insinuations of the *Kashshāf*. The use of this term and the scholarship surrounding it deserves further study, but suffice it to note that it has been used frequently by Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), who wrote the first series of notes on the *Kashshāf*, many of them critical about the work’s Mu‘tazilism. It was also used often by Abū Hayyān (d. 745/1344) to criticize things that irked him about the work. The general idea that there was hidden Mu‘tazilism in the work that needed some effort to extract, even if the word *dasā’is* was not explicitly used, was perhaps most famously articulated by Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1403). Bulqīnī was the famous Shāfi‘ī legal authority and judge of Cairo. He had studied grammar with Abū Hayyān, and wrote a partial *ḥāshiya* on the *Kashshāf* called *al-Kashshāf ‘alā-l-Kashshāf (Unveiling the Kashshāf)*. He was cited by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in his *al-Itqān fi ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān (Proficiency in Qur’ānic Disciplines)* as saying, “I extracted Mu‘tazilism from the *Kashshāf* with a tweezer,”³⁴ at the place where Zamakhsharī said regarding the verse *Whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted into Paradise has surely triumphed* (Qur’ān Āl-Imrān 3:185), “And what triumph can be greater than admittance to Paradise?” He meant to indicate that one would not see God.”³⁵ The possibility of seeing God in Paradise was a strong point of contention between Sunnis and Mu‘tazilis, the former holding that this vision was attested textually, the latter holding that such a vision was logically impossible, and its apparent textual evidence contradicted by other textual evidence affirming the impossibility of perceiving God through the senses.³⁶ Bulqīnī was contending here that Zamakhsharī asking rhetorically what could be better than being admitted to paradise was not innocent; he was taking a surreptitious jab at the Sunni belief that seeing God in paradise was a greater reward.

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) also famously made a similar argument about the hidden insinuations of the *Kashshāf*. He complained that some Mu‘tazilis, like Zamakhsharī, were so eloquent they were able to covertly insert heresy like Mu‘tazilism (*yadussu al-bida’*) into their speech without others recognizing the sleight of hand. Ibn Taymiyyah groused that it has gotten to the point where Zamakhsharī’s statements had gained currency even among those who did not hold the same beliefs; he claims to have seen scholars, exegetes and others, who had mentioned in their books or in their talks bits of Zamakhsharī’s exegesis which

³⁴ The phrase *to extract my due with a tweezer* can have a metaphorical meaning, of which Bulqīnī’s is a close permutation, in that one exhausted themselves in exerting effort. Ironically, the only one I have come across who informs us of this usage is Zamakhsharī. Al-Zamakhsharī 1998: 2:299.

³⁵ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 6:2345.

³⁶ This issue is discussed in Kifayat Ullah 2017: 122–130.

corresponded to Mu‘tazilī principles, yet had remained blissfully unaware of that.³⁷ He similarly lamented, in a fatwa to a soldier asking about *tafsīr* and other matters, commonly appended to his *Muqaddima*, that Zamakhsharī had filled his book with Mu‘tazilism’s five principles, articulating them in such a manner that most people remained oblivious to its carefully worded phrasing and intent.³⁸

For his part, Ibn Abī Jamra used the term *dasā’is* multiple times as the crux of his argument above against the *Kashshāf*, since one could either be aware of the surreptitious manner in which Zamakhsharī attempted to craft his speech so as to hide its Mu‘tazilī insinuations, or not. Ibn Ḥajar, in responding to this specific point about Mu‘tazilī implications in the text, repeats the same term twice at the end of the same entry. He clarifies that scholars have already written whole books about these insinuations, and that one who knows enough should not be bothered by these insinuations. It is clear that Ibn Ḥajar is pushing back against Ibn Abī Jamra’s argument – and probably that of Dhahabī – not simply repeating it.

6 On Ibn Ḥajar, teaching *Tafsīr*, and the *Kashshāf*

The foregoing has been aimed at showing that a specific citation from Ibn Ḥajar’s *Lisān* has been misread in a way that makes it appear as though Ibn Ḥajar harboured anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment. There is a broader problem, even if one were to set aside the preceding arguments. This is that a general awareness of the trajectory of *tafsīr* in the medieval Islamic past would have made it inconceivable to initially find it plausible that Ibn Ḥajar could have ever wanted to forbid people from reading the *Kashshāf*, or in fact discouraged them from doing so. One does not need to engage in close readings of the *Lisān* to suspect that the claims about Ibn Ḥajar were obvious misinterpretations. By the time of Ibn Ḥajar, the *Kashshāf* had long become part and parcel of the apparatus of serious scholarship. The work was so significant that one could not engage in scholarly discussions without recourse to the work.

In the case of Ibn Ḥajar, he himself used the work when he taught *tafsīr*. His student, Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhawī (d. 902/1497), has several interesting things to say about Ibn Ḥajar’s teaching of *tafsīr* in the biography he wrote of his teacher, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar fi tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar* (*Gems and Pearls in the Biography of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Ḥajar*). Sakhawī notes the mixed feelings Ibn Ḥajar used to have about his proficiency in *tafsīr*: on the one hand, he would express regret at not having recorded (or have anyone record for him) the

³⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah 2004: 13:358–359.

³⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah 2004: 13:387.

innovative exegetical thoughts he had, which could not be found in any prior source; on the other, he would also articulate the shame he felt before God for speaking about his words using mere speculation. Another of Ibn Ḥajar’s students, Shams al-Dīn al-Jawjarī (d. 889/1484), would say something similar about his teacher’s teaching of *tafsīr*, which challenges the common myth that medieval Muslim exegesis was constrained to transmission and the repetition of the exegetical opinions of earlier authorities. Jawjarī said that “In his *tafsīr* classes, he would discuss finer points, ambiguities, and difficult words, the likes of which could not be found in other *tafsīr* works. Rather, he would formulate these issues himself, and would not waste his time with mentioning transmitted material from works of *tafsīr*, since such material could be easily sourced by anyone who reads those works.”³⁹ Sakhawī also happily points out that his teacher never partook in the arrogance of other scholars in engaging with prior sources. He would not bar himself from reading prior works on the pretense that it would interfere with his own creative thinking in *tafsīr*. At the same time, he would not come up with new ideas and then arrogantly say that other scholars, who preceded him, *agreed* with him, and that he only came across their writings after he had come up with the idea himself. He also would not arrogantly say things like, *compare what I say to what al-Fakhr al-Rāzī says*.⁴⁰

Sakhawī writes that he saw Ibn Ḥajar’s rough notes for some verses he had discussed in his lessons; it contained selections from the works of a large number of exegetes, including Zamakhsharī.⁴¹ There are other pieces of evidence that demonstrate quite clearly that Ibn Ḥajar could not have had the type of negative attitude attributed to him with respect to the *Kashshāf*. His commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, his *Fath al-bārī*, the work for which he is most renowned, and probably the most well-known book of hadith commentary in history, engages with the *Kashshāf* numerous times on linguistic and exegetical matters.⁴² Ibn Ḥajar himself also wrote a work that traced the hadith narrations cited in the *Kashshāf*.⁴³ This was a book in service of the *Kashshāf*, not a book meant to deter readers from it.

³⁹ Al-Sakhawī 1999: 2:611.

⁴⁰ Al-Sakhawī 1999: 2:612.

⁴¹ Al-Sakhawī 1999: 2:611–612.

⁴² For example, cited approvingly as a linguistic and exegetical authority: Ibn Ḥajar 1960: 1:88, 1:292, 1:447, 3:517–518, 4:134–135, 6:222, 8:477–478, 8:623, 11:562; cited to bolster Zamakhsharī’s opinion with other material: Ibn Ḥajar 1960: 9:280; cited to argue against over theological implications of the interpretation of Qur’ānic verses: Ibn Ḥajar 1960: 11:356–357, 13:364, 13:387, 13:529–530.

⁴³ Printed multiple times, sometimes along with editions of the *Kashshāf*. For example, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Kāfi al-shāf fī takhrīj aḥādīth al-Kashshāf*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1997.

Sakhāwī also mentions in his biography, in a section on the special attention Ibn Ḥajar paid to his books, that he had made some corrections to a copy he had of the *Kashshāf* and its *ḥāshiya* by al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390).⁴⁴ It is not conceivable that a major scholar who is well known for using the *Kashshāf* extensively in his most prominent work, made use of it in his teaching and research, and wrote a book in service of it, also thought that one should not use the same work.

