THE SOURCES OF AL-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ISNĀDS IN HIS COMMENTARY ON Sūrat al-Fāṭiḥa AND Sūrat Al-Baqara

by
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Declaration

I hereby declare that I composed this thesis entirely myself and that it describes my own research.

Fareed Y. Al-Muftah
Edinburgh
May 4, 1998
ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the *isnāds* used by al-Ṭabarī in his renowned *Tafsīr*. It concentrates on the 8,424 *isnāds* used by him in his commentary on the first two *sūras* of the Qur’ān, *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara* and seeks to answer the following questions:

i) Did he cite his *isnāds* randomly or according to a systematic method?

ii) To what extent did he rely on written as opposed to oral sources?

iii) Is his claim that he was merely passing on the material of older authorities historically justified?

iv) In the light of the theories of Goldziher and Schacht which cast doubt upon the authenticity of *isnāds*, what conclusions can be drawn about the authenticity of those cited by al-Ṭabarī?

The thesis is divided into three parts. After an Introduction stating the significance and objectives of this study, Part One (Chapters One to Four) provides background information on al-Ṭabarī’s biography, the development of exegesis, and two introductory studies on his *Tafsīr*. Part Two (Chapters Five and Six), which forms the core of the study, presents an analysis of the 8,424 *isnāds* used by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on *Sūrat al-al-Fātiḥa* and *Sūrat al-Baqara*. Chapter Five examines al-Ṭabarī’s style in narrating from his masters and analyses his technical terms of transmission. Chapter Six contains a detailed statistical study of the frequency of al-Ṭabarī’s use of his various *isnāds*. Part Three (Chapters Seven and Eight) reviews the results of Part Two. Chapter Seven discusses the broader implications of these results for the question of the authenticity of al-Ṭabarī’s *isnāds* and the possibility of their containing written material from the first and second centuries AH. Chapter Eight examines the theories of Goldziher and Schacht regarding the authenticity of *isnāds* and suggests how one may ascertain whether, and or to what degree, the *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* are reliable. Finally, in an Epilogue, we present the most important results obtained by this study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allāh first and last, who has enabled me to complete this thesis.

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I would also like to thank my former supervisor, Dr. I. Howard, for the help and assistance he offered me during the first year of my study.

I am indebted to the University of Bahrain, which sponsored my scholarship to the University of Edinburgh.

The staff of the Library of the University of Edinburgh made every effort to eliminate the difficulties I faced during the course of my study. Most of the books unavailable at Edinburgh were readily procured for me from elsewhere.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to my sister, Umm Sa‘ūd, for her sincere help, kindness, and support during the past five years.

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- Ḥusn al-Suyūṭi, Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍara.
- Ḥabar al-Dhahabi, ʿAḥmad b. ʿUthmān, al-Ḥabar fī Akhbār man Ḡabar.
- Ikmāl Ibn Mākulā, al-Ikmāl.
- Išāba Ibn Ḥajār, al-Išāba fi Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba.
- Istīlāb Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Istīlāb fī Maʿrifat al-ʿAshāb.
- Itqān al-Suyūṭi, al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān.
- Kabīr al-Bukhārī, al-Tārikh al-Kabīr.
- Kaḥḥāla ʿUmar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, Muʿjam al-Muʿallifīn.
- Kamāl al-Mızzī, Tahdhib al-Kamāl.
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- Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima.

- Muslim Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, al-Ṣāḥīḥ.


- Nadīm Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist.


- Qafw Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, Qafw al-Āthar fī Ṣafw ʿIlm al-Āthar

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- Tadrīb   al-Suyūṭī, Tadrīb al-Rāwī.
- Tafsīr   al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ‘an Taʾwil Āy al-Qurʾān.
- Tahdhib   Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib.
- Taqrīb   Ibn Ḥajar, Taqrīb al-Tahdhib.
- Tashiil   ‘Adawi, al-Tashiil.
- Taysīr   Māḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān, Taysīr Muṣṭalāḥ al-Ḥadīth.
- Thiqāt   Ibn Ḥibban, al-Thiqāt.
- ʿUlum   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ʿUlum al-Ḥadīth.
- Muʿjam   Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Muʿjam al-Udābāʾ, or Irshād al-Arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb.
- Zuhr   Aḥmad Amin, Zuhr al-Islām.
It should be noted that two versions of the *Tafsîr* of al-Ṭabarî have been used in the thesis. Volumes 1-16 (as far as *Sūrat Ibrāhīm*, verse 27) is the version which is edited by Aḥmad and Maḥmūd M. Shākir and published by Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Egypt, AH.¹ The other version is the original Bulāq edition of 1328 AH, which covers the exegesis of the complete Qur‘ān in 12 volumes.

In translating Qur‘ānic verses, the study relies generally on two widely circulated translations, namely those of ʿAbdullāh Yūṣuf ‘Alī and Marmaduke Pickthall, although in some passages slight modifications have been made.

### B. General Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>= <em>Anno Hijri</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>(followed by a name) = ibn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BH</td>
<td>before the Hijra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca.</td>
<td>= <em>circa</em> about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>= compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>= died</td>
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<td>ed.</td>
<td>= edited or editor</td>
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<td>eds.</td>
<td>= editors</td>
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<td>e. g.</td>
<td>= for example</td>
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<td>esp. ch.</td>
<td>= especially chapter</td>
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<td>f. n.</td>
<td>= footnote</td>
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<td>lit.</td>
<td>= literally</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>= manuscript</td>
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<td>n.d.</td>
<td>= no date</td>
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¹ No date is given.
C. Transliteration

The present study follows the system of transliteration of the United States Library of Congress as outlined in the cataloguing service Bulletin No. 49, November 1958.
INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. Preface

Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) gained a reputation as one of the early exegetes of the Qur’ān and as a historian, but he is also recognized as one who had an abundance of knowledge in other Islamic disciplines. His scholarly status rests principally on the two important works which have reached us: the Tafsīr,¹ which is the focus of our study; and the Tārīkh (History).² These two books are the largest early books we have in the disciplines of Qur'ānic interpretation and history.³ Commentators on the Qur'ān after al-Ṭabarī used his interpretation as the most important and richest source of reference in interpretation from the early centuries of the Islamic society. Some of them even stated, “Anyone who came and wrote in interpretation after al-Ṭabarī is dependent on him,”⁴ meaning that anyone who wrote about Qur'ānic interpretation after the time of al-Ṭabarī was compelled to refer to his interpretation. Al-Suyūṭī said, “Scholars are unanimous that no one wrote interpretation like him [i.e. al-Ṭabarī].”⁵ Al-Nawawī said something similar: “No one has written anything like al-Ṭabarī’s book in interpretation.”⁶ Nöldeke, who was unable to find a copy of the book, nevertheless praised al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr by stating the following: “If we could get this book, we would be able to dispense with all the books of interpretation which were written afterwards. But unfortunately, it seems that this book is lost.” Nöldeke added, “Likewise his Tārīkh, which contains an abundance

¹ Al-Ṭabarī is considered the first to have written in the field of Qur’ānic interpretation, in the sense of writing an exhaustive commentary on the Qur’ān, i.e. covering all its verses and chapters. This book has survived and reached us in full. However, in terms of precedence in writing interpretations of selected verses and chapters, al-Ṭabarī was preceded by others. Among the early books on the interpretation of the Qur’ān, we have received a section of the book by Yahyā b. Sallām al-Taymī (124-200/742-815). We have also received the book of interpretation by ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (126-211/744-827). An edition of this book has been prepared and published by Muṣṭafā Muslim, al-Rushd Library, Riyāḍ, Saudia Arabia. Another early interpretation, by Sufyān al-Thawrī (97-161/716-776), is also extant.

³ Sezgin, 1/2: 159.
⁴ See al-Dhahabi, al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn, 1:207; Itqān, 2:540.
⁵ Itqān, 2:1235.
⁶ Itqān, 2:540.
of knowledge, is considered one of the most precious sources in history. Scholars after him have benefited from it.”

Basing itself on the Tradition literature, al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr is the broadest and the first extant comprehensive commentary on the Qur’ân in terms of preserving the largest amount of explanation and the detailing of many isnâds. Traditional Qur’ânic exegesis reached its apogee with this Tafsîr, which reflects favourably al-Ṭabarî’s comprehensive knowledge and vast erudition. Al-Ṭabarî was a genuine polymath in every facet of traditional scholarship, including tafsîr, Ḥadîth, history, fiqh, grammar, and poetry. For him all these areas of knowledge had become an indivisible unit. Regarding al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr and his competence in this discipline, al-Suyûtî said,

The interpretation by al-Ṭabarî is the best and greatest of all interpretations because it is based on the authority of transmission by chains of isnâds that go back to the interpretations of the Prophet’s Ḥadîth, Companions (Ṣaḥâbâ), Followers (Ṭâbi’ûn), and their followers (Ṭâbi’ al-Ṭâbi’în). Al-Ṭabarî is also concerned in his Tafsîr with investigating many of the narrations he quotes. He evaluates them and gives his preferences to those he consider most correct. He discusses i’râb (syntax or parsing) and employs his ijtihâd (legal opinion). In this sense he exceeds the interpretations by Muḥammad b. Yazîd, known as Ibn Mâjah [209-273/824-887], Muhammad b. ‘Abdullâh al-Ḥâkim [321-405/933-1014], Aḥmad b. Mûsâ, known as Ibn Mardawayh [322-410/935-1019], Abu al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥîbbân [270-354/884-965], and Ibn al-Mundhir [544-606/1150-1210].

7 See Goldziher, al-Madhâbih al-Tafsonîyya (Interpretation Ideologies), 107.
8 Isnâd (lit. ‘leaning against’) is one of the two features of any report, the other being the matn (text). It is essential to the complete listing of transmitters of each generation, and without it the report is regarded as worthless. Ibn al-Ṣalâh, 13; J. Burton, 199; Juynboll, Tradition, 19.
9 See Tadhkira, 636; al-Dâwûdî, Ṭabaqât, 2:272; ‘İbar, 2:51; Wafayât, 4:279; Sezgin, 1:377. See also chapter on “Origins and Development of the Tafsîr”.
11 See Wâfî, 8:201; Tadhkira, 1050; ‘İbar, 3:102; Shadharât, 3:190; Isfahânî, 1:168; al-Dawûdî, Ṭabaqât, 1:93; Mustafafraghi, 26; al-Nujûm al-Zâhirah, 4:245; Hadîyyat al-‘Arîfîn, 1:71.
12 A Portion of Ibn Hibbân’s Tafsîr exists in the Library of the University of Istanbul. See Mu’jam al-Mufassirîn, 2:511; Wâfî, 2:317; Lisân, 5:112; al-Nujûm al-Zâhirah, 3:342; Shadharât, 3:16; Miftâh, 2:15; Hadîyyat al-‘Arîfîn, 2:44.
13 See Yâqût, Mu’jam, 17:71; Ibn Kathîr, Bidâya, 13:54; Rawdât al-Jannât, 585; Shadharât, 5:22; Hadîyyat al-‘Arîfîn, 2:2; Zunûn, 182, 437; Wafayât, 4:141.
14 Itqân, 2:538. For further appreciative comments on the importance of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr, see the chapter entitled “Introduction to his Interpretation.”
Here, our principal concern is to identify the value of al-Ṭabarî's Tafsîr with regard to the sources which he depended upon in compiling it. The numerous isnâds in al-Ṭabarî's Tafsîr help to inform us concerning the sources which were written in the early days and circulated during the time of al-Ṭabarî, some of which, unfortunately, have not reached us, such as the Tafsîrs of the Companion Ibn 'Abbâs (d. 68/687), Mujâhid (d. 104/722),15 and Qatada (d. 118/736), while some others have reached us, such as the Tafsîr of Sufyân al-Thawrî (d. 161/778) and ‘Abd al-Razzâq b. Hammâm al-Ṣan‘ânî (d. 211/827).16 However, many of the sources which al-Ṭabarî used and which existed during his lifetime remain lost.

Al-Ṭabarî, like other commentators and narrators of his time, took his material for the purpose of compiling his Tafsîr from the sources available to him. At that time (the second and third centuries AH), reference was often made to the isnâd after the establishment of methods and technical terms in the field of Ḥadîth study, i.e. the transmitting of narrations.17 Al-Ṭabarî's method of referring to isnâds and using them extensively is clearly evidenced in his Tafsîr.18

Analysis of the statistical and historical dimensions applied in this dissertation and the types of disciplines found in the contents in al-Ṭabarî's Tafsîr, supplemented by the results of comparing the terms of transmission used by al-Ṭabarî for transmitting his isnâds, lead me to conclude that al-Ṭabarî obtained his material from works which he was permitted by his masters to narrate from. He does, in addition, refer to other works, from whose authors he did not obtain permission to narrate. He also refers in his quotations to some scattered sayings with and without isnâds, some of which he may have heard orally and committed to memory. He quotes such sayings because he requires the information they supply to explain the meanings of some Qur'ânic verses. He differentiates between what is quoted from a written document, handed to him by oral and written transmission, and what is quoted from books

15 Sezgin (1:71) stated that a manuscript copy of the Tafsîr of Mujâhid exists in Dâr al-Kutub, Cairo, under the no. 1075.
16 See f.n. no. 1.
17 Goldziher, Mus-Stud, 2: 189; cf. Sezgin, 1:118.
18 The phenomenon of using the isnâd as reference is standard in al-Ṭabarî’s writing, even in his Ṭârîkh.
without oral transmission, i.e. material sources he had obtained but without specific permission to transmit them. Having examined the technical terms used to denote the transmitting of narrations, which al-Ṭabarî mentions at the beginning of each isnad, I have reached the conclusion that al-Ṭabarî uses the terms *haddathani* (he narrated to me) or *haddathanâ* (he narrated to us) in connection with Isnâds that go back to early written documents which he had obtained permission to narrate, either from his direct master or from an earlier scholar. By contrast, he precedes the material by the word *huddithtu* (it was narrated to me) when he has obtained his material from books which he had not obtained permission to narrate. Thus, permitted isnâds are more often preceded by *haddathanâ* or *haddathani*. In this respect, the general conclusion can be drawn that for the majority of al-Ṭabarî’s isnâds, oral and written transmission went hand-in-hand, at least from the end of the first century AH.

2. Literature review

The value of Al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr and its isnâds in the eyes of both Muslim and Western scholars

When discussing traditional exegesis, Ibn Khaldûn (732-808/1332-1406) mentions, as an example, the Tafsîr of al-Ṭabarî and accuses him of not arranging or organizing his narrations and classifying their isnâds according to a clear method. Ibn Khaldûn used the phrase *ashwâţ*, which may be translated “random quotation”. He said, “This type of interpretation [tafsîr bi-al-ma’tûr (interpreting the Qur’ân by using transmitted narrations, or traditional exegesis)] contained a lot of randomly quoted information, so that it needs refutation, classification, and a revision of its isnâds and narrations.” A similar view is adopted by J. Cooper, who argues that the first objective of al-Ṭabarî in compiling his Tafsîr was to bring together everything that existed on the subject of exegetic Tradition, transmitted from orthodox Sunnî authorities, thus excluding, for example, Shi’î exegesis. Cooper adds, “Often al-Ṭabarî is content to list the divergent opinions on a word or a phrase, and leave them

19 I have devoted a separate chapter (i.e. Chapter V) to discussing the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarî to narrate from his masters and establishing what these terms may mean.

20 See Muqaddima, 1:438,439.
as they are, without attempting to resolve them.\(^{21}\) Close to this view, al-Dhahabî argued that al-Ṭabarî cited all these extensive \(\textit{isnāds}\) and left them without examination, except in a few places where he sought to arrive at a judgment regarding them.\(^{22}\)

Contrary to this view, some other scholars have praised al-Ṭabarî's \(\textit{Tafsîr}\), such as the Tunisian scholar Muḥammad al-Fādil b. 'Āshūr (d. 1284/1867),\(^{23}\) who wrote,

Those who regard al-Ṭabarî's \(\textit{Tafsîr}\) as being solely dependent on the transmitted narrations are only taking into account its external form, containing [as it does] many \(\textit{isnāds}\) and transmitted traditions. They do not contemplate al-Ṭabarî's method and his manifest objective behind mentioning these classified, arranged, and thoroughly examined transmitted chains.\(^{24}\)

A similar view is strongly held by Jane D. McAuliffe, who wrote,

Because of the tremendous number of exegetical ḥadîths which it incorporates, al-Ṭabarî's \(\textit{Tafsîr}\) is usually judged to be a particularly important example of \(\textit{tafsîr bi-al-ma'âlîhūr}\). Yet \(\textit{Jami' al-Bayan}\) is far more than simply a collection and compilation of the extant exegetical material. It is a carefully structured work which evinces considerable insight and judgment. That al-Ṭabarî was clearly aware of methodological issues is evident from the very first pages.\(^{25}\)

One of the main aims of the present dissertation is to cut through the Gordian knot of this argument by staying as close as possible to al-Ṭabarî's \(\textit{isnāds}\) and applying to them a thorough investigative and exploratory study, by using relatively new methods based on four key dimensions, i.e. statistics, history, the technical terms of transmission, and the relationship between the Qur'ānic disciplines found in the contents of the reports and al-Ṭabarî's \(\textit{isnāds}\).\(^{26}\) The purpose of this last area of research is to determine whether these \(\textit{isnāds}\) were put together coincidentally, randomly, and in a haphazard way devoid of methodology, or whether they were

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\(^{21}\) Cooper, xii, xiii.

\(^{22}\) \textit{Al-Tafsîr wa-al-Mufassirîn}, 1:212.

\(^{23}\) See \textit{Hadiyyat al-Arifîn}, 2:378; 'Idda, 2:151; Kaḥḥāla, 10:102.

\(^{24}\) Ibn 'Ashur, \textit{A-Tafsîr wa-Riḍâlah}, 36.


\(^{26}\) See 1.4, on research tools and method.
systematically arranged and organized by al-Ṭabarī with the intention of achieving definite objectives. Did he, for example, select certain isnāds to refer to more than others, because their chains of transmission were more reliable and, further, because they went back to written sources on tafsīr in early times? In this connection, we will seek to investigate whether al-Ṭabarī followed certain criteria in employing this massive weight of isnāds. Anticipating the results of this investigation, we may state here that, according to our analysis, he did in fact narrate the bulk of his isnāds via very few masters, i.e. via not more than 19 out of 208 masters. This evidence will help to show that he did not cite narrations at random with no objective.

Al-Ṭabarī's sources

Despite the existence of such ample references to earlier sources in al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr, as far as the researcher is aware there has been no broad special study made of the literature of these sources and isnāds on which al-Ṭabarī relies.

In a study of the sources used by al-Ṭabarī in his History, the Tārīkh al-Umm wa-al-Mulūk, Jawād ‘Alī demonstrated that the author had obtained information from written sources.27 His attempt to establish the authors of the source books from which al-Ṭabarī quoted his material by reference to books that have reached us and by comparison with Ibn al-Nadīm's Fīhris is considered to be more or less successful. However, Jawād ‘Alī had no specific methodology or set of criteria for determining the names of the authors of the source books used from among the names appearing in the isnāds. In fact, he had to allow for various possibilities to determine who the authors were.

In contrast with the studies undertaken into the sources of al-Ṭabarī's Tārīkh, similar studies on his Tafsīr have been far fewer. There was also the understanding that al-Ṭabarī's sources were all orally obtained.28 Wansbrough is strongly attracted to the view that a long period of oral composition and transmission, or possibly of oral

delivery from notes, is commonly supposed to have preceded the redaction of more or less fixed texts. To this he adds, “It is the chronology of that process which eludes satisfactory description.” In an article contained in his study of the narration of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr, Horst went as far as to say that al-Ṭabarî could have used the full text of some earlier interpretations, and taken some quotations from other written sources. The research contained in the present study investigates the late narrators, i.e. al-Ṭabarî’s masters, who are common for several isnâd clusters, and then those before them (masters of al-Ṭabarî’s masters), followed by those who preceded these, until we reach the oldest common link name which preceded the branching of the isnâd. The purpose of this is to reach the names of authors and compilers of documents which al-Ṭabarî used hundreds of times as sources for his Tafsîr.

The reliability of tafsîr transmissions and independent sources and materials written in this field, during the first and the early second centuries AH, is historically doubted by some scholars in both the Muslim and the orientalist camps. Al-Zurqânî and al-Dhahabi, both of whom rely on al-Suyûtî, nevertheless openly express their doubts as to the reliability of much of the material that is transmitted from the Companions. After briefly analysing narrations on tafsîr from ‘Ali b. Abî Tâlib, Ibn Mas‘ûd, and Ibn ‘Abbâs, al-Suyûtî expresses his suspicion of many chains of transmission that go back to textual exegesis attributed to the Companions and particularly those attributed to Ibn ‘Abbâs. Al-Shâfi‘î (150-204/767-819), who is one of the four leading fuqahâ, said, “Most of the tafsîrs traced to Ibn ‘Abbâs are not reliable. The authentic ones do not exceed more than around 100 statements.” It is also reported that Ibn Ḥanbal (164-241/780-855) said, “Three things are based on nothing: the tafsîr, the malâhîm (battles), and the maghâzî (conquests).” Al-Dhahabî commented on Ibn Ḥanbal’s statement regarding traditional exegesis by saying that Ibn Ḥanbal’s attitude was to reject those false, fabricated traditions,

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31 Al-Tafslr wa-al-Mufaslrun, 1:215.
32 Itqan, 2:1250.
33 Ibid., 2:1233.
34 Al-Tafsîr wa-al-Mufassîrûn, 1:47.
transmitted by suspected persons, which have been incorporated into the *tafsīr* tradition.\textsuperscript{35}

In Western studies, of course, the view that, because of the general untrustworthiness of *isnāds*,\textsuperscript{36} the traditional Muslim view of the development of *tafsīr* in the first two centuries of Islam has to be approached with caution, has been voiced by Ignaz Goldziher.\textsuperscript{37} In this view he was followed by Birkeland,\textsuperscript{38} who, however, differed from Goldziher in rejecting the latter’s view that from the earliest times onward a strong opposition existed to certain kinds of *tafsīr*, namely subjective exegesis, which was referred to as *tafsīr bi-al-ra’y* (interpretation according to personal opinion). Birkeland pointed out that during the greater part of the first century there was no such opposition; Ḥadīth or *Sunna*, ancient poems, as well as sound personal opinion (*ra’y*) were regarded as self-evident means of interpretation.\textsuperscript{39} Only towards the end of the first century did opposition from the ultra-pious circle to all interpretation of the Qurʾān arise, fading away only around the year 200/815 when *tafsīr* was subjected to the strict methods of transmission critique.\textsuperscript{40}

Wansbrough suggested that extant recessions of exegetical writings should be designated *haggadic* or narrative, in view of the fact that biographical information relating to their putative authors is not earlier than the date proposed to mark the beginnings of Arabic literature, namely 200/815.\textsuperscript{41} *Haggadic*, or narrative, exegesis is, according to Wansbrough, chronologically the earliest type of Qurʾānic exegesis, to be followed successively by other exegetical types such as *halakhic*, legal, *masoretic*, or textual exegesis.\textsuperscript{42}

Leemhuis said, “Later works, from the middle of the second century AH at the earliest, claim to contain the exegesis of the earlier authorities. But whether or not

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 1:48.

\textsuperscript{36} For a recent balanced view, see G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). Cf. Also M. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: a Source-critical Study* (Cambridge, 1981), esp. ch. 11. In both works older European views, especially Schacht’s, are presented and discussed.

\textsuperscript{37} Leemhuis, *OTT*, 16.

\textsuperscript{38} H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oslo, 1955).

\textsuperscript{39} A similar view is voiced by al-Dhahabi, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:34-36.

\textsuperscript{40} Birkeland, 42.

\textsuperscript{41} Wansbrough, *QS*, 144.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 119-21.
these claims are valid cannot be checked, because no objective criteria can be applied.”43 Recently, however, Leemhuis states that he has come across a curious fact which, in his opinion, may constitute a piece of evidence which may enable him to draw somewhat more definite conclusions about the early development of the tafsīr tradition. Thus, he argues,

The clue is provided by a comparison of some of the transmissions of what is called Tafsīr Mujāhid. It was claimed by Sezgin that the Cairo Dar al-Kutub manuscript tafsīr 1075 is one of the sources of al-Ṭabarī and thus proves his view that, by the method of isnād investigation, early written tafsīrs from the first century of Islam may be, as it were, excavated from later works. Whereas for Sezgin this manuscript is a key external proof for the rightness of his views, Wansbrough did not make use of it, although he acknowledged its probable importance.44

The present study will deal with this argument and make further investigation of many sources written in the tafsīr tradition. It will show to what extent these claims (made by authors of the late second and third Islamic centuries, such as al-Ṭabarī) are true or false.

Sezgin draws attention to the value of the isnāds in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, since they can be used to prove the existence of ancient books from which al-Ṭabarī borrowed the materials of his Tafsīr.45 This belief, just cited, regarding as an example Mujāhid’s Tafsīr; is that early written books, or documents transmitted on traditional exegesis show a high degree of accuracy. He argues, for instance, that Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687),46 the master of Qur’ānic studies, was the author of a Tafsīr, adding that the only problem is that “it still has to be determined which of the commentaries on the Qur’ān, which his pupils transmitted from him, he wrote himself and which were recorded in writing by his pupils in accordance with his lectures.”47 Sezgin attempts to solve this problem by pointing out that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, for example, recorded a large part of Ibn ‘Abbās’s Tafsīr, which was thereafter called the Sahīḥa (Document)

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43 Leemhuis, OTT, 14.
44 Sezgin, 1:157 and F. Leemhuis, OTT, 19.
45 Sezgin, 1:157.
46 His biographical details will be mentioned later when we come to discuss his narrations on tafsīr cited by al-Ṭabarī.
47 Sezgin, 1: 63.
of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa. However, al-Ṭabarī refers frequently and extensively to Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa via only two isnāds. It is alleged by Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) followed by al-Suyūtī, that Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear the Tafsīr of Ibn ‘Abbās directly from its author. Sezgin seeks to resolve the problem by quoting a report that Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa had learnt it from either Mujāhid b. Jabr or Sa‘īd b. Jubayr as intermediaries.48 Sezgin concludes that since Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear the Tafsīr directly from Ibn ‘Abbās, he must have received it in a copy written by Ibn ‘Abbās himself.49

The results of our statistical and historical investigations in this research coincide with what Sezgin states, i.e. that al-Ṭabarī cites Ibn ‘Abbās’s Tafsīr more than 1,900 times,50 but it is seen that these narrations are divisible into groups and narrated via very few and precise isnāds which are quoted frequently and extensively.51

Although Abbott is somewhat more cautious than Sezgin as regards Ibn ‘Abbās, she agrees with him in considering early ascriptions as being generally valid and also in asserting that, from early times, almost from the start,52 the transmission of tafsīr was usually connected with written documents.53 She comments,

The very prominence of these traditionists [Mujāhid b. Jabr, Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, al-Dāḥakh b. Muzāḥim, and many other scholars]54 and the great emphasis placed by scholars, early and late, on the size and significance of their contribution have cast suspicion, particularly among Western scholars, on the reliability of some of the earliest reports concerning them and their literary activities.

She adds, “Before embarking on these exhaustive studies,55 I shared more or less the same view but am now convinced that much of the suspicion is in fact unjustified.”56

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48 Itqān, 2:1231.
49 Sezgin, 1: 157.
50 This is only for the interpretation of the two sūras al-Fātiha and al-Baqara.
51 Chapter VI in this research discusses in detail this source and other sources which al-Ṭabarī refers to and makes use of in his Tafsīr. Cf. Also Chapter VII.
52 Abbott, 2:2.
53 Abbott, 2:96-106.
54 Abbott analyses the biographies of these scholars and argues strongly that they may have left written tradition sources on tafsīr. See Abbott, 2, 1-17.
55 In which she discusses 14 papyri documents about tafsīr.
56 Abbott, 2:17.
The authenticity of al-Ṭabari’s isnāds

It is obvious that within the books of ṭafsīr bi-al-ma‘thūr (traditional exegesis), such as the Tafsīr of al-Ṭabari, ḥadīths and reports transmitted on the authority of isnāds from early times, i.e. the first and second centuries AH, take a broad place. Regarding the authenticity of these isnāds and traditions, Schacht’s view is that, while they may go back to an early time, i.e. the first century AH, they only come to play a significant role in the second century AH through al-Shāfi‘ī. Similar scepticism with regard to the authenticity of the isnād was voiced by Goldziher (since Goldziher was well before Schacht), who suggested that one could view the corpus of traditions as growing over time. Whenever a controversy arose in the Islamic community, one could identify ḥadīths supporting one view or another as having been created as ammunition for partisans in that controversy. In this dissertation, it will be seen which considerations are appropriate and what conclusions are to be drawn from them regarding the isnāds of al-Ṭabari’s Tafsīr.

3. Research Questions and Remarks

Following the preceding literature review, we may briefly present the argument of this dissertation in the form of the following questions which will be set in the context of some relevant notes and remarks.

1- In citing his isnāds, does al-Ṭabari follow a systematic method in arranging them, or are they presented randomly, in a haphazard way, with no objectives?

2- Is the claim of the authors of the late second and third Islamic centuries, that they merely passed on the material of older authorities, historically correct?

3- It is clearly recognizable that al-Ṭabari quotes a large number of points in traditional exegesis for which he mentions different types of isnāds. As far as these

57 Or Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘Azīm musnadān ‘an al-Rasūl wa-al-Ṣaḥāba wa-al-Ṭābi‘īn.
58 Schacht, Revaluation, 148; Origins, 133, 163.
59 Goldziher, Mus-Stud, 2, 89.
60 I arrived at these notes and remarks while preparing a piece of research submitted to the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, in the first year of my study, according to the requirements for the acceptance of the Ph.D. degree. This piece of work was related to the sources of al-Ṭabari’s Tafsīr, making special reference to Sūrat al-Nūr, verses 1-25.
transmitted chains (isnāds) are concerned, does he treat the traditions on the same footing, whether they are related to the Prophet himself, or to one or other of the Companions and Followers?

4- Some of these isnāds are mentioned far more than others. For instance, al-Ṭabarī mentions one particular isnād (Mūsā ~ ‘Amr ~ Aṣḥāṭ ~ al-Suddī ... etc.) 61 more than one hundred times in just one volume.62 Does al-Ṭabarī’s evident confidence in some transmitted chains more than in others spring from a certain merit that characterizes them?

5- Does al-Ṭabarī draw his knowledge on tafsīr from specific individuals, such as scholars specializing in tafsīr, whether these individuals are among the Companions, such as Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd (both of whom he cites hundreds of times), or among the Followers, such as Mujāhid, Qatāda, ‘Ikrima , Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, al-Rabī’ b. Anas, and ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ?

6- It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī uses certain set expressions in transmitting ḥadīths, such as ḥaddathanā, ḥaddathani, ḥuddithtu, and, more rarely, qāla and samī’tu. Do these expressions have a particular meaning in the use of transmission which al-Ṭabarī follows in his interpretation of the Qur’ān? These expressions are known in the Sciences of Ḥadīth as ‘the ways of transmitting narrations’ (furuq or alfāẓ al-taḥammul wa-al-ādā).63

7- There is an evident disparity in the frequency according to which al-Ṭabarī employs these different expressions. For instance, ḥaddathanā and ḥaddathani appear in his Tafsīr far more often than other expressions. In this connection, what is the reason for his using these two terms more often?

8- Do the words ḥaddathani and ḥaddathanā in the chains of transmitters necessarily indicate only oral reporting? And do the words akhbaranī and akhbaranā, which al-Ṭabarī did not use, indicate written reporting?

61 See, for example, Tafsīr; 1:168, 182, 201.
62 See vol. 18, which contains the commentary on both the sūras al-Nūr and al-Furqān.
63 For closer investigation of these formulae and the ways of transmitting ḥadīths, I have devoted a separate chapter, entitled “Al-Ṭabarī’s Styles in narrating from his Masters”. See also Tafsīr, 158.
9- It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarî may use one particular isnād, as when he narrates, for instance, from the Follower ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd b. Aslam. In other cases he may use two isnāds, as when he narrates, for instance, from al-Rabî’ b. Anas. By contrast, it is clear that al-Ṭabarî narrates from some commentators on the Qur‘ān without having any particular transmitted chains through which he narrates from them; for example, al-Ṭabarî’s isnads reaching back to ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bî, who is one of the Followers who interpreted the Qur‘ān, are numerous and divergent, and do not follow a similar and repetitive pattern. What is the reason behind this practice?

10- It is also noticeable that when al-Ṭabarî needs to cite a particular piece of information in one of the disciplines, such as fiqh, he resorts to a limited number of individuals for the information he requires. For example, in fiqh, he takes such information from Mālik or al-Shāfī‘ī, while he rarely resorts to Abū Ḥanīfa and never mentions Alḥmad b. Ḥanbal.64 Along with Mālik and al-Shāfī‘ī, he also refers to Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, al-Sha‘bî,65 and some others. We may ask, what then is the reason behind his exclusion of Ibn Ḥanbal?

11- When al-Ṭabarî needs to cite information related to philology or linguistics, he refers to only two linguists, Abū ‘Ubayd Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā and al-Farrā’. Does this, then, mean that al-Ṭabarî had confidence only in these two?66

12- With regard to al-Ṭabarî’s references to the causes of the revelation (ashāb al-nuzūl), to historical narratives, as well as narrations and information taken from the People of the Book in explanation of some Qur‘ānic verses, we may ask, what is the relation between these disciplines on the one hand, and, on the other, the narrators and transmitted chains out of which he compiled his Tafsīr?

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64 For comments on al-Ṭabarî’s criticism of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal and his regarding him as only a Traditionist and not a jurist, see the chapter I, on al-Ṭabarî’s biography.

65 My examination shows that 90% of the narrations cited by al-Ṭabarî throughout the whole interpretation which were taken from the Follower, ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bî, were in fact statements cited in the discipline of jurisprudence and in interpretation of the verses relating to fiqh. The remaining 10% were narrations on history and the causes of the revelation (ashāb al-nuzūl). This indicates that al-Ṭabarî took the information on jurisprudence from this particular individual more than from any other person. See F. al-Muftah, “The Commentary of al-Sha‘bî and his Statements on Interpretation - Analytical Study and Verification,” M. Sc. dissertation, University of al-Imām, Saudia Arabia 1990.

66 See Cooper, xiii.
13- It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī tends to quote repeatedly one isnād transmitted by narrators from one family. An example of this is the following: “Al-Ṭabarī said: Muḥammad b. Sa’d told me saying: My father [i.e. Sa’d’s father Muḥammad] told me saying: My uncle al-Ḥusayn told me saying: My father [i.e. al-Ḥusayn’s father] reported to me from his grandfather from Ibn ‘Abbās.” Does this mean that this specific isnād goes back to a piece of work written on tafsīr, attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās, and inherited by one family? Further, with regard to this piece of Ibn ‘Abbās’s Tafsīr, we may ask, did al-Ṭabarī manage to obtain a copy of it?

14- It is also noticeable that al-Ṭabarī occasionally includes epithets or descriptive phrases within the isnāds he cites, apparently to introduce some of the narrators. Thus, we find passages such as the following: “Abū al-Azhar al-Lakhmī - from Palestine - related to us,” “Al-Ḥakam b. ‘Umayr - he is one of the Companions - narrated to us,” and “An unnamed person - from Syria - related to us.” We may ask, what was the reason for al-Ṭabarī’s introducing some narrators and neglecting to introduce others?

15- The narrations cited by al-Ṭabarī vary in length, so that he may quote long, medium, or short narrations to explain Qur’ānic verses. Sometimes he cuts short the narrations and gives the general sense, while at other times he quotes the whole narration including the explanation of the Qur’ānic verses. What was al-Ṭabarī’s reason for this practice?

16- Does al-Ṭabarī follow the system he sets for himself in his introduction, that is, does he make every effort to quote Prophetic traditions to interpret the verses of the Qur’ān and, where he does not find any, does he resort to the sayings or reports of the Companions and the Followers?

There are also the following additional questions for further inquiry:

17- Is there a relationship between the isnāds and the narrators from whom al-Ṭabarī took the interpretation of the Qur’ān? In other words, is there a certain method which al-Ṭabarī followed in his dealing with these isnāds? For instance, did his confidence in some particular isnāds lead him to rely on them more than on others?
18- Does al-Ṭabarī's appeal to a select group of scholars in particular disciplines have a bearing on the ultimate character of his interpretation? Posed differently, when al-Ṭabarī wishes to cite a piece of information in a certain discipline, such as Qur’ānic interpretation, jurisprudence, philology, or Qur’ānic readings (qirā’āt), does he resort to specific scholars, more than others, in order to cite from them?

19- Why does al-Ṭabarī quote some chains of transmission in more than one way?

These questions and remarks have prompted the present work.

4. Research Tools and Method

I have examined the isnāds al-Ṭabarī adduces with regard to their validity and the lost written sources which were in existence during al-Ṭabarī's time. Information regarding the narrators of these isnāds has been compiled by concentrating on four main dimensions of research, as follows.

First: I have made a statistical study of the 8,424 isnāds employed by al-Ṭabarī to interpret the first two sūras of the Qur’ān: al-Fātiha and al-Baqara. The results of this study clearly demonstrate the existence of many lost sources and also the sources which have reached us. They also show that al-Ṭabarī followed a specific method in transmitting his isnāds from his masters.

Second: I have conducted a historical study to further investigate the sources. This has been done on the basis of looking into the biographies of the men referred to in the isnāds. The results of this study coincide with the results of the statistical study in that they confirm the strong possibility of the existence of lost sources. Some other sources have in fact reached us, such as the Tafsīrs of Mujāhid, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and ‘Abd al-Razzāq. However, many other sources which al-Ṭabarī used and which existed during his time remain lost.

Third: a thorough investigation has been made into every single technical term of transmission which al-Ṭabarī uses to transmit his isnāds in accordance with the Sciences of Tradition (‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth). Once again, the results of this study are

67 See f.n. no. 1.
found to be in parallel with the results of the two research dimensions previously mentioned.

Fourth: I have attempted, in some places, to explore the relationship between the Qur’anic disciplines found in the contents of the reports in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr and the narrators of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds, especially those from whom an isnād has branched, namely “the common links”. The aim of this comparison was to find out whether al-Ṭabarī was resorting to narrations and works of a person or a number of persons who were specialists in certain fields and it seems clear that he does. For example, he refers to the specialist al-Suddī (d.127/745)68 more than 1,600 times. Al-Ṭabarī similarly refers to Ibn Zayd (d. 170/786),69 another specialist in tafsīr, more than 400 times. Elsewhere, he quotes his information from certain scholars in fiqh (jurisprudence) such as his master Abū Kurayb, to whom he refers more than 300 times, or from certain specialists in history such as Ibn Ishāq, the author of the famous Sīra (Biography and History of the Prophet), to whom al-Ṭabarī refers hundreds of times. These examples show that al-Ṭabarī has quoted specific scholars in their special disciplines, which he has utilized to explain the verses of the Qur’ān.

