



LINGUISTIC AND SEMANTIC DIMENSIONS OF RUKN AL-DIN UBAYD ALLAH AL-SAMARQANDI'S QUR'ANIC SCHOLARSHIP

<https://doi.org/10.57033/mijournals-2026-4-0299>

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Received: 15-05-2026

Accepted: 28-05-2026

Published: 09-06-2026



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Abstract. *This article examines the linguistic and semantic dimensions of the Qur'anic scholarship of Rukn al-Din Ubayd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Samarqandi (d. 701 AH/1301 CE), a Hanafi-Maturidi scholar associated with the intellectual tradition of Transoxiana. Rather than treating al-Samarqandi simply as a general polymath, the study focuses on the evidence that can substantiate his place in the history of Arabic linguistic and Qur'anic studies. Particular attention is given to works attributed to him in the manuscript and biographical tradition, especially Tafsir Ghara'ib Ma'ani al-Qur'an, I'jaz al-Qur'an al-Karim, and the treatise Risala fi Huruf al-Ma'ani wa ma Yalhaqu Biha min al-Adawat. The analysis shows that his linguistic significance is most clearly visible at the intersection of semantics, Qur'anic exegesis, rhetoric (balagha), and the interpretation of particles and contextual meaning. His method should therefore be described more precisely as Qur'anic linguistic-semantic analysis rather than as a contribution to Arabic linguistics in the modern disciplinary sense. The article also considers his legal and theological writings only insofar as they clarify the conceptual framework within which his linguistic interpretation developed. By narrowing the analytical focus and distinguishing documented evidence from broader biographical claims, the study proposes a more precise assessment of al-Samarqandi's contribution to the linguistic study of the Qur'an.*

Keywords: *Rukniddin Ubaydulloh Samarqandi, Mawarannahr, Islamic scholar, Linguist, Arabic language, Semantics, I'jaz al-Qur'an, Quranic studies, Aqidah, Kalam, Tafsir, Philology.*

INTRODUCTION

Rukniddin Ubaydullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdulaziz Samarqandi stands as a prominent figure among the scholars of Mawaraannahr, embodying the ideal of a versatile polymath in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Renowned for his profound contributions to

jurisprudence (fiqh), its principles (usul al-fiqh), rhetoric (balagha), Quranic sciences, and theology (kalam), he is a distinguished representative of the Hanafi-Maturidi school. His works, such as *Tafsir Ghara'ib Ma'ani al-Qur'an* (Interpretation of the Peculiar Meanings of the Quran), *Jami' al-Usul fi Bayan al-Qawa'id al-Hanafiyya wa al-Shafi'iyya* (Compendium of Principles Explaining Hanafi and Shafi'i Rules in Jurisprudence), and *al-Aqida al-Rukniyya* (The Rukni Creed), highlight his ability to harmonize rational and traditional approaches, cementing his legacy in Islamic thought. This article aims to explore his contributions to linguistics, jurisprudence, and theology, emphasizing his pivotal role in reinforcing the Maturidi theological tradition.

Rukniddin Samarqandi was raised in Samarqand, a vibrant center of knowledge and culture in Mawaraannahr, where he received his early education in a rich intellectual environment. Although historical sources, such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's *al-Durar al-Kamina* (The Hidden Pearls), Salahuddin Khalil ibn Ibak al-Safadi's *Ayun al-Athar wa A'wan al-Nasr* (Eyes of the Era and Supporters of Victory), and Shahabuddin al-Umari's *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar* (Pathways of Insight into the Realms of Cities), do not specify his exact birth date, they indicate that he lived during the seventh Islamic century (13th century CE). He traveled to Baghdad, a hub of Islamic scholarship, to further his studies under eminent scholars, most notably the distinguished jurist and theologian Muzaffaruddin Ahmad ibn Ali ibn al-Sa'ati, who profoundly influenced his fiqh and kalam scholarship. This intellectual journey equipped him with diverse methodologies, forming a solid foundation for his later contributions. Historical sources, such as *Tarikh al-Khamis fi Ahwal Anfas Nafis* (History of the Fifth in the States of Precious Souls) by Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Diyarbakri, also portray him as a devout ascetic, enhancing his moral and scholarly stature.

Contributions to Linguistics and Quranic Sciences

Rukniddin Samarqandi excelled in the fields of rhetoric and Quranic sciences, producing significant works such as *Tafsir Ghara'ib Ma'ani al-Qur'an* and *I'jaz al-Qur'an al-Karim* (The Inimitability of the Noble Quran). In *Tafsir Ghara'ib Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, he analyzed Quranic verses from a rhetorical perspective, elucidating their linguistic and semantic inimitability. In the preface, he stated his aim to enable students to grasp the rare and profound meanings of the verses through a concise and precise approach, emphasizing the rhetorical subtleties that highlight the Quran's beauty and

miraculous nature. In *I'jaz al-Qur'an al-Karim*, he focused on the surahs of the 30th part (Juz' Amma), showcasing their rhetorical elegance through the sciences of meanings (ma'ani), expression (bayan), and embellishment (badi'). These works demonstrate his unique ability to integrate rhetoric with theology, employing theological terms such as "ahl al-kashf" (people of unveiling) to analyze Quranic texts, thus adding an innovative dimension to his methodology. His reliance on earlier rhetoricians, such as Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani, reflects his broad engagement with the rhetorical tradition, making his works a vital reference for scholars.

