Filâli ruling house (ca. 1050/1640); and the ruinous site of Sidjilmasa, whose kasha was finally destroyed by the Ayt Atta in 1818.


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**TAFKHM** (A.), the verbal noun from *fakkama* meaning “to make thick, to emphasise or to make grand”. In Arabic, it is a phonetic phenomenon involving the pronunciation of the emphatic consonants, *mu'akhkhama* (sing. *mu'akhkhama*), /t, d, ṭ, ḏ/ and also includes the marginal emphatics /r, l/. *Kur'anic orthoepists* used the term *tafkhim* to describe the variants of /t/ when it occurs next to low and back vowels; however, they designated the term *taghzîz*, thickening, which they used synonymously with *tafkhîm*, for the description of certain variants of /t/. The /l/, as an emphatic variant, has a limited environment and is primarily used with the word *Allâh* when not preceded by /s, l/. The earliest occurrence of the term *tafkhîm* was when Sibawayhi used it to describe what he called *alif al-ta'khim* and he considered it as a variant, not a phoneme. According to him, *alif al-ta'khim* is found in a limited number of words such as *sâlat*, prayers; *zâkât*, the giving of alms to the poor; and *hâyât*, life, especially in the dialect of Hijâz (al-Kiţâb, iv, 432). The four primary emphatic consonants /s, d, t, ḏ/ are not referred to by Sibawayhi as *mu'akhkhama* but as *mu'tâba* (sing. *mu'tâbah*); a tradition followed by Arab grammarians and *Kur'anic orthoepists*. The verbal noun *ibâd* “act of covering or putting on a lid”, is used to describe the position of the tongue in the pronunciation of the *mu'tâba*. The *mu'tâba*, along with the velar/uvular group /x, ḥ, h, q, ḵ/, are referred to by the generic term *mu'tâliya*, high or raised. The *mu'tâliya* consonants are described as preventing the occurrence of *imâla* (q.v.), “inclination” of /l/ towards /l/.

Contemporary Arabists and linguists use the term *tafkhîm* to describe the emphatic consonants, *mu'akhkhama*, /t, d, ṭ, ḏ/ and the marginal emphatics /r, l/. *Tajkhlm* is often characterised by pharyngealisation or velarisation, but the *mu'akhkhama* consonants are best characterised by the phonetic feature of retraction which involves moving the tongue up and further back toward the velum and upper pharynx. *Tajkhlm* is not restricted to the environment of the emphatics, but rather spreads to any adjacent vowel or consonant making it emphatic. It is this feature of retraction that makes this group of consonants opaque to describe the position of the tongue in the pronunciation of the *mu'tâba*. For related articles on *tafkhîm*, see [SAWTTYYA].

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**TAFSIR** (A.), pl. *tafîsir* “interpretation” (as a process and a literary genre), generally, but not always, of the Kur'ân. The word is used for commentaries on Greek scientific and philosophical works, being equivalent to *shârîf* (q.v.); the term is applied to the Greek and Arabic commentaries on the works of Aristotle, for example. Jews and Christians writing in Arabic also use the word in the context of translations and commentaries on the Bible, as some of the works of Saadî Gaon demonstrate. The most significant usage of the word, however, and the focus of this article, is its reference to the branch of Islamic learning concerned with the Kur'ân. An essential part of *madrasa* training, the study of *tafîsîr* of the Kur'ân stands alongside the study of *hadîth* and *fiqh* as elements of the traditional curriculum.