The very scholarly and cultural milieu Ibn Ḥajar participated in was saturated with positive depictions of the *Kashshāf*, not in opposition to it. A poet and litterateur (and chessmaster), ‘Īsā b. Ḥajjāj al-‘Āliya (d. 807/1405), wrote a poem praising Ibn Ḥajar, which he recited aloud to the recipient in the presence of one of the latter’s friends, the scholar Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Aqfahsī (d. 821/1418). In it, the poet praises Ibn Ḥajar for his prodigious skill in various sciences, comparing him favourably to past scholars considered paragons of the field. For *tafsīr*, he praises him by saying, *The Remembrance, he explains it in a manner/like the one who penned the Kashshāf in Umm al-Qurā (wa-l-dhikr fassarahu ‘alā naḥw alladhi/qad allafa al-Kashshāffi Umm al-Qurā)*.⁴⁵ Slightly more obscure is the praise of Sha‘bān al-Āthārī (d. 828/1425), another poet and litterateur who participated in related fields like grammar and *balāgha*. In a long poem, he praised Ibn Ḥajar for, among other things, the eloquence of his speech, writing that his lectures are *a Remover of anxiety, a key to the sciences/his shining words, a light and clarity (kashshāf karb wa miftāḥ al-‘ulūm wa fi/alfāzihī al-ghurr miṣbāḥ wa tibyān)*.⁴⁶ This verse contains a play on the titles of four works seen as foundational in the field of *balāgha* (the study of effective communication), including at its head the *Kashshāf*. Suffice it to say that a scholarly culture in which Ibn Ḥajar is praised through recourse to comparison with the *Kashshāf* cannot be the same one in which Ibn Ḥajar is supposedly warning against that same book.

7 The aftermath of the claims regarding Ibn Ḥajar

The claim that Ibn Ḥajar could have forbidden the study of the *Kashshāf* is not only an obvious misreading of Ibn Ḥajar’s *Lisān*; it is also inconceivable for a multitude of reasons, some of which I have outlined above. That this type of widely available evidence is unknown, and/or does not condition the type of judgments that are made about Islamic intellectual history, is reflective of a need for further

⁴⁴ Al-Sakhāwī 1999: 1:375.

⁴⁵ Al-Sakhāwī 1999: 1:479. ‘The Remembrance’ is the Qur’ān; ‘Umm al-Qurā’ is Makkah, where Zamakhsharī wrote the *Kashshāf*.

⁴⁶ Al-Sakhāwī 1999: 1:458.

scholarship to increase familiarity with the Islamic scholarship and its practitioners in that milieu.

At a specific level, a misunderstanding over Dhahabī, Ibn Ḥajar, and the Mamluk period in general, has facilitated the spread of these false claims in secondary scholarship. Some of the reviews of Lane's book, for example, take for granted his portrayal of Ibn Ḥajar, even though I have argued that this portrayal should have been *prima facie* inconceivable. Suleiman Mourad, in his review, seems to accept, based on citations from Lane, that Ibn Ḥajar criticized the work for its Mu'tazilī contents – even though he did not – and mentions him in the same breath as the criticism the work received from Ibn al-Munayyir – even though the latter had a far more contentious relationship with the *Kashshāf*.⁴⁷ More troubling is that Karen Bauer, in her review, speaks of the problem of the overall positive reception of the *Kashshāf*, “despite vehement attacks on it by influential Sunnites such as Ibn Taymīya and Ibn Ḥajar.”⁴⁸ There is, as I have argued, no evidence that Ibn Ḥajar vehemently attacked the *Kashshāf*, and a great deal of widely available evidence to the contrary.⁴⁹ The claim about Ibn Ḥajar is also repeated by Kifayat Ullah, whose *Al-Kashshāf: Al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite Exegesis of the Qur'ān* was a useful rejoinder to Lane's larger contention that the *Kashshāf* was not as Mu'tazilī as has been thought. Ibn Ḥajar is here again portrayed as taking a negative position and warning readers away from the book.⁵⁰ The point here is not to blame these scholars, but only to highlight how misinformation can affect subsequent understanding of scholars in this period. Indeed, fact-checking already peer-reviewed work is an insurmountable task; subsequent scholarship can only realistically proceed under the assumption that primary sources are largely being represented accurately, or the field is led to a type of reproducibility crisis.

Far more significant than the examples cited above is the recent work of Walid Saleh. Saleh is the only scholar in the western academy to have worked in a sustained manner, through a series of articles, on charting out the history of the *ḥāshiya* in the *tafsīr* tradition. This body of work includes *Marginalia and Peripheries: A Tunisian Historian and the History of Qur'anic Exegesis*, a 2011 article which sought in part to resituate the role of the *ḥāshiya* in the trajectory of the discipline of *tafsīr*.⁵¹ More integral to the present discussion was a 2013 article, *The Gloss as Intellectual History: The Ḥāshiyahs on al-Kashshāf*, the first academic attempt in the western world to detail the reception of the *Kashshāf* and its *ḥawāshi* in the Islamic

⁴⁷ Mourad 2007: 411.

⁴⁸ Bauer 2006: 435.

⁴⁹ Lane did not argue that Ibn Taymiyyah vehemently attacked the work. This is ostensibly introduced by Bauer as a piece of corroborating evidence that others attacked the work.

⁵⁰ Kifayat Ullah 2017: 56.

⁵¹ Saleh 2011: 284–313.

world.⁵² The project of Saleh in mapping out the history of the *ḥāshiya* in general is ongoing. A 2021 article, *The Qur'an Commentary of al-Baydāwī: A History of Anwār al-tanzīl*, is similarly an attempt to track the development of this form of scholarly writing in connection to a work that would largely replace the *Kashshāf*.⁵³

Saleh's 2013 article on the reception history of the *Kashshāf* contained several pieces of incidental evidence that showed individual scholars taking negative positions to that work. Even though this evidence is incidental to the point of the reception history traced in that article, cumulatively, simply because of the sheer number of scholars implicated, the Mamluk period as a whole begins to appear as one in which there was widespread resentment against the work, or at least a strong undercurrent of it. I do not know if Lane's assessment has led to this type of reading in Saleh's work; it may be fairer to rest the blame not with Lane, but with the fact that knowledge of the Islamic scholarly culture in the Mamluk period, and specifically the practice of *tafsīr*, has only recently begun to receive sustained reflection. Whatever the case may be, I will assess below some of the claims that have been made related to this reception, in an attempt to clarify what are thought to be negative Mamluk attitudes towards the work. Responding to these claims specifically is necessary because of the centrality of Saleh's work to further studies on the *Kashshāf* and its reception history. I will start where I left off, with Ibn Ḥajar.

8 Undermining the legacy of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī because of the *Kashshāf*

That Ibn Ḥajar had a poor view of the *Kashshāf* is said to be reflected in a biographical entry he wrote in his *al-Durar al-kāmina fi a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina* (*Concealed Pearls: Notables of the Eighth Century*) for another scholar, ‘Alam al-Dīn Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī (d. 704/1304). An Alexandrian scholar, Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284), had written a work called *al-Intiṣāf min al-Kashshāf* (*Demanding Justice from the Kashshāf*). This work was a series of notes on Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr*, much of which were highly critical of its Mu‘tazilī content. Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī would write a *ḥāshiya* on the *Kashshāf* called *al-Inṣāf: Mukhtaṣar al-intiṣāf min al-Kashshāf* (*The Rejoinder: Summary of Demanding Justice from the Kashshāf*) a work that was largely a response to Ibn al-Munayyir's criticisms.⁵⁴ Because Ibn bint

⁵² Saleh 2013: 217–259.

⁵³ Saleh 2021: 71–102.

⁵⁴ Zirikli writes, “I have acquired an old, expertly made copy of this work, and it deserves to be published.” Al-Zirikli 2002 [15th ed.]: 4:53. This work was edited and studied in a widely available MA thesis: Ibrāhīm ‘Alī 2012. A more recent edition is from the excellent Dubai International Holy

al-‘Irāqī wrote a work defending the *Kashshāf*, Saleh reads Ibn Ḥajar’s biographical entry on Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī as deliberately negative, “clearly meant to undermine his legacy and reputation” given that the latter had written this rejoinder, “defending the indefensible.” Saleh also writes that Ibn Ḥajar informs us that Abū Ḥayyān and others did not think much of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī.⁵⁵ The latter, Saleh argues, was presented by Ibn Ḥajar as “unrepentant and unperturbed” for the reproach he received for supporting the *Kashshāf*. There is, however, little reason to read Ibn Ḥajar’s entry as undermining Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī for the given reasons. This reading only makes sense when one starts from the presupposition that Ibn Ḥajar had taken a critical position towards the *Kashshāf*, such that he would extend this attitude towards those defending that work. As I have outlined above, Ibn Ḥajar did not do so; rather, there is substantial evidence to the contrary.

Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī was a well-known and respected scholar in Cairo. He gained wide repute as a capable and patient teacher. Because of his skill in pedagogy, Ibn Ḥajar reports,⁵⁶ it seemed as though virtually everyone of renown in Egypt had studied with him (*wa kāna lahu iqtidār ‘alā al-ta‘līm wa ṣabr ‘alā al-ṭalaba ḥattā inna mu‘zam man kāna bi-l-diyār al-miṣriyya mimman qara‘a ‘alayhi wa maththala bayna yadayhi*).⁵⁷ There is not much reason to think that Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī’s *Inṣāf* work on the *Kashshāf* detracted from this standing. Ibn Ḥajar does point out that he was criticized for this (*wa qad ‘ūtiba ‘alā dhālika*), but he does not say by whom, or how widespread the criticism was, or even what the criticism constituted of. It seems as though Ibn Ḥajar mentions this primarily to note that Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī pushed back on this criticism by saying that “My work is a refutation of a refutation!” (*hādha al-kitāb radd li-radd*). The mention is probably innocuous, rather than criticism of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī. It is possible that its inclusion was a curiosity, or was meant to be an example of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī’s wittiness, a characteristic Ibn Ḥajar mentions, and one that appears to be a common refrain in other biographical entries of the scholar.⁵⁸

What is somewhat troublesome is Ibn Ḥajar’s remark in his entry for Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī that Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344), who was a student of the latter, attacked him in his *tafsīr* work *al-Bahr al-muhiṭ* (*The Encompassing Ocean*). Ibn Ḥajar writes

Quran Award series: Ibn Bint al-‘Irāqī 2017. Both editions contain useful studies of this work and its relationship to the *Kashshāf* and the *Intiṣāf* of Ibn al-Munayyir. This type of work on the content of these commentaries has not been done in western languages, as far as I can tell.

55 Saleh 2013: 223, and fn.15.

56 For the purposes of this argument. Ibn Ḥajar’s entry for Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī itself, especially on this point of pedagogy, is derived from earlier works, likely Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī’s (d. 764/1363) *A‘yān al-‘aṣr*. See al-Ṣafadī 1998: 3:138–139.

57 Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1930: 2:399.

58 Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1930: 2:399–400.

that “Abū Ḥayyān did not use to describe him as skilled; he took this up in his grand *Tafsīr*.⁵⁹ This statement is curious, and is what Saleh was referring to when he wrote that Abū Ḥayyān did not think much of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī, which he thought Ibn Ḥajar included to undermine him because of his defense of the *Kashshāf*.⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥajar appears to claim that this criticism of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī can be found in Abū Ḥayyān’s *Baḥr*. However, I have been unable to source this alleged criticism there. On the contrary, Abū Ḥayyān appears to speak highly of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī in that work. He notes in the introduction to his *Baḥr*, when listing the different perspectives that one can bring to *tafsīr*, that one of the scholars he studied *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudential theory) with was Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī, with whom he studied the latter’s summary of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Maḥṣūl fī ‘ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (*The Essence of Jurisprudential Theory*).⁶¹ Abū Ḥayyān also speaks of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī respectfully on the two occasions I have found him referring to him, calling him “our teacher.”⁶² At these two places in the *Baḥr*, Abū Ḥayyān is assessing a grammatical point Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī made about one of the rare places in the Qur’ān where, contrary to its normal practice, it grammatically treats a word in a verse in accordance to its meaning first, and later in the same verse, according to its form. While Abū Ḥayyān eventually disagrees with Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī’s parsing of the verse, he does not criticize him, nor does he come close to describing him as being unskilled.

It is thus unclear to me what we should make of Ibn Ḥajar’s inclusion of this comment.⁶³ The phrasing of this comment – *wa kāna Abū Ḥayyān lā yaṣifuhu bi-l-mahāra* – is awkward in Arabic, and the possibility remains that a scribal or printing error added the negative particle. Without it, the phrase would sound better, and would make more sense in the context of Ibn Ḥajar listing scholars who praised or benefited from him. It would also coincide with what we know overall of the relationship between the teacher and student, most of the information in biographical dictionaries about Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī coming through Abū Ḥayyān, recorded by Ṣafadī. Such a possibility can only be explored with recourse to original manuscripts, some of which, such as the copy of Sakhāwī, student of Ibn Ḥajar, have not been used in the two available editions (Cairo, India) we have

59 Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1930: 2:400.

60 Contra Saleh, there is no one else mentioned or alluded to in Ibn Ḥajar’s entry as having thought low of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī. Saleh 2013: 223 fn. 15.

61 Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī 2010: 1:15.

62 Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī 2010: 1:90; 4:660.

63 In his MA dissertation, Ibrāhīm ‘Alī offers that Abū Ḥayyān only meant by this a comparison to other major scholars in that milieu, but does not trace the statement. This is possible, but I do not find it ultimately convincing. See Ibrāhīm ‘Alī 2012: 40. The new edition by al-‘Abbās and al-Junaydī studiously ignores this obvious problem and does not mention it anywhere in the introduction, although they do use Ibn Ḥajar’s *Durar* in their biographical sketch: Ibn Bint al-‘Irāqī 2017: 1:27–36.

today. I mention this possibility only because of the oddity of the comment and the fact that it cannot be sourced where Ibn Ḥajar says it is. It can nevertheless be set aside for the time being because it is speculative, and also because it accords with the attempted conclusions of this article.

On the assumption that the manuscripts and printed editions do fairly represent what Ibn Ḥajar meant to say here, and Abū Ḥayyān did criticize his teacher in that manner at an as of yet indeterminate location in this *tafsīr*, it would be unclear what motivated such criticism. Abū Ḥayyān had a tendentious relationship with Zamakhsharī, vacillating between admiration and unfair criticism. It is possible, although I think improbable, that Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī’s attempts to shore up the reputation of the *Kashshāf*, in his own refutation of Ibn al-Munayyir’s refutation, could have led to this attack by his student. A second possibility is that Abū Ḥayyān’s generally cantankerous nature led him to snidely demean the intellectual acumen of his teacher, meaning that if Ibn Ḥajar’s attribution is accurate, the criticism had nothing to do with the *Kashshāf*. That Abū Ḥayyān would attack others was not unknown. His student and long-time companion Kamāl al-Dīn al-Udfuwi (d. 748/1347) penned a relatively long entry for him in his *al-Badr al-sāfir ‘an uns al-musāfir* (*Full Moon Shining: the Traveler’s Companion*).⁶⁴ This entry was noted by the biographer Ibn Qādī Shuhba (d. 851/1448) as reaching about a full quire in length.⁶⁵ Udfuwi was clearly distraught at losing his friend, writing that “regret over his distance is relentless, worry over his loss ever-present.”⁶⁶ He also noted that Abū Ḥayyān “was beloved and gracious to me,” and that Abū Ḥayyān had licensed him, praised him in two *qasīdas* he had written for him, and had allowed Udfuwi to transmit some hadith and a book the latter had written to him.⁶⁷ Udfuwi himself penned a few verses of praise for Abū Ḥayyān when the latter finished writing his *Bahr*.⁶⁸ Despite all of this, Udfuwi still points out the hostility with which Abū Ḥayyān treated others, writing that

He had a poor opinion of everyone else. If he heard something good about someone else, he would not seek to know more about it, but if it were bad, he would, and would overblow it to the point that he would attack even those whose presence he was in. He thus ended up attacking those who are otherwise considered praiseworthy by the entire world. Because of that, many people were exposed to quite a bit of hardship from him.⁶⁹

This assessment by Abū Ḥayyān’s friend may serve to clarify why he might attack someone, like Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī, he otherwise respected, and is probably good

⁶⁴ Al-Udfuwi 2014: 2:979–999.

⁶⁵ Ibn Qādī Shuhba 1987: 3:69.

⁶⁶ Al-Udfuwi 2014: 2:981.

⁶⁷ Al-Udfuwi 2014: 2:989.

⁶⁸ Al-Udfuwi 2014: 2:996–997.

⁶⁹ Al-Udfuwi 2014: 2:990.

reason to not put too much stock in how Abū Ḥayyān potentially described him. These possibilities are, as I have mentioned, speculative: I have not found any corresponding evidence for what Ibn Ḥajar appears to attribute to Abū Ḥayyān.

The overall point with respect to Ibn Ḥajar is that given what we know of Ibn Ḥajar's positive opinion of the *Kashshāf*, the evidence for which I have detailed above, and the high status Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī enjoyed within scholarly circles in eighth/fourteenth C Cairo, it is not reasonable to read Ibn Ḥajar as attempting to denigrate him because he defended Zamakhsharī or the *Kashshāf*. In fact, Ibn Ḥajar cites Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī as refuting a critique Ibn al-Munayyir leveled against Zamakhsharī. This occurs amidst a longer discussion in his *Faṭḥ* about using superlatives, such as supreme judge, in official titles to describe people, titles sometimes argued to be more worthy as exclusive descriptors for God.⁷⁰ While Ibn Ḥajar does come down in favour of the permissibility of using such titles, that Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī might support Zamakhsharī's opposing position was cited as a matter of course in Mamluk era literature, and not seen as blameworthy behaviour; both Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī and Zamakhsharī were respected authorities.