For the purpose of this study, we must first give a descriptive and statistical explanation of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds together with their chains. These must then be divided into repeated and non-repeated series of isnāds, in order first to establish the series (strands) which, according to statistical analysis, are most frequently repeated. In the next step we study the biographical details relating to narrators in these repeated isnāds, supplemented by a study of terms of transmission, after which we compare these isnāds with works which have been attributed to some of the early scholars, such as the Tafsīr of Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687), Mujāhid (d. 104/722), Qatāda (d. 118/736), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), and ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan’ānī (d. 211/827), in order to show that al-Ṭabarī fully preserved many of the early books that are considered lost. Finally, we go further and review these repeated

68 A well-known commentator and writer of a Tafsīr. See Kābir, 1/1:361; Jarḥ, 1/1:184; Zunūn, 448; Sezgin, 1:191; Sīyar, 5:264.
69 A famous commentator and author of a Tafsīr. See Nadīm, 1:225; al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqāt, 1:265; Sezgin, 1:201; Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn, 1: 265.
series of isnāds (strands) with a view to categorizing the disciplines quoted from them such as exegesis, history, jurisprudence (fiqh), causes of revelation (ashbāb al-nuzūl), Sūra, supernatural stories (ghaybīyāt), Qur'ānic quotations, abrogation (al-nāsīkh wa-al-mansūkh), lexicography, and Qur'ānic readings (qirāʾāt). This will be done in order to confirm that al-Ṭabarī knew what was written and available in various disciplines at the time he wrote and employed it to interpret the Qurʾān.

5. Research sample

In order to test the credibility of these questions, which have been set out above, we will conduct a statistical analysis of al-Ṭabarī's isnāds in part of his Tafsīr, that is, the part covering sūras al-Fāṭiha and al-Baqara. The number of the isnāds in this part of al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr amounts to 8,424, counting repetitions. Eliminating repetitions, they total 6,972 isnāds in these two sūras. The significance of this sample rests in the fact that these isnāds amount, more or less, to nearly a quarter of all the isnāds, i.e. approximately 30,000 isnāds, which al-Ṭabarī adduces in his entire Tafsīr. Moreover, both these two sūras, and especially al-Baqara, contain and discuss most of the subjects and disciplines mentioned in the other Qur'ānic sūras. Ibn al-'Arabī, for example, stated that Sūrat al-Baqara alone contains 4,000 teachings, distributed among the verses as follows: 1,000 commands, 1,000 prohibitions, 1,000 legal judgments, and 1,000 different points of information. Thus, on account of its great importance, 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar spent eight years studying al-Baqara's teachings.70 According to a hadith traced to the Prophet, because of the superiority of these two sūras, they are called 'the two lights'.71

This large quantity of 8,424 isnāds would appear to be a sufficient sample for conducting the process of analysing, discussing, and evaluating the questions in order to arrive at a result through which the value of al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr becomes evident, either positively or negatively.

71 Narrated by Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj. See his Sahīh, 6:19. For further information regarding the importance of these two sūras, see Adawī, Tashīḥ, 1:15, 143.
The proposal of this chapter necessitated that the researcher should conduct a qualitative and statistical analysis of the isnāds and traditions. This process requires the adopting of a system of symbols for every variable (such as terms of transmission, isnād's narrators, etc.), mentioned in each transmitted chain, through a specific classification of components, as will be mentioned later. The object to be gained from this process is our ability to handle these variables. This means that we can count the repeated variables and decide whether there are specific relations, or proportions, among them.

6. Explanation of Symbols

The use of symbols is important because it facilitates the storing of information in the SPSS\textsuperscript{72} computing program, which in turn provides speedy weighing of questions or remarks, comparison of one variable with another among hundreds of variables, and identification of repetitions whether in the transmitted chains or in narrations (relating to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, which the commentator mentions at the end of transmitted chains). The system of symbols will be as follows:

- Each isnād is denoted by the numbers found in the scholarly edition of the text established by the brothers Ahmad and Mahmūd Shākir.\textsuperscript{73}

- Each transmitted chain which is different from others is denoted by Arabic numerals. This numeration differs from the previous one in that it sorts and specifies the number of variant transmitted chains of isnāds from the repeated ones.

- Each narrator is denoted by a series of Arabic numerals, so that the computer can separate the narrators, sort out the repeated ones from others, and calculate any finding or relation we need to know. The total number of different individual narrators forming the 8,424 isnāds amounts to 1,592.

- The technical terms used by al-Ṭabarī to transmit from his masters-ḥaddathānī, ḥaddathānī, etc.- are similarly denoted by Arabic numerals.

\textsuperscript{72} Statistical Package for Social Sciences. This program can be found in the computing service, Main Library, University of Edinburgh.

\textsuperscript{73} Published by Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1969.
- The various scholarly disciplines, such as interpretation, jurisprudence, history, doctrine, and Qur’anic readings, will all be denoted by the Arabic numeral 1.

- The narrations mentioned in some of the transmitted chains will also be denoted by Arabic numerals.

- The type of the text, whether it may be a Prophetic tradition or a report attributed to a Companion or Follower, will also be denoted by Arabic numerals. This allocation of symbols is important because it will reveal the extent of al-Ṭabarî’s credibility in following the method which he briefly set out in the introduction to his commentary. There he stated that he would cite Prophetic traditions in his interpretation. We will calculate the proportion of these traditions to the traditions narrated from the Companions and the Followers.

7. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts containing eight chapters, with an introduction and an epilogue.

In the Introduction I review the literature relating to our main objectives, viz the value of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr with regard to the sources found in the isnâds which he depended upon in compiling his Tafsîr, the possibility of his referring to written sources, and the credibility of the isnâds themselves. I then outline briefly the major topic of the study and identify the research questions, the research sample, the significance of the study, and the main methodology of the study, and I summarize the organization of the thesis. Part One (consisting of four chapters) provides background information. In the first chapter, I introduce al-Ṭabarî by reviewing such matters as his upbringing, his asceticism and piety, his rejection of governmental posts, and his journeys to other places in search of knowledge. The facts presented in this chapter point to al-Ṭabarî being a well-known independent scholar, who never allowed himself to be swayed by political influence, but devoted himself to the quest for knowledge and to the work of teaching and compiling books. In Chapter Two, since one of our aims is to discuss the sources written in the pre-Ṭabarî period, a general discussion is made of the origins and development of Tafsîr. Chapters Three and Four
are intended as an introduction to al-Ṭabarî’s *Jami’ al-Bayān*. In Chapter Three, I discuss such matters as the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsīr*, the occasion for its compilation, and the discovery of this *Tafsīr*. Chapter Four contains a general discussion of certain aspects of this *Tafsīr*, such as al-Ṭabarî’s general method, the importance of knowing the meaning of the Qur’ān, al-Ṭabarî’s approach to determining the correct interpretation of the Qur’ān, the validity of interpreting the Qur’ān according to *ra’y* (personal opinion), al-Ṭabarî’s reliance on the ostensible (*zāhir*) meaning of the Qur’ān, the redundant letters in the Qur’ān, the language of the Qur’ānic expression, the Arabic dialects (*ḥarfs*) in which the Qur’ān was sent down, and, finally, al-Ṭabarî’s system of interpreting the verses of the Qur’ān.

In Part Two, which contains Chapters Five and Six, we move on to the core of the thesis, i.e. our investigation of al-Ṭabarî’s *isnāds* and sources. In Chapter Five, I study al-Ṭabarî’s style in narrating from his masters and I analyse his technical terms of transmission. Chapter Six contains a detailed statistical discussion of the frequency of al-Ṭabarî’s narration of various *isnāds*. Evidence presented in this chapter points to al-Ṭabarî’s use of *isnāds* as being selective according to a well-classified arrangement. This indicates that al-Ṭabarî did follow a certain method in citing his *isnāds*, and that the view that al-Ṭabarî’s purpose in compiling his *Tafsīr* was to collect every tradition that existed on the subject of exegesis is refuted.

In Part Three, which contains Chapters Seven and Eight, I review the result of Part Two. In Chapter Seven, I summarize the results of my study and discuss some broader implications of these results for the general discussion of the authenticity of al-Ṭabarî’s *isnāds* and the possibility of their containing ancient written sources from the time of the first and second centuries AH. This may enable us to draw somewhat more definite conclusions about the early development of the *tafsīr* tradition and particularly to conclude that independent source material from older authorities is historically correct. In Chapter Eight, I try to examine the theory of Ignaz Goldziher and J. Schacht regarding the authenticity of the *isnād* showing once again how we can ascertain whether, and to what degree, the *isnād* chains of transmission of traditions in
al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* are reliable. Finally, in an epilogue, we present the most important results obtained by this research.
PART ONE

BACKGROUND LITERATURE ON AL-ṬABARĪ'S BIOGRAPHY, DEVELOPMENT OF EXEGESIS, AND AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF THE TAFSĪR ENTITLED JĀMIʿ AL-BAYĀN
Chapter I

Al-Ṭabarî’s Biography

1. His Name and Genealogy

Some authors say that his name is Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr1 b. Yazīd b. Kathīr b. Ghālib al-Ṭabarî,2 yet others say that his great grandfather’s name is Khālid b. Ghālib and not Kathīr b. Ghālib.3 It is clear from the language used by Ibn Khallikān that he was confident about the correctness of this latter lineage, as he dismisses the first opinion and judges it weak.

2. His Birth

Al-Ṭabarî was born at the end of 224/839 or the beginning of 225/840. This was mentioned by al-Ṭabarî himself to his student al-Qaḍî Ibn Kāmil4 when he asked him about his doubt regarding his date of birth.

Ibn Kāmil said, “I said to him, how did you come to doubt your date of birth?” He replied,

The people of our town used to mark the date by events rather than by years. Therefore, my birth was dated according to an event that happened at that time in our town. When I grew up I asked about that event, and those who told me differed regarding this matter. Some of them stated that my birth took place at the end of AH 224, while others stated that it was at the beginning of AH 225.5

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1 The first scholar to write about al-Ṭabarî’s life was al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392-463/1002-1071), who specified al-Ṭabarî’s date of birth. He was followed by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawi (574-626/1178-1229), who dedicated a long chapter to al-Ṭabarî in his book, Mu‘jam al-Uḍabā’. We will rely on these two sources as the basis for our research, unless the need arises for mentioning other sources. See Baghdād, 2:162-169 and Yāqūt, Mu‘jam, 18:40-94.

2 This is mentioned by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Baghdād, 2:162; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawi, Mu‘jam, 18:40; al-Qīfī (d. 646/1248), Inbāḥ, 3:89; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), Bidāya, 11:145; Ibn al-Jawzī (510-597/1116-1201), Muntazam, 6:170; Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā’, 93; al-Nawawī (d. 677/1278), Lughāt, 1/1:78; and al-Dhahabi, Sīyar, 14:267.

3 This is mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 439/1047), Fihrist, 291; Ibn Khallikān (d. 651/1282), Wafayāt, 4:191; and al-Safadī (d. 764/1362), Wāfī, 2:284.

4 His name was Abū Bakr Ahmad b. Kāmil (biographical details will be supplied later), see Chapter VI.

5 Baghdād, 2:166; Yāqūt, Mu‘jam, 18:40; Ibn al-Jawzī, Muntazam, 6:170.
3. His life

Al-Ṭabarî was born in Āmul6 in the region of Ṭabaristân.7 For this reason, he is known both as al-Āmulî and al-Ṭabarî, 8 although the latter is much more widely used.9

Al-Ṭabarî grew up in a family of moderate income. His father,10 Ja'far, had a piece of land, on the yield of which he and his family11 used to live and he used to

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6 Āmul was the capital of Ṭabaristân region, consisting of a valley and a mountain, and was its biggest city. More specifically, it lies in the south-western corner of the eastern valley of Māzandarān, on the western bank of the river Ḫurāhāz, about twelve miles south of the Caspian Sea. It currently lies in the north of Iran. At present, the city of Jahār Juy occupies its place. See al-Balādhurî, Futūḥ, 3:679; Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 1:57; al-Qazwînî, ʿĀthâr al-Bīlād wa-ʿAkhbâr al-ʿIbâd, Encyclopedia of Islam, new ed., “Āmul”, and Bartholomew, Word Travel Map, Middle East.

7 Ṭabaristân is a region that lies between Iraq and Khurasān, near the Caspian Sea. This region consists of many towns and villages, and is called Māzandarān. Its land is thickly forested with abundant water and rivers, although, its air was unhealthy. It was related that when this region was intended to be populated, many people were moved there. They needed to cut down the trees, so they brought in many axes. The word 'axe' in the Persian language is “tibr”. In another narration it was stated that its citizens used to fight their enemies using tibr (axes). Thus, its name was first Tibristân and from this is supposed to have derived the name of the region, but then this word was Arabicized as Ṭabaristân, tâbar being the Arabicization of tibr. Saʿîd b. al-ʿĀs conquered this region in the time of the Râshidûn Caliph, ʿUthmân b. ʿAffân. See Ansâb, 8:204; Buldân, 4:13-16; Mu'jam, 18:48; al-Balâdhurî, Futūḥ, 3:745-746; al-Qazwînî, ʿĀthâr al-Bīlād, 217, 403, 406; Nadîm, 291; and Ibn Isfândiyâr, History of Ṭabaristân, ed. E. G. Browne.

8 There is no dispute among all the historians and biographers, who all refer to Muḥammad b. Jarîr as al-Ṭabarî. See Ansâb, 8:204.

9 Some other scholars bore the nickname al-Ṭabarî, including:

1) Muḥammad al-Ṭabarî (226-310/841-923), whose name was Muḥammad b. Jarîr b. Rustum b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî al-ʿIbâd Abî Ja'far. He was one of the ʿImâmi Shi'ite scholars. He died in Baghdad. See Ibn Ḥajâr, Lisân, 5:103; al-Tabârî, Fihrist, 1:368-369; al-Tabârî, Aʾyân al-Shîa, 4:139-140; and Khalîlîa, 9:146.

2) Muḥammad al-Ṭabarî al-Šâṭirî (d. 411/1020), whose name was Muḥammad b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî al-Šâṭirî Abî Ja'far. See Kaḥâlîa, 9:147.

10 His father was Jarîr b. Yazîd b. Khaulîb b. Ghułîb. See Badḫûd, 2:162 and Yaʾqût, Mu'jam, 18:40. He was a pious man who loved knowledge so much that he encouraged his young son also to acquire knowledge. Al-Ṭabarî remarked about his book, the Tafsîr: “I made up my mind to compile it while I was still a young lad.” See Yaʾqût, Mu'jam, 18:61. This would not have happened unless his family had greatly valued knowledge. This esteem for knowledge is reflected in Jarîr’s encouragement of his son to travel in search of knowledge while he was still a young lad. He used to send him money wherever he settled in order that he might learn something. See Yaʾqût, Mu'jam, 18:49 and al-Subkî, Ṭabâqât, 3:125.

11 We do not have enough information worthy of mentioning regarding his mother, brothers, and sisters. The historians did not mention anything about his family and brothers other than what was mentioned by Ibn al-ʿImâd al-Ḥanbâlî (d. AH 1089) in his book Shadhrâr, 3:105. Ibn al-ʿAthîr (555-630/1160-1232) (Lubâb, 366) and Ibn Khalîkîn (Wafayât, 4:192) state that al-Ṭabarî had a nephew who attained a position of distinction in the history of Arabic literature. This was the famous poet Abî Bakr Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbâs al-Khawārizmî (d. AH 383), who was also known as al-Ṭabarî on account of his relationship with Abî Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî. See al-Ṭibrînî, Musannâfî al-Maqâllî Musannâfî al-Ṭabarî, ed. Ahmad Munzawî, Tehran, 1959, 407.
send his son a yearly allowance\textsuperscript{12} wherever he settled. By so doing he saved him the task of bread-winning, so that al-Ṭabarī was able to devote himself totally to acquiring knowledge. His father was very keen to educate his son Muḥammad in all aspects of knowledge because he noticed that he was intelligent, very clever, and of a sharp mind.

Al-Ṭabarī said of himself, "I learned the Qur’ān by heart while I was only seven years old. I led people in prayer when I was eight. I wrote down Ḥadīth when I was nine. My father was very keen to help me on the way of acquiring knowledge while I was still a young lad."\textsuperscript{13} On these words al-Ḥawfī commented,

These three ages [learning the Qur’ān at the age of seven, leading people in prayer at the age of eight, and writing Ḥadīth when he was only nine] were below the high standard which he reached at each of them, because it is rare that a lad of seven could learn the whole Qur’ān by heart. It is also rare that a lad of nine could write the Ḥadīth in the manner that was followed by the Ḥadīth scholars regarding narration and transmitting of isnāds. Since those Muslims who stood up for prayer accepted that a lad of eight should lead them in prayer, this indicates how much they trusted, respected, and admired him.\textsuperscript{14}

The careful reader of the books of al-Ṭabarī will certainly conclude that he was unique in his time with regard to what are called the mental faculties. There is no need for extensive evidence of this, as we have enough evidence in his interpretation of the Qur’ān. We will gain a more positive appreciation of his mental faculties through our presentation of his knowledge, culture, and status among his masters and students, and by noting the admiration shown for him by his contemporaries and those who came after him, in addition to learning about his style and method in interpreting the Qur’ān and transmitting isnāds.

\textsuperscript{12} This allowance did not always arrive punctually. See L. Nicholson, History of the Arabs, 350, cf. 10.
\textsuperscript{13} Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:49.
\textsuperscript{14} Ahmad Muḥammad al-Ḥawfī, al-Ṭabarī, 58.
4. His journeys to other places in search of knowledge

When al-Ṭabarî reached the age of twenty, he realized that Amul, his native town, was unable to provide sufficient stimulation to satisfy his scholarly ambition and so he had to leave it for other places where he could meet with the celebrated scholars of his time. As we may expect, he began his journey in search of knowledge and narrations by visiting the nearest inhabited places to his home town, Amul. Thus, his first stopping place was Rayy. His visit to Rayy provided him with the opportunity of making contact with Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, whom al-Ṭabarî refers to in his Tafsîr and from whom he cites hundreds of narrations. It is stated by Yâqût that al-Ṭabarî managed to narrate more than one hundred thousand hâdîths from Ibn Ḥumayd. In Rayy al-Ṭabarî was able to learn, record, and digest thousands of hâdîths, reports, and narrations. In one of Rayy’s villages, he used to visit and learn from Āhmad b. Ḥammâd al-Dawlabî, from whom he narrated the famous books of al-Sîra al-Nabawîyya and the Maghâzî of Muḥammad b. Iṣḥâq.

In Rayy al-Ṭabarî also learned from Abû Muqâṭîl.

From Rayy al-Ṭabarî took his way to Baghdad, which was the main centre of learning in the Islamic Empire during the ‘Abbasid period. After the death of the three Sunnite jurisprudents-Abû Ḥanîfa, Mâlik, and al-Shâfi‘î-Āḥmad b. Ḥanbal became the acknowledged leader in the field. His disciples, with whom al-Ṭabarî found himself in conflict later, exercised enormous influence in the city. Al-Ṭabarî thought it necessary not to miss the chance of hearing from Āhmad b. Ḥanbal, who was a Ḥadîth scholar of the highest class. Unfortunately, Ibn Ḥanbal died shortly before the entrance of al-Ṭabarî into Baghdad.

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15 Ibn al-Jazâ’ir, Qurra’, 2:107. Some others, like Ibn Ḥajar (Lisân, 5:102), said that al-Ṭabarî began his journey in search of knowledge when he was twelve years old. See also al-Ḥawfî, al-Ṭabarî, 33.
16 Rayy is a famous city, situated 160 farsakhs (leagues, or about 3 miles) from Nîsâbûr and 26 farsakhs from the Caspian Sea. See Buldân, 3:116; and Bartholomew, Word Travel Map, Middle East.
17 We will concern ourselves with Ibn Ḥumayd when dealing with the description and analysis of al-Ṭabarî’s isnâds.
18 Yâqût, Mu’jam, 18:50
19 Yâqût, Mu’jam, 18:49.
20 Nadîm, 291.
21 Cf. the section, His Death.
22 Yâqût, Mu’jam, 18:50.
Being disappointed by the death of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Ṭabarî was not prepared to stay in Baghdad for long. He had to look for other places where learned scholars were still alive. Passing through Wāsīt, where he stayed for a while, he came to Kufa, where he was fortunate enough to meet Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ, from whom al-Ṭabarî narrated frequently and extensively, as we will see later when we discuss al-Ṭabarî’s isnāds. It is stated that al-Ṭabarî narrated more than one hundred thousand ḥadīths from Abū Kurayb.\(^{23}\) In Kufa al-Ṭabarî was able to meet with Hannād b. al-Sārī,\(^{24}\) also one of al-Ṭabarî’s most cited masters in his Tafsīr. He also met with a person called Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā and another named Saʿīd b. Yaḥyā, from whom al-Ṭabarî obtained the book al-Maghāzī by Ibn Ishāq.\(^{25}\)

Al-Ṭabarî returned to Baghdad, where he studied Qur’ānic Sciences (ʿUlim al-Qurʾān) and jurisprudence. In Baghdad he met the disciples of Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfiʿī. We know at least of prominent Shafiʿite scholars such as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Zaʿfarānī (d. 270/883)\(^{26}\) and Abū Saʿīd al-Iṣṭarkhī, both of whom influenced al-Ṭabarî greatly.\(^{27}\) While in Baghdad al-Ṭabarî managed to meet and learn from a person called Abū Muqātil, of whom Ibn al-Nadīm noted, “Al-Ṭabarî took the Iraqi law (fiqh al-ʿIrāq) from Abū Muqātil.”\(^{28}\)

From Baghdad al-Ṭabarî went to Baṣra where he met with the prominent scholar Muḥammad b. Bashshār, from whom he narrated hundreds of times, as will be seen later when we discuss al-Ṭabarî’s isnāds. In Baṣra al-Ṭabarî also learnt from others such as Abū al-Ashʿath,\(^{29}\) Bishr b. Muʿādḥ al-ʿAqādī,\(^{30}\) ʿImrān b. Mūsā al-Qazzāz,\(^{31}\) Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ṣanʿānī, Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā,

\(^{23}\) Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:50; Tadhkira, 2:497.
\(^{24}\) Tadhkira, 2:507; Tadhhib, 11:70.
\(^{25}\) Baghdād, 14:132; Shadhārāt, 1:341.
\(^{26}\) Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:53.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
\(^{28}\) Nadīm, 291. It has proved impossible to find adequate information about Abū Muqātil despite thorough search in the biographical reference sources such as Sīyar, al-Suyūṭī, Ḥafīẓ, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Jarḥ, Tadhhib, Tadhkira; and Baghdād.
\(^{29}\) Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:50.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.; Nadīm, 291.
\(^{31}\) Nadīm, 291; Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:50; Tadhkira, 2:762.
and Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Harshī, from most of whom al-Ṭabarī narrated frequently in his Tafsīr.

Al-Ṭabarī seems to have been still unsatisfied with the knowledge he gained from the scholars of Rayy, Baghdad, Başra, Kufa, and Wāṣīt. His thirst after knowledge was not yet quenched and so he had to prepare for a long and laborious journey. His journeys were to take him as far as al-Shām (lit. ‘the northern region’, i.e. Syria including Damascus and Beirut) and Egypt. In al-Shām he had the opportunity of learning the Qur’ān in its different readings. He stayed for a period of time exchanging views and collecting materials from scholars such as al-‘Abbās b. al-Walīd b. al-Bayrūtī al-Muqri’ī. The materials collected from al-‘Abbās b. al-Walīd were utilized by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr. Ibn al-Jazarī states, “Al-Ṭabarī took the Qur’ānic readings from al-‘Abbās b. al-Walīd b. Mazyad.” Al-Ṭabarī also took the Qur’ānic readings from Sulaymān b. Khallād al-Ṭallihī. Leaving the mosque of Beirut, al-Ṭabarī crossed to Fustāṭ in Egypt in the year 253/867, where he stayed until 257/870. The disciples of Mālik and al-Shāfī‘ī continued to accelerate a tremendous cultural movement there. Al-Ṭabarī does not seem to have gone to Medina, where some students of Mālik were to have been expected. His visit to Egypt, however, offered him an excellent chance to gain insight into the views of Mālik and his way of thinking. He must therefore have learnt about Mālikī opinion from Mālik’s disciples such as Yūnus al-Ṣadafī al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥakam al-Miṣrī. Al-Ṭabarī was, however, more influenced by the Shafi‘ite system of law. The so-called new Shafi‘ite system in Egypt was communicated to al-Ṭabarī by al-Rabī‘ b. Sulaymān al-Murādī, the famous Shafi‘ite scholar,
Muḥammad b. Ishaq b. Khuzaymā (223-311/838-923), and other Egyptian scholars.\textsuperscript{41}

Al-Ṭabarī continued to hold Shafiʿite views for a considerable period of time. He passed Shafiʿite judgements (īftāʾ) over controversial matters for about ten years. But at last he had to form his own personal judgements after making tremendous physical effort and exerting immeasurable mental labour. He began to show himself as an independent thinker having the right to criticize all existing schools of law as early as his visit to Fuṣṭāṭ in 253/867.\textsuperscript{42}

In addition to his theological and judicial activities, al-Ṭabarī was called upon to do some linguistic work in Egypt. He gave lectures on the poetry of al-Ṭirmāḥ b. Ḥakīm, elucidating the meaning of strange words. He conducted these lectures at the request of the Egyptian scholar Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Sarrāj, who showed al-Ṭabarī every kind of hospitality.\textsuperscript{43} When the Egyptian scholars heard of the coming of al-Ṭabarī, whose reputation was already great and widely trumpeted, they seized the opportunity of examining his intellectual capacities.\textsuperscript{44} Being asked about the science of poetical metres (ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ), of which he had little or no previous knowledge, al-Ṭabarī took the advantage of filling up that serious gap and, being accustomed to seek knowledge through its proper channels, he directly appealed to the authority of al-Khaṭīb b. Ṭāhā, the founder of the science. He immediately borrowed one of the primary sources on ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ and studied it with care and vigour.\textsuperscript{45} In Egypt al-Ṭabarī became no longer a student acquiring knowledge for himself only. From Egypt he returned to Baghdad as a mature and well-qualified savant. As such he intended to stay permanently in Baghdad, although he left it twice to go to Amul, his own home town. The purpose of these two journeys had little to do with learning, but seems to have been a matter of personal interest in visiting his homeland after such a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Yāqūt, Muʿjam, 18:55; Nadīm, 291.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Yāqūt, Muʿjam, 18:52.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 18:56.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 18:54.
\end{itemize}
long absence. In the end he had to flee to Baghdad, where he spent the rest of his life.

5. His Moral Characteristics

Al-Ṭabarī was brought up in a godfearing and pious family and himself lived a pious life. In addition to being a man of knowledge, he was also a man of a noble character, asceticism, piety, forbearance, generosity, self-denial, truthfulness, good taste, and good nature. Such characteristics would raise the status of any man among his companions, teachers, students, and contemporaries alike and also gain him the respect of those who came after him and their admiration of his knowledge and deeds, because knowledge is at its best when it is intertwined with good deeds.

A- His Asceticism and Piety

There are many testimonies which reveal to us to what extent al-Ṭabarī was a godfearing and pious man who called people to practise virtuous conduct and act according to upright principles. Many among his contemporaries and successors talked about his character and confirmed this fact. For instance, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/1378) describes him by saying, “He was a man of asceticism, piety, humbleness, trustworthiness, good deeds, and true intention, as was illustrated in his [i.e. Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabarī’s] book, Fī Adab al-Nuflūs.” Al-Ṭabarī felt it his personal calling to summon other men to virtuous living, as was affirmed by his student ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. He did not pay much attention to worldly desires. In this connection, Yāqūt said of him, “He abstained from worldly business and abandoned those who worship it, so he kept himself away from running after it.”

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46 Ibid., 18: 62.
47 See the section, His rejection of Governmental Posts.
48 Al-Ḥawfī, al-Ṭabarī, 41-57.
49 ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Ṭabarī, who lived in Damascus, heard and learned from Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabarī his interpretation of the Qurʾān. Kāḥfāla (5:258) states that his agnomen was Abū al-Ḥasan and not Abū Muḥammad, as was stated by Yāqūt.
50 Yāqūt, Muʿjam, 18:60.
51 Ibid., 18:61.
An example of al-Ṭabari’s godfearing character and piety is found in what he said when he was about to compile his interpretation of the Qur’ān: “I asked God for proper guidance in compiling an interpretation of the Qur’ān. About three years before I embarked on such a task, I asked Him to help me complete what I intended to do. So God helped me to complete it.”

Evidence of al-Ṭabari’s sense of personal honour is found in his own report: “When I grew up into a young man, my father allowed me to leave the city of Āmul in search of knowledge. He used to send me money. On one occasion my allowance was late, so I was obliged to tear off the two sleeves of my shirt and sell them.”

We might wonder why he did not resort to rich people who were lovers of knowledge in order to help him overcome his financial straits, as was the common practice of students at that time, or why he did not even borrow some money until the arrival of his allowance. The answer seems to be that, while it would have been very easy for him to have resorted to either of these two options to help him over present difficulties, he preferred to sell part of his own clothes rather than ask other people to give him money.

B- His Rejection of Gifts

Most of the time, al-Ṭabari used to reject the gifts and grants bestowed on him by caliphs, ministers, and others. His principle was that he should not accept any gift if he was not able to give back something similar in return. If that gift was beyond his financial ability, he would reject it and apologize to the person who offered it.

An example of this practice occurred when the Caliph al-Muktafi Billāh asked him to compile a book on religious endowments (awqāf) in which the principles enunciated were those of scholars who had reached a consensus and there was no dispute (with regard to waqf). When he compiled the book, al-Muktafi read it and was greatly impressed and ordered that a splendid prize be given to al-Ṭabari, but it was a prize he rejected. When some people asked him to reconsider his decision, saying, “Whoever is in the presence of the caliph, he has the chance to get some prize or to

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52 Ibid., 18:62.
53 Al-Subkī, Tabaqāt, 3:125.
54 Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:87.
ask for some favour ...,” he replied, “As for the favour, I ask the Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al-Muʾminīn) to order the police (al-shūratī) to prevent those who ask for favours (and beggars) from entering the maqṣūrah (the place where the Imām stands) until the end of the Friday religious sermon (khūfāh).” Caliph al-Muktafi then acted according to his advice.

We also find other examples demonstrating al-Ṭabarī’s nobility of character and self-esteem. For example, it is reported that when Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. ʿUbaydullāh, who was a minister of state (wazīr), gave al-Ṭabarī some pomegranates (rummān), he accepted them and promptly distributed them among his neighbours. A few days later, the minister sent him a basket made of palm leaves (zinbīl) with a bag (budrāh) inside in which there were ten thousand dirhams. Along with the zinbīl, the minister also sent him a letter (riq’ah) in which he asked him to accept the gift. The wazīr’s messenger, Sulaymān, said, “The minister said to me, ‘If he accepts it, that is all right. If he does not, then ask him to distribute it among his companions who are in need.’ I took the bag to him. I knocked at his door (he is very friendly with me). It is seldom that someone visits al-Ṭabarī at his house after he finishes his class in the mosque, because he will be very busy compiling books, unless there is something urgent.” Sulaymān went on to say,

I told him that I came to him with a message from the state minister and he gave me permission to enter. I entered and gave him the letter. He said, ‘May God forgive us and the minister as well. Convey to him my greetings and say to him, “Take us back to the pomegranates... I refuse to accept the dirhams.”’ I said to him, ‘Then distribute them among your companions who are in need and do not send it back.’ He said, ‘The minister is well aware of the people who are in need if he wishes to give them money’ ... He replied to the letter, and then I went away.

55 Al-shūratī (sing. al-shūrta) means those who keep law and order in the state. ʿĀlīb al-shūrta is the chief superintendent (of police). Al-Muʾjam al-Wasīḥ, 2:479.
56 Al-Muʾjam al-Wasīḥ, 2:739.
58 Zinbīl means a basket, container, or sack. Al-Muʾjam al-Wasīḥ, 1:400.
59 Budrāh means a bag containing an amount of money. People use it in their transactions and it is also given as a gift. It varies according to different times. Al-Muʾjam al-Wasīḥ, 1:43.
60 Riq’ah refers to a piece of paper or animal skin on which people used to write. Al-Muʾjam al-Wasīḥ, 1:365.
61 Yaqūt, Muʾjam, 18:87-88.
These examples show how al-Ṭabarī held to the principle of rejecting gifts that were presented to him.\(^62\) Therefore, we find him rejecting a thousand dīnārs presented to him as a reward for compiling a book. Perhaps he refused to take a reward for a religious deed that he performed because he preferred to receive his reward, uninvited, from God.

We may cite yet other examples. When the minister al-‘Abbās b. al-Ḥasan\(^63\) asked al-Ṭabarī to compile a compendium in jurisprudence (fiqh), he complied al-Khaṣīf and sent it to the minister. The minister then sent him a thousand dīnārs, which he rejected. He was asked to distribute them among the needy people, but he refused to do this as well.\(^64\) Again, when al-Ṭabarī accepted to educate the son of the minister of state, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Ubaydullāh b. Yahyā b. Khāqān, the minister granted al-Ṭabarī a high position in his court and gave him an allowance of ten dīnārs a month. Al-Ṭabarī accepted this on condition that it should not obstruct him from learning and teaching knowledge, performing the prayers at their appointed times, and having his meals on time as well. The minister’s son attended the class and learned how to write. On the boy’s returning home, the servant took the wooden board on which he had written and entered happily into the house. On seeing this, all the women inside the house gave al-Ṭabarī a tray in which there were dirhams and dīnārs, but he refused to accept them. He said, “I took up the job on certain conditions. Therefore, I am not entitled to take this.” The women then told the minister about what had happened and he said to al-Ṭabarī, “O Abū Ja’far [al-Ṭabarī], the mothers of this son were very happy that their son was able to write; and so they wanted to give you some gift. You saddened them by rejecting their gift.” Al-Ṭabarī then said to him, “I will only take the allowance which you agreed to give me (ten dīnārs a month)...”\(^65\)

On another occasion, Abū al-Hayjā’ b. Ḥamdān sent al-Ṭabarī three thousand dīnārs. When he looked at them, he was surprised and said, “I will not accept

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 18:89
\(^{64}\) Al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:137.
\(^{65}\) Ibn ‘Asākir, Tārikh, 18:356.
something for which I cannot repay something similar in return. How can I give in return something such as this?" He was told that Abū al-Hayjā’ did not expect anything from him in return, but rather did so in order to gain the reward from God. However, al-Ṭabarī did not accept the money, and sent it back to Abū al-Hayjā’.  

His neighbour, Abū al-Ḥasan al-MuḥARRAR, sent him two chickens as a gift and al-Ṭabarī sent him a garment ( thawb) as a gift as well.

Al-Ṭabarī wrote a poem which depicted him as possessing very little money and even his happiness in having so little money. This reflected his preference for relative poverty to the wealth that was accompanied by self-degradation.

Al-Ṭabarī despised the rich who became arrogant because of their wealth and the poor who humbled and degraded themselves in order to satisfy their need. Therefore, he advised the rich not to become arrogant and the poor not to degrade themselves.  

6. His Rejection of Governmental Posts

In accordance with his principle of asceticism, al-Ṭabarī continued to make knowledge and religion his principal concern in life. This is clear from his refusal to accept appointment to any governmental post, whether in the judiciary or any other institution.

When al-KhaqānI became a minister of state, he sent al-Ṭabarī some money, which he refused to accept. Then he suggested to him that he should become a judge, and this he refused as well. He also suggested to him the post of looking into the complaints of people (in the Dīwān al-Maẓālim), but he refused to accept the position.

His companions pleaded with him, hoping that he would accept the post in the Dīwān al-Maẓālim. They rebuked him, saying, ‘You will get a reward for this

66 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:87.
67 ibid., 18:87.
68 For further information on this poem, see Baghdād, 2:162; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:43; and Wafayāt, 3:332.
69 Baghdād, 2:162; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:43; and Ibn al-Jawzī, Muntazam, 6:171-172.
70 His refusal to become a judge was mentioned by al-Farghānī, Ṭabaqāt al-Huffāz, 308.
from God. You will also revive a *Sunna* that has long been forgotten.’ However, al-Ṭabari reprimanded them, saying, ‘I thought that, had I accepted the post, you would have prevented me from doing so’ and he rebuked them. 71

The reason behind his refusal to accept any governmental post may have been connected to the disturbances that occurred in the political and social life of his time. 72 The effect of this upheaval was evident in the thinking of al-Ṭabari, because he was well aware that individual effort was useless to produce reformation of the general disorder and mischief.

In addition to the reason we have just mentioned, his refusal of governmental posts may have been connected to the fact that he was outspoken in declaring the truth and did not fear the censure of those who rebuked him in the way of God. The judge may have had to encounter some disputes that were related to the rulers and princes of that time, but al-Ṭabari would not favour in justice a minister or other official if he was proved to be guilty of some wrongdoing. Therefore, it was better for him to avoid the judiciary system and the rulers altogether, and dedicate himself to knowledge, compiling books, and teaching his students. By so doing, he would enjoy his freedom and peace of mind. His piety may also have been the reason behind his refusal to accept governmental posts, lest he should wrong someone in one of his verdicts.

7. Some Aspects of His Personal Life

   At the end of this chapter we may include some details relating to al-Ṭabari’s personal and social life, both in connection with individuals and with society in general.

72 When al-Ṭabari entered Ṭabaristān on his return from travelling, he found that public derision for Abū Bakr and ‘Umar (the Rashidūn Caliphs) was widespread. The people of Ṭabaristān then asked him to compile a book on the virtues of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, which he did. However, the ruler did not like that book and sent someone to arrest al-Ṭabari. When the news reached al-Ṭabari, he fled. The man who conveyed the news to al-Ṭabari was flogged with a thousand lashes. See Yāqūt, *Mu’jam*, 18:85-86. From this story we infer that the situation of the rulers who held extremist views was still the same, but there were some who stood up in support of truth. This incident continued to occupy al-Ṭabari’s mind. He did what he did, knowing very well that he would suffer injustice and mistreatment for the views he held.
A- His Residence

Al-Ṭabarī took up residence in Qanṭarat al-Bardān, a district in Baghdad, as is mentioned by Yāqūt. For some time he also lived in Bāq al-Ṭaq, a fortress in Ṭabaristān. After that he built himself a house at Ruḥbat Yaʿqūb in the eastern part of Baghdad. He lived there in great delight until his death, dividing his time between worship, reading, and compiling books.

B- His Daily Regime

Al-Ṭabarī organized his daily life. He used to pray the zuhr (noon) prayer at home and write his books until the ʿasr (afternoon) prayer, when he used to go out and pray in the mosque. He would then sit teaching his students, and some of them read in his presence what they wrote until the maghrib (sunset) prayer. After that he would sit teaching jurisprudence (fiqh) up to the late ʿishāʾ (evening) prayer, when he would enter his house. It is seldom that someone would visit him after he had entered his house, because he would be very busy compiling books, unless there was something urgent.

He took great care of his health. He would not eat any food that might be harmful or indigestible. He wrote the book Firdaws al-Ḥikma, which he heard and learned from its compiler, the physician, ‘Alī b. Zayn al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī used to carry this book as a vade-mecum in health matters and he used to keep it under his pillow when he went to bed.

C- His Garden

Al-Ṭabarī used to live a modest comfortable life, depending on the income which came to him from the sale of produce grown in his garden in Ṭabaristān.

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73 A number of Ḥadīth scholars used to live in Qanṭarat al-Bardān, a district in Baghdad. See Buldān, 4:405.
74 Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:60-61.
75 Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 4:6. Al-Ṭabarī may have resided in this place before his arrival in Baghdad and settlement there. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:492.
76 Baghdād, 2:66; Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:40. Ruḥbat Yaʿqūb took its name from Yaʿqūb b. Dāwūd, who was a mawla of the Banū Sulaym and the minister of al-Mahdi b. al-Manṣūr. Yāqūt, Muʾjam, 18:40, 60.
77 Ibid., 18:60-61.
78 Ibid., 18:55-88.
With this, he was quite content about his financial status and was able to devote himself totally to knowledge, teaching, and compiling books.