The emergence of the word *tafîsîr* as a technical term is unclear. It is used once in the Kur'ân at XXV, 33, “They [the unbelievers] bring not to thee [Muḥammad] any similitude [mu'tâla] but that We bring thee the truth and the best *tafîsîr*”. This follows on a verse which states, “The unbelievers say, ‘Why has the Kur'ân not been sent down all at once?’ Even so, that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have chanted it very distinctly”. The idea would appear to be that God has provided an explanation, *tafîsîr*, of why the Kur'ân is being revealed piece-by-piece. Of course, other technical terms in Muslim religious thinking frequently have no special status within the Kur'ân, so the lack of a firm reference point for the controversies of the Baṣra Muṭazzâlite cosmology, and which is attributed in particular to Ḫârî b. Sayyâr al-Nâzâzîm (and also to Ḫârî b. al-Hakâm). Al- Ṣūλâmî, *Mufakhkhama*, is taken to have argued that it is possible to move over a distance without going through all the parts of the distance, by leaping over those parts. Although this theory came in for a lot of criticism by those sympathetic to atomism, al-Nâzâzîm was successful in pointing to difficulties in the minimal parts discrete geometry of the atomists. This is a version of the paradoxes which Zeno first discussed in connection with the existence of indivisible magnitudes. The paradox of the flying arrow was that every thing which is moving is resting at each stage of the movement. The movement itself is hidden in the substance and only appears when the substance itself is moving. Ḫârî b. Fuwâṣî (fl. early 3rd/9th century) is said to have abandoned the theory of leaps once he realised that, if it is valid, then a creature which had dipped its legs in ink would produce a discontinuous rather than a continuous track when it covered a particular distance (see Ibn Mattawîyya, 169). This sort of example played a large part in contemporary disputes over the plausibility of atomism and its alternatives as a theory of the nature of physical reality.

term tafsir is not particularly surprising (see J. Wansbrough, Quranic studies. Sources and methods of scriptural interpretation, Oxford 1977, 154-8). For the first three Islamic centuries, there appears to be no consistent differentiation between tafsir, ta’wil [q.v.] and ma’nawi [g.v., section 1] when used in titles of books or as a technical term within works of tafsir (and, indeed, this is the attitude of the lexicographers: see Lane, i, 2397; for the ambiguities of the differentiation between the terms in early times, see N. Kinberg, A lexicon of al-Farīr’s terminology in his Qur’an commentary, Leiden 1996, 40-2, 503-27, 563-6).

After some time, tafsir was distinguished from ta’wil by the latter being considered the product of research and investigation, the former dependent upon transmission from Muhammad and his companions. In its developed sense, ta’wil became limited to interpretation which leaves the “obvious” (zāhir) sense and delves into more speculative levels of language (batin). Ma’n, on the other hand, became more constrained and limited primarily to lexicographical aspects of interpretation.

A tafsir of the Kur’an is a work which provides interpretative comments on a text of the scriptural source. There are formal characteristics of such works which help to define the literary genre further. In most cases, a work entitled Tafsir will follow the text of the Kur’an from the beginning to the end, and will provide an interpretation (tafsir) of segments of the text (word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, or verse-by-verse) as a running commentary. The major exceptions to this fundamental characteristic are to be found in the formative and the contemporary periods of Islam: in the formative period, one finds works of tafsir which cover only isolated segments of the text, and in the contemporary period, thematic (ma‘ādil’t) tafsir have become quite popular (see J.J.G. Jansen, The interpretation of the Koran in modern Egypt, Leiden 1974, 13-4).

But the presence of scriptural text and commentary are two elements interplaying remains. A number of sub-disciplines are often included within the broad scholarly enterprise itself and these have resulted in books which concentrate on asbāb al-nuzūl, ghaṣb al-tanzil, ma’dm ‘l-Kur’an, kiyās al-anbā’ya’, ḫīr, ma‘ṣūm al-khāti, al-nāṣīkh wa l-mansūkh, al-wasf wa l-ʿibādīt and al-ʿunwāṣ wa l-nazā’ir. These works are best understood as a part of the overall ‘ulām al-Kur’an (to which books are devoted as summaries of the various sub-disciplines, e.g., al-Zarkash (d. 794/1392 [g.v.]), al-Burhān fi ‘ulām al-Kur’an, and Djalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505 [g.v.]), al-Dhākīn fi ‘ulām al-Kur’an). However, the contents of these books have often been derived from the major works of tafsir (and then subsequently have acted as a source for them in many instances), so, in that sense, such works are a part of the intellectual discipline while not formally being a part of the literary genre.