A broader problem about the use of biographical literature in constructing intellectual history is that even if the comment Ibn Ḥajar makes about Abū Ḥayyān is accurate, what we have before us is only a presentation of information in Ibn Ḥajar's *Durar* ('Abū Ḥayyān thought poorly of Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī'). Imputing to it nefarious intent ('Ibn Ḥajar is presenting this information to undermine Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī because of the latter's defense of the *Kashshāf*') is only credible because of an assumed background, namely one of general hostility in the Mamluk scholarly milieu towards Zamakhsharī's work, a position ostensibly shared by Ibn Ḥajar. This assumed background is clearly a misrepresentation. Such a scenario shows how assumptions can interfere with how *tabaqāt* style works are interpreted. Their presentation of information, which requires interpretation and some speculation to make sense of them, needs to be measured against other available evidence. In this specific case, it can affect how we read relationships between scholars like Ibn Ḥajar, Abū Ḥayyān, and Ibn bint al-‘Irāqī.

9 On Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā’ī wanting the *Kashshāf* banned

Presumptions about the negative reception of Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf* in Mamluk scholarly circles colour how Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā’ī (d. 885/1480) has been read as well. Biqā’ī was a student of Ibn Ḥajar, and was active in various fields, including

⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥajar 1960: 10:589–591.

history, poetry and *tafsīr*. He wrote a large *tafsīr* work, *Nazm al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa-l-suwar* (*Strung Pearls: The Interconnectedness of Verses and Chapters*). This work became subject to intense controversy in Biqā‘ī’s milieu, his rivals attacking his work under the guise of taking offense to its use of Biblical parallels to explain the Qur’ān. Saleh was the first to write extensively about Biqā‘ī for a western audience in a series of articles and chapters,⁷¹ and also edited a long treatise Biqā‘ī wrote in defense of his *tafsīr*.⁷²

In the latter work, Biqā‘ī expressed some bafflement that good Sunni scholars were attacking his *tafsīr* instead of paying attention to problematic works like the *Kashshāf*. Saleh, in a 2013 article, appears to take Biqā‘ī at his word that his enemies should see to it that Zamakhsharī’s work is ostracized and banned, not his.⁷³ This claim would be repeated in a 2022 article, where Saleh writes that

... what is not widely known about al-Biqā‘ī is that he made attacking *al-Kashshāf* a cornerstone of his polemics against his enemies, accusing his Sunni opponents of being dupes, or worse spineless preachers who kept their mouth shut about the widespread availability of such a heretical work: at best, they were reading heretical works unwittingly. Accused by some of his opponents that his own Qur’ān commentary was heretical, al-Biqā‘ī counter-accused them of reading what was a non-Sunni work, *al-Kashshāf*, and of being in no position to issue judgement on him.⁷⁴

A more accurate depiction of Biqā‘ī and his positionality vis a vis the *Kashshāf* is possible. The above depiction relies, as I have argued above, on an understanding that scholars like Biqā‘ī held a negative stance towards that work. This, however, was not the case. Biqā‘ī’s remonstrations here were performative; he was only complaining that if scholars wanted to fixate on a work they considered problematic, they should *a fortiori* have directed their attentions towards Zamakhsharī, a work known to contain non-orthodox theological content. Their lack of focus on that work shows that their professed interest in policing problematic literature is not genuine, and probably has another, personal, motive. As he puts it,

... it is known with certainty that the entire disagreement over it [Biqā‘ī’s *tafsīr*] – while being silent over the *Kashshāf* (and other named books) even with what they contain of content that is well known, that which casts aside the beliefs of Sunnis, and are openly sold in the book markets without any opposition – is purely arbitrary and self motivated (... *yu’lam qat’ an anna muṭlaq al-nizā’ fihi ma’ a al-sukūt ‘an al-Kashshāf ... ma’ a mā fihā mimmā huwa ma’ lum al-munābidha li-‘aqā’id ahl al-sunna wa hiya mimmā yujāhar bi-bay’ihi fī-l-aswāq min ghayri nakār mujarrad hawā wa hazz nafs).*

⁷¹ They include: Saleh 2007: 331–347; Saleh 2008a: 629–654; Saleh 2017: 177–193.

⁷² Saleh 2008b.

⁷³ Saleh 2013: 217–218, and fn. 2.

⁷⁴ Saleh 2021: 80.

⁷⁵ Saleh 2008b: 81 (Arabic Edition).

Arguments following this structure and aimed at highlighting an opponent's inconsistency do not demand of the opponent that they extend their behaviour under criticism. In this case, Biqā‘ī does not actually want anyone to ban Zamakhsharī's work. He is only arguing that the lack of attention paid by his rivals to the *Kashshāf* (and other problematic works), even though it is widely available, is good reason to think that their focus on his *tafsīr* has ulterior motives.

Moreover, by Biqā‘ī's time, the *Kashshāf* had long been a fixture in scholarly discussions, which applies to Biqā‘ī too. The *Kashshāf* is used throughout his *tafsīr* as an authority in linguistic matters in his Qur'ān commentary, just as it had been used by his teacher Ibn Ḥajar, and is mostly cited approvingly and used to support his own opinions.⁷⁶ Depicting Biqā‘ī as having “railed against *al-Kashshāf*,” or as *admitting* to having used the *Kashshāf*, furthers the inaccurate portrayal of anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment in the Mamluk period. Similar can be said for portraying Biqā‘ī's *Nazm* as a work in which he “had abandoned *al-Kashshāf* and had moved away from any heavy reliance on this work,” as well as the argument that Biqā‘ī uses Bayḍāwī in his *Nazm* as a replacement for the *Kashshāf*, since the latter is cited and used far more than the former.⁷⁷

One example alone from Biqā‘ī's *Nazm* is illustrative of the high regard he and other scholars held for Zamakhsharī's work, and his continued use of the *Kashshāf*. In this example, Biqā‘ī is exploring how and why consecutive attributes may or may not warrant being conjoined with the conjunctive particle ‘*and*.’ This is precipitated by the recitation of ‘Āisha of the verse in *Baqara* (Qur'ān 2:38): “*and the middle prayer, and the late afternoon prayer*.”⁷⁸ Biqā‘ī explains why, on the assumption that the middle prayer is the same as the late afternoon prayer, the conjunctive particle separating them would be warranted: this is justified because both attributes are complete self-sufficient descriptions of the prayer being described. This is a discussion firmly within the purview of ‘ilm al-*ma‘ānī*, which constituted one of the three disciplines of *balāgha*. It was Zamakhsharī who brought this discipline into that of Qur'ān commentary, and it is Zamakhsharī to whom Biqā‘ī refers after some self aggrandizement at his having properly fleshed out what accounts for the presence or lack thereof of a conjunctive particle between consecutive adjectives. He writes,

76 Examples of being cited in his *Nazm al-durar* to support his own opinion are many. For example: al-Biqā‘ī 1984: 6:219; 8:329; 11:214; 12:279; 14:98; 14:112; 17:6.

77 Saleh 2021: 80–81.

78 See al-Biyālī 2015: 1:94–95.

So here you have it, a solid principle which I have long sought after, and have asked many a distinguished scholar about, to no avail. But I let my intellectual capacities roam in the various scholarly fields, until I finally formed this idea. Then, after I had finished with my exegesis, I saw that the *Kashshāf* had alluded to it in the verse *and those who seek forgiveness late at night* in *Āl 'Imrān* [Qur'ān 3.17], and God, glorified and exalted, is the one to grant success.⁷⁹

Biqā'ī's point is that he came up with the answer himself; it was only after he had written that portion that he realized that Zamakhsharī had alluded to something similar in his explanation of another verse. Biqā'ī chalks it up to like minds being guided towards similar conclusions. The phrase he closes with, *wa-Allāhu sub-hānahu wa ta'ālā al-muwaffiq*, is a praise of God for granting success, but also a play on the idea that they both came up with the same idea. Aside from this being reminiscent of Sakhāwī's complaint about what he thought was other scholars' pompous buffoonery – it would not be surprising if Sakhāwī was alluding there to Biqā'ī, his bitter rival – Biqā'ī's desire to on the one hand mark out what he came up with himself, yet at the same time connect it to Zamakhsharī, is a familiar feeling to any academic pleased at coming up with an idea, yet also relieved at finding it, or some trace of it, in the works of an established scholar. What Biqā'ī is doing in this example indicates that he views Zamakhsharī as an authority he wants his ideas to be associated with, not someone whose *Kashshāf* he considers deeply problematic, and seriously thinks ought to be banned.