D- His Mosque

Al-Ṭabarī used to have his own mosque which bore his name. It is situated in Sūq al-ʿAṭash in Baghdad. There he would perform his daily prayers. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said, “Abū Bakr b. Mūjāhid went towards the mosque to perform the Tarāwīḥ prayers. He walked until he reached the end of Sūq al-ʿAṭash and stood at the door of al-Ṭabarī’s mosque while al-Ṭabarī was reading Sūrat al-Raḥmān [LV]. He listened to his recitation of this sūra for a long time, then he went away.”

E- His View on Marriage

Al-Ṭabarī was famous for his asceticism, keeping away from the pleasures of this life, maintaining piety, humbleness before his Lord, and total dedication to knowledge. He may have thought that marriage would deflect him from knowledge, and so he lived as a celibate. As Muḥammad b. Qāsim described him, “He was a bachelor who did not know women. He left his town in search of knowledge when he was twenty years old. He continued to learn and covet knowledge until his death.”

While he was in Egypt, al-Ṭabarī himself stated, “I have no sons or daughters, and I have never approached any woman, either unlawfully or lawfully.”

8. His Works

There is no doubt that al-Ṭabarī was a prolific and erudite scholar, as may be concluded from the numerous quantity of books he left and the diversity of topics handled by him. Moreover, many scholars of his lifetime and later recorded their indebtedness to him for his contribution to scholarship and, in particular, to the Sciences of the Qur’ān (ʿUlūm al-Qur’ān), history, jurisprudence, language, and Ḥadīth.

79 Baghdād, 2:164; and al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 3:124.
80 Yāqūt, Muʿjam, 18:61.
81 Ibid., 18:60.
82 Lisān, 5:102.
83 Yāqūt, Muʿjam, 18:55.
There follows a brief bibliography of his books which are known to us and which are mentioned sporadically in the various sources.

1) Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā', or Kitāb Ikhtilāf 'Ulamā' al-Amshār fī Aḥkām Sharā'ī' al-Islām.⁸⁴ This book was mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm,⁸⁵ Yāqūt,⁸⁶ and al-Ṣafadī.⁸⁷ It seems from its title that al-Ṭabarī's purpose in compiling the book was to deal with the differences in the recorded opinions of the jurisprudence scholars and to expose their views concerning Islamic Law, especially those of the four well-known leading fiqh scholars: Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal. 2) Tārīkh al-Umm wa-al-Mulāk, or simply Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī,⁸⁸ dealing with history and chronology. This book is considered to be one of earliest and most comprehensive history books.

3) Ṣafār al-Ṭabarī, or Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'ān,⁸⁹ i.e. the book which is under discussion in this research.⁹⁰ The three books previously mentioned are published and in circulation. 4) Kitāb Ṣarīḥ al-Sunna,⁹¹ dealing with the narrating of ḥadiths, as is clear from the title.⁹² 5) Kitāb Tahdīb al-Athār,⁹³ also dealing with narrations. 6) Kitāb Risālat al-Baṣīr fī Ulūm al-Dīn.⁹⁴ 7) Kitāb al-'Aqīda.⁹⁵ 8) Kitāb al-Qirā'āt.⁹⁶ 9) Kitāb Ikhtiyār min Aqāwil al-Fuqahā'.⁹⁷ 10) Kitāb Adab al-Quḍāt wa-al-Muḥāḍarāt wa-al-Sījillāt.⁹⁸ 11) Kitāb al-Manāsik.⁹⁹ 12) Kitāb al-ʿAḍar fī al-ʿUṣūl.¹⁰⁰ 13) Kitāb al-Iʿtidār.¹⁰¹ 14) Kitāb Ummahāt al-Awlād.¹⁰² 15) Kitāb Basīṭ al-

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⁸⁴ A manuscript copy of this work, which consists of four volumes, exists in the library of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyyah. A section of this work has been edited and published by Joseph Schacht, i.e. the section Kitāb al-Jihād wa-Kitāb al-Jizya wa-Aḥkām al-Muḥārībīn min Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā'. See Brockelmann, 3:49.

⁸⁵ Nadīm, 292.

⁸⁶ Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:159.

⁸⁷ Wāfi, 2:285.

⁸⁸ Baghdād, 12:163; Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:41; Zunun, 1:297.

⁸⁹ Baghdād, 2:163; Nadīm, 292; Wāfi, 2:285; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 3:121.

⁹⁰ For a detailed study concerning this book, see Chapter III.

⁹¹ Brockelmann, 3:50.

⁹² Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:80; Wāfi, 2:286; Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh, 8:348.

⁹³ Baghdād, 2:163; Nadīm, 292; Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:41; 292; Wāfi, 2:285.

⁹⁴ Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:80.

⁹⁵ Sezgin, 3:527.

⁹⁶ Nadīm, 292; Wāfi, 2:285; Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:45, 68, 65.

⁹⁷ Wāfi, 2:285.

⁹⁸ Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:45.

⁹⁹ Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh, 8:352.

¹⁰⁰ Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:81.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 18:57; Wāfi, 2:287.

There are some other works of al-Ṭabarī mentioned by Yāqūṭ, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Ṣafadi, and al-Khaṭīb.

102 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:73; Wāfī, 2:286.
103 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:75; Nadīm, 291.
104 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:74.
105 Ibid., 18:44.
106 Ibid., 18:81.
107 Ibid., 18:78.
108 Nadīm, 291.
109 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:73-74; Wāfī, 2:286.
110 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:73.
111 Ibid., 18:83.
112 Nadīm, 291.
113 Tadhkīra, 2:713.
114 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:76; Nadīm, 291; Wāfī, 2:287.
115 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:81.
117 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:92.
118 Wāfī, 2:286; Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:85.
119 Ibid., 18:81.
120 Ibid., 18:84-85.
121 Ibid., 18:81.
122 Wāfī, 2:286; Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:73.
123 Tafsīr, 18:68.
124 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:81; Wāfī, 2:286.
125 Nadīm, 292.
126 Wāfī, 2:286; al-Subkī, Tabaqāt, 3:121.
127 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:77.
128 Ibid., 18:75.
129 Ibid., 18:81; Wāfī, 2:286.
130 Yāqūṭ, Mu‘jam, 18:61; Nadīm, 291.
131 Al-Subkī, Tabaqāt, 3:121.
We may conclude from this list that:

I- Al-Ṭabarî wrote books dealing with different topics including the following: Qur'ānic studies, history, Ḥadīth, fiqh, literature, grammar, ʿusūl al-fiqh (the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence), ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth (the Sciences of Ḥadīth), and some other subjects. However, the information about many of al-Ṭabarî’s works is still incomplete.

II- Out of all his numerous works, according to my knowledge, there are only five which have survived: Jāmi’ al-Bayan, Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk, a section of the book of Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā’, Tahdīb al-Āthār, and Dhayl al-Madhīl.

9. His Death

The principal sources are almost unanimous with regard to the year in which al-Ṭabarî died, that is 310/922, during the reign of the ‘Abbasid Caliph, al-Muqtadīr Billāh. However, these sources differ in respect of the day on which he died.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī mentions that al-Ṭabarî died on Saturday night and was buried on Sunday morning, the 26th Shawwāl AH 310. He goes on to state that there was another narration which says that his death took place on Sunday night, the 28th Shawwāl AH 310. He died in a room facing his own house in Ruhbat Ya’qūb. Both Ibn Khallikān and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawi support the former statement. The scholars who maintain that he died on Sunday are Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Dhahabī, and Ibn Kathīr. Yāqūt also remarked, “I have also come across a statement which fixes the date of his death as taking place in 311/923, or 316/928.” Ibn al-Nadīm states that al-Ṭabarî died in Shawwāl 310/922, at the age of eighty-seven. Ibn Miskawayh

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132 Baghdād, 2:166; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:40; Wafayāt, 4:292; Ibn al-Jawzī, Muntazam, 6:172; and al-Nawawī, Lughāt, 1:79.
133 Baghdād, 2:162.
134 Wafayāt, 4:192.
135 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:40.
137 Tadhkira, 2:715.
138 Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, 11:146.
139 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:94.
140 Nadīm, 491. In view of the date of his birth (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter), his age at death was either 86 or 87.
also states that al-Ṭabarî died in AH 310, without however specifying the day and the month in which he died.141

Ibn al-Jawzî indicates that al-Ṭabarî was buried in a site facing his house. He further states that it was narrated that he was buried at night. In addition to this, Thâbit b. Sinân mentions in his Târikh that al-Ṭabarî’s death was concealed from the public and those who buried him were prevented from burying in the daylight. It is claimed that he was a Shi‘ite, then it is claimed that he was a heretic.142

Ibn al-Athîr says that the assertion regarding the public’s being fanatically against him was not true.143 Some followers of the Ḥanbalî School144 were fanatically opposed to him and others followed them. The reason for this persecution was that when al-Ṭabarî compiled his book, Ikhtilâf al-Fuqahā’ (The Differences among the Jurisprudents), he did not mention the name of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. When he was asked about the reason for this omission, he replied that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was not a jurisprudent (faqīh); rather he was a scholar of Ḥadîth. This statement was too much for the followers of the Ḥanbalî School, who were greatly offended by it. Therefore, they became fanatically opposed to al-Ṭabarî.145

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141 Tâjûrîb al-Umam, 1:84.
142 Ibn al-Jawzî, Muniażam, 6:172.
143 Ibn al-Athîr, Kâmîl, 8:134.
144 The Ḥanbalî School was named after its founder, Abû ‘Abdullâh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybâni, who was born in Baghdad in 164/780. He learned Ḥadîth at the age of fifteen. When he was twenty years old, he began travelling from one country to another in search of knowledge. After that he came to Baghdad where al-Shâfi‘î took knowledge from his student during 195-197/810-812. He was imprisoned because he did not adopt the Mu‘tazîli School in the time of the Caliph al-Ma’mûn, but was released in the time of Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 232/846. He died in 241/855. See Baghdâd, 4:412-413; Ibn Abî Ya’hî; Taḥaqat al-Ḥanâbîla, 3:11; al-Subki, Taḥaqat, 1:199-221; Ibn ‘Asâkir, Târikh, 2:39-48; al-Yâfi‘î, Mir’ât al-Jinnâ, 2:132-134; Tadhkira, 2:18-19; and Tahâdîthâh, 1:72-76. See also W. M. Patten, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and the Miḥna: a Contribution to the Biography of the Imam and to the History of the Muḥammadan Inquisition, called the Miḥna 218-34 H, Heidelberg, 1987; Brockelmann, 3:308-310.
145 Ibn al-Athîr (Kâmîl, 8:134-135) relates how, when al-Ṭabarî arrived in Baghdad from Tabaristân, Abû Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Affî al-Jaṣṣâs (305-370/918-981), Ja’far b. ‘Arâfa, and Abû Ya’hî Muḥammad b. Ṣâ al-Bayâdî were very angry with him. The followers of the Ḥanbalî School headed towards his house to ask him about Ibn Ḥanbal and how the scholars mentioned him in the science of jurisprudence (ṭilm al-fiqh). Al-Ṭabarî maintained his opinion that Ibn Ḥanbal was not a faqîh. Reacting to this, the followers of the Ḥanbalî School and the scholars of Ḥadîth became furious and stoned his house, until the head of the police (ṣâhib al-shurtah), Nâzûk, intervened with some soldiers in order to prevent the public from reaching him (see Yâqût, Mu‘jam, 18:57-58). In an act of self confidence and to proclaim the truth, al-Ṭabarî compiled a book in which he apologized to the
As Yāqūt states, al-Ṭabarī died of a pectoral illness which used to attack him from time to time. The state minister, ‘Alī b. ʿĪsā sent a physician to treat him and when the physician asked him about the history of his illness, al-Ṭabarī gave him a full report about his situation and the medicines he had been taking up to that day, and the medicines he intended to take to cure his illness. The physician then said to him, “I have nothing to offer you above the medicines you have just prescribed for yourself. If you were a follower of our religion (Christianity), you would be considered one of the disciples of ʿĪsā (al-Hawāriyyūn). May God grant you success.”

10. Eulogies of al-Ṭabarī

Because of al-Ṭabarī’s eminent scientific status and the invaluable books he compiled, some of his contemporaries eulogized him in verse, including Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn Durayd, and others.

11. The Books written on al-Ṭabarī

As a result of the religious, scientific, and moral position al-Ṭabarī occupied during his lifetime and after his death, some scholars took care to write his biography, including the following:

1) Abu Bakr Aḥmad b. Kāmil, who wrote down his biography and history in a book which bore his name.

followers of the Ḥanbali School. He did so, not from a point of weakness, but rather to clarify his opinion and the wisdom behind it. See Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:59.

146 Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:94.

147 His name is Muḥammad b. Ziyād b. Bashīr (246-340/861-952). He was a historian and a scholar of Ḥadīth who lived in Basra. He worked for al-Hajjāj as the Imam of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca and died in Mecca. See Kaḥhāla, 2:103; and A'lam, 1:199.

148 His name is Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Durayd al-Azdi (223-321/838-933). He was one of the most prominent poets and scholars of his time. He composed a famous poem entitled al-Maqṣūṭa. See Kaḥhāla, 9:189.

149 For their full poems, see Baghdād, 2:166; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:40; and Nawawi, Lughāt, 1:79.

150 He was born in 260/873 and died in 350/961. He was one of al-Ṭabarī’s students. See Baghdād, 4:357; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 2:16; and Kaḥhāla, 2:52.
2) Abu al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī,\(^{151}\) who wrote a book on the biography and history of al-Ṭabarī.\(^{152}\)

These two books became important sources for all those who were concerned with al-Ṭabarī’s biography. From these two sources, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī drew much of the information about al-Ṭabarī that he included in his book *Muʿjam al-ʿUdābā*.\(^{153}\) This is in addition to *Ṭārīkh Baḥdād*\(^{154}\) by al-Khaṭīb al-Baḥḍādī. Yāqūt commented, “The majority of these reports on Muḥammad b. ʿJarīr al-Ṭabarī came from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī’s book which he assigned to the biography of al-Ṭabarī. They were also taken from a book written by Abū Bakr b. Kāmil on the biography of al-Ṭabarī.”\(^{155}\)

3) Abū ʿIṣḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb al-Ṭabarī (d. 391/1001).\(^{156}\) Among his books was *Kitāb al-Ṭārīkh al-Mawsūl bi-Kitāb al-Ṭārīkh li-ʿIbn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*. He included in it many reports about al-Ṭabarī and his companions.


5) Al-Qīṭī\(^{158}\) compiled a book entitled *al-Ṭārīkh fī Ahkāb Muḥammad b. Jarīr*, which he described as ‘interesting’. Like the previous books, this book is also lost.

Finally, in more recent years, Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥawfī has compiled a book entitled *al-Ṭabarī*, which is printed and in circulation.\(^{159}\)

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\(^{151}\) Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 18:94. ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz’s biography has previously been mentioned.

\(^{152}\) Unfortunately, none of the books which were written on al-Ṭabarī have survived and perhaps may never be recovered.

\(^{153}\) In vol. 18, pp. 40-94.

\(^{154}\) In vol. 2, from p. 166.


\(^{156}\) He was one of al-Ṭabarī’s students as well as a follower of his school. See Shākir Muṣṭafā, *al-Ṭārīkh al-Arabi wa-al-Muʾarrūkhūn*, 2:90; and Kahhāla, 1:91.

\(^{157}\) He was a man of letters, a poet, and a jurisprudent (*faqīh*). He was one of the students of al-Ṭabarī and a follower of his school in jurisprudence. See Nadīm, 1:147, 235; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 5:146-148; and Lisān, 1:324-325.

\(^{158}\) His name is Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Yūsuf (568-646/1173-1248). He was born in the city of Qift and died in Aleppo. See *al-Ṭārīkh al-ʿArabī wa-al-Muʾarrūkhūn*, 2:259.

\(^{159}\) It was published in 1390/1970 by al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-al-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya in Cairo.
Having spent his life in learning, teaching, and serving knowledge, al-Ṭabarî died in 310/922 leaving behind him many valuable books, students, and admirers.
Chapter II

Origins and Early Development of Qur’ānic Exegesis (*Tafsīr*)

Before dealing with al-Ṭabarī’s exegetical methodology in his *Tafsīr*, with regard to his *isnāds* and sources, it is instructive briefly to review the various stages through which exegesis had gone and the methods adopted by the exegetes before and during the time of al-Ṭabarī. This is in order to identify the influences that may have affected al-Ṭabarī and to highlight both originality and emulation in his work.

The Prophet used to receive the Qur’ān in parts, in accordance with causes or happenings (*ḥisāb*), events (*hāwāḍith*), and occasions (*munāsābāt*), and would clarify for his Companions the meaning of those revelations which needed clarification. The Qur’ān itself announces the role of Muḥammad as the interpreter of the revealed text. *Sūrat al-Nahl* may be adduced as evidence of this: God said, “And we have revealed to you [the Prophet] the Qur’ān [al-Dhikr] so that you may explain to men that which has been revealed for them, and that they may reflect.”

*Surat al-Baqara* provides further evidence: “Thus as we have sent to you an apostle from among you, who will recite to you Our revelations and purify you of sin, and who will instruct you in the Book and in wisdom and teach you that which you do not know.” These two verses illuminate the fact that the Prophet Muḥammad is considered to be the first exegete of the revelation, that is, after the Qur’ān itself, which is esteemed to be its own best interpreter.

This does not mean that the Prophet interpreted the meanings of the Qur’ān sentence by sentence in the manner customarily adopted by the commentators. Rather, he explained the particularly problematic expressions, gave details concerning

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1 *Sūrat al-Nahl*, 16:44.
2 *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 2:151.
what is alluded to in the Qur’ān, and commented on the ḥukmām of the Sharīʿa (the Islamic Law).⁵

There is no doubt that in quite a number of ḥadīths the Prophet is cited as interpreting some of the Qur’ānic verses and explaining their meanings.

In his work al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ, al-Bukhārī (d.256/870), in the section on tafsīr entitled Kitāb al-Tafsīr, collected more than 500 such ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet. This was pointed out by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) at the end of his commentary on the Kitāb al-Tafsīr of al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ. Ibn Ḥajar said, “Kitāb al-Tafsīr contains 548 ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet... It also contains 580 traditions ascribed to the Companions.”⁶

In his work al-Jāmiʿ, and specifically in the section relating to exegesis, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) cites 470 ḥadīths.

In the work known as Tafsīr al-Nasāʾī, al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915), in a separate section the author cites 735 ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet, selectively covering the entire Qur’ān from beginning to end.⁷

In his al-Mustadrak, al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbdullāh (d. 405/1014) compiled a substantial number of interpretations which he introduced with the following words:

In this book, we have begun with the revelation of the Qurʾān as documented in the various traceable traditions, and with what the Companions who compiled the Qurʾān had to say, before moving on to the interpretation of the various chapters which selectively covered the entire Qurʾān from beginning to end.⁸

The present researcher has reckoned the number of ḥadīths transmitted by al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak, from the Prophet and Companions, to be 1,000, a body of

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⁵ See Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr; 4:493; and al-Shawkānī, Fatḥ al-Qadīr, 3:165.
⁶ See Fatḥ, 8:673, 674.
⁸ Al-Mustadrak, 2:220.
material which is substantial enough for an entire work separately devoted to exegesis.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) followed with his own compilation of hadīths ascribed to the Prophet which, not including those covering the causes for revelation, amounted to 240. In the conclusion, al-Suyūṭī stated,

This is what I could recall of the interpretations ascribed to the Prophet, the authentic (sahīḥ) ones, the acceptable (ḥasan) ones, the weak (đaʻīf) ones, those with incomplete chains of isnād (mursal), and the problematic (muʻdal) ones. I have discarded the dubious (bāṭil) and the fabrications (mawḍū‘āt).

It has been noted, however, that the number of hadīths which have been ascribed to the Prophet far exceeds those of varying quality which al-Suyūṭī collected. For example, the number of hadīths that al-Nasā‘ī was able to include in his work of interpretation is nearly three times as many as those collected by al-Suyūṭī!

Moreover, in al-Mustadrak, al-Ḥākim included a large number of hadīths ascribed to the Prophet, amounting to four times what al-Suyūṭī mentioned. Evidently, the Prophet elucidated many passages of the Qur’ān.

Speight indicates that there is a difference of opinion as to how much of the Qur’ān the Prophet actually explained to the early community, but this is a theoretical question, since the material that is available today from the Prophet Muḥammad covers the Qur’ān only in a fragmentary fashion.

Muḥammad Muḥammad Abū Shahba states,

There is no doubt, that the Prophet clarified the Qur’ān to the Companions, particularly those problematic expressions and those which were obscure. But we have not received everything which he had to say about the verses of the Qur’ān. The reason for this has perhaps to do with the fact that those who heard him were able to understand quite a large number of the verses through linguistic intuition and knowledge of the shari‘a. They therefore felt no

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9 Itqān, 2:1288.
10 For more details, see the earlier explanation, p.
12 Because the revelation of the Qur’ān was sent down in the Arabic language, in general, and the people of the time of the Prophet were pure Arabs, i.e. native speakers, and yet they did not mix with
particular need to transmit all that which related to the interpretation of the Qur’ān. They also thought that there would be others who would equal them or be nearly equal to them in undertaking this task. Besides, they were preoccupied with wars, conquests, and spreading Islam, which left them not enough time to devote to scholarship and narration.\(^{13}\)

It is also well known that they resorted to interpretation only when there was a particularly problematic point, which they would inquire into. Otherwise, they were content with what they comprehended, albeit in general terms.

When considering the Jāmi’ al-Bayān, to find out for how many times al-Ṭabari cites and benefits from the ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet which relate to tafsīr, we discovered that his citations of such ḥadīths amounted to 521 (6.2% out of 8,424). This is only in the section containing his interpretation of the two suras, al-Fātiha and al-Baqara. However, throughout the whole text of his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabari’s citations of ḥadīths surpass this number. This is because the approximate total number of all al-Ṭabari’s quotations of traditions and reports which are related to the Prophet, Companions, Followers, and later informants contained in his Tafsīr amounts to more than 30,000 narrations. Therefore, since among the 8,424 narrations al-Ṭabari cites 521 Prophetic ḥadīths, this may suggest that in the entire body of his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabari may have quoted more than 2,000 traditions ascribed to the Prophet in the course of his interpreting all the verses of the Qur’ān.\(^{14}\)

Some scholars, such as Aḥmad Amlīn,\(^{15}\) have criticized al-Ṭabari for citing only a limited number of Prophetic ḥadīths, which are the second source of material relevant to the interpretation of the Qur’ān. However, if we compare the amount of al-Ṭabari’s citations of ḥadīths with the amount of ḥadīths referred to by those scholars whom we have just reviewed, it becomes evident that al-Ṭabari’s quotations of ḥadīths are far the more extensive, this despite the fact, noted earlier, that the classical compilations of Ḥadīth contained only few scattered Prophetic ḥadīths

\(^{13}\) Isrā‘īlīyyät, 70, 71.

\(^{14}\) For further information regarding Prophetic ḥadīths in al-Ṭabari’s Tafsīr, see Chapter III.

\(^{15}\) Aḥmad Amlīn, Duḥā, 2:138; and al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirin, 1:48.
relating to the exegesis of the Qur'an. Since this is the case, we can safely conclude that al-Ṭabarî did refer to Prophetic ḥadîths in his Tafsîr and tried his best to use what is available of traditions at that time, i.e. the third century AH.

The Companions, on the other hand, took particular care in reflecting about the Qur'ânic text, comprehending its meanings, studying and reciting it, defining its ǧalâl and  ḥarâm (what it allows and what it forbids, or prescribes and proscribes), underlining its ḥudûd (the limits it sets) and farâʾîd (the duties it imposes), explaining what is firm (muḥkam), and clarifying what is ambiguous (muṭashâbih). The Prophet urged his people to make every effort to study, reflect, and act upon the Qur'ânic revelation. Abû Hurayra reported that the Prophet said, “When people sit in a mosque to recite the Book of God and to study it carefully (yatadarasunahu) together, the presence of God (ṣakîna) will descend upon them, mercy will envelop them, and the angels will surround them.”  

The Companion ‘Abdullâh b. Mas’ud (d. 32/603) stated, “When one of us learnt ten verses, he would not go beyond that until he had grasped the full meaning and acted upon it.” He further argued, “I swear by the One God that where and in what context each and every Qur'ânic verse was revealed never escaped me. If I ever heard of anyone whom I could reach who was more knowledgeable than me about the Book of God, then I would go and meet him.”

In this connection, Anas b. Mâlik asserted that “if a man recited by heart Sûrât al-Baqara or Āl ‘Imrân, he would rise in our esteem.” Abû ‘Abd al-Rahmân  

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16 Al-Tirmidhî, al-Jâmi‘, in the section Abwâb al-Qirâ‘ât, 3.  
17 Quoted by al-Ṭabarî in the Introduction to his Tafsîr, 1:80.  
18 Narrated by al-Bukhârî in his Ṣaḥîh, 9:47, in the chapter on Faḍā‘îl al-Qur‘ân, in the section on the reciters among the Companions of the Prophet. See also in the chapter on al-Faḍā‘îl on al-Bukhârî’s Ṣaḥîh, the section on Manâqib Ibn Mas‘ûd.  
19 He is Anas b. Mâlik b. al-Nadr (d. c. AH 92), a servant of the Prophet for ten years. It is stated that Anas stayed a lived for a long time. See Istâ‘âb, 1:108; Kamâl, 3:353, 378; Ibn ‘Asâkir, Târikh, 3:142-153.  
al-Sulamī\(^{21}\) said, "Those who taught us to read the Qur‘ān told us that they used to read the book at the hands of the Prophet and as soon as ten verses were learnt they would not go beyond this until they knew what action these entailed, thus teaching us both words and deeds."\(^{22}\) Thus, the Companions were a third source\(^{23}\) for information relevant to the interpretation of the Qur‘ān after, of course, the Qur‘ān and the Prophetic ḥadīths.

In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328) stated,

Then, when failing to find the right interpretation within the Qur‘ān or the Sunna,\(^{24}\) we would resort to the sayings of the Companions as these were reliable witnesses for what was revealed in the Qur‘ān and for the conditions which were specifically addressed. Also they were the people who comprehended both words and deeds in the Qur‘ān, of particular importance among these being the four Caliphs who were the Prophet’s Companions.\(^{25}\)

The Companions roamed the land spreading Islam and teaching people the Qur‘ān. In fact, some of them were well-known scholars and teachers of the umma (Muslim nation), teaching the Qur‘ān and explaining its interpretation.

In Medina, among the well-known scholars were ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (23 BH-AH 40/600-661),\(^{26}\) Ubayy b. Ka‘b (d. 30/651),\(^{27}\) and Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753);\(^{28}\) in Mecca, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās (3 BH-AH 68/619-687);\(^{29}\) in Iraq, ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd (d. 32/653);\(^{30}\) in al-Shām, Abū al-Dardā‘ al-Anṣārī and Tamīm al-Dārī; in Egypt,

\(^{21}\) Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, also known as ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥabīb al-Kūfī, one of the prominent Followers, was born in the time of the Prophet and died between AH 70 and 80. See Kabīr, 5:72, 73; Jarḥ, 5:37; Tahdhib, 5:183; and Ma‘rifat al-Qurrā’ al-Kibār, 1:45.

\(^{22}\) Quoted by al-Tabarī in the introduction to his Tafsīr, 1:80.

\(^{23}\) The first source is the Qur‘ān itself, i.e. interpreting the Qur‘ān by referring to other verses on the same subject within the Qur‘ān itself. The second source is the ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet narrated on interpretation.

\(^{24}\) Sunna, technically, means in this context the ḥadīths of the Prophet relating to tafsīr. See Burton, An Introduction to the Ḥadīth, ix.

\(^{25}\) See Muqaddima fi ‘Uṣūl al-Tafsīr, 42; Ibn Kathīr, introduction to his Tafsīr.

\(^{26}\) Mu‘jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:364.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 1:25.

\(^{28}\) Al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:176.

\(^{29}\) Nukat al-Himyān, 180; Hilāya, 1:314; Baghdād, 1:173; Tadhkira, 40; al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:232; Sezgin, 1:179.

\(^{30}\) Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirīn, 1:83; Ibn Sa‘d, 3:150; Zunūn, 1:429; Mu‘jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:327.
'Abdullâh b. 'Amr b. al-'Âs (7 BH-AH 65/616-684); and in Yemen, Mu'tâdh b. Jabal and Abû Mûsâ al-Ash'arî.32

Ibn Taymiyya commented,

As for exegesis, the people of Mecca were the most knowledgeable because they were followers of Ibn 'Abbâs,33 such as Mujâhid, 'Âtâ b. Abî Rabâh, 'Îkrîma the mawlâ (patron) of Ibn 'Abbâs, and others including Tâwûs b. Abî al-Sha‘thâ and Sa‘îd b. Jubayr. The people of Kufa, the followers of Ibn Mas‘ûd, were also distinguished.34 The exegetical scholars of Medina included Zayd b. Aslam.35 The Companions left a number of traditions interpreting some of the Qur‘ânic verses. These may be found scattered in exegetical works.36 Abû Shahîb said, “We have received a substantial amount of interpretation from the Companions, some of which is sahih (sound), some hasan (acceptable), some da'îf (weak), some disclaimed, and some dubious. There are also the Isrâ‘îlyât.”37

At this stage, during the second half of the first century AH, the traditions of the Companions were not recorded in a systematic manner. This kind of recording was only to begin in the second century AH. Exegesis was also considered as part of Ḥadîth. When the time of the Companions ended, or was almost at an end, and when these men scattered throughout the land, the time of the Followers began. Islam had spread widely by then, reaching many lands, but there were intrigues (fitan),

31 Zu'nûn, 429; Tahdhib, 5:337; Shadhârât, 1:73; Isâba, 4838; Ibn al-Athîr, Kâmîl, 3:413.
32 See Isrâ‘îlyât, 92, 93.
33 The reason that Ibn ‘Abbâs was the most knowledgeable commentator among all the Companions was that he was privileged, on account of the Prophet’s having prayed for him, to comprehend the meaning of the Qur‘ân and explain its verses to others. In one of his Ḥadîths, the Prophet said, “O Lord teach him [Ibn ‘Abbâs] the Book of God and wisdom.” See al-Tafsîr wa-al-Mu’assirûn, 1:67. Ibn ‘Umar (one of the prominent Companions) said, “Ibn ‘Abbâs was one of the most knowledgeable scholars among the Companions in the Qur‘ânic revelation.” See Usâd al-Ghâbâ, 2:192-195.
34 What distinguished them was their tendency to put forward opinions regarding religious texts, to innovate, and to deduce through reason. This was at variance with conventional methods, prevalent at the time, of not going beyond what the Prophet and the Companions said. See Encyclopedia of Islam, new ed., 5:350, s.v. tafsîr.
36 For example, see the Tafsîr of al-Tabârî, Jâmi‘ al-Bayân, also the Tafsîr of Ibn Abî Ḥâtîm, Tafsîr al-Qur‘ân al-‘Âmirmusnadân ilâ al-Rasûl wa-al-Sâhîbawala-Tâbî‘în.
37 Isrâ‘îlyât, 77.
differences of opinion, and wars among the Muslims, factors which led to the recording of Ḥadīth and the development of its disciplines.\footnote{38}{See Ţūnūn, 1:33.}

The Followers received information from the Companions, studied at their feet, travelled to visit them, and acquired their knowledge. The Follower Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (45-95/665-714) remarked, "At that time, the people of Kufa were in disagreement concerning the verse, 'If a man kill a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell.' \footnote{39}{Siirat al-Nisa', 4:92.} So I travelled to Ibn ‘Abbās and asked him about it. He said, 'That was the last verse to be revealed, then it was abrogated by something.'\footnote{40}{Ibn Abī Mulaykā reported that he saw Mujāhid with his writing boards questioning Ibn ‘Abbās concerning the exegesis of the Qur’ān. Ibn ‘Abbās told him to write it down and Mujāhid asked him for the exegesis of all of it.\footnote{41}{That is ‘Abdullah b. ‘Ubaydullāh b. Abī Mulayka al-Qurasht, a judge during the time of ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr. He was from Mecca and was considered a trustworthy narrator in Ḥadīth. See Jarḥ, 5:99.} Mujāhid is reported to have said, “I showed Ibn ‘Abbās the Qur’ān three times from beginning to end, and I stopped him at every verse and asked him about it.”\footnote{42}{Quoted by al-Tirmidhī in his al-Jami’al-Sahih, the section Kitab al-Tafsir, 8:148.} Qatāda said, “In the Qur’ān there is no verse that I have not heard something about,”\footnote{43}{Ibid.} that is, related on the authority of the Companions.}

Among the most famous exegetes among the Followers were Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (d.104/722), ‘Ikrima (d. 105/723) the mawlā (patron) of Ibn ‘Abbās, Qatāda b. Da‘āma (d.118/736), Rufay’ b. Mihrān al-Riyāhī (d. 93/712), al-Ḥasan al-Bāṣrī (d.110/728), and al-Ḍāḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d.105/723),\footnote{44}{Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in his al-Jami’al-Sahih, the section Kitab al-Tafsir, 8:148.} from all of whom al-Ṭabarī benefited on a large scale, as will be seen later.\footnote{45}{In Chapters VI and VII.}
After these, the second generation, *al-ṭabaqa al-thāniya* (i.e. scholars of the second century AH), began to write about traditional exegesis and to collect the sayings of the Companions and the Followers. Among them were Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812),\(^{47}\) al-Suddī (d. 150/767), Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767),\(^{48}\) Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d.160/777), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), Waḵī b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812), Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (d. 197/814), Yazīd b. Hārūn (d. 206/821), ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Šan‘ānī (d. 211/827), al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣiṣī (d. 226/841) known as Sunayd, Ādam b. Abī ɱayās (d. 220/835), Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Ishāq b. Rahawayh (d. 238/853), and ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd al-Kashshī (d. 249 AH).\(^{49}\)

At this stage, during the second-third centuries AH, the presence of books entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, such as those written by scholars among the Followers which we have just mentioned and those of subsequent scholars like al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā‘ī, and al-Ḥākim, are evidence that there was independent and parallel development in the discipline of *tafsīr*. The emergence of a full-blown work of *tafsīr*, such as the *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān* of al-Ṭabarī, from the third century, is startling evidence of the difference between the concerns of a *mufassir* (exegete) and a *muhaddith* (traditionist).

In compiling his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī nevertheless benefited from most of the scholars who preceding him as well as from the Qur‘ān itself and the Prophetic ḥadīths. The results of our statistical enquiry show that al-Ṭabarī’s citations from the two generations comprising the Companions and the Followers were plentiful, as will be thoroughly discussed later.\(^{50}\)

With the passage of time and the development of Islamic culture as a result of its contact with other cultures, and the outbreak of political, religious, and sectarian


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 2:92.

\(^{49}\) *Burhān*, 2:159; *Ẓunūn*, 1:430; *Iṣqān*, 2:190; and *Isrā’īlīyyāt*, 103.

\(^{50}\) For further discussion concerning al-Ṭabarī’s citations from these three generations, see Chapters VI and VII.
differences, the exegetes progressed from the stage of transmission to that of innovation (ijtihād, or raʾy) and rational argumentation. They did not refrain from explaining the Qurʾān according to their own opinions, departing from the customary knowledge which was restricted to the transmissions of their forebears.51

However, the Iraqis were the pioneers in exegesis on the basis of personal opinion because at that time Iraq was the largest of the Islamic regions using personal opinion in the formulation of Islamic Law,52 and since then it has been the cradle of exegesis and interpretation.53

From the second century AH, exegesis began to be influenced by the orientations of the exegetes and to be marked by their particular cultural backgrounds. There were grammarians such as al-Zajjāj (d. 311/929), al-Wāḥidi54 (d. 468/1076), and Abu Ḥayyān55 (d. 745/1344), who concerned themselves with philological incongruities (al-khilāfāt al-naḥwiyyah, al-lughawiyyah), and parsing (iʿrāb), who parsed the words of the Qurʾān so as to assist in its exegesis, and who were preoccupied with grammatical problems such as God’s words: “In hādhāni

51 Ahmad Amīn, Duḥā, 2:138.
52 We have already mentioned that Kufa, one of the cities of Iraq, was distinguished among the other Islamic cities in that it employed personal opinion and rational argumentation in the exegesis of the Qurʾān and was the first in this field.
53 Exegesis (tafsīr) relies upon transmission on the authority of the Prophet and his Companions, especially concerning matters in which human judgement is powerless and regarding which rational argument cannot decide, for example the interpretation of the obscure separate letters with which some of the Qurʾānic sūras begin, such as alif lām mīm, hā mīm, and kāf hā yāʾ ayn sīd, and the abrogating (al-nāṣīḥah) the abrogated (al-mansūkh) texts. By contrast, interpretation (taʾwīl) relies upon innovation, personal opinion, and awareness of the meaning of terms, their method of use in literary styles, and the deduction of their meanings. Examples of exegesis and interpretation are scattered throughout the various exegetical works, some of them bearing the stamp of the scholars of Ḥadīth, traditionists who would not go beyond what was transmitted, while some of them are characterized by personal opinion and innovation. Other remarks have been made to explain the difference between exegesis and interpretation. For further information, see al-Dhahabī, al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirīn, 1:13; liṭānī, 2:1204.
54 Al-Wāḥidi is ‘Alī b. Ahmad (d. 468/1076), an exegete and literary scholar. He produced a large exegetical work entitled al-Bāṣīf dealing mostly with inflection, textual quotations, and language. He produced two further works, one called al-Wasīf, a selection from al-Bāṣīf, and the other entitled al-Wajīz. See al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:523; al-Suyūṭī, Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn, 23; al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt, 5:240; Ibn Kathīr, al-Ǧamāl wa-al-Nihāya, 1:523.
lasāḥirānī, instead of lasāḥiraynī (These two are sorcerers),56 “Ilādānī khaṣmānī ikhtaṣamatu fī rabbihim”, instead of ikhtaṣamā (These two are contenders, they contend about their Lord),57 and “In tatubā ilā Allāh faqad šaghat qulūbukumā”, instead of šaghā qalbākumā (If you two turn to God in repentance [for your hearts have sinned]).58 There were philologists like Abū ‘Ubayd59 and Qutrub,60 who composed works on the ambiguous or obscure words of the Qur’ān (gharīb al-Qur‘ān) and who were preoccupied with linguistic problems such as God’s words: “Fālā ansāba baynahum yawma ‘idhin wa-lā yatasa‘alunīn” (On that day [i.e. the day of judgement], there will be no relationships between them, nor will one ask after another)61 and “Wa-ushīna ba’dūhum ‘alā ba’dīn yatasa‘alunīn” (They shall approach each other and ask).62 All these produced works entitled Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān (The Meanings of the Qur’ān).