Within the genre attempts have been made to classify the various books. Attempts to describe the “method” of the books predominate in Muslim discussions, and such classifications have also found their way into scholarly works (e.g., I. Goldzahi, Die Richtungen der islamischen Kommentierung, Leiden 1920). The basic separation between tafsir bi l-maṭbūʿ (or māṣūma) and tafsir bi l-ʿrāʿiy (or ḫīrā), with the occasional addition of tafsir bi l-iṣḥāra, reflects a tension which runs throughout the Muslim community and its intellectual disciplines, that of the authority of the community (maṭbūʿ) versus that of the intellect (rāʿiy) (iṣḥāra being the speculative “hint” or “allusion” generally connected to Šiʿism and outside these two main classifications). This separation does not, however, provide a sufficient analytical tool by which one may characterise the wide variety of books and approaches which are contained within the broadly-defined genre of tafsir, since it concentrates on a superficial understanding of the form of the works with little attention to their underlying substance.

Recent scholarly attempts to define the genre have concentrated on isolating the variety of elements which come together within a given text in varying proportions (see N. Calder, Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir: problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham, in G.R. Hawting and A.-K.A. Sharref (eds.), Approaches to the Qur’an, London 1993, 101-40; P. Heath, Creative hermeneutics: a comparative analysis of three Islamic schools of tafsir, Oxford 1992, 173-210). Different maṣaḥfūrūn have different concerns and goals, and this is reflected in the relative weight they put upon elements such as history, grammar, semantics, law, theology, or folklore. All commentators are concerned with the process of analysing the text in light of the “external world”, however that be defined for the individual author, with the aim of resolving any apparent conflict and making the text “clear”. Each element that comes into play within a text of tafsir acts both to prompt excess (in the sense that a conflict is perceived between the world and the text) and to characterise the emphasis of a given interpretative approach.

Pride of place in the tools used in the interpretative process has been given to grammar (including elements of lexicography and orthography). As an implement for asserting the scholar’s status and authority, arguments over grammar have had no rival (see M.G. Carter, Language control as people control in medieval Islam: the aims of the grammarians in their cultural context, in Al-Ākhand, xxi [1983], 65-84). Grammar became a specialisation within tafsir, producing works such as Maʿātim ‘l-Kurʾān wa l-ʿrābaḥa by al-Zadīджādī (d. 311/923; see GΛS, v, 99-101), Frāb al-Kurʾān by al-Nabhās (d. 338/950; see GΛS, ix, 207-9) and Muḥkāli ibn al-Kurʾān by Maqālī al-Kaysī (d. 437/1045 [g.v.]). The historical origins of grammar and lexicographical comparison within the framework of tafsir have become a matter of scholarly controversy in light of Wansbrough’s arguments for the relatively late introduction of both aspects (see Quranic studies, 216-27; for example, C.H.M. Verevsegh, Arabic grammar and Qurʾānic excess in early Islam, Leiden 1993, and M. Muranî, Neue Materialien zur tafsīr-Forschung in der Moscheebibliothek von Qairawān, in S. Wild (ed.), The Qurʾān as text, Leiden 1996, 225-55, both argue against Wansbrough’s point, citing grammatical and poetical references in texts understood to be early in date. Much of the dispute depends upon dating of texts (see A. Rippin, Studying early tafsīr texts, in Isl., lxiii [1995], 310-23).

Rivaling grammar but yet itself often thought of as dependent upon it, the framework of legal analysis emerges quite clearly in some works, achieving a status reflected in titles such as the Ḥakīmat al-Kurʾān written by the Ḥanafī al-Qāṣṣ (d. 370/981 [g.v.], the Mālikī Ibn al-Arabi (d. 543/1148 [g.v.]) and the Mālikī al-Kurshī (d. 671/1272 [g.v.]). Aiming to demonstrate that the body of Islamic law may be derived in the first instance from the Kurʾān, such works include, out of necessity, grammatical and historical elements within interpretation in order to argue their legal points.