Contributions to Jurisprudence and Its Principles

In the realm of jurisprudence and its principles, Rukniddin Samarqandi emerged as a leading Hanafi scholar of his era. His seminal work, *Jami' al-Usul fi Bayan al-Qawa'id al-Hanafiyya wa al-Shafi'iyya fi Usul al-Fiqh*, is a pioneering comparative study of the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools' principles, demonstrating his analytical rigor and critical thinking. This book reflects his mastery of juristic methodology, drawing on the views of prominent Hanafi scholars like Abu Hanifa and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, with a focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of *usul al-fiqh*. His reference to al-Maturidi as "Imam al-Huda" (the Imam of Guidance) underscores his deep connection to the Maturidi tradition. Beyond authorship, his teaching at the *Zahiriyya* and *Nuriyya* madrasas in Damascus played a crucial role in disseminating Hanafi jurisprudence, training generations of students and strengthening the school's influence in the region. His juristic works exhibit a commitment to precision and systematic analysis, grounded in authoritative Islamic evidence.

Contributions to Theology and Role in Maturidi Thought

In theology, Rukniddin Samarqandi made substantial contributions through works such as *al-Aqida al-Rukniyya fi Sharh La Ilaha Illallah Muhammad Rasulullah* (The Rukni Creed Explaining "There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah") and *Aqaid Shaykh Rukniddin Samarqandi* (The Creeds of Shaykh Rukniddin Samarqandi). In *al-Aqida al-Rukniyya*, he systematically addressed theological issues, including divine attributes, prophethood, and eschatological matters, dividing the book into an introduction and three chapters. He tackled contemporary issues, such as proving God's existence and refuting the views of Mu'tazilites, philosophers, and Rafidites with rational and scriptural evidence. His other treatises, such as *Risala fi 'Ilm al-Haqiqah* (Treatise on the Science of Reality), *Risala fi al-'Ubudiyya* (Treatise on Servitude), and

Risala fi ‘Alam al-Malakut (Treatise on the Realm of the Divine Kingdom), explored Sufism and theology, emphasizing the balance between reason and revelation a hallmark of the Maturidi approach. These works showcase his ability to integrate theology with mystical insights, using terms like “alam al-malakut” to elucidate doctrinal matters.

His role in the Maturidi school was pivotal, as he reinforced its principles by defending and developing the views of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. He drew on the works of Maturidi scholars like Abu al-Laith al-Samarqandi, Abu al-Yusr al-Bazdawi, and Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi, advocating a balanced approach between rational and scriptural proofs against opposing intellectual currents, such as the Mu’tazilites and Ash’arites. His critiques of certain Ash’ari views further solidified his commitment to the Maturidi methodology, which emphasizes harmonizing reason and revelation. This role established him as a prominent representative of Maturidi theology, contributing to its coherence and resilience against intellectual challenges. His scholarly impartiality is evident in his respectful citation of opposing views, such as those of al-Zamakhshari, whom he referenced with honorifics like “Shaykh Zamakhshari” or “rahimahullah,” reflecting his high ethical standards.

Influence and Scholarly Legacy

Despite his tragic martyrdom at the Zahiriyya Madrasa in Damascus in 701 AH/1301 CE, caused by a guard’s act of violence, Rukniddin’s intellectual legacy endured through his works and influence on his students. Sources like *Tarikh al-Khamis fi Ahwal Anfas Nafis* and *al-Manhal al-Safi wa al-Mustawfi ba’d al-Wafi* by Yusuf ibn Tangri Bardi portray him as a devout and ascetic scholar, enhancing his status as a moral and intellectual exemplar. His works, preserved in libraries such as the Süleymaniye in Istanbul, reflect his vast knowledge and methodological precision, making him a reference in jurisprudence, rhetoric, and theology. His influence extended to subsequent generations of scholars who drew inspiration from his ideas to advance the Hanafi-Maturidi tradition. His teaching at the Zahiriyya and Nuriyya madrasas further underscores his commitment to disseminating knowledge and nurturing future scholars.

CONCLUSION

Rukniddin Ubaydullah Samarqandi epitomizes the versatile scholar who combined intellectual depth with disciplinary breadth. His contributions to linguistics, jurisprudence, and theology highlight his mastery, rooted in his steadfast adherence to the Hanafi-

Maturidi tradition. Through works like *Tafsir Ghara'ib Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, *Jami' al-Usul*, and *al-Aqida al-Rukniyya*, he enriched the Islamic intellectual heritage, demonstrating an exceptional ability to integrate reason and revelation. His pivotal role in consolidating the Maturidi school as a cohesive intellectual tradition marks him as a towering figure of his era, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to inspire scholars and researchers today. His scholarly contributions and ethical conduct make him a model of dedication to knowledge and faith.

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