Some of them, such as Abū ‘Ubaydah Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā63 (d. 209/824), were concerned with the metaphors (majāz) in the Qur‘ān, for example God’s words: “Fābushshirhum bi-‘adhābin al-im” (Announce to them a grievous penalty). The jurisprudents differed concerning the exegesis of verses containing laws, and composed works such as Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān (The Laws of the Qur’ān) according to

56 Sūrat Tāhā, 20:63.
60 Qutrub, i.e. Muhammad b. al-Mustanīr (d. 206/821), was a Mu‘tazilite, grammarian, philologist, and literary scholar. His books include Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān, I‘rāb al-Qur‘ān, and al-Radd ‘alā al-Mūlīḥidīn fī Mutashābah al-Qur‘ān. See Bughyat al-Wu‘āt, 1:242; Inbāh, 3:219; ‘Ibar, 1:35; Miṣfāh, 1:160; Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, 156; Wafayāt, 3:490.
62 Sūrat al-Ṣaffāt, 37:27 and 50.
63 Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā (110-209/728-824) was a philologist, poet, and genealogist. Al-Jāḥīz remarked, “There was not a Kharjīite in the land more knowledgeable in all the sciences than Ma‘mar.” To him are attributed some 200 works including Majāz al-Qur‘ān, printed in two volumes, I‘rāb al-Qur‘ān, and Ma‘ānī al-Qur‘ān. See Baghdadī, 13:252; al-Nawawi, Lughāt, 2:260; Wafayāt, 5:235; Mizān, 4:155.
the school of Mālik (d. 93/795),64 Ḥikām al-Qurʿān by al-Shafiʿī, according to the school of al-Shafiʿī65 (150-204/767-820), Ḥikām al-Qurʿān by Dāwūd b. ‘Alī al-Zāhirī,66 and Ḥikām al-Qurʿān by al-Qurtubi67 (d. 671/1273).

The scholastic theologians (mutakallimūn), for example al-Zamakhsharī,68 interpreted some of the verses of the Qurʿān in order to support their particular school of thought. Even though very few of their books are extant, there have nevertheless survived Maʿānī al-Qurʿān by Wāsīl b. ‘Aṭāʾ69 and the books of Qurtubi Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr including al-Radd ‘alā al-Mulḥidīn fi Mutashabīh al-Qurʿān. In a similar manner, those concerned with the rational sciences employed some Qurʿānic verses in order to corroborate the views of the philosophers and thinkers, as did al-Rāzī.70

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64 Mālik b. Anas (93-179/712-795), the famous jurist, one of the four scholars of the Sunnites and the founder of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. His books of exegesis include Gharib al-Qurʿān. See Tadhkira, 207; Tahdhib, 10:5; Sezgin, 2:120; Mustatrafa, 13; Muḥammad Abū Zahra, Mālik b. Anas.

65 He is Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shafiʿī, the famous jurist, one of the four scholars of the Sunnites and the founder of the Shafiʿī school of jurisprudence. His books of exegesis include Aḥkām al-Qurʿān. See al-Dawūdi, Tabaqat, 2:314; Inbah, 3:265; Taj al-Tarajim, 71; Mirʿat al-Jinan, 3:264; Bidaya, 12:219.

66 See the biography of al-Qurtubi in Zunun, 534; Wāfī, 2:122; al-Suyūṭī, Tabaqat al-Muṣaffarīn, 28; al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqat, 2:65; Shadhīrat, 5:335.

67 Al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/1075-1144), that is, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Jārahū, was a linguist, rhetorician, grammarian and exegete. He was also a Muʿtazilite. His most famous work is Taʿṣīr al-Kashkhāf ʿan Ḥaqūq al-Tanzīl, on the exegesis of the Qurʿān. See al-Suyūṭī, Tabaqat al-Muṣaffarīn, 41; al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqat, 2:314; Inshāʾ, 3:265; Tāj al-Tarāʾīm, 71; Mirʿāt al-Jīmān, 3:264; Bidāya, 12:219.

68 Wāsīl b. ‘Aṭāʾ (80-130/700-748), i.e. al-Ghazzūl Abū Ḥudhayfah, the founder of the thought of the Muʿtazilite sect, whose followers were called al-Wāṣīliyya after him. One of his works is Maʿānī al-Qurʿān. See al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqat, 2:356; Miṣān, 4:329; Wafayat, 6:7; Kahhala, 13:159; and Muʿjam al-Muṣaffarīn, 2:718.

69 Yaḡūṭ, Muʾjam, 19:147; and Ahmad Amīn, Duḥā, 92-146.
The sufis, like Ibn ‘Arabī al-Andalusī, also coloured their exegesis with their particular viewpoint.

In the second and third centuries AH, a generation of exegetes arose who compiled the exegetical materials and collected the scattered teachings of those who preceded them in studying the Ḥadīth and statements of the Companions, the Followers, and their adherents. Among this new generation were Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d.327/938), Ibn Mardawayh (d. 410/1019), and others.

Al-Ṭabarī lived in the third century AH/ninth century AD and studied the different kinds of exegesis, both that which had been produced before him and that of his time. He travelled to many places in order to seek knowledge and gather traditions. He read for a time and listened to the scholars for a time (that is, he narrated from them with the chains of transmission), benefiting from the procedures and isnāds of his predecessors (salaf) who were his forebears in the exegesis of the Qurʾān, whether this be by Ḥadīth and statements linked by chains of transmission to the Prophet and Companions, or by rational argumentation and personal opinion concerning what is probable, preferable, and derivable. From the various kinds of exegesis, al-Ṭabarī chose the most appropriate and suitable for the school which he followed in his exegesis. He taught this to his disciples, even though he believed that exegesis based on the traditions of the Prophet and the Companions was obligatory for those who purported to study religion, as is clear from the Introduction to his Tafsīr.

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71 Ibn ‘Arabī (560-638/1165-1240), that is, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, known as Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ‘Arabī, a sufī and jurisprudent, was known for his school propounding a form of existentialism (wihdat al-wujūd). His books include an exegetical commentary on the Qurʾān entitled al-Jāmiʿ wa-al-Tafsīr fī Asrār Maʿānī al-Tanzil. See al-Suyūṭī, Tabaqāt al-Mufassirīn, 38; al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqāt, 2:202; Wāfi, 4:173; al-Nuṣūm al-Zāhīra, 6:339.

72 His followers were known as the Jarīrīyya. Al-Ṭabarī’s school adhered the Shāfī’ī school of jurisprudence before it separated and became an independent school. See al-Ṣabbāgh, Lamahāt, 269.
Chapter III

Al-Ṭabarî’s Commentary on the Qur’ān

(Jāmi‘ al-Bayān)

1. Preface

The purpose of the present chapter is to present a general overview of the Tafṣīr of al-Ṭabarî, by briefly discussing the following topics: the book’s title, the value of this Tafṣīr in the view of well-known scholars, the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafṣīr, the story behind the compilation of this book, the discovery of this commentary, whether al-Ṭabarî himself wrote down his Tafṣīr or asked his students to copy it down as he dictated it to them, the summarized versions of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafṣīr, the translations of the Tafṣīr into other languages, and its printed editions.

Al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qur’ān is referred to in a variety of ways, including the following: Kitāb al-Tafṣīr (The Book of the Interpretation),1 Kitāb Tafṣīr al-Qurʾān (The Book of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān), Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an al-Qurʾān (The Comprehensive Explanation of the Qurʾān),2 Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta‘wil āy al-Qurʾān (The Comprehensive Explanation of the Exposition of the Verses of the Qurʾān),3 or simply Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarî.4

Al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qurʾān is unanimously considered to be one of the most precious, sound, and ancient works of interpretation which have reached us in a complete form. Ibn al-Nadîm said, “No book has ever been compiled better than this.”5 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdâdî (392-463/1002-1072) said, “Al-Ṭabarî has a book on the interpretation of the Qurʾān, similar to which no one has ever compiled another book.”6 He added, “It was related to me that Abū Ḥāmid ʿAlī b. ʿAbī Ṭāhir al-

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1 Baghdād, 2:163; Nadîm, 292; Wâfî, 2:285; al-Subkî, Ṭabaqât, 3:121.
2 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:41. This same title appears on the cover of the copy of the text in MS no. 245 in the Department of Manuscripts, General Library, King Sa’ud University, Saudi Arabia.
3 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:41. The title Jāmi‘ al-Bayān indicates that this interpretation of the Qurʾān was compiled from a number of interpretations and that it intends to be an exhaustive treatment.
4 Baghdād, 2:163.
5 Nadîm, 292.
6 Baghdād, 2:163. See also 2:163; Ansâb, 367; Sīyar, 14:272.
Faqih al-Isfârâ’înî (344-406/955-1016) said that if a man travels to China in order to learn [lit. to get] al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qur’ân, his journey will not be wasted.7 Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328) said,

The most correct (sound) interpretation of the Qur’ân in circulation is al-Ṭabarî’s commentary. This is because it mentions the statements of the predecessors (salaf) along with their established transmitted chains, contains no innovation (bid’â), and does not transmit any narrations from suspected, questionable narrators.8

Ibn Ḥajar (773-852/1372-1449) mentioned that Ibn Khuzayma borrowed al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr from Ibn Khālawayh (d. 370-980) and returned it after some years. Ibn Khuzaymah then said, “I read this book from cover to cover and I do not know of any man on this earth who is more knowledgeable than al-Ṭabarî.”9

Ibn ʿAtîyya (d. AH 518) said,

Muḥḥammad b. Jarîr [al-Ṭabarî] - may Allāh have mercy upon his soul - has compiled for the people the interpretations of the Qur’ân which have been scattered here and there and made them handy, and he was unequivocal, methodological with regard to the transmitted chains (isnāds).10

Al-Suyûṭî said about al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr, “It is the most precious, valuable commentary. No one has compiled one similar to it, as was mentioned by al-Nawawi in his Tahdīlī. This is because in this book al-Ṭabarî has combined both al-riwāya (transmitted chains) and al-dirâya (ijtihad, or ra’y). No one, whether before or after him, has done anything similar.”11 Also, when questioned on which commentary he recommended, al-Suyûṭî replied, “The Tafsîr of Imām Abū Ja’far Muḥḥammad b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî.”12 Al-Dāwūdî (d. AH 945) narrated from Abū Muḥḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Ṭahmāl al-Farghānî, that he, wrote in his history saying,

Among Muḥḥammad b. Jarîr’s writings, he completed the commentary of the Qur’ân. He perfected that book, explaining the legal consequences of the

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7 Ibid.
9 Lisān, 5:102. See also Baghdād, 2:164; Yâqūt, Mu’jam, 18: 42-43.
10 Muqaddimat Tafsîr Ibn ʿAtîyya, 1: 19. See also Burhān, 2:159.
11 Al-Suyûṭî, Ṭabaqât al-Mufassirîn, 96.
12 Itqān, 4:213.
Qur'ān (ahkām), the abrogated verses (al-āyāt al-mansūkha), and the verses abrogating them (al-āyāt al-nāsikha), the difficult statements (mushkil), the obscure constructions (al-tarakīb al-ghariba), its meaning, and the differences among the commentators and scholars regarding its fiqh, lawful and unlawful, and their interpretation, and what is correct according to him among their opinions.

Al-Farghānī added, “If any scholar were asked to compile out of this book ten books, each one containing an individual comprehensive and marvellous branch of knowledge, he would be able to do so.”

In the introduction to his book al-‘Ujāb, Ibn Ḥajar said,

In addition to the spacious narrations cited in his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī added certain things which they [i.e. Ibn Abī Ḥātim (240-327/854-938), Ibn al-Mundhir (242-319/856-931), and ‘Abd b. Ḥamīd] did not share with him. These things included the readings of the Qur'ān (qira'āt), grammatical points (i'rab), emphasis on meanings in the majority of verses, expressing his own comment (rā'y), and tackling the problem of the favouring of some statements over others. All those who compiled books on the interpretation of the Qur'ān after him did not combine the things he combined in his commentary. This is because al-Ṭabarī mastered these disciplines on an equal level, while others excelled in one branch of discipline and did not fully master the other branches.

Al-Ṭabarī prefaced his work with an introductory section which touches upon a number of hermeneutical considerations. In addition to traditions, linguistic and lexical concerns, such as the commonly accepted ‘readings’ (qira’āt) of the Qur'ān, al-Ṭabarī discusses the opinions and objections of those who opposed all exegetical activity and the reputations of previous commentators, whether revered or denigrated in the passage of time. All these things and others will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

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13 Al-Dawūdi, Tabaqāt; 2: 11.
14 Every one of these scholars wrote a Tafsīr. See their biographies in Mu'jam al-Mufassirin, 2:465, 1:271.
15 Al-Suyūṭī, Durr, 6: 423.
16 The only extended treatment in Western languages of al-Ṭabarī's introduction to his Tafsīr is to be found in an article published a long time ago by O. Lot, “Ṭabarī's Korankommentar”, ZDMG, vol. 35 (1881), 588-628.
17 See the Introduction to al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr, 1:77-89.
18 See Chapter IV.
2. The Methodological Achievement of al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr

Al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qur’ān gained a reputation for being dependent solely upon transmitted narrations, randomly arranged for the purpose of comprehensive exegetical coverage. However, there have been some scholars who have rejected this opinion, such as the Tunisian scholar Muḥammad al-Fāḍil b. ʿĀshūr, who wrote,

Those who regard al-Ṭabarî’s commentary as being solely dependent on transmitted narrations are only taking into account its external composition which contains many isnâds and transmitted traditions. They do not contemplate al-Ṭabarî’s method and his manifest objective behind mentioning these classified, arranged, and thoroughly-examined transmitted chains.

In fact, al-Ṭabarî’s commentary, in addition to being rich in transmitted narrations and ḥadîths, also evaluates foregoing scholars’ opinions and gives preponderance to some of them over others. He also mentions desinential inflection and the discovered (deducted) meanings, such as were noticed in the statements mentioned earlier of some scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, al-Suyūṭī, and Ibn Ḥajar.

As we have seen, most succeeding scholars, and particularly Ibn ʿĀshūr, praised al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr for its being methodical and precise in transmitting isnâds. On the other hand, because of the tremendous number of exegetical traditions which it combines, this Tafsîr is usually judged to be solely a particular source of tafsîr bi-al-maṭhûr. As we have noted, this huge compendium of transmissions was said to have been put together randomly, as al-Ṭabarî did not apply any specific method in classifying his isnâds. Yet Jâmi’ al-Bayān is far more than simply a compilation of the extant exegetical material. It is a carefully structured work demonstrating

19 Al-Ṣabbâḥ, Lâmahât, 270.
20 Ibn ʿĀshūr, Al-Tafsîr wa-Riṣālah, 36.
21 Al-Dhahâbî, al-Tafsîr wa-al-Mufassirûn, 1: 207.
22 This is alleged to have been said by the sociologist scholar Ibn Khaldûn. Ibn Khaldûn stated, “The Qur’ānic commentaries of al-Ṭabarî were filled with materials of such a nature [unaccepted narrations] transmitted on the authority of such people [suspected]” (Muqaddimât Ibn Khaldûn, 2:444). J. Cooper says, “Often al-Ṭabarî is content to list the divergent opinions [traditions] on a word or a phrase, and to leave them as they are, even citing contradictory opinions from the same person without attempting to resolve them” (The Commentary on the Qur’ân, p. xiii).
considerable insight and judgement. That al-Ṭabarî was clearly aware of methodological issues is evident from the very first pages.\(^{23}\)

Fu'ād Sezgin draws his readers' attention to the value of the isnāds in al-Ṭabarî's Tafsīr, since they can be used to prove the existence of ancient books from which al-Ṭabarî borrowed the materials of his Tafsīr.\(^{24}\)

We will reserve until later our examination of this problem since it requires an extensive study in order to examine and weigh these two opinions in an attempt to establish whether or to what degree these chains of transmission are reliable. In connection with this, we will consider whether these chains of transmission are cited coincidentally, accidentally, or in an attempt (i.e. by al-Ṭabarî) to follow, more or less, a systematic method. At the same time, we must attempt to assess whether they are organized and arranged in a helpful manner to clarify the meaning of the verses of the Qur’ān.\(^{25}\)

A few valuable source-analytical studies exist in the field of Ḥadīth,\(^{26}\) but I will show in what follows that the issue can also be examined in the field of traditional exegesis (tafsīr bi-al-ma‘thūr) and in the Sciences of the Qur’ān (‘ulum al-Qur’ān).

3. The Story behind the Compilation of this Book

According to al-Khaṭīb’s narration to his students, al-Ṭabarî described as follows the story behind his compiling this Tafsīr and his famous book al-Tārīkh:

Do you have enough energy and effort to interpret the Qur’ān? They said: How big should it be? He answered: Thirty thousand pages. On hearing this they said: We will all be dead before completing it. Consequently, he summarized it in three thousand pages. He then said to them: Do you have

\(^{23}\) Cf. J. D. McAuliffe, Qur’ānic Hermeneutics, 48.

\(^{24}\) Sezgin, 1:160.

\(^{25}\) Further details and investigation regarding these questions can be found in the Introduction.

enough energy and effort to write the history of the world from Ádam to this age of ours. They said: How big should it be? He gave an answer similar to the one he gave regarding the commentary on the Qur'án, and they gave a similar reply, to which he said: We are God's and to Him we shall return. Ambition is dead.

It thus seems that al-Ṭabarí initially planned his Tafsír to be bigger than it is now. But when he proposed to his students that he was going to dictate to them a tafsír of thirty thousand pages, they found it too much. So al-Ṭabarí summarized it for them in three thousand pages.

For three years before starting his project, al-Ṭabarí made the istikhārā prayer to seek God's guidance and he spent thirty years in compiling his Tafsír.

Al-Ṭabarí was considered the principal person to collect wide-ranging material of traditional exegesis in a move to standardize the works of Qur'ánic explanation. On account of his momentous work, al-Ṭabarí obtained the title “the master of tafsír”. Not only did his work become the most outstanding reference tool for Muslim scholars, but it has also been accepted as a source of information on historical and critical research by Western scholars.

4. The Discovery of this Commentary

Until recently, al-Ṭabarí’s commentary was considered lost without trace, but it was a great surprise to the academic community in the east and the west when a complete manuscript copy was recently found in the possession of Ḫumūd b. ʻAmīr Abū al-Rashīd, an emir of Ḥā’il in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia. Hence, we have

27 Al-Ṭabarí is equally famous as a muḥassir and as a historian, since he was the author of a vast collection of annals under the title Tārikh al-Rusul wa-al-Anbiyā’ wa-al-Mulūk wa-al-Khulafā’ (The History of the Messengers, Prophets, Kings, and Caliphs).
28 Baghdād, 2:163. This narration was also reported by al-Dhahabi in his Siyār, 14:374. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, Muntazam, 6: 171.
29 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:439.
30 Al-Dhahabi, al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn, 1:218.
31 Ibid., 1:203.
32 Ibid.
33 Cf. J. D. McAuliffe, Qur'ānic Hermeneutics, 46.
come to have a comprehensive encyclopaedia on the interpretation of the Qurʾān through transmitted narrations.\(^{34}\)

5. Whether or not al-Ṭabarī wrote his *Tafsīr* or asked his students to copy it down as he dictated it to them

It became clear from our study of al-Ṭabarī’s life that he travelled widely in search of knowledge, Hadiths, and narrations. He later settled in Baghdad, where he became a famous scholar. He used to have a study circle in the Baghdad Mosque, which a large number of students used to attend in their quest for knowledge.\(^{35}\) This practice of learning circles was in fact a well-known method followed in the spread of knowledge at that time.

Abū Bakr b. Kāmil\(^{36}\) said, “Al-Ṭabarī asked us to copy down one hundred and fifty verses of his commentary on the Qurʾān. Then he came out and read to us the commentary up to the end of the Qurʾān. This was in the year two hundred and seventy (270/883).”\(^{37}\) It is reported in another statement that some students heard al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* and copied it down from one to another. The statement runs as follows: “It [the commentary] reached Aḥmad b. Ṭūs al-Sa’dī through reading and hearing from ‘Alī al-‘Āṣ Abī al-Ḥasan al-Jaṣṣī, from Abī Muḥammad al- Farghānī, from Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī. The original copy is at hand to be seen.”\(^{38}\) In view of the two texts just cited, it seems quite clear that al-Ṭabarī first asked his students to copy down his commentary as he dictated it to them, as was stated by Ibn Kāmil. The

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\(^{35}\) See Chapter I, on al-Ṭabarī’s biography.

\(^{36}\) He was one of al-Ṭabarī’s students. His biographical details are mentioned earlier, in Chapter I, on al-Ṭabarī’s biography.


\(^{38}\) This quotation can be found in the original manuscript of al-Ṭabarī’s commentary, of which the present researcher possesses a photocopy obtained from the Public Library, King Sa’ud University in Riyadh under the number 212/JJ. This is a copy of *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, written in an ancient script, and including *samā‘āt* (readings and hearings), meaning that it was transmitted from hand to hand through the generations hand by hand via *iṣnāds* and writings. I also possess other photocopies of the commentary, obtained from Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo; from Maktabat al-Madrasa al-Qādiriyya al-‘Amma, Baghdad, under the numbers F/54 and F/55; and from the Department of Manuscripts, King Faysal Centre, Riyadh, under the number MS no. 155.
words “read to us the commentary” suggest that he read it to his students from a document which he may have first written down. From this we may presume that there existed at that time a master copy, in the handwriting and arrangement of al-Ṭabarī himself.39

In the introduction to al-Ṭabarī’s40 commentary we find the following text:

“The commentary on the Qur’ān was read to Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] in the year three hundred and six AH.” The same thing is asserted in another copy of this commentary, beginning, “Imam Abū Ja’far [al-Ṭabarī] read”41 (my italics in both quotations). What concerns us in these two texts are the italicized words. The first text indicates that the commentary on the Qur’ān was read to al-Ṭabarī, whereas the second text states that it was al-Ṭabarī who relayed his commentary on the Qur’ān by reading it to his disciples. The latter statement agrees with the words previously cited from Ibn Kāmil, that al-Ṭabarī read to them the commentary and asked them to copy it down in AH 270. It seems safe to conclude from all this that al-Ṭabarī relayed (by reading, dictating) his commentary to his students in AH 270, then it was read to him by one of his students in AH 306, as was stated in the first text. He also read it to his students during the period AH 283-290, as was mentioned by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī42 and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī.43

These citations seem to indicate that al-Ṭabarī read his Tafsīr more than once: once in AH 270 and another time in AH 283. It was also read to him in AH 306. Thus, al-Ṭabarī’s commentary has reached us after reading, copying down, and authentication by al-Ṭabarī himself and then by his students and his students through the generations. At that time, it was common practice for leading students to copy

39 Al-Ṭabarī’s biographers state that he worked at a formidable rate and many cite the anecdote that he used to write forty pages a day for forty years. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (Baghdād, 2: 163) said, “I heard ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār, the linguist who was known as al-Samsamānī, say that Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī lived for forty years, in each day of which he used to write forty pages ...” Yāqūt (Mu’jam, 18: 44) said, “Some of al-Ṭabarī’s students counted the days of al-Ṭabarī’s life from the time he reached manhood until his death at the age of eighty-six; they then divided the pages of the books he compiled by that number and found that he had written fourteen pages per day ...”

40 See the edition edited by Shākir, 3.

41 MS no. 212/JJ in the Manuscript Department of the Public Library, King Sa’ud University (photocopy in possession of present writer).

42 Baghdād, 2: 164.

43 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18: 42.
down what their master relayed to them during the teaching sessions and for them then to submit their copies to him for authentication. Such was done in this case. When they had obtained his permission, they were then entitled to transmit the text in their turn, much as in the case of traditions, and to pass their copy on to other scribes who would see to it that the work was disseminated. In the case of a popular work such as al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr, many copies must have been made, for it quickly gained widespread acceptance as a major text.44

6. The Summarized Versions of al-Ṭabarî’s Commentary

Owing to the largeness of al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qur’ân, some scholars undertook the task of abridging it. Among the summaries produced were:

1- Abû Bakr b. al-Ikhshîdh’s summary. Ibn al-Nadîm said, “A group of scholars summarized al-Ṭabarî’s commentary on the Qur’ân, such as Abû Bakr b. al-Ikhshîdh and others.”45

2- A summary compiled by Abû Yaḥyâ Muḥammad b. Ṣumâdîh al-Tujîbî (d. AH 419).46 This summary was published47 in two volumes in Beirut, under the title Mukhtasar min Tafsîr al-Imâm al-Ṭabarî (A Summarized Version from Imâm al-Ṭabarî’s Commentary), edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan Abû al-ʿAzm al-Zafîṭî.

7. Translations of the Tafsîr into other language

Persian

Al-Ṭabarî’s commentary was translated into the Persian language by order of Abû Ṣâliḥ Maṇṣûr b. Nūḥ al-Sammānî (d. 366-977). Manuscript copies of this translation can be found in the British Library, no. 8, 9, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 2/25 and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Library, no. 955.48 A summary of al-Ṭabarî’s commentary by an unknown author was also translated into Persian, of which there is

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44 See Tafsîr; 156-165; cf. Cooper, x.
45 Nadîm, 292.
46 Sezgin, 526.
48 Sezgin, 526; Brockelmann, Suppl. I. 218.
a manuscript copy, written in the ninth/fifteen century and consisting of 650 pages, in the Library of Ayä Sofia (no. 87).  

**Turkish**  

There is a translation into Turkish, copies of which can be found in Dresden (no. 22) and Ayä Sofia (no. 87).  

**English**  

An English translation exists in one volume, which is in fact an abridged translation of a part of al-Tabari's commentary, the translator having omitted all of al-Tabari's *isnāds* and, in addition, many narrations which he deemed to have been repeated. He also amended al-Tabari's expressions through omission and abridgement. It was published under the title *The Commentary on the Qur'ān*, by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabari, an abridged translation of Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil āy al-Qur'ān, with an introduction and notes by J. Cooper.  

8. The Printed Editions of al-Tabari's Commentary  

Al-Tabari's commentary was published in thirty volumes in Cairo in 1321-1903 by the Yemeni Printing House. It was then published in a better format at the Amīriyya Printing House in Bulāq, Cairo, 1322-1330/1903-1911.  

Finally, Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir edited and published selected parts of al-Tabari's *Tafsīr*: Sixteen volumes have been published in this edition, the first eight with the assistance of M. M. Shākir's brother, Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, who did the work of revision and traced some of the ḥadiths cited in the text. After the eighth volume, M. M. Shākir continued the edition of al-Tabari's commentary on his own.  

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49 Sezgin, 526.  
50 Brockelmann, III, 143.  
52 Sezgin (1:26) cited his name as Muḥammad Maḥmūd Shākir, which may be a misprint.  
53 In the introduction to the tenth volume of al-Tabari's commentary, written by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, the following statement is made: "... in the introduction to the fourth volume I indicated that I verified the traditions and narrations in co-operation with my brother ... As from the ninth volume, I undertook the task on my own, and edited volumes nine and ten ..." In the introduction to the eleventh volume of the same commentary, which was written by Shaikh Aḥmad Shākir, we read the following: "Since I started work on this commentary with my brother Maḥmūd Shākir, I took care
to review some of the transmitted chains, especially the hadīths which are traceable in ascending order to the Prophet Muhammad. I edited what I could of these hadīths ... Then my brother helped me in editing the hadīths. He was able to verify many traditions in many volumes and, thanks be to Allāh, he was well qualified to do the work...".
Chapter IV

The Methodology of al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*

1. Preface

In this chapter we will discuss the general methodology of al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*, showing how it governed not only his use of ḥadīths and reports transmitted from the Prophet, Companions, and Followers, but also his use of his personal opinion (*ra'y*) as well as other rational interpretations. We will see how frequently in his discussion he dismissed many commentators who preceded him and rejected their opinions. We will also notice how al-Ṭabarī placed importance on the need for clarity of discourse (*bayān*) when people attempt to express the depth of their hearts and indicate the promptings of their souls. In fact, al-Ṭabarī adopts a comparative method, comparing the *bayān* of the people and the *bayān* of the Qurʾān, which is in fact the words of God. The ultimate purpose of al-Ṭabarī’s comparison is to conclude that the *bayān* of the Qurʾān is the most eloquent because it is uttered by God.

It is necessary to scrutinize al-Ṭabarī’s convictions regarding the manner in which knowledge relating to the interpretation of the Qurʾān is attained. We will see from the examples cited below that when all external evidence was lacking as to the correct meaning of the Qurʾānic text, he often depended in his interpretation on the ostensible meaning of the words. It was his conviction, contrary to that of many grammarians, that in the Qurʾān there is no redundant letter and there are no expressions other than Arabic ones.

We will also consider al-Ṭabarī’s attitude towards the seven *ahruf* (sing. *ḥarf*), i.e. the dialects in which the Qurʾān is said to have been revealed.

Finally, we will notice some of the methods employed by al-Ṭabarī in interpreting the Qurʾān, such as his use of the word *ta'wil* instead of *tafsīr*; his references to linguistics, *i'rāb* (parsing or syntax), and poems, and his more common method of interpreting the Qurʾān verse by verse.
2. His Method in General

Al-Ṭabarî explained his methodology in a long Introduction at the beginning of his Tafsîr; in which he also reveals what motivated him to write his commentary. He stated,

The worthiest object towards which your attention can be directed, and the knowledge of which leads to the ultimate goal, is the study of something approved by God, which directs the pursuit along the path of right guidance as well as achieving all his desires. This is the study of the Book of God 'wherein there is no doubt'1 and about whose revelation there is no dispute, the reader of which will gain abundant provisions in the next world and a magnificent reward. 'No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it; it is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise'2.3 With this pious concern for the Qur’ân, al-Ṭabarî went on to state,

As for us, in setting forth its interpretation and clarifying its meaning and signification, we shall, God willing, compose a comprehensive book, which will combine everything people need to know about this Book and surpass all other books on tafsîr. In all of this we shall state whatever consensus (ijmâ’) has been arrived at, and has been transmitted by trustworthy competent scholars and authorities, thus indicating where there has been agreement concerning a meaning of a verse of the Qur’ân. However, we will also point out disagreement where this has occurred, establishing the reasoning of each opinion, and finally indicating, in a brief manner, what seems to be more correct according to our preference.4 In these words al-Ṭabarî stated concisely the principles on which his Tafsîr was based. Thus, in most places, al-Ṭabarî did not merely record differences of opinion among the Companions, Followers, and those who followed after them, but he also investigated and examined them. Examples of his treatment of these matters will be illustrated later.

Al-Ṭabarî began his Introduction by discussing the principle of ‘expressing meaning by clarity of discourse (bayân) and interpreting texts (muṣṣûs).’ He regarded speech (kalâm or bayân) as one of the highest graces (ni’am, sing. ni’ma) bestowed by God. Thus he stated, ‘One of the greatest favours which God has granted his

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1 Sūrat al-Baqara, 2.
2 Sūrat Fuṣṣilat, 42.
3 Tafsîr, 1: 6.
people and one of the most precious gifts which He has accorded His creatures is His bestowal of clarity of discourse (bayān). By so stating, he asserted that God has distinguished mankind from other creatures in as much as bayān is one of the clearest phenomena that places men in a higher rank than that of beasts. Through bayān, as al-Ṭabarī explains, “People express what is hidden within their hearts and indicate what their souls intend. By means of it, God has smoothed the coarseness of their tongues and eased what they have found difficult.” Al-Ṭabarī went on to argue that since bayān has become the distinguishing mark between bestiality and humanity, and the differing degrees of ability in discourse among mankind set one person above another, so the most able person in discourse should be a man of the highest degree and above all others.

On the basis of this, al-Ṭabarī placed the speech of God on a superlative level, which nobody could challenge for supremacy. He stated,

Since things are as we have described them, it is clear that no discourse is more eloquent, no wisdom is more profound, no speech is more sublime, and no form of expression is more noble than this clear discourse and speech with which a single man challenged a people at a time when they were acknowledged masters of the art of oratory and rhetoric, poetry and prose, rhymed prose and soothsaying.

It is therefore clear that in al-Ṭabarī’s view the purpose of discourse is to expose what is veiled in the soul and to clarify what is hidden in the mind. Starting from this point, al-Ṭabarī pointed out that if we attempt to give an explanation of a meaning (ma’na), we may say that it is the hidden intention which is presented by the expressions used to indicate its definite sense with a view to the addressee’s comprehension of the speaker’s intention. He argued, “Since this is the case and since it is impossible for any one of us to communicate with someone else in a way which he cannot understand, it is obvious it would not be permissible for God to address any one of His creatures in a way other than that he can understand.”

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5 Tafsir, 1:8.
6 Tafsir, 1:8.
7 Ibid.
8 Tafsir, 1:9.
9 Tafsir, 1:11.
Since God’s discourse is in a form familiar to that of the addressee, and since its intelligibility is a basic condition of its validity, al-Ṭabarī emphasized that his exposition of the meanings of the Qur’ān was in accord with the meanings of the terms in common use among the Arabs. He indicated,

Since what we have said is clearly correct... it necessarily follows that the meanings of the Book of God, which was sent down to our Prophet... must agree with the meanings of the speech of the Arabs, and its ostensible sense must concur with the ostensible sense of their speech, even if the Book of God is set apart from it by the sublimity through which it surpasses all other speech and discourse, as we have already described.10

It is clear from al-Ṭabarī’s statement that knowing the meaning of the Qur’ān is not difficult and that the addressees could easily comprehend its meaning since it was sent down in accordance with their language. In the following section we will illustrate this view of al-Ṭabarī in further detail.

3. The Importance of Knowing the Meanings of the Qur’ān

In his Introduction, al-Ṭabarī cites a number of traditions narrated to encourage people to gain knowledge in interpreting the Qur’ān. These quotations, as we will mention shortly, show to what extent the Companions and the Followers took the utmost care to explain every single verse of the Qur’ān, helping people to ponder its meaning and take warning from it. So, for instance, al-Ṭabarī reported ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd, one of the Companions, as having said,

No verse of the Book of God was sent down without my knowing where and about what it had been sent down. And if I knew of a place where there was someone who knew more about the Book of God than I did, and which riding animals could reach, I would go to him and learn from him.11

He noted also that Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab had said, “Someone who reads the Qur’ān and does not then contemplate or reflect on it, is like a blind person or a badw.”12

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10 Tafsīr, 1: 11-12.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 1:81. This report is also narrated by the Follower Saʿīd b. Jubayr.
Al-Ṭabarī depended upon the Qur'ānic text to demonstrate the legality and the obligation to interpret the Qur'ān. This is because, as he believed, God has urged His people to reflect on the verses of warning in the Qur'ān as well as the exhortations and evidences. In al-Ṭabarī’s view, this cannot be done unless the reciter comprehends the meaning of the text, because it is absurd to say to someone who does not understand what is said to him and cannot interpret it, “Be warned by what you cannot understand and by the words, explanations, and speech you cannot comprehend.” In other words, he must first learn to understand it, interpret it and then ponder on it and take warning from it. Furthermore, that one should abandon the task of interpreting the Qur'ān, which was the opinion of those who rejected the work of the exegetes, would make it difficult for Muslims to obey the command of God to “ponder on the Book of God and be warned by its wisdom and different sorts of admonitions.” This is because the revelation concerns the message being conveyed from the Creator to His creatures, which does not end just in reciting or reading the words and knowing their linguistic meanings. It goes well beyond this since Muslims have to comprehend the meanings contained within the Qur’ānic phrases as well.

Consequently, according to al-Ṭabarī’s argument, this procedure does not contradict appeals to linguistic logic since there is no way for the believer to ponder and consider the text if he cannot understand its true syntactic sense. Otherwise he would be placed in a position similar to that of a non-Arab who is asked to comprehend an Arabic poem that contains images, similes, parables, and wisdom; such a poem would obviously be useless and beyond his understanding. Thus, al-Ṭabarī remained within the orthodox school of linguistic analysis when he finally concluded that the addressee would not respond to the speaker’s call unless he could comprehend the meaning of his speech. Therefore, it would be impossible to ask him to ponder and take warning while he is ignorant of the meaning. This is relevant to the interpretation of the Qur'ān, since the Qur’ānic text makes use of expressions that

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13 Ibid., 1:82.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
have recognizeable meanings and teachings. Hence, the Prophetic ḥadīths are cited so that people can gain the knowledge they contain about both the recitation of the Qur’ān and its exegesis.

Consequently, one of al-Ṭabari’s most favoured reports is the one that was narrated by Ibn Masʿūd, because it recommends the superiority of knowing the meaning of the Qur’ān as it has been understood since the time of the Prophet. Ibn Masʿūd said, “When one of us had learnt ten verses, he would not go further until he had come to know the meanings and how to act according to them.”

In connection with this care taken to know the meaning of the Qur’ān, Ibn Taymiyya in many places quoted a favoured saying of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī which stated that “God did not send down a verse without His wishing it to be known for what purpose it is sent down and to what meaning it is intended.”

Al-Ṭabarī then moved on to mention other sources and other materials related to tafsīr apart from linguistic considerations. The first of these was the Qur’ān itself, then the Prophetic ḥadīths, and finally the reports that are transmitted from the two generations of both the Companions and the Followers.

4. Al-Ṭabarī’s Means of arriving at the correct Interpretation of the Qur’ān

In his Introduction, al-Ṭabarī devoted a section to discussing the various ways through which the individual commentator may arrive at correct knowledge regarding the interpretation of the Qur’ān. He began his discussion by citing the following Qur’ānic verse which touches very closely on his argument since it contains such terms as muḥkamāt (clear [matters]) and muṭashābihāt (ambiguous [matters]):

It is He who sent down upon you the Book, wherein are clear (muḥkamāt) verses that are the essence of the Book (umm al-kitāb), and others ambiguous

17 ibid., 1:80.
18 Ibn Taymiyya, Fatāwā, 31: 144-145.
19 Tafsīr, 1:73. Further details concerning these sources will be mentioned in Chapter VI.
20 ibid.
As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring discussion and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation, save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge (rāsikhūn) say: We believe in it; all is from our Lord; yet none remembers, but men who are possessed of minds.21

The framework of al-Ṭabarī’s remarks concerning muḥkamāt and mutashābihāt is built around three different kinds of the Qur’ānic materials, which can be classified into two main types.

First, are the clear (muḥkam) verses, those whose meanings are not hidden and can be known. Under this type there are two kinds.

The first kind consists of those verses which can only be interpreted by the Prophet Muḥammad,22 bearing in mind that, in al-Ṭabarī’s view, explaining the meaning of the Qur’ān is part of the Prophet’s message. Regarding this, al-Ṭabarī stated that those verses whose interpretation people must know have been made clear to them by the Prophet. Therefore, God commanded His Prophet to explain to people when He said to him, “We sent down to you [the Prophet] the Remembrance (al-dhikr) that you may explain to all mankind what was sent down to them, and so haply they will reflect.”23 God also states in another verse, “We have sent down upon you the Book, except that you [the Prophet] may make clear to them that whereon they are at variance, and as a guidance and as a mercy to a people who believe.”24 Each of these two supporting verses contains the clause li-tubayyina (that you may explain), where the Prophet is the subject. Al-Ṭabarī’s commentary then presents the various kinds of verses which fall into this first grouping.