Theology, on the other hand, frequently remained subsumed within the overall contents of tafsir, although certain works attributed to prominent theologians (e.g. the Ḥakīmat al-taṣawwūf fi muḥādab al-ṭanżīl by al-Sharīf
al-Radi, d. 406/1016 [q.v.]) tend to provide a thorough-going emphasis on a certain theological perspective. The famous work of al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144 [q.v.]), renowned for its Mu'tazili perspective, is distinctive primarily for its special outlook and not for the presence of an overall theological argument itself, nor for the quantity of such argumentation. Other works, especially those from Shi'i writers such as al-'Utsi (d. 460/1067) and al-Tabrisi (d. 548/1153), provide more detailed and thorough-going examples of the Mu'tazili tendency, as does the work available in "reconstructed" form from al-Dhubab' (d. 303/915 [q.v.]) (see D. Gimaret, Une lecture ma'uladique du Conan. Le tafsîr d'Abî 'Ali al-Dhubab'î [m. 303/915], Louvain-Paris 1994). All other major works of tafsîr have a theological perspective as well (see e.g. C. Gilliot, Exégèse, langue, et théologie en Islam. L'exégèse coranique de Tabari (m. 311/923), Paris 1990, 207-78) but are not so "distinctive" as to gain a reputation in that regard. The observation regarding al-Zamakhshari's distinctiveness (but not uniqueness) is confirmed by the frequent use of that book within the madrasa context, regardless of its theological perspective.

The genius of Muslim tafsîr is perhaps best seen in its historicisation of the text through the general tools of narrative provided by prophetic history, both of the distant past as found in the kisas al-anbiya' and of the contemporary as found in the sina of Muhammad. Designed both to prove the fact of revelation and to embody an interpretation that would relate the text to a context (see Rippin, The function of asbab al-nuzul in Qur'anic exegesis, in BSOAS, li [1988], 1-20), historicisation of the text allows the contemporaries to make their own life the day-to-day life of the Muslim community. In that manner, the extraction of law was facilitated, the sense of moral guidance was emphasised and the "foreign" made Islamic.

Whether this was a matter of filling in the details on the life of the former prophets with incidents to which Muslims could relate (see e.g. J. Lassner, Demonzing the Queen of Sheba. Boundaries of gender and culture in post-hiblical Judaism and medieval Islam, Chicago 1993), a concern with identifying the unknown within the context of the life of Muhammad (ta'yan al-mubham) (see U. Rubin, The eye of the beholder: the life of Muhammad as viewed by the early Muslims: a textual analysis, Princeton 1995), or a polemical impulse from the context of Sunnî-Shi'i interaction (see e.g. U. Rubin, Prophets and progenitors in the early Shi'a tradition, in JSiM, i [1979], 41-65), historicisation of the text was comprehensive and compelling. Of course, this is not the history of contemporary historians, but a history which is both controlled by, and productive of, the meaning of the text of the Qur'an.

It is in the flight from the constraints of sacred history, however, that symbol, allegory and inspiration gained their status, especially in tafsîr from within the context of Sufism, but by no means limited to that area. The appreciation of the literary qualities of the text of the Kur'an in terms of literary figures and general stylistic concerns may well have led, over the course of time, to more wide-ranging symbolic and allegorical readings of the text. In the hands of Sufis, such readings became supported by notions of insight derived from mystical experience; this is reflected in the text of their tafsîr in the way in which a passage of the Kur'an can be the jumping-off point (a "keynote") for a meditation on a topic seemingly unconnected to the text itself but derived from images contained within the personal experience of the individual Sufi (on Sufi interpretation, see P. Nwyia, Exégèse coranique et langue mystique, Beirut 1970).