10 On Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī trying to subvert or warn against the *Kashshāf*

A similar problem about overinflating the opposition to the *Kashshāf* in the Mamluk period can be seen in a reading of Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), nearly a century before Biqā'ī. Subkī, who had studied the *Kashshāf* with 'Alam al-Dīn Ibn bint al-'Irāqī, and had also studied grammar with Abū Ḥayyān, wrote a short treatise, *Sabab al-inkifāf 'an iqrā' al-Kashshāf* (*The Reason for Ceasing to Teach the Kashshāf*), detailing his own history with the book and what led to his decision to no longer teach it. Saleh edited this treatise from a manuscript in the British Museum⁸⁰ and was the first to study its contents.⁸¹

Part of Subkī's history with the book is detailing how he taught the book. This bears relevance to the purpose of this paper, which is to explore claims made about

⁷⁹ Al-Biqā'ī 1984: 3:367.

⁸⁰ Saleh 2013: 251–252.

⁸¹ Saleh 2013: 220–229.

prominent Mamluk scholars taking noteworthy stances against the *Kashshāf*. Subkī is indeed one of the few Mamluk era scholars who took a decidedly anti-*Kashshāf* stance towards the end of his life, a problem I will return to below. The following discussion is not to contest this, but to clarify the depiction of him as having participated in this anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment throughout his teaching. In Saleh's edition of the *Sabab*, Subkī claims that while teaching the *Kashshāf*, he was subverting and warning against it, but his students were nevertheless falling in love with it (*unaffiru 'an fawā'idihi wa yughramu bihi*).⁸² The notion that he would be subverting the work while nevertheless teaching it leads Saleh to question the genuineness of this narrative, that is, why Subkī "continued to teach, for most of his life, a work that he deemed so unappealing."⁸³ This scenario is additionally strange for another reason: the very thing Subkī admired about the *Kashshāf* was its finer points on Qur'ānic style, which he thought could not be found in previous works. For him to later claim that he was trying to subvert the work on these grounds would be noticeably odd.

It is unlikely that Subkī was indeed attempting to subvert the work while teaching it. Prior to his *Sabab*, Subkī was clearly enamoured with the *Kashshāf*. His prime interlocutor in issues related to Qur'ān commentary, in the letters, tracts, and answers compiled by his son to make up his *Fatāwā* (*Legal Opinions*) is Zamakhsharī; many, if not most, of his opinions on such issues start off by citing from the *Kashshāf*.⁸⁴ The same can be said for a work he wrote on *tafsīr*, his *al-Durr al-naẓīm fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm* (*The Strung Pearl: Explaining the Glorious Qur'ān*). Little is known of this work; it remains unpublished, and only two partial copies are known to be extant.⁸⁵ He seems to have started the work relatively early, and it may have been his taking up of an increasing number of official appointments that prevented him from finishing it. The Vienna copy of this work, which is an autograph, is dated in part to 734 AH (1334 CE);⁸⁶ he would become chief judge in Damascus in 739 AH (1339 CE). Ibn Ḥajar had seen a volume of the work, and saw on

⁸² Saleh 2013: 223; the phrase in the edition: 251.

⁸³ Saleh 2013: 224.

⁸⁴ For example: Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1: 14; 1:16; 1:77; 1:81; 1:91; 1:111, and so on.

⁸⁵ The two extant copies are: 1) Ambrosiana 475. C219. This is the third of a four-volume set, covering from 19:35 to the end of sūra 37. It was copied in 1164/1751. See Löfgren/Traini 1981: 2:237. This volume is apparently unusable because of damage. 2) Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2052 (Cod. Mixt. 780). This two-volume copy is an autograph and contains, in this order, sūras Fath 48 to Ḥashr 59:7, and sūra Ibrāhīm 14:1–7. See Loebenstein 1970: 17–18. This copy is also physically unavailable due to damage. However, it has been digitized and can be viewed in high quality on the Austrian National Library site here: <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC14393574>. It is deserving of study, especially because it is an autograph. See also: *al-Fihris al-shāmil* 1987: 411.

⁸⁶ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Durr al-naẓīm fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2052 (Cod. Mixt. 780), f. 192a.

its cover a couplet in praise of it, written in the hand of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Ṣā’igh al-Ḥanafī (d. 776/1375).⁸⁷ This couplet, with a partially legible sentence above it that seems to read “By Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ḥanafī,” is, remarkably, on the cover of the Vienna copy.⁸⁸ It is not farfetched to believe that the Vienna copy was the one Ibn Ḥajar had access to. This *tafsīr* and that copy itself deserves further study. However, it is noticeable from even a cursory look in that work as well that Subkī’s prime interlocutor, and the work he often immediately engages with in interpreting verses, is Zamakhsharī.⁸⁹

Subkī was, similar to the description of Biqā’ī above, delighted at having found his own ideas validated in the writing of Zamakhsharī.⁹⁰ Subkī is generally quite happy – as many are – at having come up with something he hadn’t heard elsewhere, for example writing that one of his ideas about the interpretation of a verse is “a brilliant point I gleaned without having heard it from anyone else.”⁹¹ He was especially pleased at finding that some of his ideas were not present in the *Kashshāf*, meaning that he had come up with something original not found in that exemplar. An example of this from his *fatāwā*, which also includes a number of his excurses in *tafsīr*, is his writing, “This is a good point, which grammarians have failed to mention, and which Zamakhsharī did not clearly articulate, even if he had indicated the foundation for it.”⁹² Subkī is also quite happy at discovering aspects of Zamakhsharī’s methodology; he worried over why Zamakhsharī did not follow Zajjāj, as he was wont to do, in a given interpretation, but was then pleased at having found out for himself the reason why.⁹³

Possibly most instructive with regards to Subkī’s relationship with Zamakhsharī’s work is what he wrote in his *fatāwā* at the end of a long piece justifying the

⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī 1930: 3:68. Ibn al-Ṣā’igh’s couplet is: *atayta lanā min al-durar al-naẓīm/ sulūkan li-l-ṣirāṭ al-muṣṭaqīm; jama’ta bihi al-‘ulūm fa-yā li-fardin/ḥawā taṣnīfahu jam’ al-‘ulūm* (You laid out for us, through pearls strung, the way to the straight path; you filled it with the disciplines – acclaimed is he whose writing combines all the disciplines!).

⁸⁸ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Durr al-naẓīm fi tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2052 (Cod. Mixt. 780), f. 1a. The copy has: *atayta lanā min al-durr al-naẓīm*; the Hyderabad edition of *al-Durar al-kāmina* probably relies on, or introduces, an error.

⁸⁹ See, for example: Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Durr al-naẓīm fi tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2052 (Cod. Mixt. 780), f. 3a-4v, dealing with the interpretation of Fātḥ 48:2, “Such that God would forgive you of sins to come and ones past,” an obvious point of contention between Sunnis and mu’tazilīs; also f. 297a, the beginning of Subkī’s commentary on Ibrāhīm. As Loebenstein has pointed out, f. 297a also includes a note attesting to this portion being an autograph.

⁹⁰ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:114.

⁹¹ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:68.

⁹² Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:52. Another example is Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:117.

⁹³ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:77.

way Zamakhsharī had explained a noun-adjective phrase which is being negated, found in Qur'ān *Ghāfir* 40:18. Some previous scholars had thought that the way Zamakhsharī had explained it did not make sense, and that because of that, he must have meant the opposite of what he said. Subkī argued that Zamakhsharī's phrasing was intentional, and held special significance the way he had worded it. He ended his discussion by writing,

This is what has become apparent to me regarding Zamakhsharī's phrase, which had previously been problematic to a group of scholars, who thought that it was backwards; there must be many examples of this which demonstrate the strength and keenness of his understanding, and which show how he alludes with few words to breadth and depth in meaning, although in his phrasing here he falls short of expressing his intent. This was a worrying matter. I was one of those who thought his phrase was backwards. I saw that an early scholar had a solution to this problem, but he did not really do anything to solve it. Then God inspired me with the solution, and it was as if the former difficulty had never been. Such is knowledge, it opens up with the slightest of effort. I am so pleased at the knowledge [or: the solution] God has blessed me with. It is to me better than this world and all it contains; no property nor wealth can replace it. I seek refuge in God from becoming conceited, or for me to accumulate pride in my soul, over this, yet I view it as a grace from God to me, despite my weakness and lack of cleverness, and my acknowledgement of the superiority of Zamakhsharī. Written by 'Ali b. 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī in 751; praise be to God, lord of the worlds.⁹⁴

At least in 751 AH, about three years before he would write *Sabab al-inkifāf* in 754 AH, and about five years before he would die in 756 AH, Subkī had a far more appreciative outlook towards the *Kashshāf* that very likely did not include subverting or dissuading his students from it.