Al-Ṭabarī summarized his listing by stating that it comprises the interpretation of those verses with regard to whatever they contain, such as the various modes of God’s command that have legal consequences relating to actions which may perhaps be obligatory, or recommended, or commands which are given for guidance only. This is in addition to the different kinds of interdiction, duties (wājibāt) of observing and implementing God’s righteous, and prescribed punishments (ḥuqūq wa-ḥudūd),

21 Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān, 7.
22 Tafsīr, 1: 74.
23 Sūrat al-Naḥl, 44.
24 Ibid., 64.
the proportions fixed by God for inheritance, the extent of legal obligations among His creatures, and the similar legal rulings which appear in verses that can only be understood through the Prophet’s interpretation.\textsuperscript{25}

Consequently, al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I} asserted that the only necessary discussion of these verses is regarding the God-sent Prophet’s explanation of them in his interpretation, to the exclusion of the rest of his community, either through a sound (\textit{mutaw\text{"a}t\text{"i}r}) tradition attributed to him, or through an \textit{\text{"a}h\text{"a}d} (single) \textit{isn\text{"a}d}, but by trustworthy narrators reaching back to the Prophet, otherwise through a \textit{hasan} (fair, or reliable) \textit{isn\text{"a}d} by an accurate (\textit{sad\text{"u}g}) narrator.\textsuperscript{26} According to al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I}, this explanation may take two forms. It may involve either a phrase from him (\textit{bi-na\text{"a}ss minhu}), constituting a direct commentary from the Prophet, or a convincing demonstration (\textit{bi-dal\text{"a}l\text{"a}}) such as an indirect \text{"h}ad\text{"i}th formulated to show what led the commentator to his interpretation.\textsuperscript{27}

The second kind of clear (\textit{mu\text{"h}kam}) verses, according to al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I}, are those of which everyone who possesses knowledge of the language in which the Qur‘\text{"a}n was sent down knows their interpretation. In this regard, al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I} stated that everyone who knows the language in which the Qur‘\text{"a}n was sent down knows how to interpret some verses of this kind.\textsuperscript{28}

There are, wrote al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I}, three particulars of this linguistic communality. They include first of all a comprehension of the language’s desinential inflection (\textit{iq\text{"a}mat i\text{"a}rab\text{"i}h}). Secondly, there must be a recognition of the inherent signification of the nouns which are not homonyms (\textit{al-musammay\text{"a}t bi-as\text{"a}m\text{"a}\text{"i}h\text{"a} al-l\text{"a}zima ghayr al-mushtarika fi\text{"a}h}). The last thing required is an understanding of the things qualified by essential descriptive and specific attributes (\textit{al-maw\text{"u}f\text{"a}t bi-sif\text{"a}tih\text{"a} al-kh\text{"a}\text{"s}sa d\text{"u}na m\text{"a}\text{"s}i\text{"w}\text{"a}\text{"h}}).\textsuperscript{29}

The Qur‘\text{"a}nic example which al-\text{"I}abar\text{"I} cited to illustrate his classification covers only one of these three particulars. This example is as follows. If someone

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Tafs\text{"i}r}, 1: 74.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 1: 92-93.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 1: 74.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, 1: 24.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, 1: 75.
reads the Qur'ānic verse, “When it is said to them: do not work corruption in the land, they say: We are only ones that put things right. Truly they are the workers of corruption, but they are not aware,” the reader knows that the meaning of “working corruption” (ifsād) is connected with doing something detrimental or harmful (muḍarra) which must be refrained from, whereas “putting things right” (islāh) is connected with doing those things which are good (manfa‘a). According to al-Ṭabarī, these root significations would be understood by any Arabic-speaker regardless of whether or not the specified particulars of ifsād and islāh were known.

The second type of Qur'ānic material in al-Ṭabarī’s classification into three different kinds relates to the “ambiguous” (mutashābih) verses, the interpretation of which, according to al-Ṭabarī, only God knows. As examples of this type al-Ṭabarī cited those Qur'ānic verses that contain references to future dates and times, such as the time when the Hour of Resurrection will begin, when the last trumpet will be sounded, or when ‘Īsā b. Maryam (Jesus) will descend from heaven.

To support this view, al-Ṭabarī quoted the following verse:

They will question you concerning the Hour, when it shall berth. Say: the knowledge of it is only with my Lord; none shall reveal it at its proper time but He. Heavy is it in the heavens and the earth; it will not come on you but suddenly! They will question you as though you are well informed of it. Say: The knowledge of it is only with God, but most men know not.

When the Prophet was requested by those who harassed him to inform them about the final Hour, he would only indicate it by its portents (bi-ashrātihā) and its appointed time by God’s signs (bi-adillatih), without defining its precise time according to day, month, or year. In both his commentary on the verse itself and in the present context, al-Ṭabarī was keen to insist upon God’s exclusive possession of this awareness or knowledge about the Hour.

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30 Sūrat al-Baqara, 2: 11-12.
31 Tafsīr, 1: 75.
32 Ibid., 16:298-301.
In further support of his view al-Ṭabarī cited the following ḥadīth, which, he stated, was reported by the Prophet when he talked to his Companions about the Antichrist (Dajjāl). The Prophet said, “If he emerges while I am still among you, then I am the one who will bring proof against him, but if he emerges after I have gone, then God will take over my place to protect you from him.”

This example shows that the Prophet had no knowledge about any of these things in terms of a definite year or day. God only informed him about their advent together with their portents, and only announced their time indefinitely.

Al-Ṭabarī concluded the analysis of two types of the Qur’ānic verses with regard to their interpretation- the muḥkam and the mutashābih- by citing a ḥadīth and a report narrated by both Ibn ‘Abbās and the Prophet himself. These reports run as follows:

‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās narrated saying, “There are four kinds of exegesis: an exegesis which the Arabs know through their language, an exegesis which no one may be excused for not knowing, an exegesis which the learned know, and an exegesis known only to God.”

The Qur’ān was sent down according to four types (ahruf) [of passages with regard to their interpretation]: the lawful and the unlawful, which no one may be excused for not knowing, the exegesis which the Arabs can explain [i.e. according to their language], the exegesis which the learned (‘ulamā’) can explain, and the ambiguous type (mutashābih) known only to God. Whoever claims mastery of this last type, apart from God, is a liar.

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36 *Dajjāl* is the name of the figure who, according to Islamic tradition and faith, will appear before the end of time to spread corruption and his tyrannical rule over the world. Various signs of his coming, his description, and the events associated with him have been given in the traditions in the major collections. It is narrated that he will be defeated and killed by Christ (‘Īsā b. Maryam) after his second coming, or by the promised Mahdī.


38 *Tafsīr*, 1: 74-75.


40 Before quoting this ḥadīth, al-Ṭabarī mentioned that there were some reservations concerning it. The possible reason why al-Ṭabarī said this was that this ḥadīth was narrated by Muḥammad b. al-Sā‘īb al-Khāli (d. 1467/63), who was judged to be a suspect narrator and accused of telling lies, as al-Ṭabarī stated in his *Tafsīr*, 1: 76. See also al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 144; *Wafayāt*, 4: 309; *Khulāṣa*, 288; *Mīzān*, 3: 556; *Tahdhib*, 9: 178.
We may notice that these two supporting reports do not precisely match al-Ṭabarî’s argument. This is because in both of them, the Prophet shares his specialized knowledge with the learned (‘ulamā‘), at least in those Qur’ānic passages which carry legal consequences.

5. The Validity of Interpreting the Qur’ān according to Ijtihād, or Ra’y

Al-Ṭabarî devoted a section of his Tafsīr to investigating the opinion of some scholars who rejected the validity of explaining the Qur’ān according to reasoning (ra’y or ijtihād). He entitled this section A quotation of reports which have been mistakenly interpreted by those who reject the validity of the interpretation of the Qur’ān.41

Regarding this matter, al-Ṭabarî quoted a group of traditions, of which I have chosen the following as examples:

‘Ā’ishah, one of the Prophet’s wives, narrated saying, “The Prophet would never comment on anything from the Qur’ān, except a few verses, which Gabriel taught him.”42

When Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was asked about the interpretation of the verse, “And fruits and herbage (wa-fākiha wa-abba),”43 he is reported to have said, “Which heaven shall shelter me, and which earth shall carry me, if I say concerning the Qur’ān things of which I have no knowledge?”44

Ṣa‘d b. al-Mussayab narrated that when he had been asked to comment on a verse of the Qur’ān, he had said, “I would say nothing about the Qur’ān.”45

‘Āmir al-Sha‘bī is reported to have said, “There are three things on which I do not give my comment: the Qur’ān, the spirit (rūḥ), and reasoning (ra’y).”46

On this occasion, al-Ṭabarî gave his point of view on these traditions on the basis of what he previously elaborated concerning the varying degrees to which

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41 Tafsīr, 1:84.
42 Ibid.
44 Tafsīr, 1:78.
46 Ibid., 1: 87.
knowledge about the interpretation of the Qur’ān can be attained. He also expressed his doubt concerning the transmission of the isnād of the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’isha and gave his own explanation of the meaning of the texts (mutun, sing, matn) of these reports. Thus, he argued that if the report narrated from ‘Ā’isha, mentioned earlier, stated that the Prophet never interpreted the Qur’ān except for a few verses, this meant that the Messenger of God had left the explanation of it to his community (umma) and had refused to clarify the revelation to them! In fact, as al-Ṭabarī showed by referring to verses 44 and 64 of Sūrat al-Naḥl (previously mentioned), God had instructed His Prophet to convey and clarify the revelation to the people, telling him that He had sent down to him the revelation in order to explain its verses to all mankind.47 Al-Ṭabarī argued from these verses that the Prophet had carried out God’s command and performed His obligation set upon him by conveying and explaining the Qur’ān. This, he said, was also proved by the correct and sound (sahīḥ) report narrated by ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd when he said, “If a man among us learned ten verses, he would not go beyond them until he had known both their meanings and deeds.”48 Then al-Ṭabarī commented on the isnād of the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’isha by judging it as weak, or inaccurate and unacceptable, in accordance with recognized principles within the Sciences of Ḥadīth, because its isnād contains a questionable narrator, Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Zubayrī.49

As for the reports of some of the Ṭabī‘ūn (Followers), like Ibn al-Mussayab and al-Sha‘bī, who refused to comment on the Qur’ān, al-Ṭabarī justified their position as follows. Al-Ṭabarī compared the stance of those who refrained from interpretation with that adopted by those who acted with similar restraint regarding the issuing of legal opinions (fatwās) concerning events and occurrences in fiqh. They were prompted to this view through their conviction that God had not caused the Prophet Muḥammad to die before He had created a perfect religion for his umma. They were convinced that God had revealed His judgement regarding every possible

47 Ibid., 1:87-89.
48 Ibid.
49 Ja‘far al-Zubayrī was known to be an inaccurate narrator and was rejected as a muḥaddith by al-’Bukhārī, Abū al-Fāṭḥ al-Azdī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. See Jarḥ, 1: 1: 487, 488; Lisān, 2: 124; Ḥabr, 1: 2: 189.
occurrence through the Qur‘ān, Sunna, or Ḥadīth, yet they refrained from pronouncing judgement, fearing that their individual effort (ijtihād or ra‘y) was inadequate to execute the charge entrusted by God to His appointed ‘ulamā’. In a similar manner, those who refrained from discussing the exegesis of the Qur‘ān did so not because they believed that the correct interpretation was hidden or absent from the Muslim community’s learned men, but because they feared that they themselves might fail to deliver a correct message.50

6. Al-Ṭabarī’s Reliance on the Ostensible (ẓāhir) Meaning of the Qur‘ān

One of al-Ṭabarī’s general methods which he followed in his Tafsīr is his dependence, for the most part, upon the ostensible literal meaning of the Qur‘ānic expressions themselves, in cases where there is no other reliable evidence (i.e. Prophetic Ḥadīth) to which one could refer.

In this regard, al-Ṭabarī cited many examples, among them the following verse: “Then they said: Will you place therein one who will work corruption there and shed blood?”51 This prompted al-Ṭabarī to ask the following questions:

How could the angels say to their Lord, when He told them that He was placing a vicegerent on earth, “Will You place therein one who will work corruption there, and shed blood?” when Ādam had not yet been created, let alone his offspring, so that the angels could have known through the evidence of their eyes what they would do? Did they have knowledge of the unseen (ghayb) that they could say this? Or did they say what they said through conjecture? However, that would only have been a suppositional evidence, since they gave a statement of what they did not know for certain; and that is not in accordance with their attributes. What else could be the reason for what they said to their Lord?

To this rhetorical question al-Ṭabarī replied that scholars of interpretation held a number of opinions which he would quote, with their evidence, in order to arrive at a decision as to which of them was most likely to be correct. Then al-Ṭabarī cited a long narration transmitted by al-Daḥḥāk, from Ibn ‘Abbās, and commented on it by

50 Tafsīr, 1: 88-89.
51 Sūrat al-Baqara, 30.
noting how the tradition from Ibn ‘Abbās asserted that God’s words, “And when your Lord said to the angels I am about to place a vicegerent on earth,” were spoken by Him not to all the angels, but only to those who were of the tribe of Satan (Iblīs), who had fought on earth against the jinn before Ādam was created. Al-Ṭabarī asserted that God had addressed them in this particular manner so that they should learn the limitation of their knowledge, the superiority over them of many of His creatures less strongly built than themselves, and that His favour was not bestowed according to bodily power or strength, as Iblīs, the enemy of God, had wrongly supposed.

Following this, al-Ṭabarī quoted another narration, transmitted by al-Suddī from both Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd. In summary, this hadīth asserted God’s awareness of the arrogance that Iblīs had allowed to fill his heart, in response to which God declared His imminent plan to set a vicegerent on earth. The angels questioned who or what this vicegerent would be and were informed that he would be one whose offspring would “work corruption on earth and envy each other.” Astonished at this proposal, the angels questioned how God could choose such a vicegerent while they themselves were ever declaring God’s praise and holiness. But God knew about Iblīs what the angels were unaware of and so He commissioned Jibrīl to bring Him clay from the earth with which He would create Ādam.52

Al-Ṭabarī went on in further detail about this narration and cited in addition several narrations transmitted from Qatāda, al-Rabl’ b. Anas, Ibn Zayd, and others. Then he went on to notice how certain Arabic philologists held the view that the angels did not ask, “Will You place therein one who will work corruption there, and shed blood?” intending to contest the proposal of their Lord, but rather they asked this question with a desire to understand and to affirm that they themselves constantly praised God. They spoke these words because they hated to think that God should be disobeyed, knowing also that before this the jinn had received God’s command and had disobeyed it. Some others said that these words amounted to a request made by the angels for guidance concerning what they did not understand.53

52 Tafsīr, 1: 454-468.
53 Ibid., 1: 469.
Finally, al-Ṭabarî declared what was his own preferred interpretation, noting that the most probable of these interpretations of God’s words, “Will You place therein one who will work corruption there and shed blood, while we proclaim Your praise and call You Holy?” was that of those who said that it was an inquiry which the angels made of their Lord. Thus, the general meaning is, “Teach us, our Lord, are You going to place on earth someone with this attribute, and are You not going to place a vicegerent from among us, who proclaim Your praise and call You Holy?” They did not contest what their Lord had taught them He would do, although they were dismayed when they were informed that God would have a creature who would disobey Him.

Dealing with the claim that God allowed the angels to ask about this and that they then asked Him in a way which expressed astonishment, al-Ṭabarî declared that there was no evidence for this view in the ostensible revelation, nor in any Tradition from an authority which would be decisive. He concluded, “It is not permissible to hold any view about the interpretation of the Book of God for which there is no evidence from any of the ways in which a proof can be established.”

Al-Ṭabarî considered the interpretation of Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd, also supported by Qatāda, to be acceptable, that is, that God informed the angels that He was placing on earth a vicegerent whose offspring would cause corruption and that the angels asked their question as a mere inquiry. He did not dismiss as erroneous the view expressed elsewhere by Ibn ‘Abbās, followed by al-Rabî’ b. Anas, that the angels were asking whether the vicegerent would be like the previous inhabitants of earth, i.e. the jinn, nor did he dismiss the view of Ibn Zayd that the angels were expressing amazement that God could have creatures who disobey Him. However, he dismissed them on the grounds mentioned above, that there was no proof that they are correct. In such cases, he stated, the best interpretation is the one which is supported by the ostensible meaning of the revelation.54

In interpreting the verse, “Wa-laqa’d ‘alimtumu al-ladhīnā i’tadaw min-kum fī al-sabī fī-qunā lahum kūnū qiradatān khāṣī’ta” (And you know there were those

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54 Ibid., 1: 471.
among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them: ‘Be you apes, miserably stinking!’

al-Ṭabarī cited several narrations concerning the meaning of this verse which contended that the hearts of those who disobeyed the command of God were transformed and that they (their bodies) were not transformed into apes. The reference to “apes, miserably stinking,” commentators believed, was only a similitude which God coined for them. Al-Ṭabarī attributed this view, that their hearts were transformed and they were not physically transformed into apes, to Mujāhid (one of the Follower commentators).

Eventually, al-Ṭabarī dismissed this opinion and rejected it, arguing his case by relying on the ostensible meaning of the Qur’ān and asserting that God had really changed their bodies into apes and swine. To support his view, al-Ṭabarī appealed to a number of Qur’ānic verses and asserted that the opinion of Mujāhid contradicted the ostensible meaning of the text, that God stated in His Book that He made apes, swine, and worshippers of idols out of them (Sūrat al-Mā‘īda, 60), just as He stated that they said to their Prophet, “Show us God openly, but [God] struck them with thunder” when they asked this. Al-Ṭabarī stated that it was only reasonable to place a literal interpretation on the Qur’ānic narrative concerning the Israelites’ worship of the calf, in view of which God made their repentance to be declared in their killing each other. The same principle applied to the account of God’s commanding them to enter the Holy Land, when they said to their Prophet Moses, “Go forth, you and your Lord, and do battle; we will be sitting here,” which entailed God’s putting them to the test in the wilderness.

Thus, al-Ṭabarī concluded that it was just the same for anybody to claim that God did not literally change the Sabbath-transgressors into apes and swine as it was for another person to assert that all God stated about the Children of Israel, such as their opposition to their prophets and the exemplary punishments and chastisements...

55 Sūrat al-Baqara, 65.
56 For further information on this point, see Sūrat al-Mā‘īda, 60. Cf. Tafsīr, 2: 173.
57 Reference to the Qur’ān itself to interpret a Qur’ānic verse is esteemed one of the main methods of Qur’ānic interpretation.
which God brought down upon them, did not actually accord with objective reality. If anyone denied the literal meaning of the one text yet affirmed the literal meaning of some other text, he must, al-Ṭabarī asserted, be asked to produce the proof on which he based his opinion with regard both to the text whose literal meaning he denied and also with regard to that whose literal meaning he affirmed. Then he should be asked how this opinion differs from a widespread report or tradition. He went on, “This is in addition to the disagreement between Mujāhid’s opinion and the opinion of all the authorities who cannot be lying in what they unanimously transmitted. It suffices as a proof of the falsity of an opinion that all authorities should agree that it is mistaken.”

It is clear that al-Ṭabarī rejected the opinion of Mujāhid because he preferred to rely upon the ostensible meaning of the Qur’ān, not because Mujāhid contradicted the consensus (ītīficāq) where there was an agreement among the commentators. Thus al-Ṭabarī would rely upon the ostensible meaning where there was no other decisive evidence to which he could refer, yet, if he found a sound narration concerning the meaning of a Qur’ānic verse, then he would leave the ostensible meaning, as indeed he frequently used to do. So, for example, commenting on the verse “Wa yas’alūnaka māḏhā yunṣiḏūna qul al-‘afw (And they ask you what they ought to spend. Say: That which is beyond your needs),” al-Ṭabarī stated that the commentators differed concerning the meaning of ‘afw. Thus, some, such as Ibn ‘Abbās, Qatāda, ‘Aţā, and al-Suddī, said that it meant that they should give in charity the surplus of their money. Some others, such as Ṭawūs, said that it indicated spontaneous giving, to give charity in such a way as not to count or show to others what one gives. This opinion was also held by Ibn ‘Abbās. A third opinion reported by al-Ṭabarī held that ‘afw meant taking from people whatever they give in charity, no matter how much it is, whether the sum be large or small. The fourth opinion noted

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60 Tafsīr, 2: 173.
61 The rationalistic interpretation of Mujāhid, that the transformation was of men’s hearts and characters and not their natural bodies, was adopted by most commentators who came after al-Ṭabarī. See ‘Abd El-gādīr, Some Aspects of the Tafsīr of Mujāhid, 128-145.
62 See for example his interpretation of verses 6 and 7 of Sūrat al-Nūr. See also Chapter VII, on the discussion.
63 Sūrat al-Baqara, 219.
by al-Ṭabarī was that the word indicated one should give of one’s money what one is asked to give, while the fifth opinion noted by him held that the word indicated the fixed ordinance of charity (zakāt).

Finally, al-Ṭabarī stated that it was his view that the most correct of these opinions was that of those who said that the word ʿafw indicated surplus, so that one should give in charity the remainder of one’s money after using what was necessary for the upkeep of oneself and one’s family; indeed surplus is what the Prophetic reports mentioned and argued for. In support of this meaning, al-Ṭabarī quoted four reports transmitted by the Prophet. In one of them, Jābir b. ‘Abdullāh narrated that the Prophet said, “If there is one from among you who is poor, let him start by [providing for] himself and those whom he ought to support and look after [i.e. his family]. Then, if he finds after all that he has more than his need, that is, surplus or redundancy, then let him donate to others.”

Al-Ṭabarī concluded that since the Prophet advised his people to give for alms money that remained after providing for their own needs, the word ʿafw must indicate ‘surplus’, which indeed accords with the common speech of the Arabs, in which the word ʿafw carries the sense of superfluity. That is why God said, “ḥatta ʿafw (until they increased in number),” meaning that they were latterly more numerous than previously. In further substantiation of this favoured interpretation, al-Ṭabarī went on to cite examples from poetry in which ʿafw carried this same meaning.

In this example of his Qur’ānic interpretation, al-Ṭabarī leant for support on Ḥadīth and common Arabic usage, but al-Ṭabarī commonly depended for his interpretation on the practice of interpreting the Qur’ān through the Qur’ān itself according to its ostensible meanings. As we have previously explained, he would not refrain from this practice unless there existed an apparent conflict of meanings between different verses. In such cases, he would leave the ostensible meaning and attempt to find the interpretation that would establish an agreement between the Qur’ānic texts.

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64 See for the transmission of his ḥadīth, Muslim, Șahīh, 1: 274; Ibn Kathīr, 1: 503; al-Suyūṭī, Durr, 2: 254; Ṭafsīr, 4: 341.
65 Sūrat al-Aʾrāf, 95.
An example of this occurs in what al-Ṭabarī wrote regarding the verse, "Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein," on which he commented that commentators were in dispute regarding the meaning of the words, "His recompense is Hell to abide therein," and again he cited the various opinions. First, some said that the murderer’s recompense, if God rewarded him, was to be cast into Hell. Second, some others held that these words alluded to a particular incident that occurred in the time of the Prophet, an incident in which a Muslim man apostatized and then murdered a believer. With this in view, the meaning of the verse was that if any non-Muslim killed a believer with premeditated design, he was to suffer the retribution of Hell for ever. Third, any unrepentant murderer is to abide in Hell. Fourth, the purpose of these words is to warn anybody who wilfully intends to kill another person, since God has stated in His Holy Book that no repentance will be accepted of one who commits such a crime. His only prospect is to dwell in Hell forever.

Al-Ṭabarī transmitted a number of narrations adduced to support each of these opinions. Ultimately, he sought to achieve a compromise between the third and fourth opinions. He therefore stated his opinion that the interpretation first to be preferred was that which held that anybody who intentionally kills a believer will receive as his punishment banishment to Hell forever, yet, since God is all-merciful and all-forgiving toward those who believe in His message, He may in His mercy forgive the murderer, or perhaps place him in Hell for some time, but free him later through His mercy and forgiveness, in accordance with His declaration in another verse that He would forgive the believers among His servants: “Say: O My slaves, who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds)! Despair not of the Mercy of God, verily God forgives all sins.” After quoting this verse, al-Ṭabarī raised for consideration the objection that if the killer ought to be included within the scope of this verse, this would mean that the mushrik (polytheist) should also be included because polytheism (shirk) is also a sin. To this objection al-Ṭabarī replied that God

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66 Sūrat al-Nisā’, 94.
67 Sūrat al-Zumar, 53.
had specifically declared that He would not forgive the polytheism of anyone when He said, "Verily, God forgives not that partners should be set up with Him in worship, but He forgives all except that (anything else) to whom He pleases." Al-Ṭabarî observed that killing was one such lesser sin than polytheism.69

We see therefore that al-Ṭabarî did not interpret verse 94 of Sūrat al-Nisā' according to its ostensible meaning, which requires that the killer abide in Hell forever, but in such a way that it does not contradict statements elsewhere about repentance and the forgiving of all sins except polytheism.

7. The Redundant Letters in the Qur'ān

One of al-Ṭabarî's general and basic principles was that every single letter in the Book of God has a meaning, so that, contrary to the view of many grammarians, there is no redundant letter in the Qur'ān. Al-Ṭabarî took the trouble to investigate the view of those who held the contrary opinion and refuted their opinion in many places of his Tafsīr. An example of this occurs in his interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse: "Wa-idh qāla rabbuka li-al-malā’ikati innī jā’ilun fī al-ardī khalīfatān (And when your Lord said to the angels: I am about to place a vicegerent on earth)."70

There is a problem here and elsewhere in the Qur'ān with the Arabic particle idh. It should introduce a second clause in a compound sentence, as in, "I arrived at the meeting when (idh) it was breaking up," but in this verse (and other, similar ones) there seems to be nothing as a first clause. The claim was therefore made by the Basran philologist, Abu ‘Ubaydah (110-209/728-824),71 that the particle idh was redundant. Al-Ṭabarî rejected this argument on the ground that idh is essential to the meaning of the verse when it is taken in the context of what comes before and after it.72

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68 Sūrat al-Nisā', 48.
69 Tafsīr, 9: 57 onwards.
70 Sūrat al-Baqara, 30.
71 For his biography, see Baghdād, 13:252; Lughāt, 2:260; Tahdhib, 10:246; Miftāḥ, 1:150; Tadhkira, 371; Shadharāt, 2:24.
72 Tafsīr, 1:439.
Al-Ṭabarî posed the following objection: “Suppose someone were to say, ‘What then is the meaning of this clause? To what is the idh clause connected if there is nothing in the preceding passage to which it is attached?’” In his reply to these questions, al-Ṭabarî first observed that he clarified who it was whom God was addressing in his comments on the two preceding verses (“How do you disbelieve in God, seeing that you were dead and He gave you life…”). Al-Ṭabarî stated that in these words God rebuked them, denouncing their evil deed of remaining in error despite the blessing He had bestowed on them and on their forefathers. God reminded them of His might by enumerating these blessings and making known to them His favourable disposition towards those of them who repented, urging them to seek forgiveness. Among the blessings enumerated (in verse 29) was that He had created all that is on earth for them, and had made the sun, the moon, and the stars in the heavens subservient to them, as well as other benefits He had provided for them and for the rest of mankind. Thus, His words, “How do you disbelieve in God, seeing you were dead and He gave you life, then unto Him you are returned?” mean, “Recall My blessings which I have bestowed on you when I created, while you were not anything, all that is on earth and ordered what is in the heavens for you.” Then, observed al-Ṭabarî, God connects His words, “And when your Lord said to the angels,” with the meaning necessarily implied by His words, “How do you disbelieve in God...?” since they necessarily imply what al-Ṭabarî had mentioned, i.e. “Recall My blessings when I did for you as I did, and recall what I did for your forefather, Ādam, when (idh) I said to the angels, ‘I am about to place a vicegerent on earth’ (…wa-idhkurū fi ’ībi-ābabikum Ādam idh qultu li-al-malā’ikati innīja ’ilun fī al-arḍi khalīfā).”

Bringing linguistic support to his argument, al-Ṭabarî quoted examples from poetry of expressions necessarily implying clauses. He produced further evidence that idh is not redundant and that the context indicates its importance in connecting what is mentioned in the preceding verses and what is stated afterwards. Thus, al-Ṭabarî

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73 Sūrat al-Baqara, 28.
74 Ibid.
75 Tafsīr, 442-443.
refuted the opinion of those who felt that there exist some redundant letters in the Book of God.

Another example of al-Ṭabarī's refutation of this view occurs in his interpretation of God's saying, "Fa-qalllan mā yu'mīnūna (But little will they believe)."76 Al-Ṭabarī noted a disagreement among the grammarians about the meaning of mā here. Some said that it was redundant, so that the passage meant they believed in little, on the grounds that redundancy cannot be attributed to God's speech. Al-Ṭabarī preferred the opinion of those who refuted this view.77 A further example occurs in his interpretation of the verse, "Aw ka-al-ladḥī marra 'alā qaryatīn wa-hiya khāwiyatun 'alā 'urūshihā (Or like the one who passed by a town and it had tumbled on its roofs)."78 With regard to the prefix ka, al-Ṭabarī reported that the Başran grammarians claimed it was redundant. Contrary to this he asserted, "We have indicated elsewhere that it is not permissible for there to exist in the Book of God something senseless."79

8. The Language of Qur'ānic Expressions

Another working principle of al-Ṭabarī's general and basic methodology, discussed in his Introduction and followed in his Tafsīr, was that only pure Arabic language is contained in the verses of the Qur'ān. Thus, he affirmed,

It must therefore follow ... since the Book of God, which He sent down to our Prophet, Muḥammad, was in his language, and since his language is Arabic, the Qur'ān came in Arabic. This is quite clearly stated in the revelation of our Lord where He says, "We have sent it down to you as an Arabic Qur'ān; haply you will understand,"80 and where He says, "Truly it is the Revelation of the Lord of all beings, brought down by the Faithful Spirit upon your heart, that you may be one of the warners, in a clear Arabic tongue."81

Al-Ṭabarī concluded,

76 Sūrat al-Baqara, 88.
77 Tafsīr, 2: 330-331.
78 Sūrat al-Baqara, 259.
79 Tafsīr, 5: 438.
80 Sūrat Yūsuf, 2.
Since what we have said is clearly correct ... it necessarily follows that the meaning of the Book of God, which was sent down to our Prophet ... must agree with the meanings of the speech of the Arabs, and that its ostensible sense must concur with the ostensible sense of their speech, even if the Book of God is set apart from it by the sublimity through which it surpasses all other speech and discourse, as we have already described.  

Al-Ṭabarî rejected the opinion that there are in the Qur‘ān some expressions which are not original Arabic and he dismissed the view of those scholars who said that there are some expressions in the Qur‘ān borrowed from the Persian and Ethiopic languages. Al-Ṭabarî dealt with this matter in a section of his Tafsîr entitled Explanation of the expressions common to both Arabic and the languages of some other nations of mankind. After mentioning a group of these expressions, he commented that all that some of these scholars said was that such-and-such an expression meant such-and-such in Ethiopic and that another expression meant something else in Persian. He did not deny that there may be some utterances which agree in the speech of all the people of all different tongues, where they have one and the same meaning, let alone what might be the case between just two linguistic communities. Indeed, he asserted, we find such agreement common in different languages that we know- for example, dirham, dînār, dawāt (inkpot), qalam (pen), and qirṭās (paper)- where Persian and Arabic agree in word and meaning, so that it is quite possible there are similar cases in other languages which we do not speak. Al-Ṭabarî sought to demonstrate his argument by supposing a case in which someone

\textsuperscript{82} Tafsîr, 1: 11-12. 
\textsuperscript{83} All the words which al-Ṭabarî quotes, except one, are to found in the Qur‘ān, dirham (only in its plural form darāhima) in Sūrat Yūsuf, 22, dînār in Sūrat Al‘Imrān, 75, qalam in Sūrat al-Qalam, 1 and in Sūrat al-‘Aqāq, 4, and qirṭās in Sūrat al-An‘ām, 7. Al-Suyūṭî said in his Itqān (1:427-444) that most exegetical commentators were, like al-Ṭabarî, against the opinion of the existence of foreign words in the Qur‘ān, either reasoning along the same lines as al-Ṭabarî, or believing, contrary to al-Ṭabarî, that it was other languages that had borrowed from Arabic, which, since it had been chosen as the vehicle for the final Revelation, must be the most complete and perfect language. The fact that al-Ṭabarî was here refuting the argument that these words were originally non-Arabic, shows that such a view was current in his time. However, his aim was to show that such an opinion was not to be attributed to the authorities he had quoted, being only a mistaken interpretation of what they had said. Al-Suyūṭî preferred the opinion, included by al-Ṭabarî in his Tafsîr of the Qur‘ān, that since such words were adopted and fully assimilated by the Arabs, then they were truly Arabic. His list of these words contains borrowings from languages referred to by him as Ethiopic, Persian, Greek, Indian, Syriac, Hebrew, Nabataean, Coptic, Turkish, Negro (Zinjī), and Berber. For closer investigation of these points, see Itqān, 1:427-444.
were to assert concerning the examples of apparent loanwords he adduced, as well as others he refrained from mentioning, that all of them were either Persian and not Arabic, or Arabic and not Persian, or perhaps that they were originally Arabic and spread and became current in Persian, and then spread to the Arabs and became Arabicized. Al-Ṭabarī replied to all these propositions by commenting that anybody making such suggestions must be unlearned because the Arabs have no right to claim that the origin of an expression lies with them rather than with the Persians, and neither have the Persians the right to claim that the origin of such an expression lies with them rather than the Arabs. The only certain fact, he asserted, was that the expression is employed with the same meaning by the two linguistic groups. Since this was how matters stood, he wrote, no group could claim that any of these words was original with itself rather than with another group. Anybody making such a claim, wrote al-Ṭabarī, is asserting something whose soundness could only be established on the basis of clear evidence which leads to sure knowledge and eliminates doubt, and whose genuineness cuts short any uncertainty.84

Concerning this matter, al-Ṭabarī adduced further evidence confirming that the Qurʾān contains nothing that is not from the Arabic tongue. In conclusion he wrote,

We have given sufficient proof of the correctness of the opinion that God sent down the whole of the Qurʾān in the Arabic language, and not in any other language of the nations of mankind, and of the incorrectness of the opinion of those who claim that some of it [the Qurʾān] is not in Arabic or its dialects.85

9. The Arabic Dialects (ḥarfs) in which the Qurʾān was sent down

Among the things discussed by al-Ṭabarī in his Introduction were the Arabic dialects in which the Qurʾān was sent down. He wrote, “If we have managed to prove that the language of the Qurʾān is all in Arabic, then in which of the Arabic dialects (ḥarfs) was the Qurʾān sent down? In all of them, or in one of them?”86

84 *Tafsīr,* 1:12.
85 *Tafsīr,* 1:21.
Dealing with this question, al-Ṭabarī first observed that although the Arabs are called by the same name, they have different ways of expressing themselves and different manners of speaking. This being the case, and since God has informed His people that He made the Qur'ān Arabic and that He has sent it down in a clear Arabic tongue,87 and since this has ostensibly both a general sense (i.e. all the dialects are meant), then the only way for us to know whether God meant the particular or the general sense is through an explanation by the person to whom the proper explanation of the Qur'ān was accorded, and that is the Messenger of God. It is evident here, and in many other places elsewhere, that al-Ṭabarī accorded great importance to the Ḥadīth transmitted from the Prophet.

Al-Ṭabarī quoted a group of Prophetic reports which indicate that the Qur'ān was sent down in seven dialects. It will be sufficient to mention the following ḥadīth, in which the Prophet said, "The Qur'ān was sent down in seven harfī. Whichever you recite of these harfī, you would be correct."89

Eventually, al-Ṭabarī gave his opinion concerning these harfī, saying that the seven harfī in which God sent down the Qur'ān are seven dialectical readings for a single expression or a single word, with different verbalizations but the same meaning, like someone saying halumma, aqbil, ta’āla, ilayya, qasdi, nahwi, qurbi (all = "come"), and so forth.

Then al-Ṭabarī raised the following possible objection. Somebody might perhaps ask in a rhetorical manner, in which of the verses of the Book of God do we find a single expression recited in seven dialects with different verbalizations but with the same meaning? The implication is that this is impossible. Al-Ṭabarī replied by saying, "We do not claim that they are in existence at the present time; only it has been reported to us that the meaning of what the Prophet said is as the traditions have

87 See Surat al-Nahl, 103.
88 Tafsīr., 1:21.
89 This report was transmitted by Ahmad b. Ḥanbal in his Ḥusnād (6:433, 462, 463, Ḥalabi edition) and by Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna with the same isnād. It was also mentioned by Ibn Kathīr in Faḍlīl al-Qur‘ān, 64, where Ibn Kathīr commented, "This isnād is correct." It was also narrated by al-Haythami (in Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id, 7:154), who commented, "It is narrated by al-Ṭabarī and its transmitters are trustworthy."
explained, and this is what we have described. What we claim is not at variance with this, for the reason we have already explained." This led him to another possible objection. What, it might be queried, has happened to the other six ḥārfs no longer in existence, if the Messenger of God did indeed teach and command his Companions to recite them, and God sent them down to His Prophet, Muḥammad? Were they abrogated and taken back and, if so, what is the proof of this assertion? Or has the community forgotten them? But this would imply that they had caused something to vanish which they had been commanded to preserve. How can this be explained? Al-Ṭabarī’s reply was that the other six ḥārfs were not abrogated, nor were they taken back; the community who were commanded to preserve the Revelation did not cause them to vanish. The community was commanded to preserve the Qurʼān, and individuals were allowed to choose to recite and preserve it in whichever of these seven ḥārfs they wanted, just as they were commanded to expiate for breaking an oath, if they were wealthy, by any of the three expiations they might choose: by freeing a slave, or by feeding the poor, or by clothing them. Thus, if it is agreed that expiation may be made by one of the three ways that an expiator may choose, he will have carried out God’s ruling and discharged his duty towards God concerning it. In the same way, al-Ṭabarī asserted, the community was commanded to preserve the Qurʼān and its recitation, and individuals were permitted to recite it in any of the seven ḥārfs they wished. In fact, they decided, for practical reasons, to recite it according to a single ḥarf and discarded the idea of reciting it according to the remaining six ḥārfs, although they did not ban the reciters from reciting the Qurʼān according to one or all of its permitted ḥārfs.

This was the general methodology, concerning different issues in Qurʼānic studies (‘Ulam al-Qur’ān), which al-Ṭabarī explained in scattered places of his long Introduction and in some other parts of his Tafsīr. We may now proceed to give further details, in brief, concerning other aspects of the principles followed by al-

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90 Sūrat al-Mā‘ida, 89.

91 Tafsīr, 1: 13-59.
Ṭabarî in writing his *Tafsîr*. Thus, we may gain further knowledge of his methodology in the *Tafsîr*.

10. His Ways of Interpreting the Qur’anic verses

While the foregoing discussion has focused on the main principles followed by al-Ṭabarî concerning different aspects of *tafsîr*, the following study will attempt to deal concisely with some other methods of interpretation on which al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsîr* is based, and which he employed and followed in interpreting the verses of the Qur’ân one by one.

1. One characteristic of al-Ṭabarî’s style when he intended to interpret a verse of the Qur’ân was his use of the term *ta’wîl*. Thus, for example, he would begin by saying, “Al-qawl fi *ta’wîl* qawlih ... (As for the interpretation of His words ...),” after which he would give his comments on the verse by quoting materials relevant to all that he mentioned.

The materials which al-Ṭabarî quoted were the traditions reported by scholars of *tafsîr* and *ta’wîl*, which are cited with full *isnâds*. The transmitted reports of the exegetes and interpreters he quoted were firstly those classified as ḥadîths of the Prophet (if he succeeded in finding one), but more usually those deriving from the Companions of the Prophet, or the Followers. If there was more than one commentary or opinion on a verse, he would mention most of them, citing also their chains of transmission. These chains of transmission were important to him when he had to weigh the value of one tradition against another. After examining various opinions, al-Ṭabarî would make every effort either to reach some kind of compromise position, or to reason why one opinion should be given more credit than the others. He would preface his judgement by words such as the following: “This being the more correct in our opinion ...,” or “The most likely of these opinions is that of ...,” or “That view, in my opinion, is the nearest to being the correct concerning this, and the closest to the ostensible meaning of the Book of God ...”

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92 Although the latter of these two terms, i.e. *ta’wîl*, came to denote a more allegorical style of interpretation than the former, al-Ṭabarî apparently used both terms synonymously, as the very title of his commentary indicates. See *al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufassirûn*, 1: 17.
2- Al-Ṭabarī would occasionally find it sufficient to give just a brief explanation of the verse, in cases where there was not much difference of opinion among the commentators concerning it. See, for example his interpretation of verses 10, 14, and 16 of Sūrat al-Nūr.