Within all these aspects and procedures, there are changing emphases over time. Variability in the matter of citation of authorities is one such factor, and the one which Muslims seized upon in their efforts at classification, as noted above. Expansion and contraction in the number of meanings provided is another, independent variable which appears to vary over time. It is perhaps one of the ironies (but also one of an author's celebrations) that the reliance on the citation of authorities tended, in some hands at least, to proliferate meanings. There was a continual building upon the past which was being accumulated for future generations within these works. Al-Kurṭubī, for example, exemplifies the tendency towards multiplicity of meanings with little indication of what is to be preferred. The Kur'an, it is being suggested, incorporates all these potentialities. Named authorities are an important element within this proliferation of alternatives. But even then, it needs to be remembered that all this is done within a certain framework of the author, his concerns and allegiances (e.g. his concept of what "Sunnî" Islam encompasses). The citations are always subject to choice, the authorities subject to selection. Time, location, sectarian and popular beliefs will all have affected the selections and choices. The selection of material is precisely what defines the tradition within which an author is working (and thus for the purposes of this overview of tafsîr as a genre, distinctions such as Sunnî versus Shi'i are irrelevant; on the specific characteristics of the latter, see G. Monnot, Islam: exégèse coranique, in Annaire EPHE, V. section, xci [1982-3], 309-17).

Another such variable may be seen in the expansion and contraction in the amount of supplementary material provided within a tafsîr. This is especially so in the contemporary context, but it is a tendency which has roots in the mature stage of Muslim tafsîr for a variety of reasons. Some authors clearly aimed their works at more popular (although not necessarily less learned) audiences with the result of producing concise works suitable for easy copying and detailed study. Such works (e.g. Djalal al-Dîn al-Malalî, d. 984/1479 [q.v.] and Djalal al-Dîn al-Suyûtî [d. 911/1505], Tafsîr al-Djalâlîyam) end up being technical and presumptive of a great deal of knowledge in areas of grammar and the like. Other authors, however, reacted to the accumulation of exegetical material with a more negative attitude, feeling that much of it was "getting away" from the meaning of the Kur'an. Categories of material emerged which were deemed to be extraneous and were to be censured: the movement against Isra'ilîyyat [q.v.], a technical term within tafsîr apparently first employed as such by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328 [q.v.]), serves as the prime example of this tendency. Rigorous inad criticism and a prioritising of knowledge by its proximity in time to Muhammad also provided criteria by which the treasure trove of material from the generations of past exegetes was whitened down to produce more limited ranges of meaning.

In tracing the historical developments of the genre, it is possible to separate out four periods of expression: formative, classical, mature and contemporary. The separation is artificial, particularly fuzzy at the edges and certainly in need of refinement. It does, however, provide a means by which to summarise the contents of the genre by its highlights.

A debate has raged for a century now in scholarly literature concerning the origins of tafsîr as a procedure and as written works. To some extent, this is a continuation of a debate within Islam itself concern-
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ing authority in tafsir: did Muhammad authorise interpreting the Kur'an? If so, then interpretations from him and his closest companions might be thought to be of the highest importance in establishing what the text means. It may be observed in passing that such an argument tends to be a restraining one, suggesting a limited range of legitimate meanings; these arguments become closely associated in medieval times with Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathîr (d. 774/1373 [q.v.]). On the other hand, an early reluctance to interpret the Kur'an is to be noted, especially associated with statements attributed to the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattâb [q.v.]. An attempt to reconcile these two ideas is found in the notion that 'Umar was only against interpretation of "unclear" verses. The lack of documentary evidence makes the debate a difficult one to adjudicate, and the debate among the views of Goldziher, Richtungen; H. Birkeland, Old Muslim opposition against the interpretation of the Koran, Oslo 1955; N. Abbott, Studies in Arabic literary papyri: Qur'anic commentary and tradition, Chicago 1967; and Wansbrough, Qur'anic studies, remains unresolved (see Gilliot, Les débats de l'exégèse coranique, in RMMM, xviii [1990], 82-100).