It is also unlikely that Subkī would try after the fact to portray himself as having unsuccessfully attempted to subvert the work. The phrasing that Saleh interpreted to mean this was already awkward in Arabic, and required some interpretation for it to make sense. This may be why what Saleh has in his edition, *I warned people away from its finer points* (*unaffiru 'an fawā'idihi*), is glossed in his study of the treatise as *I warned people away from it* (*unaffiru 'anhu*).⁹⁵ A better reading might come from other editions of the *Sabab al-inkifāf* treatise. It has been recounted by Şuyūṭī in two of his now published works. The first is a complete copy in the entry for Zamakhsharī in his *Tuhfat al-adīb* (*Gift of the Litterateur*),⁹⁶ a biographical work of scholars who participated in linguistic disciplines and had been referenced in Ibn Ḥishām's (d. 761/1360) grammar work *Mughnī al-labīb* (*Sufficiency for the Perspicacious*). The second is a partial copy in his *ḥāshiya* on Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-tanzīl* (*Lights of Revelation*), his *Nawāhid al-abkār wa shawārid*

⁹⁴ Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:125.

⁹⁵ Saleh 2013: 223, 251.

⁹⁶ Al-Suyūṭī 2008: 400–402.

al-afkār (*Full Virgin Breasts and Stray Thoughts*).⁹⁷ The treatise in the edition of *Nawāhid* has only *wa ana abquru ‘an fawā’idihi*,⁹⁸ meaning ‘while I was fully explaining its finer points.’⁹⁹ Another option comes from the treatise contained in the edition of the *Tuhfa*, which reads *wa ana usfiru ‘an fawā’idihi wa a‘ūmu bihi*,¹⁰⁰ meaning ‘while I would unfurl its finer points and revel in it.’ Without recourse to the manuscripts of the treatise, or those of the *Nawāhid* or the *Tuhfa*, an ultimate determination of this phrase cannot be made. However, what can be said with more certainty is that the reading in Saleh’s edition is not linguistically sound, nor does it fit the tenor of Subkī’s engagement with the *Kashshāf*. On the other hand, these other readings do accord with what we know of Subkī and his relationship with the *Kashshāf* prior to the *Sabab*. These readings are also superior because they allow for a fair assessment by Subkī of his own academic history, as opposed to a reading which inadvertently imputes to him what would certainly have been a mischaracterization of his past teaching.

11 On Qinālīzāde indicating that Samīn was disparaged because of the *Kashshāf*

The assumption of widespread discontent with the *Kashshāf* affects a reading of the scholar and chief judge of Damascus, and then chief judge (*qādī ‘askar*) of Anatolia, Qinālīzāde ‘Alī Çelebī (d. 979/1572). Qinālīzāde wrote a treatise, *al-Muḥākamāt al-‘aliyya fī-l-abhāth al-rādawiyya fī i‘rāb ba‘d al-āy al-Qur’āniyya* (*High Adjudication on Pleasing Research over the Parsing of some Verses of the Qur’ān*) in response to that of a Damascene scholar, Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 984/1577), who had written *al-Durr al-thamīn fī ba‘d mā dhakarahu Abū Ḥayyān wa ‘āraḍahu al-Samīn* (*Exquisite Pearl: Some of what Abū Ḥayyān Raised and was Objected to by Samīn*).¹⁰¹ Both of these treatises were, as is fairly evident from their titles, about contestations over criticisms made by Abū Ḥayyān in his *tafsīr* of grammatical interpretations of the Qur’ān by Zamakhsharī in his *Kashshāf*, and rejoinders to these criticisms by his student al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 756/1355) in his

⁹⁷ Al-Suyūtī 1425 AH [2005]: 501–502. A recent edition by Māhir Adīb Ḥabbūsh of the *Nawāhid*, along with an edition of Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār*, is sure to become the standard for both. This edition has the same reading of this phrase as al-Drūbī’s dissertation. See Al-Şuyūtī 2022: 7:86.

⁹⁸ Al-Suyūtī 1425 AH [2005]: 501.

⁹⁹ An example of this kind of usage is given in, for example, Ibn Manzūr’s (d. 711/1311) *Lisān al-‘Arab*, from the ‘scandalous affair’: *fa-baqartu lahā al-ḥadīth ay fataḥtuhu wa kashaftuhu* (*I explained to her the matter, that is, I opened it up and made it clear*). Ibn Manzūr 1883: 4:74.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Şuyūtī 2008: 400.

¹⁰¹ This treatise was edited in al-Manṣūr 1439/2018: 99–140.

own *tafsīr* defending Zamakhsharī. Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī's treatise largely sided with the criticisms of Abū Ḥayyān, whereas Qinālīzāde mostly sided with the rejoinders of Samīn. Helen Pfeifer has discussed the social and historical background to the debate between Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī and Qinālīzāde through the framework of scholarly gatherings and the social tensions between Turkish and Arab speaking scholars and their respective scholarly worlds.¹⁰² Saleh, who also discussed some of this background, introduced Qinālīzāde's treatise primarily as evidence – even if it was incidental to the main contents of the treatise – of a type of Ottoman intellectual history of *tafsīr*: a reflection on the history and the scholarly reception of the *Kashshāf*. Saleh argued that it constituted an alternative history by Qinālīzāde to the reception history of the *Kashshāf* presented by Suyūṭī in the introduction to his *Nawāhid*, which Saleh also analyzed.¹⁰³ The treatise has thus been treated around the same time from different perspectives, both valuable, by scholars working in two different fields, Ottoman history and *tafsīr*.

Saleh writes that in his treatise, Qinālīzāde compared the merits of two prominent students of Abū Ḥayyān, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Safāqīsī (d. 742/1342) and al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 756/1355), both of whom wrote works of Qur'ān commentary. Their works were specifically in a subfield of grammatical parsing (*i'rāb*) of the Qur'ānic text, and heavily engaged with their teacher's *Bahr*.¹⁰⁴ Qinālīzāde had no doubt that Samīn's work was the best of the genre, but, on Saleh's reading, appeared to think that "because as-Samīn was a partisan of *al-Kashshāf*, some scholars were bound to disparage the work."¹⁰⁵ In the context of Saleh's article, this point is not critical. However, the article is broadly about the reception of the *Kashshāf*. The idea that some scholars might disparage Samīn's work because of its defense of the *Kashshāf* adds to the cumulative force of the various pieces of evidence that depict Mamluk-era scholars as having had a negative disposition to that work. In this case, it led to a type of guilt by association attitude towards other works and scholars in the field: it is alleged that Samīn and his *tafsīr* are being looked at with suspicion because his work defended the *Kashshāf*.

Qinālīzāde does compare the two students, Samīn and Safāqīsī. He is quite clear that Samīn's work is in his opinion far superior to that of his peer. Qinālīzāde's

¹⁰² Pfeifer 2015: 219–239, throughout, but especially 226–228. This is based on a section of her dissertation; see Pfeifer 2014: especially 119–125. Pfeifer's book based on this has recently been published. See Helen Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons: Conquest and Community in Early Modern Ottoman Lands*, Princeton University Press, 2022.

¹⁰³ Saleh 2013: 238–247.

¹⁰⁴ I do not know if there is any serious debate over the merits of the two students' works. Safāqīsī's one volume work is relatively short in print compared to the massive eleven volume enterprise that is Samīn's. See al-Safāqīsī 1430/2009; al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Saleh 2013: 247.

comment about the *Kashshāf*, however, is made in the context of comparing Samīn not to his peer *Safāqīsī*, but to their teacher, *Abū Ḥayyān*. Moreover, his remarks through this comparison of student and teacher do not support the reading that some scholars may have disparaged Samīn because of his support of the *Kashshāf*, but rather a situation of broad approval of *Zamakhsharī*'s work.

Qinālīzāde argues that the mere fact that Samīn levels excellent criticisms towards *Abū Ḥayyān* does not necessitate that he is of the same level as his teacher, or even anything close to it.¹⁰⁶ Critiquing a large book, he argues, is a relatively simple task compared to the hard work of putting together a polished, finished product. This is obvious, he goes on to explain: there exist grand buildings, monuments, and ancient mosques, but they are now subject to architectural criticism from those who are devoid of any skill or ability, to the extent that they could hardly be expected to successfully place even one stone upon the other themselves.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, he argues, there is another reason for Samīn to look like he is coming out on top over his teacher *Abū Ḥayyān*; he is supporting the author of the *Kashshāf* against *Abū Ḥayyān*'s criticisms. This is a work:

... which emerged from the heights of *Zamakhsharī*'s impenetrable excellence, and one which prominently displays as a chain of victory around one's neck; anyone who supports such a superior and dominant party is necessarily positioning themselves for victory (*wa li-anna al-Samīn mutaṣir li-ṣāḥib al-Kashshāf al-nāshi' 'an shawāhiq faḍlihi al-ghidāf wa-l-jāhiẓ nizām kharazāt al-ghalaba 'alā 'unuq*¹⁰⁸ *wa-l-mutaṣir li-l-ghālib ghālib wa-l-mustazhir bi-l-aqwiyā' fāz bi-l-maṭālib*).¹⁰⁹

Qinālīzāde goes on to explain other reasons that Samīn's rejoinders to his teacher's criticisms were successful, one of which is that *Abū Ḥayyān* already had a pre-existing negative disposition towards *Zamakhsharī*, and was therefore himself not the fairest critic. Because this bias impacted his critique, it was fairly easy for others like Samīn to respond to what amounted to his imagined criticisms, the kind that would not have occurred to the unbiased reader.¹¹⁰ *Qinālīzāde* is thus not hinting at Mamluk era discontent over Samīn's work because he supported the *Kashshāf*; rather, his comments as a whole point towards the opposite. Samīn's work could

¹⁰⁶ 'Alī Çelebī b. Amr Allāh al-Ḥumaydī [Qinālīzāde], *al-Muḥākamāt al-‘aliyya fī-l-abḥāth al-raqawīyya fī i‘rāb ba‘d al-āy al-Qur‘āniyya*, Esad Efendi 3556, f. 9v.