3- Sometimes, al-Ṭabarī might not interpret the whole verse all at once, but instead divide it into sentences or words and mention for every sentence or word a number of different opinions. See, for example, his interpretation of the word sūra at the start of the first verse of Sūrat al-Nūr, and his division of the second verse of the same sūra into the sentences “let not compassion move you in their case” and “let a party (tā'īfa) of the believers witness their punishment,” i.e. two different parts of the same verse.

4- At times, al-Ṭabarī would cite other Qur’ānic verses to explain the meaning of a certain verse. Examples of this practice will be mentioned later.93

5- On many occasions, al-Ṭabarī mentioned the reasons behind the Revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl) to assist in determining the meaning of the verse. See, for example, the narrations he cited for verse 6 and the number of quotations he adduced concerning the event of ifk referred to in verse 11 of Sūrat al-Nūr.

6- In certain ways, al-Ṭabarī would sometimes shorten the text of a ḥadīth and cite only the part of it which was related to the evidence he used in interpreting the verse. See, for example, what he quoted concerning verse 22 of Sūrat al-Nūr.

7- Al-Ṭabarī would also clarify the meaning of obscure expressions or those that had uncertain meanings. For example, reference may be made to what he mentioned in interpreting the words quru’,94 tā’īfa,95 and nikāh96 (was it a synonym of waṭṭ or ‘aqd?). In seeking to explain the meaning of talaqqī in the verse, “Idh talaqqawnahu bi-alsinatikum (Behold you received it on your tongues),”97 al-Ṭabarī stated, “God means by talaqqawnahu receiving the ifk from those who brought

93 See Chapter VII, on the sources to which al-Ṭabarī referred in compiling his Tafsīr.
94 Siirat al-Baqara, 228.
95 Sūrat al-Nūr, 2.
96 Ibid., 32.
97 Ibid., 15.
forward this fabricated lie ... it is said according to language [i.e. in some other Arabic dialects], 'I received this talk from somebody,' meaning that I accepted it from him.  

8- Al-Ṭabarī would sometimes interpret a verse by referring to its variant readings (Qirāʿāt), since he considered these to be valid exegetical materials but since, as he himself explained, he dealt with this subject in another one of his works, i.e. Kitāb al-qirāʿāt, he had recourse to this method only occasionally. He generally seems to have considered the subjects of tafsīr and qirāʿāt as quite far apart.

9- Al-Ṭabarī sometimes interpreted an expression or word by referring to its philological meaning.

10- If having interpreted a certain verse and then a similar verse occurred, having a similar interpretation, al-Ṭabarī would refer the reader to his commentary on the previous comparable verse, as he did at the beginning of Sūrat al-Nūr when he referred for the meaning of sūra to what he had explained in the Introduction of his Tafsīr. Similarly, for the interpretation of khutuwat al-Shayṭān (the footsteps of Satan), he referred the reader to what he had mentioned on the interpretation of Sūrat al-Baqara, verse 168. This method of al-Ṭabarī is a characteristic of his Tafsīr and reflects his endeavours to summarize information and not to lengthen it by repeating details concerning Qurʿānic verses he had already explained.

11- Another of al-Ṭabarī’s methods is seen in his keenness to quote poems to prove that one of the Qurʿānic readings is more correct than the others, or to support an opinion he prefers, or finally, to explain a word phonetically.

12- After quoting a verse, al-Ṭabarī usually began by summarizing its meaning, before moving on to expound it in detail. Examples of this practice can be found in any part of his Tafsīr.

98 Tafsīr, 18:78.
99 See Chapter I, in the section on his works.
100 See, for examples, what he mentioned concerning khatṭa (Tafsīr, 2:110), qaswa (2:234), and the word ṣafā (3:224).
101 See vol. 1 pp. 104, 105.
103 See, for example, Tafsīr, 1:331.
13- Another of al-Ṭabarî's methods is seen in his keenness to interpret the verses on jurisprudence (aḥkāmi) in detail, and to examine and discuss the different opinions of jurisprudents.\textsuperscript{104} He might, occasionally, express his own original opinion on some legal topic.\textsuperscript{105}

14- Al-Ṭabarî also showed himself concerned about i'rab (parsing, or syntax) and in this connection investigated the opinions of grammarians whom he usually quoted anonymously under appellations such as “a Basran grammarian” or “a Kufan grammarian”. Al-Ṭabarî had learned and benefited from the opinions of both schools of grammar and also met with many Baghdadi grammarians.\textsuperscript{106} His general tendency was to favour the opinions of the Baghdadi school.

As an example al-Ṭabarî’s consideration of arguments concerning i'rab in his Tafsîr, we may note his comments concerning the verse “Ṣirāṭa al-ladhiṇa an'amta 'alayhim ghayri al-maghḍūbī 'alayhim wa-lā al-ḍālīna (The path of those on whom You have bestowed [Your grace] and not those who have incurred wrath, and not of those who are astray).”\textsuperscript{107} Discussing the word ghayr, al-Ṭabarî mentioned two different opinions as to whom the word should refer, as follows:

First opinion: the experts on the recitation of the Qur'ān were, so al-Ṭabarî asserted, in agreement on the reading ghayri, as opposed to ghayra. Al-Ṭabarî presented two arguments for the reading ghayri, based on the possibilities of parsing or syntax. In one, the exceptive clause is taken to be attached adjectivally to “those whom” in the previous verse, giving “The path of those on whom You have bestowed [Your grace], who are those who have not incurred Your wrath.” In another, the exceptive clause is attached to “path”, giving, “the path of those on whom You have bestowed [Your grace], the path of those who have not incurred Your wrath.” Although there are two interpretations of the verse, based on different reasons, maintaining the final vowel of

\textsuperscript{104} Examples concerning this point may be found as follows: Tafsîr, 3:240-245; 5:125-133; 10:295.
\textsuperscript{105} I have made a separate study of these passages, but this is not, unfortunately, included in the present thesis. However, some examples can be found in the following places: Tafsîr, 1:52; 2:472-473, 535; 3:384-396; 4:544-547; 8:302-309.
\textsuperscript{106} We have previously noted, while studying al-Ṭabarî’s biography (Chapter I), that he travelled to different places such as Kufa and Basran in order to seek knowledge from scholars living there.
\textsuperscript{107} Siirat al-Fāṭīha, 7.
the word ghayr to be i, they both produce approximately the same meaning because whosoever they be on whom God bestows His favour and whosoever they be whom He guides to His religion, they are secure from His wrath and are saved from going astray in His religion. Al-Ṭabarī’s argument was that the two clauses make mention of two groups and a moment’s reflection makes it clear that those on whom God bestows His grace must also be saved from His wrath; it would be impossible for God to be pleased with someone and yet be angry with him, to guide him and to lead him astray at the same time. Thus, the group of the favoured also has the same attributes as the group with whom God is not wrathful and whom He does not lead astray. Therefore, the different syntactical consequences of the two readings nevertheless produce the same meaning, the first directly and the second through a simple step of reasoning.

Second opinion: it is possible to read ghayra, in the accusative, in this verse, although al-Ṭabarī was averse to reading it thus because it is, as he said, an odd, strange reading (qirā’a shāhdha), at variance with the reading of the experts. This reading produces the following meaning: “... the path of those whom You have guided—bestowing favours on them, not being wrathful against them -not of those who are astray.” Al-Ṭabarī cited the interpretation of one of the Bṣran grammarians based on the reading ghayra. The sense of it was, “Guide us in the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed favour, but excluding those who have incurred Your wrath.” The Kufan grammarians, al-Ṭabarī noted, rejected this interpretation, judging it weak or imprecise and saying that ghayr is not used here to exclude but to negate: “...not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who are astray.”

In drawing his conclusion, al-Ṭabarī stated,

Although we previously decided to undertake only the interpretation of the verses of the Qur’ān in this book, we have inserted these expositions of the reasons for different desinential inflections¹⁰⁸ because therein lie different

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¹⁰⁸ Here al-Ṭabarī indicated the importance which he attached to nahw (grammar) for its help in interpreting the Qur’ān and clarifying its obscure meanings.
reasons for the first, ghayri al-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim, and the correct interpretation is the one that follows from the first reading (i.e. ghayri).109

15- Finally, one of al-Ṭabarī’s methods which recurs in many places of his Tafsīr; especially after examining various opinions on the interpretation of verses, was his use of a debating style, i.e. a conversation consisting of the raising of objections or the posing of questions, followed by a reasoned reply.110 For example, he stated the following objection: “If someone questioned us, What do we have to say about the following traditions?..., before answering those who rejected the validity of the practice of Qur’ānic interpretation.” In another place he stated the following objection: “How can it be called a qur’ān, meaning a ‘recitation’, when it is in fact the thing recited (maqrū’)?111 To this he replied, “This is permissible on account of a linguistic rule allowing the use of the verbal noun in place of the passive noun, just as writing (kitāb) can be used for something written (maktūb).”

CONCLUSION

At the end of this discussion of the methodology adopted by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr, we may conclude that this Tafsīr, in addition to following a traditional method of exegesis based on transmitted chains narrated from the three earliest generations of Muslims, those of the Prophet, the Companions, and the Followers, also contains the personal opinion (ra‘y) of al-Ṭabarī himself on the correct interpretation of the verses of the Qur’ān. Further, as we have seen, in many places of his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī investigated these cited narrations and opinions by correcting or rejecting the views of many commentators who preceded him.

We have seen how, in his Introduction, al-Ṭabarī set out the principles on which his commentary was based, explaining, for example, his three aspects concerning the muḥkam and mutashābih, through which correct knowledge concerning the interpretation of the Qur’ān may be attained. Finally, we have also

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109 Tafsīr, 1: 180-185.
110 See e.g. Tafsīr, 1: 162, 164, 165, 167, 168, 197, 198.
111 Ibid., 1: 97.
112 Ibid. The verbal noun (masdar), e.g. kitāb (writing), denotes the action of the verb and is thus near to the infinitive in meaning. However, according to al-Ṭabarī, it may also denote the result of the action, the thing done or being done. In this respect, it is similar to the English “-ing” construction, which, as in the case of “writing” itself, may denote either the action (gerund) or the result of the action (gerundive), the thing that is written.
seen that al-Ṭabarī followed a methodical system in interpreting the Qur'ānic verses one by one.
PART TWO

AL-ṬABARĪ’S SOURCES

(A DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ISNĀDS)
Preface

In this Part, which contains two chapters, we are going to focus on the core of this thesis by investigating the validity of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds through concentrating on the following questions. Did al-Ṭabarī arrange his isnāds by citing them in a systematic manner? Did al-Ṭabarī resort to material from written sources, or from various oral narrations, or from both? In other words, our purpose is to investigate the possibility of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr containing written sources. In connection with this we must ask, is the claim of the authors of the late second and third centuries, that they merely passed on the material of older authorities, historically correct? What is the reason behind al-Ṭabarī’s mentioning some of the isnāds repeatedly and more extensively than others? In connection with this, does al-Ṭabarī’s evident confidence in some transmitted chains more than in others spring from a certain merit that characterizes them? Does al-Ṭabarī draw his knowledge on tafsīr from specific individuals, such as scholars specializing in exegesis, jurisprudence, history, or the Prophet’s biography (Sīra)?

These questions and others, which have been discussed in detail in the introduction, will form the basis of my investigation in this chapter.

The numerous isnāds in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr help to inform us concerning the sources which were written in the early days and circulated during the time of al-Ṭabarī, which, unfortunately, have not reached us. I have examined the validity of these isnāds and the information al-Ṭabarī provides concerning the lost written sources by concentrating on four main dimensions which we have mentioned in the introduction, but it is appropriate to briefly remind the reader about them.

First: a statistical study has been provided by counting, describing, and analysing the 8,424 isnāds employed by al-Ṭabarī to interpret the first two chapters of the Qur’ān, al-Fātiha and al-Baqara.

Second: I have conducted a historical study to further investigate the isnāds and examine the possibility of their containing written sources. The basis of this study is an examination of the biographies of the men referred to in the isnāds. The results
of this study coincide with the results of the statistical study in that they confirm the strong possibility of the existence of such lost sources. Some other sources have in fact reached us, such as the Tafsīr of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778)\(^1\) and the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq.\(^2\) However, many other sources which al-Ṭabarī used and which existed during his time remain lost.

Third: in order to further investigate the previous result, a thorough analytical and statistical investigation has been made of every single technical term which al-Ṭabarī uses at the beginning of each isnād to transmit isnāds from his major masters.

Fourth: I have attempted, in some places, to explore the relationship between the Qur’ānic disciplines in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr and the narrators of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds, especially those from whom an isnād has branched, namely “the common links”. The aim of this comparison is to find out whether al-Ṭabarī was resorting to narrations and works of a person or a number of persons who were specialists in certain fields. For example, he refers to specialists such as al-Suddī (d. 127/745) more than 1,600 times. Al-Ṭabarī also refers to Ibn Zayd (d. 170/786), another specialist in Tafsīr, more than 400 times. Elsewhere, he quotes his information from certain scholars in fiqh (jurisprudence) such as his master Abū Kurayb, to whom he refers more than 300 times, or from certain specialists in history such as Ibn Ishāq, the author of the famous Sīra (Biography and History of the Prophet), to whom al-Ṭabarī refers hundreds of times. These examples show that al-Ṭabarī quoted specific scholars in their special disciplines, which he has utilized to explain the verses of the Qur’ān.

Despite the existence of such ample references to earlier sources in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, there has, to my knowledge, been no special study made of the literature of these sources and isnāds on which al-Ṭabarī relied.

Al-Ṭabarī, like other commentators and narrators of his time, took his material for the purpose of compiling his Tafsīr from the sources available to him. At that time (the second and third centuries AH), reference was often made to the isnād after the establishment of methods and technical terms in the field of the Sciences of the

\(^1\) Edited and revised by Imtiyāz ‘Alī ‘Arshī, Maktabat Rîdā, Rampur, India.
\(^2\) See the Introduction, f.n. no. 1.
Hadīth ('Ulum al-Ḥadīth), i.e. the transmitting of narrations. Al-Ṭabarī’s method of referring to isnāds and using them extensively is clearly evidenced in his Tafsīr.

Following the statistical and historical approach applied in this thesis into the types of disciplines found in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, and by comparing the terms used by al-Ṭabarī for transmitting every single isnād, we may ascertain that al-Ṭabarī followed a systematic method in citing his isnāds and that he also obtained his material from works which he was permitted by his masters to narrate from. He did in addition, refer to other works which he had no permission to narrate from. He also refers in his quotations to some dispersed sayings with and without isnāds, some of which he may have heard orally and committed to memory. He quoted them because he required the information they supplied quotations to explain the meanings of some Qur’ānic verses. He differentiated between what was quoted from a permitted written document which had reached him by perfect isnāds, and what was quoted from non-permitted sources, i.e. books he had found without perfect isnāds. Having examined the technical terms used to denote the transmitting of narrations, which al-Ṭabarī uses at the beginning of each isnād, I have reached the conclusion, as will be seen in the next chapter, that al-Ṭabarī uses the terms ḥaddathānu (he narrated to me) or ḥaddathanā (he narrated to us) in connection with isnāds going back to written books which he had obtained permission to narrate, whereas he would precede the material by the word ḥuddithtu (it was narrated to me), in connection with books which he had not obtained permission to narrate. Thus, permitted isnāds are more often preceded by ḥaddathanā or ḥaddathānu.

For the purpose of this study, starting from al-Ṭabarī’s masters, we must first give a descriptive and statistical explanation of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds together with their chains. These must then be divided into repeated and non-repeated series of isnāds, in order first to establish the series (strands) which, according to statistical analysis, are most frequently repeated. The next step is to study the biographical details relating to

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3 Goldziher, Muh-Stud, 119, and cf. Sezgin, 1/1:118.
4 The phenomenon of using the isnād as reference is standard in al-Ṭabarī’s writing, even in his Tārīkh.
5 See Chapter V.
narrators of these repeated isnâds, after which we compare these isnâds with works which have been attributed to some of the early scholars, such as the Tafsîrs of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbâs (d. 68/687), Mujâhid (d. 104/722), Qatâda (d. 118/736), Sufyân al-Thawrî (d. 161/778), or ʿAbd al-Razzâq b. Hammâm al-Ṣanʿānî (d. 211/827), in order to show that al-Ṭabarî fully preserved many of the early books that are considered lost. Finally, we must not stop at this point, but go further by reviewing these repeated series of isnâds (strands) with a view to categorizing the disciplines quoted from them such as Exegesis, History, Jurisprudence (Fîqh), Causes of Revelation (Asbâb al-Nuzûl), Sîra, Supernatural Stories (Ghaybiyyât), Doctrine, Qur’ânic Quotations, Abrogation (al-Nâsikh wa-al-Mansûkh), Lexicography, and Qur’ânic Readings (Qirâʾât). This will be done in order to confirm that al-Ṭabarî used what was written and available in various disciplines at the time he wrote and employed it to interpret the Qur’ân.
Chapter V

Al-Ṭabarī’s Technical Terms of Transmission

The outstanding feature of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr is his inclusion of a selected collection of reports, transmitted from the Prophet, Companions, and Followers, which relate to Qur’ānic verses. This was discussed by Muslim scholars, as mentioned in the section dealing with al-Ṭabarī’s general methodology in his Tafsīr.¹ In connection with this, the following points are worthy of underlining. First, the whole corpus of traditions in the collection of al-Ṭabarī was gathered from competent scholars who preceded him.² Second, it is obvious that al-Ṭabarī obtained from different sources variant accounts relating to such disciplines as tafsīr, Ḥadīth, fiqh, and history. Third, it is clear that al-Ṭabarī had deep knowledge not only in traditional exegesis, but also in fiqh, linguistics, grammar, and dialects³ and that his Tafsīr is a carefully structured work which evinces considerable insight and judgment. That al-Ṭabarī was clearly aware of methodological issues is evident from the very first pages.⁴ In this chapter our concern is to identify and analyse the technical terms of transmission used by al-Ṭabarī to transmit isnāds from his masters, such as ḥaddathānī and ḥaddathānā

In al-Ṭabarī’s effort to study the background of the scholars,⁵ especially those who were eminent in tafsīr, he quotes precisely from 208 of his masters,⁶ from whom he transmits the 8,424 isnāds which are traced back through eminent scholars to the three generations of the Prophet, the Companions, and the Followers. The following Table and Pie Chart illustrate statistically how many times al-Ṭabarī benefits from these three generations.

¹ Cf. also the Introduction and Chapter III, dealing with “His commentary on the Qur’ān.”
² Sezgin, 2:159.
³ Cooper, the translator’s introduction, ix-xxxv.
⁴ See the section on “al-Ṭabarī’s general methodology in his Tafsīr.”
⁵ See Chapter II, on the origin and early development of tafsīr.
⁶ Detailed analysis regarding them will be presented later.
Al-Ṭabarî’s citations categorized according to ultimate source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>4,423</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,424</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This reinforces the scholars’ claim that al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsîr* incorporates a collection of reports which were taken from eminent scholars before and during his time.⁷

The following Bar Chart is another way of looking at the 208 masters from whom al-Ṭabarî narrates his *isnâds*, and shows that the numbers of *isnâds* from those masters are by no means equivalent. In fact, al-Ṭabarî cites from some 19 of them more than from the others. Regarding this we will allocate a separate study in the following chapter.

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⁷ See Chapter II, on the origins and early development of *tafsîr.*
In his *Tafsir*, al-Ṭabari follows a specific method and applies precise technical terms in transmitting *isnāds* from his masters. These are well recognized in the Sciences of Ḥadīth (*'Ulum al-Ḥadīth*). In fact, al-Ṭabari uses very few terms in narrating. But before proceeding to discuss these terms used by al-Ṭabari, I shall give a brief general view of the technical terms of transmission as used according to the Sciences of Ḥadīth.

Taking into consideration the basics of *'ilm al-muṣṭalāḥ* (the science of technical terms of transmission), these terms vary in their usage. Some Ḥadīth scholars, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. AH 643), al-ʿIrāqī (d. AH 806), Ibn Kathīr (AH 701-774), Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (AH 908-971), al-Suyūṭī, count eight different manners of transmission. These manners can be summarized under the following headings:

1- *Samaʾ* (listening), hearing directly from the master; or *ṭariq al-samaʾ* *taḥdīthan* (narrating by direct listening from the master). This is where the master

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8 See *'Ulum*, 130-180.
9 See *Taqyyid*, 151-169.
10 See *Bā’ith*, 108-129.
11 See *Qafw*, 109-113.
12 See *Tadrīb*, 2:4-63.
13 This was the first and most famous method of learning Ḥadīth in the early days of Islam. It is called *samaʾ* (direct listening). See al-Qāsimi, *Qawā'id al-Taḥdīth*, ed. M. b. al-Bayṭār, Cairo, 1380/1961, pp. 88-92.
narrates and the student, or disciple, listens, whether the master narrates by heart or, in most cases, from his own sahiṣṭa (document), and whether the student who listens writes what he hears or just listens.¹⁴ This kind of reporting must occur during the lifetime of both of them; in other words, it is an indication that they have actually met. Such quotations are preceded by terms such as sami’tu (I heard), or ḥaddathanī (he narrated to me), or ḥaddathana (he narrated to us).¹⁵

2- Qira’ah (reading). This is where the student recites a written document in the presence of a master. This method is known to Ḥadith scholars as “reading to the master” or “revision hearing”, whereby the student reads hadiths from a sahiṣṭa (written document) which was particularly reported by his master and not any ḥadiths he himself wished to read. The objective in this was for the master to be able to hear his student and correct the ḥadiths for him before approving his student’s narration to others.¹⁶ Reference to this manner of transmission is usually denoted by the phrase qara’tu ‘alayhi (I read in front of him [i.e. the master]), or akhbaranī (he informed me).¹⁷

3- Ijāzah (permission). In this case the master, or anyone who is permitted to narrate, grants another person permission to narrate one or more written books, or to grant to any other person permission or authority to narrate books which he does not name exactly. He would say, “I permit you to narrate whatever I have narrated.” The permitted person usually precedes reference to such a source by terms such as

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¹⁴ See Taysīr, p. 158.
¹⁵ Further information is contained in those treatises dealing with the terminology of the Sciences of Tradition. With reference to the study of Ḥadith in the early days, numerous terms were used by the muḥaddithūn (scholars of Ḥadith). Many isnāds contain various names. The terms ḥaddathana, ḥaddathanī, akhbaranī, and akhbaranī were frequently employed to refer to the relevant sources. Scholars of Ḥadith sometimes used abbreviations to simplify the isnād or sometimes some words are even dropped from the isnād, e.g. ḥaddathanā is usually written as thanā or simply as nā (in the Tafsīr of al-Ṭabarānī, this method is found to be predominant in the old volumes of the Egyptian edition); akhbaranī is usually written as anā only and rarely as arānā. See Tadrīb, 2:28; Qafw, 109; Taqyyid, 140; ’Ulūm, 132; Bā’ith, 108.
¹⁶ See Taysīr, p. 159.
¹⁷ See Qafw, 111.
akhbarani (he informed me), or ajāzani (he permitted me), or ḥaddathani (he narrated to me).  

4- Munāwalah (handing over) means that the master hands his student the original copy of his book or the book he is narrating from, or a copy of it. He says to him, “This is my book (or this is my narration document) and I have permitted you to narrate it.” This copy would become the property of the student, or the master would ask the student to write out a copy of it and return the original to himself. Reference to transmission in this manner is preceded by terms such as nāwalani (he handed to me), or akhbarani, or ḥaddathani.  

5- Mukātabah (writing) is when the master himself prepares a copy of his book or narrations, or makes another person (a student for example) copy it. Reference to this manner of transmission is usually preceded by kataba ilayy (he wrote to me).  

6- Wasiyyah (inheriting or granting) means that the master writes in a document stating that after his death the narration of his book or books is granted to one named person or to a designated group. Reference to transmission in this manner is preceded by terms such as awsā ilayy (he bequeathed to me), or ḥaddathani, or akhbarani.  

7- ‘Atiyyah (giving), or i’lam (informing). In this case the master would recite a written book or books in front of his students, informing them that he had transmitted the narrations of this book from a particular narrator, but without declaring that he permitted them to narrate this book or books. In this case, a reporter would precede his narrations by the term ‘an (as from).  

8- Wijādah (discovering, or finding) a document. In this manner, a reporter would find a written book or books containing narrations, regardless of the reporter’s being contemporary with the author, or authors of these books or not. Whoever is in
possession of a copy can obtain the right to narrate, but reference to this source should be preceded by terms such as wajadtu (I found), or ḥuddithtu (it was narrated to me), or qāla (he said), or dhakara (he mentioned), or rawā (he transmitted).\textsuperscript{23}

It is evident from our brief discussion of these styles and technical terms of transmission that in most cases a written document is appealed to in order to verify the oral transmission. So, oral transmission and written books are used in narrating ḥadiths, reports, etc.

With regard to the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarī to transmit his isnāds from his masters, it is seen that he employs just two, i.e. the first and the eighth, of the previously mentioned manners of transmission.

It is the first manner of transmission, i.e. samā‘ (direct transmission), that al-Ṭabarī depends upon mostly in transmitting isnāds from his masters in his Tafsīr. In fact, 95.7\% of his 8,424 isnāds are transmitted by this method. This manner of transmission is regarded by scholars of Ḥadīth as the most reliable way.\textsuperscript{24} It is of two kinds:

1) When the disciple, alone privately, or person-to-person, heard from his master, he would say haddathanī (he narrated to me).\textsuperscript{25} In turn, if the disciple wanted to narrate to others what he cited from his master, an ijāzah (permission) had to be granted to him from the latter. In such a case the master would say, “I permit you to narrate what I have narrated.” Subsequently, when narrating from this source, the disciple would precede the isnād with terms such as ajāzanī (he permitted me), or haddathanī (he narrated to me).\textsuperscript{26}

Reviewing the situation statistically, al-Ṭabarī uses the term haddathanī 4,230 times, i.e. in introducing 50.2\% of the total 8,424 isnāds. Thus, more than half of the isnāds used in connection with his interpretation of both sūras, al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara, are introduced by this term.

\textsuperscript{23} See Qafw, 112; ‘Ulūm, 180; Tadrib, 2:63.
\textsuperscript{24} See al-Ilmū ‘ilā Ma‘rifat Uṣūl al-Riwayah wa-Taqqyīd al-Samā‘, p. 69; Taqqyīd, 166; and Taysīr, 159.
\textsuperscript{25} Various examples of this can be found in any part of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr.
\textsuperscript{26} See ‘Ulūm, 151; Tadrib, 2:29.
Al-Ṭabarî uses the term *haddathani* to transmit from 139 of his 208 masters, but in most cases this term is employed to transmit from only 6 of them, as shown in the following Table and Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mūsā b. Ḥārūn</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Muthannā</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>63.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yūnus</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>73.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ya’qūb al-Dawraqî</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>78.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Amr</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-‘Awfî</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (133)</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4230</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The incidences adduced in this Table and the associated Pie Chart testify to the fact that these persons are al-Ṭabarî’s masters from whom he heard alone, or person-to-person, and that when transmitting from them he uses the term *haddathani* to introduce 87.3% of the total 4,230 isnāds.
Occasionally, al-Ṭabarî diverges from this normal use of ɣaddathani by mentioning that he has heard from more than one person, without stating who they were or to whom the statement of the report belonged, as in his saying, “Haddathani bi-dhālika ba’ḍu aṣḥābinā (This was narrated to me by some of our masters).” Nevertheless, ba’ḍu, as it is here, could possibly refer to just one person.

2) When the student heard with others, i.e. among a group of people, from the master, he would say ḥaddathana (he narrated to us). The implied difference between this usage and the previous one is that here he was one among a group of students sitting in audience on a master. Al-Ṭabarî uses this term quite frequently, but nevertheless less than the previous one. Statistically expressed, al-Ṭabarî uses this term to introduce an isnād 45.5% of the time, i.e. for 3,834 of the total 8,424 isnāds which he quotes in the course of interpreting the sûras al-Fātiha and al-Baqara. In most cases, he uses this term to quote from only 13 out of his 142 masters, which are shown in the following Table and the associated Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ḥumayd</td>
<td>533</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al-Hasan b. Yaḥyā</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Qāsim</td>
<td>421</td>
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<td>35.9</td>
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<td>Ibn Bashshār</td>
<td>406</td>
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<td>Abū Kurayb</td>
<td>388</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bishr b. Mu‘ādh</td>
<td>336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmad b. Ishāq</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān b. Wākī‘</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Muthannā</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannād b. al-Sarī</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 I have found just two such examples, which occur in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsīr on Surat al-Nur.
28 Examples may be found in any part of his Tafsīr.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abu Hishām</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Amr b. 'Alī</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (129)</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3834</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Table and Pie Chart show the most cited masters of al-Ṭabarî from whom he heard with others (among a group of people) and in connection with whom he uses the term ʰaddathanā.

The following Table and Pie Chart express the frequency of al-Ṭabarî’s use of the two terms ʰaddathanī and ʰaddathanā as well as the lesser used terms ʰuddithtu and qāla.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʰaddathanī</td>
<td>4,230</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʰaddathanā</td>
<td>3,834</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʰuddithtu</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qāla</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,424</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If a report was narrated to him indirectly, then he would use either of the terms *huddithtu* or *qāla* to indicate this different mode of transmission.\(^\text{29}\) According to recognized usage in the Sciences of Ḥadīth, these two terms normally indicate narration using a book or a written document (*ṣahīfa*) containing ḥadīths without having obtained the previous narrator’s permission. Whoever is in possession of a copy from the last narrator has the right to narrate from it and prefixes narrated passages with terms such as *wajādu* (I found), *huddithtu* (it was narrated to me), or *qāla* (he said).\(^\text{30}\) In his *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* normally uses the word *qāla* when he quotes a ḥadīth narrated from the Prophet and omits to mention its *isnād*. However, he does this in citing only 25 ḥadīths, i.e. in 3% of all the investigated *isnāds*.\(^\text{31}\)

The terms *akhbaranī* and *akhbaranā* are used very rarely by al-Ṭabarī; in fact only once do we find the term *akhbaranī* and only twice the term *akhbaranā*, on which we will comment more fully below. It is evident, as the previous Table illustrates, that for the majority of his *isnāds*, that is 99.7% of them, al-Ṭabarī uses

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\(^{29}\) See the eighth style of transmission.

\(^{30}\) See 'Ulūm, 178; Tādīb, 2:60.

\(^{31}\) For further discussion regarding his transmission from the Prophet without using *isnāds*, see Chapter VII.
just three terms: ḥaddathānī, ḥaddathānā, and ḥuddithtu. This indicates how he followed a precise method in transmitting isnāds from his masters.

To introduce an isnād, it is, as we have noted, also possible to use the terms akhbaranī and akhbaranā. These expressions may be used when a student reports by narrating a saḥīfa (document) which he had obtained by previously reciting it while attending in the presence of his master, in order to obtain the master’s approval to narrate to others. This type of narration is virtually absent from the usage of al-Ṭabarī, for reasons which we will comment on later. These two terms indicate two variants of this kind of transmission, as follows:

A- Where the student has recited a document alone in the presence of one of his masters, he says akhbaranī (he informed me).

B- Where the student, with others, but individually, has recited a document in front of one of his masters, he says akhbaranā (we were informed by...). As we have observed, al-Ṭabarī almost never uses these two terms; they appear in only one or two places in the whole of his investigated isnāds. In most cases he consistently uses one or other of the two terms ḥaddathānī and ḥaddathānā. Perhaps he may have wished to be consistent with regard to all that he narrated and so was content to use only these two terms instead of others (i.e. akhbaranī, akhbaranā), because there are no major differences, in the usage of transmission, between ḥaddathānī and akhbaranī, or ḥaddathānā and akhbaranā.

Consequently, we may ask, do the words ḥaddathānī and ḥaddathānā in the chains of transmitters necessarily indicate only oral reporting? And do the words akhbaranī and akhbaranā indicate only written reporting?

We have seen earlier that this is not necessarily the case. The words ḥaddathānā and ḥaddathānī were used in a very wide sense. As previously noted, if a narrator read a document of traditions to his master, he could use the word ḥaddathānī. If the master read to his students from a document or from memory, ḥaddathānā was used to describe the channel of knowledge. Some scholars applied different terms to these two different methods of learning. If the master read to his students, then the students could use the term ḥaddathānā whenever they transmitted
that particular tradition, but if the students read to their master, then he would use the term **akhbaranā**.  

There follow some examples, collected from the classical Ḥadīth collections, which will help to clarify the meaning of the terms reviewed above and their traditional usage.

- Al-Bukhārī narrated, "**Haddathanā** 'Amr b. 'Abbās said **haddathanā** Muḥammad b. Ja'far said **haddathanā** Shu'ba ... 'Amr said: In the book of Muḥammad b. Ja'far there was a space." Al-Bukhārī relates a tradition from 'Amr, who in turn relates from Muḥammad b. Ja'far from Shu'bah. Al-Bukhārī does not give the complete Ḥadīth and leaves a blank space in the book, then quotes his teacher 'Amr as saying, "In the book of Muḥammad there was a blank space." Yet the term **haddathanā** is used throughout the **isnād** without any reference to the book.

- Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, "**Haddathanā** 'Abd al-Raḥmān ... **haddathanā** Ibn Mahdī... **haddathanā** Sufyān al-Thawrī, who transmitted to us the Ḥadīths of Isrā'il, 'an (from) 'Abd al-A'ālā, 'an (from) Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah." Then Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, "It was from a book."  

- Ibn Ḥazm stated, "**Haddathanā** 'Abdullāh, who said, **haddathanā** Muḥammad b. Muʿāwiyah, who said, **haddathanā** Muḥammad b. Abī 'Adī from his book ..." It will be noted that Ibn Abī 'Adī is one of al-Ṭabarī's main sources.

Many examples can be found in the Ḥadīth literature where the words **kataba ilayya** (he wrote to me) appear within the **isnād**, e.g. "**Kataba ilayya** Sālim b. Aḥmad, as from Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Sijistānī...", or "**Kataba ilayya** 'Abdullāh b. Sa'īd, 'an (from) Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir...," or "**Akhbaranā** 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī **fi kitābihi ilaynā**." As will be seen later, both al-Sijistānī and

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32 Al-Qāsimī, Qawā'id, 207-208.  
33 Al-Bukhārī, **Ṣaḥīḥ**, 112-113.  
34 See Jarḥ, 1:71; Ibn Sa'd, 6:234-235; Tahdhib, 6:94.  
35 **Muḥallā**, 1:251.  
36 **Kataba** or **mukātaba** (writing) is used in cases when the master himself prepares a copy of his book of narrations or makes another person (a disciple, for example) copy it. See al-Suyūṭī, Tadrīb, 2:55.  
37 **Muḥallā**, 2:57.  
38 **Muḥallā**, 1:208.  
39 Al-Khaṭīb, **Kifāya**, 87.
Manṣūr b. al-Muʿtamir were among al-Ṭabarī’s main sources. These examples, many more of which could be adduced, testify to the fact that oral transmission is usually supported by written documents.

According to some Ḥadith scholars, the use of the term ʿaddathani indicates that the narrator heard from a master via a document whose narration to others was permitted to him by his master. The use of this term is also allowed in cases where a narrator takes information from a book, or books, shown to him, or handed to him, even without permission for its narration having been accorded by the master. When Mālik b. Anas (the famous muḥaddith and faqīh, and founder of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence) was asked about books shown to a person and whether a person who wanted to narrate from them could say ʿaddathani (he narrated to me), he replied, “Yes.” Therefore, narrating from a book was a practice known to scholars of Ḥadith at that time, i.e. in the second and third centuries AH.40

Ibn Ishāq’s (d. AH 150) al-Maghāzī is a well-known written source, the text of which was established and given its title by the author himself. The book was transmitted by several students of Ibn Ishāq and reached al-Ṭabarī via two isnāds, which will be described shortly.41 Al-Ṭabarī benefited greatly from this source in both of his two famous books, the Tafsīr and the Tārīkh, without stating that he is quoting from a book but, nonetheless, al-Ṭabarī states the full isnāds up to Ibn Ishāq.42

Ibn Ḥajar says, “As for terms such as ʿaddathani, akhbaranī, anbaʿanī...,” and so forth, there is no major difference in meaning between them, they all indicate narrating directly from the master. Therefore, when we find, for instance, al-Bukhārī in his Sahīh, in the section concerning tafsīr, stating that the narration of Nāfiʿ “akhbaranāʾ”, or the narration of al-Ismāʿīlī “anbaʿanā”, the narration of Mālik “ʿaddathanaʾ”, which all relate to one Ḥadīth, all these terms indicate similar meanings, narrating directly from an earlier narrator. These terms may also indicate narrating from a master while he is reading from a written document. This is an

40 Tadrīb, 2:14.
41 In the following chapter.
42 There were at least fifteen versions of this work. See A. Guillaume, The life of Muḥammad, the translation of the Sīra of Ibn Ishāq, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 30.
opinion which was held by Ḥadīth scholars such as al-Zuhrī, Mālik, Ibn ʿUayna, Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān, Ibn al-Ḥājib, al-Ḥākim, and most of the Ḥijāzis and Kufan scholars. It is also an opinion of the four famous faqīh scholars [Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, and Ibn Ḥanbal]."43

Therefore, if any isnād is prefixed by the common terms ḥaddathanā or ḥaddathanā, this does not necessarily mean that the traditions were transmitted only in an oral manner and that no documents were used. In fact, it indicates that the current method of transmission at that time (the second and third centuries AH)44 was employed, whether in oral transmission or in dictation from a written document. So we may safely conclude that oral and written transmission went hand-in-hand with al-Ṭabarī’s citations from those scholars to whom he refers frequently and extensively. These scholarly sources flourished during the generations that preceded his own time, i.e. in the first, second, and third centuries AH.

As for the term ḥudūdītu, which al-Ṭabarī uses 335 times (introducing 4% of the total 8,424 isnāds) to transmit some of his isnāds, according to the Science of Tradition, this term is normally used if a narrator wants to cite from a book, or books, handed to him without permission. In such circumstances, as we have previously explained, the narrator would use either the term ḥudūdītu or wajadtu to indicate that the isnād is interrupted and that he is narrating from a book which he obtained without a full isnād. So, when using this term, al-Ṭabarī may have been referring to a written book which he found without having obtained permission to narrate from it from a contemporary master.

Having analysed the 8,424 isnāds of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, it is obvious that in almost all the reports taken from the 19 most cited masters of al-Ṭabarī, which were mentioned previously in the two Tables, in most cases, i.e. 8,064 times (95.7% of the total 8,424 isnāds), the two terms ḥaddathanā and ḥaddathanā were used widely, as we have seen earlier.