One response to this uncertain historical situation has been the attempt on the part of a number of contemporary editors to reconstruct texts on the basis of attributions found in later texts. Such "books" are historically said to have existed (as Szezgin documents in Gds, i, 6-8, 25-35 esp.) but are no longer found in manuscript copies. Thus the only choice has been to reconstruct them. Such publications have recently proliferated and a number of examples can be cited: al-Hasan al-Bayrî (d. 110/728 [q.v.] and see Gilliot, Textes arabes anciens édités en Egypte au cours des années 1990 à 1992, in MEDEO, xxi [1994], 295-6, no. 36); Ibn Abî Talha (d. 120/737; see Gilliot, Les débuts de l'exégèse coranique, 89-90). In some senses, such "books" are more likely to be authentic, although certainly not free of later interpolation, reformulation and editorial intrusion. Works ascribed to Mukatîl b. Sulaymân (d. 110/728 [q.v.])—and at the same time ascribed to a number of other authors who lived roughly in the same period as al-Tabarî still exist and need to be viewed as a part of this expression of classical tafsir. Notably, a number of other works that express differing theological viewpoints need close attention, especially when viewed in light of the polemical aspects of al-Tabarî: Hûd b. Muhîkm (d. towards the end of the 3rd/9th century; see Gds, i, 41), Tafsîr, an Ibâdî work; Fûrât b. Fûrat b. Kûfî (d. ca. 310/922; see Gds, i, 439-40, no. 78); al-Suddî (d. 120/737; see Gilliot, Textes arabes anciens édités en Egypte au cours des années 1990 à 1992, in MEDEO, xxi [1993], 439-40, no. 79); al-Suddî (d. 128/745; see Gilliot, Textes arabes anciens édités en Egypte au cours des années 1990 à 1992, 296, no. 37, and E. Kohlberg, A medieval Muslim scholar at work. Ibn Taâsirî and his library, Leiden 1992, 346, no. 574); and Sufyân b. Wahb (125/743-320/932 [q.v.]).

One of the more significant works from authors who lived more closely associated with a number of other works from authors who lived more closely associated with the character of which is more cohesive and thus more likely to be authentic, although certainly not free of later interpolation, reformulation and editorial intrusion. Works ascribed to Mukatîl b. Sulaymân (d. 110/728 [q.v.]) and see Gds, i, 99), and al-Akhfash al-Awsât (d. 161/778 [q.v.], and see Gilliot, Les débarts de l'exégèse coranique, 89). A fundamental issue exists regarding the fragmentary nature of these books: should it be interpreted as evidence of the fragmentary nature of early tafsir per se, or as evidence of a mediaeval attempt to extract these books from later works? On this, see Rippin, Al-'Azârî, naskh al-Qur'ân and the problem of early tafsir texts, in BSOAS, lviii (1985), 22-43.

We are on somewhat firmer ground for discussion of the formative period of tafsir with a series of books the character of which is more cohesive and thus more likely to be authentic, although certainly not free of later interpolation, reformulation and editorial intrusion. Works ascribed to Muâjhid b. Djabrî (d. 100-4/718-22 [q.v.])—and see Gilliot, Textes arabes anciens édités en Egypte au cours des années 1990 à 1992, 441-2, no. 81)—may all be thought to fit into this category. However, the work ascribed to al-Kalbi (d. 146/763 [q.v.])—and at the same time ascribed to al-Abî Allâh b. al-Abbâs (d. ca. 68/687 [q.v.] and see Gds, i, 539—indicates the difficulty in accepting an ascription without detailed examination and comparison; In this particular case, the work is more likely attributed to the 4th/10th century (see Gds, i, 539), tafsir an: Shaykh Tabarsi's commentary, Lahore 1977), Madjma' al-bayân li-tulûm al-Qur'ân, a moderate Shi'i work; Ibn al-Djâwizî (d. 397/1201 [q.v.], and see Jane McAuliffe, Ibn al-Jawzî's exegetical prophetic: introduction and translation, in Alif. Journal of Comparative Poetics, viii [1988], 101-13), Fâhîr al-Dîn al-Râzî (d. 606/1209
It is important to observe as well that in contemporary  

Tafsīr, it is zâlid al-Kur'ân of Sayyid Qūb (d. 1966 [q.v.]), is an eloquent statement constructing an  