¹⁰⁷ I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the glaringly obvious parallel to the criticisms of this author directed at his teacher's work.

¹⁰⁸ See my paraphrase above. I am uncertain of the translation of his use of *al-ghidāf* and *al-jāhiẓ*.

¹⁰⁹ 'Alī Çelebī b. Amr Allāh al-Ḥumaydī [Qinālīzāde], *al-Muḥākamāt al-‘aliyya fī-l-abḥāth al-raqawīyya fī i‘rāb ba‘d al-āy al-Qur‘āniyya*, Esad Efendi 3556, f. 9v.

¹¹⁰ 'Alī Çelebī b. Amr Allāh al-Ḥumaydī [Qinālīzāde], *al-Muḥākamāt al-‘aliyya fī-l-abḥāth al-raqawīyya fī i‘rāb ba‘d al-āy al-Qur‘āniyya*, Esad Efendi 3556, f. 9v-10v.

appear to position him on the high scholarly level of his teacher simply because he was taking the side of a scholar and work widely recognized as the current standard of academic excellence in the field.

12 The transition to Bayḍāwī: on Suyūṭī deeming the *Kashshāf* completely unacceptable

The transition to Bayḍāwī is one reason why a reconsideration of the evidence surrounding the negative Mamluk reception of the *Kashshāf* is important. The Islamic world would at some point adopt the *Anwār al-tanzīl* of Bayḍāwī, and that work would come to somewhat replace the *Kashshāf* in teaching and research. We do not have a full picture of this transition or replacement yet, and this article is not the place to attempt to weigh in on this substantively, except on the point of its intersection with the subject of this paper. There have been two recent and meritorious perspectives on this topic. The adoption of Bayḍāwī has been described by Susan Gunasti in an article on political patronage and Ottoman *tafsīr* writing.¹¹¹ In it, she argued that this transition came about in the sixteenth century through an administrative process, namely, the adoption of the work as part of the Ottoman higher curriculum and madrasa system.¹¹² A recent article by Saleh was the first wholly dedicated to this problem,¹¹³ and has already been cited above. Saleh presented an alternative answer to this shift, situating the prime movers of this transition in Mamluk Cairo, especially singling out Biqā‘ī and Suyūṭī for their roles in prompting this move. Importantly, Saleh placed much greater importance on the role of theological considerations in this shift, meaning that the shift to Bayḍāwī was motivated by theological misgivings over the *Kashshāf*. The importance placed on the role these considerations played was one which Gunasti, in the Ottoman context, had argued was misplaced, even if plausible.¹¹⁴ I have already argued above that the evidence for a negative positionality towards the *Kashshāf* with respect to Biqā‘ī is not sufficient; if anything, there is sufficient evidence pointing towards the opposite.

Assessing Suyūṭī is somewhat more complicated. Saleh argues that Suyūṭī dismissed the *Kashshāf* in his *al-Tahbīr fi ‘ilm al-tafsīr* (*The Art of the Discipline of Tafsīr*), and explicitly stated that Bayḍāwī’s *Anwār* was to be a replacement for it. This, Saleh contends, is a type of smoking gun proving that there was a theological

¹¹¹ Gunasti 2013: 335–357.

¹¹² See especially the section “The Ascendance of al-Bayḍāwī,” in Gunasti 2013: 343–349.

¹¹³ Saleh 2021: 71–102.

¹¹⁴ Gunasti 2013: 346–347.

impetus for the replacement of the *Kashshāf* by the *Anwār*, the result of “a long and protracted process that was the result of a Sunni entrenchment against *al-Kashshāf* at the end of the Mamluk period in Cairo.” He points out that Suyūṭī singled out the work as “completely unacceptable;” stated that the work of a heretic, especially one like Zamakhsharī, was inadmissible; cited in this context Subkī’s *Sabab*; noted Zamakhsharī’s affronts to the Prophet; approvingly cited Dhahabī’s warning in his *Mīzān*; and also negatively judged the work in his *Itqān*. All of this, Saleh contends, was part of what he deems a long process of an anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment in the Sunni Islamic world, a sentiment that started in the Arab provinces but then spread to the Ottoman realm, replacing the *Kashshāf* with the *Anwār*.¹¹⁵

These claims about Suyūṭī are true, to an extent. However, there are noteworthy caveats. One is that his statements derive from a theoretical section of his *Taḥbīr* dealing with the prerequisites of an exegete, including the categories of individuals whose exegesis cannot be accepted. It is not the case that Suyūṭī says that the *Kashshāf* is completely unacceptable and inadmissible. Rather, in the context of this type of discussion, Suyūṭī is arguing that people who are known to have heretical opinions should not have their exegesis accepted by default. The reason for this, he goes on to explain, is that people of this category will interpret, often surreptitiously, verses of the Qur’ān in ways that were not intended, all in service of whatever pre-existing theological positions they hold. This is a reasonable thing to say in that context and is not about deeming a whole work unacceptable. This explanation is similar to how I described the aims of Dhahabī in his *Mīzān* above, where I argued that the genre of literature determined the type of judgements and language used to describe other scholars and their works. Given the similarity in aims in the types of literature, it is unsurprising that Suyūṭī immediately cites Dhahabī’s *Mīzān* here in this regard.¹¹⁶

From another perspective, it cannot be the case that Suyūṭī really thought that the exegesis of Zamakhsharī was inadmissible. His *Itqān*, for example, a work that was in many respects a revision of the *Taḥbīr*, does not speak negatively about the *Kashshāf*. The negative judgement of the *Kashshāf* in the *Itqān* referred to above is, again, only in a theoretical chapter on the prerequisites of the exegete (and is a long citation of Ibn Taymiyyah’s *Muqaddima* at that).¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the judgement in that chapter does not have the type of practical import one may think: Zamakhsharī is himself later cited by Suyūṭī to weigh in as an authority on what constitutes improper exegesis,¹¹⁸ and is also cited to support Suyūṭī’s argument on

¹¹⁵ Saleh 2021: 85–86.

¹¹⁶ Al-Suyūṭī 1986: 330–331.

¹¹⁷ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 6:2283.

¹¹⁸ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 6:2294.

the importance of knowing *balāgha* and Arabic style as a prerequisite for the exegete.¹¹⁹ If Suyūṭī did hold Zamakhsharī in low regard, he would not be citing his opinions on how to practice Qur’ān commentary as authoritative. Aside from theoretical discussions on how to do *tafsīr*, practically speaking the *Itqān* – and many of Suyūṭī’s other works – is filled with a wide range of Zamakhsharī’s exegetical opinions. In comparison, Bayḍāwī barely warrants mention in the *Itqān*, meaning that the sentiment Suyūṭī expressed in his *Tahbīr* about Bayḍāwī being a sufficient replacement for the *Kashshāf*¹²⁰ had no practical impact on his immediate scholarly production. Zamakhsharī’s opinions are often quoted approvingly in the *Itqān* and are far too many to list; for example, he is cited approvingly on the eloquence of multiple sequential parables in the Qur’ān;¹²¹ an explanation for an intensive form of an adjective in the Qur’ān;¹²² the connection between the beginning and the end of sūra 23 *al-Mu’minūn*;¹²³ and the use and importance of *tamthīl* (metaphorical language) in the Qur’ān.¹²⁴ He is also often given by Suyūṭī as the sole or primary citation in support of a point he is trying to establish; the examples of this are again far too many, but for example, he is cited to explain the use of *īhām/tawriya* (double entendre)¹²⁵ and the use of *istiṣrād* (digression) in the Qur’ān.¹²⁶ A work Suyūṭī thought was inadmissible would not serve in this way as a cornerstone to his own work on the Qur’ān, much of which concerns aspects related to Qur’ān interpretation.