43 Ibn Ḥajar, Ḥadi al-Sāri Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 1:231.
44 I include the second generation even though al-Ṭabarī was alive in the third century, because al-Ṭabarī’s masters and their master’s masters, when narrating, also used these terms, but before them the term ‘an (as from) was employed to introduce most isnāds. See al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, passim.
The implication that can be drawn here by way of conclusion is that al-Ṭabarî’s traditions, incorporated in his *Tafsîr*, came to him via oral and written transmission from his well-known masters. This conclusion is supported by our statistical study of the 8,424 *isnâds*, which we will discuss in detail in the following section. It will be seen there that most of these *isnâds*, which form parts of strands of clusters of *isnâds*, refer in most cases to written sources produced by well-known scholars. Sezgin believed that, in producing his *Tafsîr*, al-Ṭabarî borrowed from collected materials containing traditions related to the Qur’ân.45

However, if he quotes an *isnâd* from a written document produced by someone from whom he did not hear directly and was uncertain about the exact wording as it came to him via narrators and, further, if he had not obtained the master’s permission to transmit the text to others, he would use the term *huddithtu* in introducing information from such a source. It is clear therefore that al-Ṭabarî sought to distinguish between information obtained from those whom he had met and which had been transmitted to him directly, and information obtained from those whom he had not met and which had been transmitted to him indirectly. Thus, he uses *huddithtu* in 335 places (in 4% of all the 8,424 investigated *isnâds*), e.g. as in the following *isnâd*:

Al-Ṭabarî says, “*Huddithtu* (I was told) via ‘Ammâr, who said, I heard ‘Abdullâh b. Abî Ja‘far al-Râzî, who said, my father transmitted to me that he heard al-Rabi‘ b. Anas saying ...”46 This confession of doubt, implied by use of the word *huddithtu*, must be seen as proof of his careful sifting of evidence, his truthfulness, and his intention to reproduce the teachings of his master, or sources, as exactly as possible. So, al-Ṭabarî was honest, methodical, clear in transmitting *isnâds*, and an accurate narrator of all that he cited.

The term least used by al-Ṭabarî in his narration is *qâla* (he said). In such cases, he would omit mentioning the whole *isnâd* and content himself with stating the name of the person to whom the report related. He uses this word of introduction in

45 Sezgin, 1:159.
46 *Tafsîr*, 1:229.
25 places, or in 0.4% of all the 8,424 isnāds. However, he does this only when he wants to narrate a hadīth reported from the Prophet. Before examining the possible reason for this habit, we should note that the abbreviation of isnāds is a practice which was followed by some Ḥadīth scholars. For instance, among the Ḥadīths found in the Muwattā’ of Mālik, there are some 61 Ḥadīths without an isnād.\(^{47}\) Also, in the Sahīh of al-Bukhārī, there are a number of Ḥadīths without isnāds or with broken isnāds.\(^{48}\) Similarly, in the Sunan of al-Dārimī (d. 225/869), some of the isnāds are interrupted.\(^{49}\) So, it may be concluded that the abbreviating of isnāds and stating directly the hadīth was a fairly common practice in the third century AH and that it was practised by some eminent Ḥadīth scholars.

In the case of al-Ṭabarī, in addition to what we have just said, the reason for his practice is that either these Ḥadīths were known to be sound and their isnāds are dependable so he excludes the whole isnād, or these Ḥadīths do not relate primarily to the interpretation of Qur’ānic verses and so he uses them only as additional evidence to establish an argument. An examination of these 25 Ḥadīths reveals that none of them was used to interpret a Qur’ānic verse, nor as proof of a ḥukm of the Sharī‘a (Islamic law); rather they were used to explain a word or to state an incident (sabab nuzūl). Any statement which is not used as proof of a juristic law, or as an interpretation of a Qur’ānic verse may be quoted, though it may not be accepted by Ḥadīth scholars as a general explanation of a Qur’ānic expression and how it was understood by the earlier generations, whether they were Companions or Followers. A simpler explanation may be that in the case of these 25 Ḥadīths without isnāds, al-Ṭabarī cited them from a written compilation which contained Ḥadīths with no isnāds!

\(^{47}\) See Ra‘ūf, Ḥadīth Literature, 273.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 275.
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 277.
Chapter VI

Statistical and Analytical Description of al-Ṭabarī's Isnāds

In this chapter I will attempt to give a statistical description of al-Ṭabarī's isnāds, supported by figures and percentages relating to their number and the number of narrators mentioned in them, the names of al-Ṭabarī's masters, and those masters from whom he narrated most, least, and moderately. Moreover, I will provide a study of those strands of isnād which appear most frequently, starting with al-Ṭabarī's masters. These isnāds will then be divided into groups and studied historically, to see whether they reach back to authors or, at least, compilers. An examination will then be made of these groups and the disciplines derived from them in order to discover whether they refer to certain scholarly specializations.

The total number of isnāds quoted by al-Ṭabarī, and the ones he uses to interpret the two Sūras, al-Fātihā and al-Baqara, is 8,424, including the repeated isnāds; without counting the repetitions, there are 6,972 isnāds. The total number of men (narrators, scholars, interpreters, etc.) whose names appear in these isnāds is 1,700.¹

The number of al-Ṭabarī's masters is 208, from whom he narrated the strands of his isnāds. Al-Ṭabarī's approach in narrating isnāds from his masters differs widely. I have manage to classify al-Ṭabarī's masters into the following three categories.

1. Masters from whom he narrated less than 10 reports per master

This is the case with 169 masters (81.2% of the total 208 masters). The number of citations from this large number of masters is only 445, or 5.2% of the total 8,424 isnāds.

2. Masters from whom he narrated between 10 and 45 reports per master

This is the case with 20 masters (9.6% of the total 208 masters). The number of citations from these masters is only 482, or 5.8% of the total 8,424 isnāds.

¹ See the coding Table of al-Ṭabarī's narrators in the appendix.
3. Masters from whom he narrated between 66 and 1,677 reports per master

This is the case with only 19 masters (9.1% of the total 208 masters). Narrations from these are plentiful and are repeated extensively (reference is made to them from as few as 66 times up to 1,677 times per master). From these 19 masters he narrates 7,497 times, i.e. 89% of the total 8,424 isnāds. The following Table shows the number of masters and the percentages of narration al-Ṭabarī attributed to them.

### Classification of al-Ṭabarī’s masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Al-Ṭabarī’s masters</th>
<th>Frequency of Narration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 masters</td>
<td>From 66 to 1,677 times</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 masters</td>
<td>From 10 to 45 times</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169 masters</td>
<td>From once to less than 10 times</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>8,424 times</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Table shows that al-Ṭabarī employed a small number of his masters (19 masters, or 9.1% of the 208 masters) to narrate the greatest percentage of his isnāds. The bulk of his isnāds is through 19 masters, from whom he narrated 89% of all his isnāds, which is a very high percentage divided between a very small number of his masters. The 11%, relating to 927 isnāds, were narrated from the remaining 189 masters. We may conclude that al-Ṭabarī narrated the majority of his isnāds from a limited number of his masters, and that those 19 masters were his main sources to whom he referred frequently and extensively. This is a result which, to my knowledge, has not been reached by anyone who has written about al-Ṭabarī earlier.

The following Table and Bar Chart show those 19 masters and the number of times al-Ṭabarī narrated from them together with the respective percentages.

### Table no. 1: Al-Ṭabarī’s 19 major masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial no.</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mūsā b. Hārūn</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ibn Ḥumayd</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Al-Qāsim</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial no.</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ibn Bashshār</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yūnus</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Abū Kurayb</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bishr b. Maʿādh</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A missing master</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yaʿqūb al-Dawraqi</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ibn ʿAmr</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ibn al-Muthannā</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aḥmad b. Isḥāq</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sufyān b. Wakī‘</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Muḥammad b. Saʿd</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hannād b. al-Sarī</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Abū Hishām</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>ʿAmr b. ʿAlī</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>(189) masters</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,424</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Al-Ṭabari’s Major Masters**

It can be seen from the above Table and the associated Bar Chart that the person to
whom al-Ṭabarī refers most is Mūsā b. Ḥārūn al-Baghdādi. He narrates from him 1,677 times, or 19.9% of the total number of 8,424 isnāds. In the second place comes his master al-Muthānna b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿĀmulī. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-ʿĀmulī 1,118 times, or 13.3% of the total 8,424 isnāds. These two masters, Mūsā b. Ḥārūn and al-Muthānna b. Ibrāhīm, are the ones from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates most, citing more than 1,000 narrations from each one of them. The total number of isnāds narrated by al-Ṭabarī from these two masters amounts to 2,795, or 33.2% of all the isnāds. This indicates that virtually one third of al-Ṭabarī’s 8,424 isnāds used in his Tafsīr of Sūras al-Fāṭiha and al-Baqara were narrated from these two masters alone, as is illustrated in the following Pie Chart

**Al-Ṭabarī’s Two Major Masters**

- Mūsā b. Ḥārūn: 19.9%
- Al-Muthānna: 13.3%
- Other: 66.8%

Al-Ṭabarī’s master, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī comes in third place with the frequency of 533 isnāds, or 6.3% of the total. Fourth is al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan, to whom al-Ṭabarī refers 431 times, or 5.1% of the total. These are followed by al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Jurjānī, who comes fifth and from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates 429 times, or 5.1% of the total isnāds. The sixth master is Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Baṣrī, from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates 412 times, or 4.9% of the total. It is evident that these six masters are the ones from whom al-Ṭabarī narrated repeatedly and extensively. His narrations from each one of them amount to more than 400. The total number of isnāds narrated by al-Ṭabarī from these six amounts to 4,600, or 54.6% of
the total. This means that he narrated more than one half of his isnāds from these six masters alone, while the other half, i.e. 3824, or 45.4% of the total, were narrated from the remaining masters (202 out of 208 masters in total) (see the following Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mūsā b. Hārūn</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Muthannā</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ḥumayd</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Bashshār</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (202)</td>
<td>3,824</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,424</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Al-Ṭabarī’s narrations from the remaining narrators among the 19 masters from whom he narrated most extensively are represented in Table no.1.

As we have stated, the total number of isnāds taken and narrated by al-Ṭabarī from these 19 masters is 7,497, or 89% of the total figure (8,424), i.e. the total number of isnāds used by al-Ṭabarī to interpret Sūras al-Fāṭiha and al-Baqara in his Tafsīr. He narrated the remaining 927 (11%) of his isnāds from 189 masters, completing his 208 masters. What becomes evident from this statistical study is that al-Ṭabarī followed a certain methodology in dealing with his sources, which are these isnāds. We see how he relied on a small number of masters for quoting the majority of his narrations. Therefore, what he narrated in his Tafsīr from those isnāds was not what we might call “random quotation”, i.e. the sort of thing referred to by Ibn Khaldūn in his Mugaddima (Introduction) when talking about tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr (traditional exegesis), depending on isnāds. The example he mentioned was al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, of which he wrote, “This type of interpretation contained a lot of randomly stuffed
information, requiring refutation, classification, and a revision of its isnāds and narrations.”

In the present work, we have reviewed al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr*, at least the part selected for this study, and ascertained that he followed a certain methodology in narrating and transmitting from his masters. He narrated the largest part of his isnāds from a limited group of masters whom he chose to quote from. He selected two masters, from each of whom he narrated more than 1,000 times. The narrations he made from each of four others ranged between 533 and 412 occurrences, as shown in Table no. 1. He narrated from four other masters more than 300 times. These masters were Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-A’lā al-Miṣrī,3 Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’, Bishr b. Ma‘ādh al-‘Aqadī, and an unnamed master. From another three he narrated more than 200 times: al-Mughīra b. Muslim, Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Abbās al-Bāhili, and Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā. Narrations from yet another three amounted to more than 100 each. These were Aḥmad b. Ishāq al-Ahwāzī, Sufyān b. Waki’, and Muḥammad b. Sa’d al-‘Awfī. Transmissions from the other 3 masters, completing the 19 masters, ranged between 91 and 66. These were Hannād b. al-Sarī, Muḥammad b. Yazīd Abū Hishām al-Rifā’ī, and ‘Amr b. ‘Alī.

From the summary of the above statistical study, we may deduce that these 19 scholars were al-Ṭabarī’s most important masters in *Tafsīr*, from whom he narrated most of his isnāds, at least for the part which we are studying, i.e. the isnāds he employed for the interpretation of *Sūras al-Fātiha* and *al-Baqara*. Al-Ṭabarī’s narrations from these masters amount to 89% of the total, as was mentioned earlier.

Before passing from our consideration of these results to a separate study of each of the masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrated most in his *Tafsīr*, we may first consider the following question: are these masters distinguished from others by their achievements, such as having written documents from which al-Ṭabarī narrates and which reached him by *samā’* (hearing), or *mukātaba* (writing), or *munāwala*

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3 I will discuss each one of them in detail at a later stage.
(handing over, *scil.* a document), or *ijāza* (permission), or *wijāda* (discovering, *scil.* a document)?

I believe, in fact, that al-Ṭabarī was referring to these sources—“documents”, or “compilations”, or whatever else he had benefited from through his masters—each time he wanted to interpret the Qur'ān. This explains why these *isnāds* are repeated so extensively. Otherwise, how can such a repetition be explained? We will return to this question at a later stage, when we expand our research into a coverage of al-Ṭabarī’s prominent masters, but for the moment we may note that the results of our statistical study of al-Ṭabarī’s masters indicate that he narrated extensively from some and very little from others. These results strongly suggest the possibility that al-Ṭabarī was referring to written and compiled sources in his *Tafsīr*. In theory, they could have been compiled and recorded by himself, or alternatively they could have been compiled and written by his masters or even by other scholars appearing in the *isnād*. It is evident, however, that he obtained the bulk of his information from these sources. To ascertain the credibility of this hypothesis we will study each master separately and consider what was narrated by him.

However, before moving on to study these 19 most quoted masters, to avoid generalizing, we shall categorize al-Ṭabarī’s masters into four groups, as follows, according to their frequency of appearance.

**Section one**: masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates more than 1,000 times, i.e. Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī and al-Muthammā al-Āmulī, two the most extensively quoted major masters.

**Section two**: masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates more than 400 times, i.e. Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥasan b. Yahyā, and Muḥammad b. Bashshār.

**Section three**: masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates more than 300 times, i.e. Yūnus al-Miṣrī, Abū Kurayb, and an unnamed master.

**Section four**: masters from whom he narrates less than 300 times, i.e. the remaining 11 masters.

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4 For further discussion of these technical terms, see Chapter V.
Section five: masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates between 10 and 45 times, i.e. 20 other masters. With the 19 most cited masters, these amount to a total of 39 masters, from all of whom al-Ṭabarī narrates nearly 95% of the entire 8,424 isnāds.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) See Table no. 1, containing classification of al-Ṭabarī’s masters.
SECTION ONE
Al-Ṭabarî’s two most quoted masters, from whom he narrated more than 1,000 times, i.e. Mūsâ b. Hārūn and al-Muthannā al-Āmulî

1. First major master: Mūsâ b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī

Mūsâ b. Hārūn has the largest numerical frequency in al-Ṭabarî’s narrations. Thus, in the statistical Table of al-Ṭabarî’s masters,⁶ it is indicated that his name recurs 1,677 times (19.9% of all the 8,424 isnāds). Mūsâ narrates from one master: ‘Amr b. Ḥammād b. Ṭalḥa al-Qannād. There is no branching in the isnād and Mūsâ’s narrations are through only one person, as shown in the following Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Amr b. Ḥammād</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,677</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of Mūsâ’s narrations from ‘Amr remain at the same fixed number, i.e. 1,677 times (100.0%). When we move on to consider those from whom ‘Amr al-Qannād narrates, we find that he also narrates from only one master, Asbāṭ b. Naṣr, from whom he narrates a similar 1,677 times (100.0%). Thus, al-Ṭabarî’s narration from his master Mūsâ b. Hārūn to the third generation of narrators is confined to one line. It is an isnād through one master without branching, as shown in the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asbāṭ b. Naṣr</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,677</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When moving to the fourth generation of narrators, we note the following. Asbāṭ b. Naṣr narrates from virtually only one master, al-Suddî, from whom he narrates 1,676 times (99.9%). Asbāṭ also narrates one isnād from Mānsūr b. Al-

⁶ See Table no 1.
Mu’tamir (at a rate of 0.1%). Nevertheless, the isnād remains in one form passing from Mūsā b. Hārūn to al-Suddī, who was the fourth narrator in the isnād (see the next Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Suddī</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansūr b. al-Mu’tamir</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the fifth generation, that of al-Suddī’s masters, we see how the isnād starts to branch out fundamentally. We see that al-Suddī narrates from 9 masters, together accounting for 1,676 times (100.0%), as is illustrated in the following Table:

**Al-Suddī’s most quoted masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murra</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Mālik</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ṣāliḥ</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(6)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Al-Suddī's Three Most Quoted Masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Šāliḥ</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Mālik</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murra</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is indicated in this Table and the associated Pie Chart, al-Suddī narrates extensively (1,669 isnāds, or 99.6% of the total 1,676 isnāds) from 3 masters, and once each from the other 6 masters. The three from whom he narrates very extensively are:

1-Murra al-Hamdānī, from whom he narrates 836 times (49.9%, i.e. nearly half of all al-Suddī’s narrations);
2-Abū Mālik, from whom he narrates 417 times (24.9%, i.e. nearly a quarter of all al-Suddī’s narrations); and
3-Abū Šāliḥ, from whom he narrates 416 times (24.8%, i.e. nearly a quarter of all al-Suddī’s narrations).

It is thus evident that the source (the common link), upon whom al-Ṭabarī depended through this isnād, was al-Suddī, via whom he quotes from these 3 major scholars (i.e. al-Suddī’s masters), since this isnād is repeated 1,676 times. However, when we reach al-Suddī’s masters, we see that the isnād suddenly branches out into 9 tracks. Al-Suddī narrates extensively from the 3 masters to whom we referred above. From those 3 masters he narrates 1,669 times (99.6%). Therefore, the largest percentage of the strand of isnād Mūsā ~ Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī is narrated from 3 persons. This leads, as I assume, to one possibility, which is that al-Suddī was the common link for the isnād of Mūsā b. Hārūn, al-Ṭabarī’s master. This further
suggests that al-Suddî compiled and documented what he had taken from his masters by isnāds reaching back to narrations of sayings in tafsīr taken from the Prophet’s Companions (Ṣaḥāba), who appear as the sixth generation. This possibility, amounting to a virtual probability, is confirmed by history, in addition to being backed by the results of the statistical analysis. When we move to the sixth generation, that of the masters of those 3 narrators (Murra, Abū Mālik, Abū Ṣāliḥ) from whom al-Suddî narrates extensively, we find that they also narrate from some of their masters in an extensive manner.

Thus, we find that Murra al-Hamdānī narrates 836 isnāds (almost 50% of the total 1,669 isnāds) from only two masters. The first of these was Ṭabdullāh b. Mas‘ūd the well-known Companion and commentator, from whom he narrates 419 isnāds (50.1%, i.e. approximately half of Murra’s narrations. The other 417 isnāds (49.9%), Murra narrates from some other Companions, who are not named by Murra nor specified either by him or by al-Suddî. He introduces them merely by saying, “From some Companions.” From these persons Murra narrates 417 times (49.9%) (see the following Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Mas‘ūd</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Companions</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contrast, Abū Mālik, who narrates 417 isnāds (24.9%), and Abū Ṣāliḥ, who narrates 416 isnāds (24.8%), together narrated the total amount of 834 isnāds (49.9% of all the 1,669 isnāds) from one master: Ṭabdullāh b. Ṭabbās, the well-known Companion and commentator. Consequently, these 3 narrators (Murra, Abū Mālik, and Abū Ṣāliḥ) narrated nearly three quarters (1,254 isnāds, or approximately 75%) of the total 1,669 isnāds from only two notable Companions, i.e. Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd. The other third also narrated from Companions, who are unfortunately

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This is how the words appear in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsīr, without any mention of who these Companions were.
unnamed. We can conclude that the major source of these 3 narrators (Murra, Abū Mālik, and Abū Ṣāliḥ) was the two Companions Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-AH 618/619-687)⁸ and Ibn Mas‘ūd (d. 32/653).⁹ These two Companions were in fact known as the most knowledgeable persons in the discipline of Qur’ānic exegesis.

As for the narration of the seventh generation, the isnād continues but through only five frequencies all of which reach to ḥadiths (traditions) narrated from the Prophet. See the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it becomes clear that all that was narrated by al-Ṭabarī through this isnād reached back to the Companions ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās and ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd, plus a group of unnamed Companions.

We may note here the possibility that al-Suddī may have taken information from people who compiled material dealing with tafsīr. The people concerned are his three masters Murra, Abū Mālik, and Abū Ṣāliḥ. Narrations and compilations by these three are among al-Suddī’s sources and it is upon them that he mostly relied for his narrations from Companions such as Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd, who were well informed in tafsīr, as well as from a number of unnamed Companions. This is evident in the extensive repetition in the tafsīrs of information taken from these Companions.

Most of those who wrote about al-Suddī say that he wrote a book on tafsīr containing narrations reported from earlier generations. This matter will now be discussed, but first we need to go back a little to consider the historic aspect of this

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⁸ ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās al-Hāshimi is one of the famous Companions each known as ḥabr al-umma (learned of the people) and turjman al-Qur’ān (commentator on the Qur’ān). He grew up in the early years of Muḥammad’s prophethood and accompanied the Prophet while still young. Many ḥadiths have been reported through him. He is reliable and widely knowledgeable in fiqh and especially in tafsīr. A book on tafsīr attributed to him is entitled Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās. See Isāba, 2:330; Istīlāb, 3:33; and Usd al-Ghāba, 3:390.

⁹ ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd al-Hudhali, a very well-known Companion, was the servant of the Prophet and narrated many ḥadiths. He was an authority in the field of tafsīr and Qur’ānic recitation. He lived and died in Medina. See Isāba, 2:368; Istīlāb, 3:187; and Usd al-Ghāba, 3:384.
isnād Mūsā ~ ‘Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī. This isnād is the one appearing most frequently among al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds. In fact, al-Ṭabarī hardly ever presents an interpretation of any verse of the Qur’ān which does not contain a narration from this isnād. Before going into a detailed explanation of this isnād, we should remind ourselves of the question enunciated earlier: when citing this isnād, does al-Ṭabarī refer to a document written in the discipline of tafsīr which was compiled by al-Suddī (the common link of this isnād) and which existed during al-Ṭabarī’s time? It is necessary to consider this question since the extensive repetition in some isnāds found in al-Ṭabarī’s interpretation may be due to some sources referred to in the interpretation.¹⁰ However, a large number of these interpretations have not reached us and are still considered lost, although by the tools and method employed in this research, we are able to identify many of them.

The Tafsīr of al-Suddī was passed down by narrators through one of the technical means of narrating that have previously been noted: samā‘ (hearing), mukātaba (writing) or ijāza (permitting). The follower would hear the Tafsīr from the shaykh (master), then the shaykh would permit the follower to narrate it to those who followed after, such as the follower’s own pupils or disciples, until the Tafsīr reached al-Ṭabarī through his master, Mūsā. We should note that al-Ṭabarī uses the term haddathānī (he narrated to me) each time he narrates the isnād Mūsā ~ al-Suddī (see the next Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of the term ḥaddathānī used by al-Ṭabarī when narrating from his master Mūsā b. Hārūn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathānī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our explanation of terms used by al-Ṭabarī in the course of narrating and conveying, we saw that this term could mean that al-Ṭabarī heard from a master via a written document whose narration to others was permitted to him by his master or

¹⁰ Some of these sources have survived only in sections, like the Tafsīr of Suḥyān al-Thawrī, the Tafsīr of Yahyā b. Sallām al-Ṭamīmī, and the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī.
even without permission. So al-Suddî’s Tafsîr may have reached al-Tabarî via both oral and written transmission.

We may now return to note some biographical details relating to the persons contained in the isnâd Mûsâ ~ ʿAmr ~ Asbâṭ ~ al-Suddî, because the scholars of Ḥadîth had something to say on this matter.

1. Al-Ṭabarî’s master, Mûsâ b. Hârûn is Mûsâ b. Hârûn b. ʿAbdullâh b. Marwân Al-Baghdâdî (d. AH 294), a muḥaddith (narrator) and ḥâfîz (one who could memorize narrations by heart) from Iraq. He penned original works and compilations. Historians affirm that Mûsâ wrote down his knowledge in these books. Ibn Nâṣîr al-Dîn said of him, “He is the narrator of Iraq.” Several scholars narrated from him including al-Ṭabarâni. Al-Ṭabarî also narrated from Mûsâ b. Hârûn in more than fifty places in the first and second volumes of his Târikh. Mûsâ was in fact one of al-Ṭabarî’s most important masters from whom he benefited in Qur’ânic interpretation and historiography. Among his writings there was a document dealing with Qur’ânic interpretation and another one on history. He was possibly a major writer who combined both these disciplines and to whom al-Ṭabarî referred in compiling his own books in Qur’ânic interpretation and history.

2. ʿAmr b. Ṭalḥa al-Qannâd (d. AH 222), Mûsâ’s master, is ʿAmr b. Ḥâmmâd b. Ṭalḥa al-Qannâd, who is sometimes simply referred to as ʿAmr b. Ṭalḥa. In his turn, ʿAmr narrated from his own master, Asbâṭ b. Naṣr. Scholars have decided that ʿAmr’s narration from Asbâṭ came from a book. Ibn Ḥajar said, “Muslim and al-Bukhârî [scholars of Ḥadîth] narrated from ʿAmr. Abû Dâwûd and al-Nasâ’î also narrated from him and so did Ibn Mâjah in his interpretation.” Ibn Sa’îd said about him, “He was also accepted by Yaḥyâ b. Maʿîn, Abû Ḥâtim, and Ibn Ḥajar.”

11 See Chapter V on the explanation of the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarî in narrating isnâds from his masters.

12 Shadharât, 3:399; Siyar, 8: 172 - 173; Tadhkira, 2:217; Kaḥhâla, 13:49.

13 Tahdhib, 8:22-23.


15 Tahdhib, 8:22.

16 Ibn Sa’d, 6:285.

17 Jarh, 3/1:228.

18 Taqrîb, 1:331.
3. Asbāt b. Naṣr⁹ (d. 170/786) is Abū Yūsuf al-Hamdānī al-Kūfī, a commentator and a narrator of Ḥadīth, from whom al-Bukhārī narrated in his historical work (Tarikh), as also did other leading scholars of Ḥadīth: Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah. Ibn al-‘Imad ¹⁰ said, “Asbāt b. Naṣr is a Kufan, a commentator, and the companion of Ismā‘īl al-Suddī.” Al-Suyūṭī said, “The interpretation compiled by al-Suddī was narrated from him by Asbāt b. Naṣr and al-Suddī’s Tafsīr is the best interpretation.”¹¹

4. Al-Suddī (d. 127/744) is Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Kūfī, the elder.²² Al-Suddī obtained his name from the fact that he used to sit at the mosque door (sudda). He narrated from the Companions Anas b. Mālik and Ibn ‘Abbās. He saw Ibn ‘Umar, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ali, Abū Hurayrah, and Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī.³³ Al-Suddī used to interpret the Qur’ān and his interpretation was admired by Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, the famous Tābi‘ī scholar. He was also trusted and accepted by Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qattān, Ṭāmān b. Ḥanbal, Ibn Mahdī, al-Nasā‘ī, and Ibn ‘Adī. Al-‘Ijli said that his scholarship in Qur’ānic interpretation was beyond any doubt³⁴ and Kahhāla stated that he wrote a tafsīr:³⁵ Sezgin said, “al-Suddī’s Tafsīr, as I assume, combined the interpretation of all the verses of the Qur’ān. It is quite possible to reassemble it from al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr.”³⁶ Ibn Taghrībirdī said about him, “Al-Suddī is the author of a book on tafsīr, a book on maghāzī (military expeditions), and a book on the sūra (biography of the Prophet). He was a knowledgeable scholar who knew the events and the days of people,”³⁷ meaning that he had mastered the discipline of history. Al-Suyūṭī said, “Ismā‘īl al-Suddī refers his interpretation by various isnāds to Ibn

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⁹ See his biographical details in Kabīr, 1/2:53; Jorḥ, 1/1:332; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:376; ‘Ibar, 1:259; Shadharāt, 1:279; Tahdhīb, 1:221; Wāfi, 8:383; Sezgin, 1:192.

¹⁰ Shadharāt, 2:327.

¹¹ Itqān, 2:534.

²² Al-Suddī, the junior, is Muḥammad b. Marwān (d. 186/802), whose narrations were considered weak, inaccurate, and unacceptable by scholars of Ḥadīth. See Tahdhīb, 5:279.

²³ Tahdhīb, 1:199-200.

²⁴ Ibid., 1:199.

²⁵ Ibid., 1:199-200.

²⁶ Kahhāla, 2:276.

²⁷ Sezgin, 1:191.

²⁸ Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira, 1:308; Lubāb, 1:537; A‘lām, 1:313.
‘Abbas and Ibn Mas‘ūd. We have already noted al-Suyūṭi’s praise for the *Tafsīr* of al-Suddī in our biographical notes on Asbāṭ.

Having reviewed the biographies of the narrators in the *isnād* Musā ~ ‘Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī, it becomes clear that they were famous historically and that they heard from each other. Some stated that the narration of Asbāṭ from al-Suddī was by reference to a written document. It was also affirmed that al-Suddī was a scholar in Qur’ānic interpretation and wrote a book on the subject. Ibn Ḥajar’s statement is even further confirmation that the book was an interpretation of the Qur’ān using the three ways branching from al-Suddī which we discussed previously. Ibn Ḥajar says, “Al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and others have, in their commentaries, mentioned al-Suddī’s interpretation of various chapters of the Qur’ān, from Asbāṭ b. Naṣr narrated from al-Suddī.” Ibn Ḥajar was correct in that Ibn Abī Ḥātim was narrating from this interpretation since I have in fact seen this interpretation and found that Ibn Abī Ḥātim repeatedly narrated from al-Suddī’s *Tafsīr*, as, of course, did al-Ṭabarī.32 Besides, Ibn Abī Ḥātim lived during the time of al-Ṭabarī, or a little later. His birth and death were between 240 and 327/854 and 938. Al-Suyūṭi said, “The interpretation by Ismā‘īl al-Suddī is referred by various *isnāds* to Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abbas. Scholars and imams such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shu‘ba have narrated from al-Suddī. But the best interpretation is that of al-Suddī.” He added moreover, “Al-Ṭabarī refers a lot to al-Suddī’s *Tafsīr* through Mūsā b. Hārūn, from Abū Mālik, Abū Ṣāliḥ as from Ibn ‘Abbās, and from Murra as from Ibn Mas‘ūd and some other Companions.” Al-Suyūṭi stated that al-Ḥākim narrated from al-Suddī’s *Tafsīr* in *al-Mustadrak.*33 When examining this book, it revealed that al-Ḥākim quoted some of this *Tafsīr* in his *al-Mustadrak.*34

29 *Itqān*, 2:534.
30 *Tahdhib*, 1:315.
31 There is a manuscript copy of this *Tafsīr* in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Egypt, under the no. 15 *Tafsīr*.
33 *Itqān*, 2:534.
This historical research shows us that al-Suddi’s interpretation was one of the first documents written in the field of *tafsīr*. It is from an early generation, because al-Suddi died in 127/745. The statistical result of this *isnād* is in line with the historical result. This result explains the reason for al-Ṭabarī’s extensive reference to this *isnād*, the reason being that the Mūsā ~ al-Suddi *isnād* goes back to an interpretation written by al-Suddi on which al-Ṭabarī relied for narrating in his interpretation. Other scholars of that time, such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Ḥākim, also relied on it.

It needs to be emphasized that this *isnād*, Mūsā ~ al-Suddi, narrates mostly from Companions, mainly ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd and ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, who were both famous for their extensive knowledge in different Islamic disciplines such as Qur’ānic interpretation, history, jurisprudence, and the causes of the revelation. This *isnād* also narrates from some other (unnamed) Companions. See the following Table, which illustrates how this *isnād* mostly quotes narration from Companions, to a lesser degree, from the Prophet i.e. ḥadīths, and minimally from Followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Second major master: al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmuli

Al-Muthannā is the second major source of reference in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr on account of the frequency with which al-Ṭabarī narrates from this person. From al-Muthannā, al-Ṭabarī narrates 1,118 isnāds (13.3% of the total number of 8,424 isnāds), in his exegesis of al-Fātiha and al-Baqara. In many places of his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī uses the full name of this person, which is al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmuli, while in many other places he mentions only the first name, al-Muthannā. Al-Ṭabarī also refers to this master in his Tārīkh.2

Al-Muthannā was born before AH 205 and died after AH 240.3 Beyond these facts, however, I have been unable to discover adequate information about him,4 except for Ibn Kāmil’s note saying, “When al-Ṭabarī started seeking knowledge and gathering narrations, he began to learn from scholars in his native town [i.e. Āmul in Ṭabaristān]5 such as al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmuli, and then he went to Rayy where he met with Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzi.”6 It is evident from this statement that al-Muthannā as well as Ibn Ḥumayd,7 were among al-Ṭabarī’s most important masters and this may help to explain why al-Ṭabarī refers to al-Muthannā hundreds of times.

An examination of the references to al-Muthannā’s masters reveals that they range from an extensive narration from a few persons to scattered narrations from many others. His masters are 41 in number. He quotes 1,063 isnāds from only 11 masters, i.e. just over 95% of the 1,118 isnāds. The remaining 55 isnāds (4.9%) are

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1 See Table no. 1.
2 Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk; see, e.g., 10:38.
3 Cf. Host, 293, 296, 298-9, 301; Stauth, 125-2. See also Fred Leemhuis, “OTT” in Andrew Rippin, (ed.), Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān, 28. This name, al-Muthannā, also appears in the Tafsīr of Ibn Kathīr in scattered places, e.g. 1:88,105,138,139,339.
4 There is no mention of him in the following biographical references: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Baghdādī, al-Dhahabi, Tadhkira; Mīzār, Sīyar; Ibn Sa’d; al-Bukhārī, Kābūr; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Jarḥ; and Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib.
5 Cf. Chapter I, al-Ṭabarī’s biography.
6 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:49.
7 Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzi is also one of al-Ṭabarī’s major masters from whom he narrates frequently and extensively. See notes on al-Ṭabarī’s third major master.
dispersed among 30 other masters. From these 11 masters come several isnād formations of origins traceable to notable commentators after the generation of the Companions. The following Table and Pie Chart show the names of those who were quoted most frequently by al-Muthannā:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ishaq</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Ḥudhayfa</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abdullāh b. Šāliḥ</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwayd</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Iyās</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn al-Minhāl</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Awn</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Nuʿaym</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hibbān b. Mūsā</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Ḥamīd</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim b. Ibrāhīm</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (30)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most quoted masters of al-Muthannā
In view of the frequency of *isnāds* and what we know about the persons in these *isnāds*, it seems safe to conclude that these strands, branching off from al-Muthannā’s eleven most quoted masters, contained narrations which originated from primary reference sources that were considered in the pre-Ṭabarī period to be major works of *Tafsīr*. This is supported by the statistical result we arrived at when counting the recurrence of terms used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate from his master al-Muthannā. The following Table shows that al-Ṭabarī almost always uses the term *haddathanā* (he narrated to me) when transmitting *isnāds* from al-Muthannā. As we have seen above, *haddathanā* is a term used by scholars of Ḥadith to indicate that the information they narrate comes from a written source.⁸ Al-Ṭabarī employs this terminology in 90.1% of all his narrations. Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that al-Ṭabarī is referring to a written document when quoting from this master al-Muthannā. The following Table illustrates this hypothesis.

**Frequency of the terms *haddathanā* and *haddathana* as used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate from his master al-Muthannā**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Haddathanā</em></td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Haddathana</em></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our discussion of the terms used by al-Ṭabarī in narrating *isnāds*, we noted that his use of the term *haddathanā* indicates that he heard from a master via a document whose narration to others was possibly permitted to him by his master. As the above Table shows, 1,018 times (90.1%) out of 1,118, al-Ṭabarī uses the term *haddathanā*, while for only 100 *isnāds* (8.9%) he employs the term *haddathana*. This may suggest that in the majority of cases, when using the term *haddathanā*, al-Ṭabarī is quoting from al-Muthannā teaching from a document, while in the minority of cases, when using the term *haddathana*, he is referring to different scattered

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⁸ See Chapter V, al-Ṭabarī’s technical terms of transmission.

narrations which he transmitted from the same master, i.e. al-Muthannâ, but via other sources, possibly also via a written document.10

Description and Analysis of Isnâds (Strands) flowing from the Major Masters of al-Muthannâ

2.1. The Strand of al-Muthannâ ~ Ishâq b. al-Ḥajjâj al-Ṭâhûnî (lived between AH 170 and 240)11

Al-Muthannâ narrates 308 of his isnâds (27.5%, or nearly one third of the total number of 1,118 isnâds) from Ishâq. In his turn, Ishâq b. al-Ḥajjâj narrates these 308 isnâds from 35 masters, but mainly from 5 masters, from whom he narrates 256 isnâds (83%). These appear in the Table below, showing to the amount of narration from each. Ishâq narrates the remaining 52 isnâds (17%) from another 30 masters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abî Ja'far</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Mighrâ’</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Razzâq</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Abd al-Karîm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Rahmân</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (30)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of al-Muthannâ’s narrations from Ishâq may be illuminated by the statement made by Ibn Abî Ḥâtim that he heard Abû Zur‘a saying that ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Dashtâkî had documented ‘Abd al-Razzâq’s Tafsîr as it was narrated from Ishâq b. al-Ḥajjâj al-Ṭâhûnî.12 This assertion suggests that Ishâq compiled a book on tafsîr from materials he reported from earlier masters such as the five most quoted masters just referred to, in particular ‘Abdullâh b. Abî Ja’far al-Râzî and ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣan’ânî, both of whom were famous scholars in tafsîr.

10 Ibid.
11 Jarîh, 2: 217.
12 Ibid., 2:217.
It should be emphasized here that, when quoting from his master al-Muthannā via Isḥāq al-Ṭahānī’s 5 most quoted masters (mentioned in the above Table), al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one term, i.e. ḥaddathānī. Earlier we noted how this term indicates that the narrator is quoting from a written document. This fact, together with the above statement of Abū Ḥātim, may explain al-Muthannā’s extensive narrating from his most quoted master Isḥāq via Isḥāq’s 5 most quoted masters, which could have come from Isḥāq’s written document that was transmitted to al-Muthannā, who, in turn, transmitted it to his student al-Ṭabarī.

We will next examine the clusters of isnāds by al-Muthannā from Isḥāq and analyse them by reference to the biographies of their reporters. The previous Table has shown that Isḥāq narrated widely, more than three quarters of his isnāds, from 5 of his main masters. These isnāds are as follows:


This isnād is repeated 156 times (i.e. 50.6% of 308 isnāds). ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Jaʿfar al-Rāzī narrates from 3 masters only, including his father Abū Jaʿfar al-Rāzī (AH 90 - 160), from whom he narrates 154 times, i.e. 98.7%. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Abū Jaʿfar was a reliable master of tafsīr. Moreover, al-Dhahabī stated, “Abū Jaʿfar has heard from al-Rabī’ b. Anas when they met during their residence in a village called Burz. Later, Abū Jaʿfar left the village for Rayy where he died.” Abu Jaʿfar on his own has narrates 154 isnāds (100%) from 6 masters, but the majority of them, 147 isnāds or 95.5%, from al-Rabī b. Anas al-Ṭabṣī (139/756). 140 isnāds end at al-Rabī b. Anas, 6 isnāds al-Rabī narrates from his master Abū al-ʿAlīya (d. AH 93), and the remaining 1 isnād al-Rabī narrates from his other master, al-Ḥasan

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13 Tahdhib, 3: 117; Kashīf, 2: 78. He narrated from his father Abū Jaʿfar al-Rāzī.
14 It is claimed that his real name is ʿĪsā b. Abī ʿĪsā Māhān, but he was well known by his agnomen. He narrated from al-Rabī b. Anas and his son ‘Abdullāh b. Jaʿfar narrated from him. See Siyar, 7: 346; Ibn Saʿd, 7: 380; Tahdhib, 6: 324-325; Kabīr, 3: 271; Kashīf, 1: 303.
15 Tahdhib, 6: 325.
16 Siyar, 7: 346.
17 Ibid.
18 Tahdhib, 2: 168.
This shows that al-Ṭabarî heard the *Tafsîr* of al-Rabî’ b. Anas from his master al-Muthannā in the following way, which he repeated 147 times:

Al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja’far al-Rāzī ~ Abū Ja’far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabî’

The significance of this isnād lies in the fact that it reaches back to an early written source on *tafsîr* entitled *Tafsîr al-Qur’ān*, which contained opinions on *tafsîr* expressed by al-Rabî’ b. Anas al-Baṣrî, the famous commentator who lived in an early generation at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century AH.