Islamic vision of the world that is, at times, brilliant in its ability to relate the Kur'ānic text to the contemporary situation often through the tools of allegory and symbolism (see e.g. A.H. Johns, *Let my people go! Sayyid Qūb and the Vision of Moses*, in *Islam and Christian-Muslim relations*, 1 [1990], 143-70, and O. Caire, *Mystique et politique. Lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qūb, frère musulman radical*, Paris 1984). Likewise, works known as *tafsîr* 'ilmī (for example, *Ṭanṭāwī Djamār* [d. 1940] [see *DJamār*, *Ṭanṭāwī*], *al-Dawūḥābī fî tafsîr al-Kur'ân al-karm*) are characterised by an emphasis upon the "scientific" elements of the Kur'ān and could be said to introduce a new tool for interpretation, that of the discipline of science.

As well, there has been a tendency among contemporary writers to leave the form of classical *tafsîr* and compose works more limited in scope but embracing particular methods of approach. *ʿArīṣa* 'Abd al-Rahmān (b. 1913) has written (under the pseudonym *Bīt al-Shajī*) *al-Tafsîr al-hayānī li 'l-Kur'ân al-karm*, a study of 14 short *sūrās* which focusses on lexical matters and "original meanings" of individual words within a framework of attention to Kur'ānic stylistic usage. *Naẓīr Ḥamīd Abī Zayd, Maḥfūz al-naṣīh* *Qurān al-mawṣūl*, *Dīrāsā fī 'l-'ilm al-Kur'ān*, is another recent example in quite a different vein, for it is a book which raises methodological issues (severely challenged by some) about the understanding of the Kur'ān within contemporary times, in a form structured along the lines of classical introductions to *tafsîr* (see R. Wielandt, *Wurzel der Schwierigkeit innerislamischen Gesprächs über neue hermeneutische Zugänge zum Korantext*, in *Wild* (ed.), *The Qurān as text*, 257-82).

The other important approach in contemporary times has been thematic (*maṣūdāt*), a form that has no direct classical counterpart and breaks significantly from the description of the literary genre since, in the main, it leaves the principle of following the order of the scriptural text. The *tafsîr* of Maḥmūd Shālīt [q.v.], for example, does follow the Kur'ān *sūrā-by-sūrā*, but emphasises the themes which emerge from a given *sūrā* and then brings that theme into conjunction with all other passages dealing with the same theme. The treatment of each *sūrā* thus ends up being organised by theme rather than verse order (see K. Zebīrī, *Maḥmūd Shālīt* and *Islam modernism*, Oxford 1993). As a technique of interpretation, this does not move far from Ibn Ṭaymīyya's emphasis on the first source of interpretation being the Kur'ān itself. Nor, upon close analysis, is it significantly different methodologically from the classical exegetes' well-established willingness to adduce other passages from elsewhere in the Kur'ān which would help in the elucidation of a problematic verse (al-Ṭabarī, for example, provides many such instances of referring the reader back to earlier discussions of a given point of dispute). It is thus the form in which the commentary appears that gives the contemporary works their distinctiveness. The popularity of this method has also led to the publication of vast numbers of monographs dealing explicitly with single themes within the Kur'ān (e.g. Maḥmūd Shālīt, *Miḥthāl fī 'l-Kur'ān*, which contains a number of individual monographs).

It is important to observe as well that in contem-
Tafsiir has also been an important vehicle for new religious expressions, notably in the case of the Babi and Bahá’í faiths, once again indicating an increasing flexibility in the genre within the contemporary period.


Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi, al-Tafsir wa l-mu'azzan, ‘Iraq, 1967, surveys the major tafsirs in a useful manner.


tafsa’i

(a), a type and weave of fabric used mainly in dress in Persia and Turkey from the 16th century onwards. Since the verb tafsii has many meanings, e.g. to twist, turn, be woven, be shining, be sparkling, there has been much ambiguity and confusion of identification; the term has been used indiscriminately for both silk cloth and linen garments. The oldest definition is based on technique, and here the meanings “twisted” and “shining” are important.

tafsa’i is a silk cloth of technically simple plain or tabby weave. Fine horizontal silk weft threads pass over and under single alternating vertical silk warp threads of equal weight and thickness to produce a firm textured, but supple and versatile, fabric. Tafsa’i was used in Turkey from the 16th century as a light silk garment fabric.