The same argument can be made for Suyūṭī’s *Nawāhid*, but to an exponentially higher degree. The *Kashshāf* is cited and engaged with countless times. This is inescapable, given that one can hardly explain Bayḍāwī without recourse to the *Kashshāf*. However, there is nothing grudging about Suyūṭī’s engagement with the latter, belying some type of deep anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment. Suyūṭī treats Zamakhsharī as an authority throughout, much like he is treated in the *Itqān*. Indeed, he singles out Zamakhsharī for high praise in the introduction to this work, calling him the sultan of *balāgha*-based analysis of the Qur’ān and the one who trod new ground in this domain (*al-imām al-sālik fī hādhā al-majāz ilā al-ḥaqīqa*).¹²⁷ He also corroborates Zamakhsharī’s claim to being the gold standard in the field for a linguistic type of Qur’ān commentary that became widely accepted and acclaimed

¹¹⁹ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 6:2296.

¹²⁰ Al-Suyūṭī 1986: 331.

¹²¹ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1654.

¹²² Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1775.

¹²³ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1851.

¹²⁴ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1934.

¹²⁵ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1726.

¹²⁶ Al-Suyūṭī 2005: 5:1842–3.

¹²⁷ Al-Suyūṭī 1424 AH [2004]: 3.

(*wa laqad ṣadaqa wa barra wa-rasakha niẓāmuḥu fi-l-qulūb fa-waqara wa qarra*).¹²⁸

The examples of Suyūṭī’s use of Zamakhsharī in this work are far too many to mention, but they certainly belie the notion that he could have been harboring a deep bias against the book, while happily engaging with it in this manner for the two decades he spent writing the *Nawāhid*.

What is noteworthy for our purposes, however, is how Suyūṭī does speak of the *Kashshāf* in his *Nawāhid* at an occasion when he sees fit to bring up Subkī’s *Sabab*. This occasion is the interpretation of Qur’ān *Tawba* 9:117: *God has forgiven you; why did you grant them permission?* The language used by Zamakhsharī in the interpretation of this verse, vis a vis the Prophet, was widely seen as inappropriately and unnecessarily harsh. He interpreted, for example, the former phrase (‘afā Allāh ‘anka) as a euphemism for an egregious offense (*jināya*), and paraphrased its entirety as “You erred, and what a terrible thing you did” (*akhṭa’ta wa bi’sa mā fa’alta*). This language was jarring to Qur’ān commentators, who instead generally held that the phrasing of this verse was an example of how God speaks with kindness to the Prophet and elevates his status, since the Qur’ān here does not explicitly blame him, and also foregrounds forgiveness over rebuke.

Suyūṭī, discussing this verse, writes that it was because of issues like this that some pious people turned away from and prohibited the study of the *Kashshāf*: “Because of this point [Zamakhsharī’s interpretation of Qur’ān *Tawba* 9:117] and others like it, people of faith and piety abhorred looking into the *Kashshāf* and forbade reading and teaching it.”¹²⁹ It seems likely to me that Suyūṭī is alluding here to Ibn Abī Jamra, who fits this description. It is also how Suyūṭī introduces Subkī’s *Sabab* here. It is not unlikely that Suyūṭī also places Subkī in this category, and thinks that this is how to make sense of his turn away from the work. Subkī did write the *Sabab* in 754 AH, towards the end of his life. In general, Subkī appears to have had something of a turn away from *tafsīr* towards the end of his life. None of his writings from the last few years of his life are on *tafsīr*. The last dated piece of writing of his having anything to do with *tafsīr* is from 752 AH, and even this is a piece of poetry reflecting on his life.¹³⁰ The citation discussed above in which he praised Zamakhsharī was from 751 AH. After this point, there are numerous dated pieces of his writing up to 755 AH, but they are all on matters of law. It is not improbable that Subkī had a pious turn later in life, as he himself describes in his *Sabab* and as pointed out by Suyūṭī, which led to his disenchantment with the *Kashshāf*. This turn could even have been precipitated by his growing discontent with what he saw as Zamakhsharī’s lack of etiquette with the Prophet.

128 Al-Suyūṭī 1424 AH [2004]: 6.

129 Al-Suyūṭī 1425 AH [2005]: 500–501; Al-Suyūṭī 2022: 7:85.

130 Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī 2003: 1:125.

This, however, is speculative. What is important, is that Ṣuyūṭī's reference here in his *Nawāhid* to those who abjured the *Kashshāf* is very different from the impression one might obtain from the *Taḥbīr*, in which he appeared to be one of those people. In the *Nawāhid*, however, he is speaking about them at a distance, without any indication that he might be one of them. There are at least two ways to make sense of this. It is somewhat plausible that Ṣuyūṭī's opinions mellowed over time. He wrote the *Taḥbīr* in 872/1468 when he was twenty-three years old. He would go on to write the *Itqān* a decade later, just before 883/1479; by the time he wrote this, he had removed this judgment from the *Taḥbīr* about the *Kashshāf* at its parallel location in the *Itqān*.¹³¹ Around the same time that he was writing the *Itqān*, he would start putting together the *Nawāhid*. He began compiling his notes for this work in 880/1476, when he began teaching Bayḍāwī, and was in the process of writing this work for about twenty years. It is thus possible that following the *Taḥbīr*, his view of the *Kashshāf* somewhat changed. While this is possible, what is more likely to me is what I have argued above about the context of the discussion of the *Taḥbīr*, the inverse of which applies to the *Nawāhid*. In the context of the latter work, which is to say Qur'ān interpretation itself, it does not make sense to espouse that type of condemnatory attitude about the unacceptability of the work; one is, after all, necessarily engaged in discussing and researching the *Kashshāf* and its related literature when one is compiling a *ḥāshiya* on another work in the domain of the former.

The caveats I have outlined above make it difficult to firmly place Ṣuyūṭī within a narrative of a long-standing anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment, motivated by theological misgivings, in the Mamluk period. They further complicate the notion that there was such a deep undercurrent to begin with. This in turn calls for a reassessment of the argument that such sentiments were sufficient in precipitating the rise of Bayḍāwī in the Sunni world as a replacement for the *Kashshāf*.

13 Conclusion

Claims about the widespread nature of anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment, as I have attempted to demonstrate above, are vastly overstated. More often than not, they are factually incorrect. Correcting this record about the reception of the *Kashshāf*, aside from getting the history right, allows for a clearer picture of how Qur'ān commentary was being practiced in the Mamluk period, in which this work was heavily engaged with, and what motivated intellectual production in it. Theological considerations are sometimes portrayed as a motivating factor – often, the

¹³¹ Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2005: 6:2298.

only factor worth exploring – in accounting for developments in Islamic intellectual history. In the case of the *Kashshāf*, a host of scholars have been implicated, in various ways, for adopting a negative stance towards the *Kashshāf*, motivated primarily by theological reasons. This is a significant list, including some of the most notable scholars in disparate fields in this period. When taken as a group, the Mamluk period as a whole begins to appear as one in which there is widespread resentment against the *Kashshāf*. The point of this paper has not been to argue that there were no theological considerations at play in the reception of the *Kashshāf*; that is certainly untrue.¹³² To that end, I have attempted above to highlight some of these critical responses, and to situate them in the broader reception of the *Kashshāf*. What I have shown, using a wide range of primary source material, is that theological considerations played far less a role than is otherwise thought. Most, if not all of the scholars discussed above had a far better relationship with the *Kashshāf* than has been intimated. Rather than being dismissed for theological reasons, the *Kashshāf* continued to be engaged with – and enthusiastically at that – in spite of any such reservations with the work. Moreover, the negative responses that were circulated often demonstrate the opposite of what one may assume. Far from demonstrating widespread resentment with the work, they tend to be repeated as noteworthy by virtue of how removed they were as exceptions to the rule. This requires a different account of what was motivating Muslim scholarship and Qur’ān commentary. The nexus of the *Kashshāf*, Baydāwī, and the *ḥawāshī* tradition is ripe for further study, after having had its foundations laid primarily (and almost exclusively) by Saleh. This paper builds on that framework in clarifying aspects of the reception of Zamakhsharī’s work, with clear ramifications for how the history of the subsequent literature in the wake of the *Kashshāf* is conceptualized.

¹³² One example of this I did not discuss, partially because it has not been previously referenced, is that of Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), son of Taqī al-Dīn. In his *Mu‘id al-ni‘am* (*The Returner of Favours*), he complains about various ills of the pretend scholars of his day; one of them is their enthusiasm for philosophy. He adds to this their use of the *Kashshāf*, which is an occasion to summarize his father’s *Sabab*. Subkī the son ends his discussion by opining that looking in the *Kashshāf* should not be permitted, except to those who are strong Sunnis, whose adherence cannot be shaken by mu‘tazilis (*qadariyya*). This is one of the stronger opinions of the *Kashshāf*, certainly constituting stronger evidence of anti-*Kashshāf* sentiment than many of the examples listed above. Here too, however, this condemnation is an outlier, and is also aimed primarily at, from his perspective, the charlatan scholars he is berating in this section who do not meet the requisite basic standards of scholarship yet still dabble; certainly not the scholars of his own class he deems above falling for heretical beliefs. See Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī 1986: 66.

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