The best surviving examples are coats of 17th century date, with tight bodices, long sleeves and full bell-shaped skirts which were all probably woven in Isfahan, with Yazd and Kirmān as important secondary centres of manufacture. Background colours include light blue, orange and golden yellow. Variations in the basic tafsa’i weave depend on the twist of the silk, which produces a more or less pronounced ribbed effect. Tafsa’i can be decorated with stamped geometric motifs or with sprays of flowers woven in supplementary brocade weave in coloured silks and gold and silver wire. Tafsa’i production continued into the 18th and 19th centuries, brocaded with small repeated floral motifs. Tafsa’i was used in Turkey from the 16th century onwards, mainly as a plain fabric decorated with stamped designs. Here it was used as linings and facings in contrasting colours to the long, formal kaftan and eniari robes made of velvet or heavy silk brocade.

Tafsa’i passed into Europe as Italian taffeta, German Taft, where, although possibly represented in 16th century paintings, it is best known as a light silk fabric in fresh colours—blue, green, pink—made into women’s fashionable dresses of the late 17th to 18th centuries. The tafsa’i weave survives today but it is machine-woven in synthetic fibres.


(Jennifer M. Scargé)


His family seems to have been distinguished in scholarship for several generations, and his grandfather Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Umar was a kāfī. Nothing certain is known about his education. Ibn Ḥaḍjar al-‘Askālānī in his unreliable biographical notice in his Inba‘ describes him as a pupil of ‘Adud al-Dīn al-Iḍāf and Kubq al-Dīn al-Rāzī without specifying a time or place for his allegiance with them. It is, in fact, unlikely that al-Iḍāf ever taught him. In his commentary on al-Iḍāf’s Sharḥ al-Mukhtāsār fi ‘l-qur‘ān, al-Taftazānī praises him highly without referring to him as his teacher. A story reported by Ibn al-Inād about al-Taftazānī’s having at first been the most stupid among al-Iḍāf’s pupils is entirely fictitious. According to Ibn ‘Arabshāh, al-Taftazānī and Kubq al-Dīn al-Rāzī were both among the scholars active at the court of the Kāhān of the Golden Horde in Sarāy. If they were there at the same time, al-Taftazānī may have benefited from Kubq al-Dīn’s learning in philosophy. He was, however, already an established scholar at that time. More reliable is perhaps a note in Ibn Ḥaḍjar’s biography of Diyā‘ al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘d Allāh al-Kawzmī al-Kirmānī that al-Taftazānī was among his pupils. Al-Taftazānī’s fields of learning, especially his expertise in both Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī law and usūl, closely matched those of Diyā‘ al-Dīn. Al-Taftazānī, in any case, completed his earliest book, a commentary on al-Tarṣīf al-‘lāzī by al-Zandjānī on Arabic morphology, in 738/1338 at the age of sixteen, according to Faṣḥī al-Khāfī in Faryūmād.

His further peregrinations are better known from the dates and places of completion of his works. In 742/1342 he was in Diwāndīnā in Khāżārām. Then he became attached to the ruler of Harāt, Mu‘izz al-Dīn Kar, to whom he dedicated his Sharḥ al-Taftīṣ al-mu‘tasūm in 748/1347. In 752/1351 he was in Dājam. Next, he joined Dājamī Beg, Khān of the Golden Horde, to whom he dedicated his Mukhtāsār al-mu‘tasūm, completed at Qhudjiwān in 756/1355. Two years later he was in “Gūstān of Turkestan”. Gūstān is known as a mint of the Golden Horde; its exact location is uncertain, but it has been thought to be near New Sarāy. Al-Taftazānī departed, presumably because of the troubles following the death of Dājamī Beg, and was back in Harāt in 759/1358. He completed books in Khāżārām in 760/1367, 770/1369, and 778/1367-8 and was evidently attached during this period