This isnād occurs 58 times (i.e. in 18.8% of the 308 isnāds). Abū Zuhayr studied under 3 masters but received most of his narrations (56 isnāds or 96.5%) from only one person, Juwaybir b. Sa’īd al-Azdi al-Kūfī (d. between AH 140 and 150). Juwaybir attributes all 56 isnāds to al-Ḍāḥhāk b. Muzāhim al-Khurasānî (d. 105/723), a Tābi’î (Follower) and a famous commentator on the Qur’ān, who left a written *Tafsîr*. This isnād ends 54 times at al-Ḍāḥhāk as al-Ṭabarî went on narrating this scholar’s own opinions on *tafsîr*. The remaining two isnāds extended from al-Ḍāḥhāk to another prominent Tābi’î, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî (d. 115/723). Hence, the isnād of al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ Abū Zuhayr ~ Juwaybir ~ al-Ḍāḥhāk, repeated most frequently in the commentary on *al-Fātiha* and *al-Baqara*, may well indicate that al-Ṭabarî intended specifically to cite al-Ḍāḥhāk’s commentary on the Qur’ān, especially since al-Ḍāḥhāk’s prominence in *tafsîr* scholarship was testified to by others such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Ḥanbal, and Ibn ‘Adî. This statistical and historical research shows that al-Ḍāḥhāk’s *Tafsîr* was one of the first documents written in the discipline of *tafsîr*. It is from an early generation, because al-Ḍāḥhāk died in 105/723.

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22 He is known as a commentator, his *Tafsîr* being well-respected among experts on *tafsîr* and hadîth scholars. He narrated from al-Ḍāḥhāk, the well-known commentator. See *Kāshīf*, 1:190; *Tahdhib*, 1:397.
2.1.3. Al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī al-Yamanī (126-211/744-827)²⁶

This isnād recurs 25 times, representing 8.1% of the 308 isnāds. It seems that al-Ṭabarî used it to benefit from ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s wide knowledge as he was famed for works on tafsīr as well as Ḥadīth. Al-Ṭabarî narrates from ‘Abd al-Razzāq via various routes that will be described later, including that of his master al-Muthannā and others. ‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates from 7 masters but he reports relatively more often, about 14 times (56%), from Ma’mar b. Rāshid al- Bsîrî and later al-Yamanî (d. AH 153).²⁷ Ma’mar could be considered as a major source for ‘Abd al-Razzāq. He resided in Basra and then in Yemen where he met with ‘Abd al-Razzāq, who said that he recorded and wrote one hundred thousand narrations from Ma’mar.²⁸ It is quite possible that the information narrated in this isnād was transmitted at that time. On the other hand, Ma’mar b. Rāshid narrates 14 times from six masters. He communicated more isnāds from Qatāda b. Da‘āma al- Bsîrî ²⁹ (60-117/ 680-736) stopping at Qatāda 5 times (35.7%) and once reaching beyond Qatāda to Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkî (21-104/ 642-722), the famous commentator.³⁰

It is quite conceivable that the source which al-Ṭabarî intended to benefit from was the compilation of the famous scholar of tafsīr and Ḥadīth, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānî al-Yamanî, because the isnād reaches back to ‘Abd al-Razzāq 25 times and then after him becomes divided into several branches. ‘Abd al-Razzāq wrote many books, including one entitled Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān.³¹ We will see later that al-Ṭabarî narrates from ‘Abd al-Razzāq by various masters other than al-Muthannā, especially

²⁶ He is ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan‘ānî from Yemen, a commentator on the Qur‘ān as well as on Ḥadīth. He wrote a number of books of which some are extant and in circulation, like Kitāb al-Musannaf on Prophetic Tradition, ed. by Ḥabīb al-Rahmān al-‘Azāmī and printed by al-Majlis al-‘ilmî in 1970, Rapur, India. ‘Abd al-Razzāq wrote another book on the Qur‘ān, entitled Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, which has been ed. by Muṣṭafā Muslim. See Tadhkira, 1:364.
²⁸ Tadhhib, 5:500.
²⁹ He was a commentator on the Qur‘ān from Basra and wrote a book entitled Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān. See Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn, 1: 834.
³⁰ Tadhkira, 92; Tadhhib, 10:42; Ibn Sa‘d, 4:466; Sezgin, 1:185; Nadîm, 33; Ẓunînî, 458; Mu‘jam al-Mufassirîn, 2:462.
³¹ Ẓunînî, 452; Sezgin, 1:277; Mu‘jam al-Mufassirîn, 1:281.
via al-Ṭabarī’s fifth major master, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, where the isnād ends with the same result we have come to here. We may note, however, from the biographical study of ‘Abd al-Razzāq and his master Ma’mar, that after Ma’mar left his birth place, Basra, he went to Yemen at the end of his life where ‘Abd al-Razzāq met him and learned from him a large amount of narrations, and then Ma’mar became ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s major master. We may note further that Ma’mar b. Rāshid and his master Qatāda were both from the town of Basra. Hence Ma’mar heard from Qatāda when he was in Basra and then conveyed the knowledge he learnt to the people of Yemen.


This isnād is repeated 11 times (3.6% of 308 isnāds). It reveals al-Ṭabarī’s extensive knowledge of narrations since, while he was born in Ṭabaristān and lived in Iraq, he was able to cite information produced in far-away places like Yemen. Thus, the present isnād was successively transmitted in one family which lived in Yemen. Ismā‘īl attributed the eleven isnāds to his uncle ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma‘qil al-Yamani (d. AH 183).33 ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, in turn, attributed this same number of isnāds to his uncle Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamani34 (24-114/654-732), with whom the isnād stops. Wahb, a Jew who converted to Islam, was born and died in Ṣan‘ā’ in Yemen. He was known as a qassāṣ (a story-teller), i.e. one of that class of people who used to narrate anecdotes about ancient people and describe the eras of early prophets and kings. He wrote a number of reference works like the one entitled Taṣnīfī Dhikr al-Mulūk min Ḥimyar wa-Akhbārihim wa-Qiṣaṣihim wa-Qubūrihim wa-Ash‘ārihim (on the stories, poems, and ruins of the kings of Ḥimyar). His other works include Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā‘, Kitāb al-Qadar, al-Isrā‘īliyyāt, and Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān.35 Al-Ṭabarī’s frequent narrating of this scholar’s isnāds from various routes, including that of his master al-Muthannā and others, may indicate his desire to cite

32 It is said that he obtained a document which he narrated from. Tahdīḥib, 1: 200.
33 ‘Abd al-Ṣamad narrated from his uncle Wahb b. Munabbih as well as from his nephew Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd al-Karīm. He was quoted by his brother ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his sons Yahyā and Yūnus, as well as by ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. al-Ṣan‘ānī. He had a long life. See Tahdīḥib, 3: 455.
34 Tahdīḥib, 6: 107.
material from written sources as well as his confidence in Wahb’s ability as a narrator, especially since the latter was in close fellowship with ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, the famous Companion.

2.1.5. Al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abdullāh b. Sa‘d al-Dashtakī al-Rāzī

This isnād recurs 6 times, representing 1.9% of the 308 isnāds. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Dashtakī narrates 5 times from Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī and once from another person. Abū Ja‘far narrates 5 times from his master al-Rabī’ b. Anas, from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates his Tafsīr. Therefore, al-Ṭabarī narrates via his master al-Muthannā the Tafsīr of al-Rabī’ b. Anas 152 times through two chains, viz:

1. Al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja‘far al-Rāzī ~ Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī’; and


This is further evidence that the later commentators benefited from a work or works composed by al-Rabī’.

This concludes the discussion of the clusters of isnāds branching off from al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq, an isnād strand which reappears 256 times, or in 83% of 308 isnāds, in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr of al-Fātiha and al-Baqara. Also to be noted is the fact that Ishāq is shown as having 5 masters. They are ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī and Ismā‘īl al-Ṣan‘ānī from Yemen; ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Ja‘far al-Rāzī and ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abdullāh b. Sa‘d al-Rāzī from Rayy; and Abū al-Zuhayr ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Mīghrā’ from Kufa.

2.2. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa Mūsā b. Mas‘ūd al-Baṣrī (d. 240/835)

This isnād is repeated 234 times, i.e. it accounts for 21% of 1,118 isnāds.38 Abū Ḥudhayfa narrates most of them, 231 times (98.7%), from Shībl b.

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37 He was known as al-Nahdī and wrote, among other works, a Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Ibn Abī Ḥātim said that he narrated more than fifteen thousand hadiths. See Kabīr, 4/1: 295; Hadiyyat al-‘Arifin, 2: 477; Kahhala, 13: 48; Tahdhib, 5: 510-579.
‘Abbad al-Makki\(^3\) (70-148/689-764). He narrates each of the remaining 4 isnāds from 3 different masters. See the following Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shibl</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (3)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although, in turn, Shibl narrates the 231 isnāds from 4 persons, he attributes most of them, some 226 isnāds (97.8%), to one person, ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ\(^4\) (d. AH 131). Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates from 6 masters, but mainly from only two of them: Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makki\(^4\) (21-104/642-722) and ‘Aṭṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkl.\(^4\) From Mujāhid, Ibn Abī Najīḥ took 213 isnāds (94.2%), in 210 of which the isnād stops at Mujāhid to narrate his Tafsīr. In the remaining three isnāds, he reached further back to narrate from Mujāhid’s master, the Companion ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās.\(^4\) From ‘Aṭṭā’ Ibn Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkl, Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates 6 times, 4 times stopping at ‘Aṭṭā’ and twice going further back to Ibn ‘Abbās.

The distinguishing thing about this isnād is the high frequency of the recurrence of one of its strands, that of al-Muthannā – Abū Ḥudhayfa – Shibl al-Makki – Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makki – Mujāhid b.Jabr al-Makki. This isnād strand recurs 213 times (i.e. in 94.2% of the 226 isnāds attributed to Ibn Abī Najīḥ by Shibl). Also notable is the fact that its last three narrators are from Mecca, which may have been an assumed point of strength in the credibility of the isnād as it was made through

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38 See Table of al-Muthannā’s most quoted masters.
39 He was known as al-Qāri’ owing to his admired recitation of the Qur’ān. ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ narrated from him. See Tahdhib, 2: 477; Shadharāt, 2: 221.
40 A commentator from Mecca who had fellowship with Mujāhid. Waki‘ said that Sufyān used to edit Ibn Abī Najīḥ’s Tafsīr. See Shadharāt, 2: 136; Tahdhib, 3: 284.
41 Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkl Abū al-Ḥajjāj was a commentator on the Qur’ān. Abū Khaṣīf said of him that he was the best informed among all the commentators of his time. He wrote a Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. See Ibn ‘Asākir, Tarīkh, 16:125,131; Tahdhib, 5:373.
42 He was a credible scholar, well informed in jurisprudence and Ḥadīth. See Tahdhib, 4:128-130; Shadharāt, 2:69.
43 Scholars attribute to him a work in tafsīr and a musnad in Ḥadīth, as well as rulings lawsuits in jurisprudence included in 20 reference books. See Ibn ‘Asākir, Tarīkh, 9:238,244; Wāʾf, 15: 47; Tahdhib, 3: 180.
personal transmission in one place. There is also the fact that this isnād goes back to a written source on tafsīr produced by the well-known commentator Mujāhid al-Makki.44 We may therefore conclude that al-Ṭabarī’s purpose in frequently referring to this isnād is to benefit from Mujāhid’s scholarly work on Tafsīr through his master al-Muthannā.

2.3. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Misrī45(137-223/754-838)

This isnād is repeated 163 times, making a proportion of 14.6% of 1,118 isnāds. ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ narrates mostly from 2 masters out of 5 (see the following Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muʿāwiyah</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Layth</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These 2 most quoted narrators are Muʿāwiyah b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥimsī46 (d. AH 172), from whom ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ narrates 124 times (76.1%), and al-Layth b. Saʿd al-Misrī47 (AH 94-175), from whom ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ narrates 34 times (20.9%). The total number of isnāds narrated by ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ from these 2 masters is 158 (97% of 163 isnāds). The remaining 5 isnāds ‘Abdullāh narrates from a further 3 masters. In turn, Muʿāwiyah b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥimsī narrates 122 times (98.3% of 124 isnāds) from his master, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa al-Ḥimsī48 (d. AH 143) and the other 2 isnāds he narrates

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44 See f.n. no. 90.
45 He served as secretary to al-Layth b. Saʿd (d. AH 175) and became well known for doing so. Ibn Saʿd, 7: 518; Ṭadhkira, 1:388; Huffāẓ, 172; Tadhhib, 3: 121.
46 Ṭadhhib, 5: 480; Ṭadhkira, 1:170; Huffāẓ, 84; ‘Ibar, 1: 241.
47 He was recognized for his extensive knowledge of jurisprudence, Qur’ānic exegesis, ǧāfiz (memorization of ḥadīths), and capacity for grammar and poetry. See Huffāẓ, 151; Baghdad, 13:3; Ṭadhkira, 1:224; Mizān, 3:423; Wafayāt, 1: 439.
48 His father’s name is Sālim; so he is called ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa Sālim. He was originally from the Arabian Peninsula but later moved to Hims. He narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās but did not hear directly from him except through Mujāhid b. Jabr or Saʿd b. Jubayr. See Ṭadhhib, 4: 213.
from 2 other persons. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa himself narrates these 122 times (100.0%) from one master, Ibn ‘Abbâs. Consequently, this isnâd reaches Ibn ‘Abbâs 122 times and it is apparently from his Tafsîr that al-Ṭabarî intended to cite information from this source. Therefore, the most frequently emerging strand (122 times) here is al-Muthannâ ~ ‘Abdullâh b. Śâliḥ ~ Mu‘âwiya b. Śâliḥ ~ ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa ~ Ibn ‘Abbâs. This isnâd is one of the most common of all the isnâds in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr; as it recurs many times. Al-Suyûtî proclaimed it “the best isnâd to Ibn ‘Abbâs ...and by this isnâd, al-Ṭabarî, Ibn Abî Ḥâtim (240-327/854-938), and Ibn al-Mundhir narrated frequently through intermediaries between themselves and Ibn Abî Śâliḥ.”

It was said that ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa did not hear directly from Ibn ‘Abbâs because ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa and Ibn ‘Abbâs lived in different eras and could not have met. Al-Bukhârî, nevertheless, included his narration in his Šâhîh in the section on tafsîr; because the intermediaries between ‘Alî and Ibn ‘Abbâs are identified as either Mujâhid b. Jabr or Sa‘îd b. Jubayr. Al-Suyûtî said, “‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa heard Ibn ‘Abbâs’s Tafsîr from Mujâhid and Sa‘îd b. Jubayr.” Consequently, Ibn Ḥajar attempted clarification by saying, “Once the unknown intermediary is identified and is recognized as a credible source of narrations, then there is no harm in this sort of narration.”

To endorse Ibn Abî Ṭalḥa’s isnâds and boost his credibility, Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) commented that there was a document on tafsîr in Egypt narrated by ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa so valuable that if a man travelled to Egypt to consult it, it would prove worthy of all the effort and his trip would not be wasted. On the same subject, Ibn Ḥajar said that this document of Tafsîr was with Abî Šâliḥ ‘Abdullâh b. Śâliḥ (the secretary of al-Layth b. Sa‘d). Its contents were narrated by Mu‘âwiya b. Šâliḥ on the authority of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalḥa, who ascribed it to Ibn ‘Abbâs. A copy was kept by al-Bukhârî, who relied on it and used it extensively as a source of reference in compiling his Šâhîh. Moreover, al-Suyûtî said that this reference tool was frequently consulted.

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49 Itqân, 2:1231.
50 Talhdhib, 3: 214.
51 Itqân, 2: 533.
52 Ibid., 2: 532-533.
by al-Ṭabarī, by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and by Ibn al-Mundhir, who all quoted ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ through various intermediaries because they did not meet him. In the case of al-Ṭabarī, the mediator was al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī.

The other major master of ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ is al-Layth b. Sa’d al-Misrī. Al-Layth narrates 34 isnāds from 6 masters, but mainly from 2: Yūnūs b. Yazīd al-Ayli (d. AH 159) and ‘Aqīl b. Khālid al-Ayli (d. AH 141). He narrates from Yūnūs b. Yazīd 17 times (50%) and from ‘Aqīl b. Khālid 13 times (38.2%). In turn, each of these men narrates from one master, Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. AH 124), the famous scholar acknowledged by al-Layth b. Sa’d for his far-reaching efforts in collecting traditions of the Prophet and his competence in the study of Ḥadīth.

Al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-Zuhrī’s own Tafsīr 21 times as the isnād ceases after al-Zuhrī, while the remaining 9 times he goes beyond al-Zuhrī to reach 4 narrators who, together with al-Zuhrī, account for the total narrations due to Yūnūs al-Ayli and ‘Aqīl al-Ayli. Al-Layth further attributes four narrations to 2 persons, making the frequency of what he narrates 34 times. This information may show that the strands via al-Layth b. Sa’d were intended to reach the commentaries of al-Zuhrī, which are referred to 30 times out of 34.

Therefore, al-Ṭabarī used two routes of transmission via ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ. They are represented as follows:


~ Yūnūs al-Ayli ~ al-Zuhrī.

54 Itqān, 2: 533.
55 He narrated extensively from al-Zuhrī and was a close colleague of his. It was known that al-Zuhrī would be a guest with Yūnūs b. Yazīd whenever he visited “Ayla”. They were also travelling companions during journeys to Medina. See Tadhkira, 1:162; Jarḥ, 4/2:247; Tahdhib, 11:450; Ibn Sa’d, 7/2:206; Kabīr, 4/2:406; Ḥuffāẓ, 78.
56 He narrated from al-Zuhrī and was quoted by al-Layth b. Sa’d. See Ḥuffāẓ, 77; Tadhkira, 1:161; ‘Hbar, 1:197; Shadharāt, 1:216; Kabīr, 4/1:94; Jarḥ, 3/2:43.
57 Both persons are from a place called Ayla. However, Ayla is a village in the seaside of the Red Sea located somewhere close to al-Sham =Eilat (modern Israeli part). See Buldān, 1:292.
Our examination of the two strands of al-Muthannā shows that ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ, al-Muthannā’s master, wrote a work on tafsīr in which he managed to incorporate traditions and reports attributed to his two major masters, Mu‘āwiya b. Ṣāliḥ and al-Layth b. Sa‘d. He assembled the collection in a document which have historians agreed in attributing to him. This document was known as “the book of Abū Ṣāliḥ ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī.” Al-Ṭabarī benefited from this work by frequent reference (163 times) to Abū Ṣāliḥ via his master al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm. It is also possible that ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ, in his role as secretary to al-Layth, acquired more information and wrote another book which was the fruits of his fellowship with al-Layth b. Sa‘d.

2.4. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Suwayd b. Naṣr al-Marwazi♂ (d. AH 240)

This isnād recurs 103 times, representing 9.2% of 1,118 isnāds. Suwayd narrates almost all of his isnāds (102, or 99%) from ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwazi♂ (118-181/736-797), narrating only once from another person (see the next Table).

Suwayd b. Naṣr al-Marwazi’s most cited master

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn al-Mubārak</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other master</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In turn, Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from 39 masters, thus representing 39 branches of this isnād. Before proceeding to explain them, we may observe that Ibn al-Mubārak could be considered as the common link in this isnād because the isnāds start to

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60 He was considered as the narrator of Ibn al-Mubārak. Kabūr, 2/2: 149; Tahdhib, 2: 460-461.
61 He was a well recognized scholar admitted to be expert in fiqh, an authority in tafsīr, a master of Ḥadīth an eminent historian, and a person fluent in grammar and articulate in linguistics. Among his writings are Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Kitāb al-Tārikh, and al-Sunan fī al-Fiqh. See Nadīm, 1: 228; Ḥīlya, 8: 162; Tadhkira, 1: 253-257; Zamān, 57, 911, 1410, 1422.
diverge immediately after him. The statistical count shows that the part of the isnād reaching up to him from al-Ṭabarī’s direction recurs 102 times, but beyond Ibn al-Mubārak the isnād splits into 39 branches. We noted earlier that Ibn al-Mubārak composed a Qur’ānic commentary with the usual title Tafsīr al-Qur’ān, a book on fiqh entitled Kitāb al-Jihād, and a work on history. We noted also that Suwayd b. Naṣr al-Marwazī was a student of Ibn al-Mubārak and that both of them resided in the town of Marw.62 Yāqūt noted that Ibn al-Mubārak was the principal scholar of the town and that Suwayd was the intermediary through whom al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm passed Ibn al-Mubārak’s commentaries over to al-Ṭabarī.63

Hence, al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds from his master al-Muthannā congregate at Ibn al-Mubārak, who could be considered as the common link in this strand. He chose to narrate from four narrators more frequently than any others. They are his main sources of isnāds and his attributions to these four persons add up to 47 instances, or almost 46% of all attributions. They are explained below:

- Ibn Jurayj al-Makki64 (d. AH 150). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 14 times (13.7% of 102 isnāds). Ibn Jurayj narrates half of these, or 7 isnāds, from his master ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki, while he attributes the rest to 5 other masters.

- Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī65 (97-161/716-778). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 12 times (11.8% of 102 isnāds). Ibn al-Mubārak praised his narrations as the best among 1,200 persons he learned from.66 Al-Thawrī narrates nearly in equal proportions from 9 masters.

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62 Marw or Marw al-Shāh Jān, was the most famous town in Khurasān. Marw means “the white stones”, Shāh means “king”, and Jān means “the soul”. So Shāh Jān means “the soul of the king” in Persian. Presently, the town is located in Iran. See Buldān, 5: 132; Ansāb, ed. ‘Abdullāh ‘Umar al-Bārūdī (published by Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut), 5: 264.

63 Buldān, 5: 132-134.

64 His name is ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Jurayj al-Makki. Ibn Ḥanbal said that he was the first to compile books of traditions. See Huffāz, 81; Bagdād, 15: 400; Tadhkira, 1: 169; Tahdhib, 6: 402; Lisan, 6: 62.


66 Huffāz, 95.
- Ma’mar b. Rāshīd al- Başrī (AH 96-154). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 11 times (10.7% of 102 isnāds). In turn, Ma’mar narrates these 11 isnāds from 5 masters with similar frequencies.

- Juwaybir b. Sa‘īd al-Kūfī (d. between AH 140 and 150). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 10 times (9.8% of the 102 isnāds). In turn, Juwaybir narrates the same amount of times from al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥīm and no one else. We noticed earlier that al-Ḍahḥāk was a famous commentator and composed a work on tafsīr. The following Table summarizes this information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Jurayj</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma’mar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juwaybir</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (35)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Ādam b. Abī Īyās al-Khurasānī (132-220/749-835)

This isnād is reappeared 100 times, representing 8.9% of 1,118 isnāds. Although Ādam narrates these isnāds from 6 masters, he narrates 89 times (89%) from only 1 master, Abū Ja’far al-Rāzī. He attributes the 11 remaining isnāds to another 5 masters (see the following Table).

---

67 Ibn Sa’d, 5:546; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 288; Kāfir, 7:378-379; Jarḥ, 8:255-257; Kamāl, 1354-1355; Siyar, 7:5.
68 Biographical sources assert that Ibn al-Mubārak narrated from Juwaybir. See Tahdhib, 1:397.
69 See Strand no 1.
70 Ādam wrote a book on tafsīr. Al-Suyūṭī said that Ādam b. Abī Īyās’s Tafsīr was one among a number of tafsīr books that collected the narrations of the Prophet’s Companions and the Followers. Al-Suyūṭī also said that Ādam was a quick transcriber with numerous notes and records. Ādam said about himself that he used to learn at Shu’ba’s sessions and, as he was a quick writer, others used to copy from him. See Ḥuṭṭāṭ, 172; Tadhkira, 1: 409; Tahdhib, 1: 126-127.
Adam b. Abi Ṣyās’s most quoted master

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abu Ja'far</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(5)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, Abu Ja'far is the most significant master among the 5. He, in turn, narrates from 3 masters, but attributes narrations more frequently to 2 persons. They are:

- Al-Rabi’ b. Anas al-Bakri. Abū Ja'far narrates from him 79 times, or in 88.7% of 89 isnāds. Al-Rabi’ himself narrates the same number from his master Abu al-'Alīya Rufay’ b. Mihrān al-Riyāḥī al-Bašrī⁷¹ (d. 93/712). The isnād goes no further, so that what al-Ṭabarī employed was Abū al-'Alīya's Qur’ānic interpretations. Abū al-'Alīya is well known as a competent commentator and an authority on the exegesis of the Qur’ān, who produced a book on tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur’ān.⁷² In his classification of the tafsīr experts, Abu Bakr b. Idrīs placed Abu al-'Alīya at the top. He said that there was no well-informed expert after the generation of Shu’ba like Abū al-'Alīya, after whom came Sa’īd b. Jubayr, then al-Suddī, and then Sufyān al-Thawrī.⁷³

- Qatāda b. Da’āma al-Bašrī. Abu Ja'far narrates from him 7 times, or in 7.8% of 89 isnāds.

By studying the frequency and biographies of the al-Muthannā ~ Adam isnād, it becomes clear that Adam b. Abi Ṣyās was a major source for al-Ṭabarī since he narrated from him 100 times. His biography also shows that he composed a document in which he collected traditions containing the opinions of the Prophet's Companions and their Followers on matters of tafsīr. He too produced a book entitled Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Hajji Khalifa described this Tafsīr as a comprehensive work containing narrations of the Companions and Followers. This isnād (i.e. al-Muthannā ~ Adam)

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⁷¹ Tadhkira, 1: 61; Ibn Sa’d, 1: 112; Kabīr, 5: 355; Tahdhib, 2: 168; Siyar, 4: 207-213; Huffāz, 29; Shadharāt, 1: 367.
⁷² Kabīr, 1/2:326; Tadhkira, 61.
⁷³ Huffāz, 29.
ended at two branches, leading to two well-informed persons in *tafsīr*: Abū al-'Āliya and Qatāda. Each is known to have written on *tafsīr*.

Al-Ṭabarî used two *isnāds* originating from the same person differently. He used the *isnād* al-Muthannā ~ Ādam ~ Abū Ja’far ~ al-Rabī‘ to narrate the *Tafsīr* of al-Rabī‘’s master, Abū al-‘Āliya, but used another *isnād* (al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja’far ~ Abū Ja’far ~ al-Rabī‘) to cite what al-Rabī‘ claimed to be his *Tafsīr*. It is possible that Abū Ja’far, the pupil of al-Rabī‘ in both *isnāds*, wrote two works on *tafsīr*. One work included the *Tafsīr* of al-Rabī‘, which had been narrated by Ibn Abī Ja’far via (his father) Abū Ja’far from al-Rabī‘, while the other work may have contained the *Tafsīr* of Abū al-‘Āliya, the master of al-Rabī‘, which was narrated by Ādam, who attributed it to Abū Ja’far via al-Rabī‘ and via Abū al-‘Āliya. The above observations show that al-Ṭabarî’s method in applying a great number of *isnāds* is not haphazard or redundant because different portions of the *isnāds* lead to the presentation of the *tafsīr* of different scholars.

### 2.6. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī⁷⁴ (d. AH 227)

This *isnād* is repeated 66 times or close to 5.9% of 1,118 *isnāds*. Al-Ḥajjāj, from Basra, narrates them from 14 masters. He narrates 44 *isnāds* (66.7%) from 1 major source, Ḥammād b. Salama al-Baṣrī⁷⁵ (d. AH 167), also from Basra, while he attributes the remaining 22 *isnāds* (33.3%) to 13 masters with nearly equal frequencies (see the following Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥammād</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(13)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁷⁵ *Tadhkira*, 1: 202; *Ḥuffāz*, 94; *Tahdhib*, 2: 10; *Mīzān*, 1: 590; *Ibar*, 1: 248; *Sīyar*, 7: 444.
In turn, Ḥammād b. Salama al-Baṣrī narrates the 44 isnāds from 28 masters, without particular reliance on any one person. We know from biographical comments that Ḥammād was known as a respected scholar who wrote books and narrated plentifully from the Tradition. For example, ‘Amr b. ‘Āşim said that he wrote down well over 100,000 ḥadīths from Ḥammād b. Salama.²⁶ Moreover, al-Dhahabī said that Ḥammād was extensively involved in writing books about Tradition. Likewise, Ibn Ḥajjar affirmed that Ḥammād used to write down whatever he heard from his masters.²⁷ These assertions point to the conclusion that Ḥammād was a resourceful person who gathered many narrations and traditions that were narrated by later scholars, witnessing to the fact that he provided others with reliable documented sources. Al-Ṭabarī put to proper use this man’s work and adopted it through his master al-Muthannā al-Āmulī. It should be noted in connection with this isnād that both al-Ḥajjāj and his master Ḥammād were from the town of Basra and this may strengthen the possibility that they actually met each other.

2.7. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ ‘Amr b. ‘Awn al-Wāsiṭī²⁸ (d. AH 225)

This isnād recurs 22 times, representing 1.9% of 1,118 isnāds. ‘Amr b. ‘Awn studied under 3 masters but narrated 19, i.e. most, of the isnāds from Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī (469)²⁹ (104-183/722-799). Both men came from the town of Wāsiṭ in Iraq. The isnād diverges into 12 directions after Hushaym, without any specific concentration in narration on any one master. So, it appears that Hushaym was the common link whom al-Ṭabarī meant to consult. At the end of his lifetime, Hushaym moved his residence to Baghdad where he composed works in tafṣīr and Tradition like al-Sunan fī al-Fiqh, Kitāb al-Tafṣīr, al-Maghāzī, and al-Qira‘āt. He was well known for his competence in tafṣīr, qira‘āt (Qur’ānic readings), fiqh (jurisprudence),

²⁶ Siyār, 6: 288.
²⁷ Tahdhib, 2: 12.
²⁸ Kabīr, 3/2: 36; Siyār, 10: 450; Jarḥ, 6: 252; Tahdhib, 4: 371.
²⁹ Siyār, 8: 287; Kabīr, 8: 242; Tahdhib, 6: 41.
and Ḥadīth.\(^{80}\) Yaʿqūb al-Dawraqī said that Hushaym mastered 20,000 ḥadīths.\(^{81}\) Regarding his Ṭafsīr, Sezgin stated that it was one of al-Ṭabarī’s sources.\(^{82}\)

2.8. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Abū Nuʿaym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn al-Kūfī\(^{83}\) (130-219/748-834)

This isnād recurs 21 times, representing 1.8% of 1,118 isnāds. Abū Nuʿaym narrates from 4 masters, but most frequently, 17 isnāds (81%), from 1 person, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī (see the following Table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān al-Thawrī</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The isnād diverges into 11 branches after Sufyān al-Thawrī, so that it is possible to view Sufyān as a common link for a number of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds, especially since Sufyān produced several books including Kitāb al-Tafsīr, Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr, Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr, and al-Faraʿīd. Later on, I will show that, in his Ṭafsīr, al-Ṭabarī reported several narrations from Sufyān through different routes other than the strand branching from his master al-Muthannā. It may be noted that Abū Nuʿaym and his master Sufyān were both from the town of Kufa in Iraq.

2.9. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Ḥibbān b. Mūsā al-Marwazī\(^{84}\) (d. AH 233)

This isnād reappears 18 times, representing 1.6% of 1,118 isnāds. Ḥibbān, from Marw, narrates all of these isnāds from 1 master, ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak, a scholar also from Marw (see the following Table).

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\(^{80}\) Nadīm, 1: 228.
\(^{81}\) Tahdhib, 6: 41.
\(^{82}\) Sezgin, 1: 202.
\(^{83}\) Tahdhib, 4: 488; Wāfī, 13: 94-96; Mizān, 2: 229; Aʿlām, 5: 353; Kahhāla, 8: 67.
\(^{84}\) Tahdhib, 1: 428; Shadharāt, 3: 153.
Hibbān b. Mūsā al-Marwāzī’s master

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn al-Mubārak</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibn al-‘Imād stated that Hibbān narrated extensively from Ibn al-Mubārak. The isnād splits after Ibn al-Mubārak into 8 routes traceable to 8 masters. Hence, the common link for several strands is Ibn al-Mubārak, who was introduced earlier as a scholar responsible for collecting, recording, and narrating numerous works in tafsīr and Ḥadīth narrated from the Companions and their Followers.

Al-Ṭabarī employs narrations of Ibn al-Mubārak which came to him via two strands from the account of al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī. The recurrence of these strands, taken together, adds up to 120 times. The first is the strand of al-Muthannā ~ Suwayd al-Marwāzī ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwāzī, which has been shown to recur 102 times, and the second is the present one.


This isnād recurs 16 times, representing 1.4% of 1,118 isnāds. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, a Kufan, narrates from 2 masters (see the next Table).

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥimmānī’s most cited master

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharīk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other master</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He narrates almost all of them, 15 times (93.8%), from another Kufan, Sharīk b. ‘Abdullāh al-Nakha’ī al-Kūfī (AH 95-177). Sharīk is the common link in these isnāds because they only begin to split after him, into 9 branches, each pertaining to a

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85 Shadharāt, 3: 153.
86 See Strand no. 4.
87 Tahdhib, 3: 326-327; Ibn Sa’d, 6: 399; Shadharāt, 3: 9.
master but without particular reliance on any one of them. Sharīk was known as a narrator of tradition (a muḥaddith), an expert in fiqh, and a judge. He learned from his father 20,000 fatwās in jurisprudence as well as other disciplines.\(^9\) He was a bright person with a sharp intellect,\(^9\) as is attested by the many controversial debates and discussions against Abu Ḥanīfa, the famous scholar in fiqh, in which he engaged.\(^9\)

2.11. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Muslim b. Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī\(^9\) (AH 130-222)

This isnād is repeated 12 times, or in approximately 1% of 1,118 isnāds. The source of this isnād is Muslim b. Ibrāhīm because the isnād diverges immediately after him. Unlike the previous isnāds, Muslim narrates from 8 masters without relying disproportionately on any one of them. Al-Muthannā learned them from Muslim and al-Ṭabarî took them up into his Tafsīr: Muslim b. Ibrāhīm narrated from many famous Ḥadīth scholars including al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Yahyā b. Ma‘īn, and al-Dārimī.\(^9\) He said concerning himself that he had learned from 800 masters, although Abū Dāwūd thought that he had learned from around 1,000.\(^9\)

It may be observed here that most of these isnāds (the 11 most quoted strands) which flow from al-Muthannā reach back to the generation of the Tābi‘ūn, i.e. mainly to such men as al-Rabī‘ b. Anas al-Baṣrī, al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī, Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī, Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa al-Miṣrī, and Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwāzī. These scholars are well known for their deep learning in tafsīr and composed documents on the subject. The following Table and Pie Chart illustrate that 75.8% of al-Muthannā’s isnāds are attributed to Followers, 21.9% are attributed to the Companions, and only 2.3% are ascribed to the Prophet (i.e. Ḥadīth). This

\(^{9}\) Sīyār, 8: 202.
\(^{9}\) Tadhkira, 1: 214; Aʿlām, 3: 163.
\(^{9}\) Baghdād, 13: 374-397; Sīyar, 8: 202.
\(^{9}\) Kabīr, 7: 254; Ibn Saʿd, 7: 304; Ṭabaqāt Khaṭṭātī, 1944; Tārīkh Khaṭṭātī, 476; Jarḥ, 8: 181; Tahdhib, 5: 423; Tadhkira, 1: 394; Kāshfi, 3: 139; Sīyār, 10: 314; Shadharat, 3: 102.
\(^{9}\) Sīyār, 10: 314-315.
\(^{9}\) Tahdhib, 5: 423.
supports the hypothesis that al-Muthannā specialized in citing *tafsīr* information from the generation of the Followers, whereas the previous *isnād*, that of Mūsā ~ al-Suddī, specialized in narrating *tafsīr* information from the generation of the Companions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Prophet**

2.3%

**Companions**

21.9%

**Followers**

75.8%

**Conclusion**

Al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī is considered the second principal reference for al-Ṭabarī’s *isnāds*. To be exact, al-Ṭabarī narrated 1,118 of his *isnāds* (13.3% of 8,424 *isnāds*) from al-Muthannā. His strands were narrated by 41 narrators who were al-Muthannā’s masters and each master formulated more *isnād* clusters. I have shown that al-Ṭabarī narrates from certain persons via al-Muthannā more than others, that is, al-Ṭabarī has more often conveyed the narrations of 11 out of 41 persons. The frequency of recurrence of these 11 routes is 1,063, or around 95% of all al-Muthannā’s 1,118 *isnāds*. Evidently, this is a striking observation because the
sources of the majority of narrations are ascribed to a minority of narrators, and the remaining 5%, 55 isnāds, are attributed to 30 persons who make up the remaining 41 routes.

We have further seen that each route consists of a cluster of strands that could be traced to early narrators and occasionally later generations closer to al-Ṭabarī’s era. These narrators are the sources of most of al-Ṭabarī’s strands via his master al-Muthannā. It has been shown that there were scholars at these sources who were responsible for collecting and conveying the strands to the following generations. Moreover, I have often demonstrated, through various scholars’ biographical data, that these sources are written documents in the discipline of taṣfīr, like Ishāq al-Tahuni’s, ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Śāliḥ’s, Ibn ‘Abbās’s, Mujāhid’s, al-Rabī’i’s, Abū al-‘Āliya’s, ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s, and Ibn al-Mubārak’s Tafsīrs. It has been demonstrated, using figures and percentages, that al-Ṭabarī narrated from these scholars amply, in fact in their hundreds.

Additionally, we have regularly found that various clusters of isnāds were generated by people from the same town. Examples are strands ascribed via chains of narrators from Kufa, Basra, Hums, Ayla, and Marw. Al-Muthannā al-Amuli and his pupil al-Ṭabarī and their like of the succeeding generations of scholars reaped the benefits of these isnāds in a selective and disciplined way.

Al-Ṭabarī’s selectivity is evident in his frequent citation of a number of al-Muthannā’s specific isnāds. Obviously, he repeated 18 strands out of hundreds, i.e. 1,118 chains of transmission which match all his narrations in al-ṣātiḥa and al-Baqara. These highlighted isnāds are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Chains of isnād</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa al- Başrī ~ Shibl al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ Mujāhid al-Makkī</td>
<td>213 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Ishāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja’far al-Rāzī ~ Abu Ja’far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī’ b. Anas al-Baṣrī</td>
<td>147 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ ‘Abdullāh b. Śāliḥ al-Miṣrī ~ Mu‘āwiya</td>
<td>122 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand</td>
<td>Chains of isnād</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>al-Ḥimṣī ~ Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa al-Ḥimṣī</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Suwayd al-Marwazi ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazi</td>
<td>102 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Ādām ~ Abū Ja'far ~ al-Rabī' b. Anas ~ Abū al-'Āliya</td>
<td>79 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Abū Zuhayr ~ Juwaybir ~ al-Daḥḥāk</td>
<td>56 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī</td>
<td>44 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī ~ al-Layth b. Sa'd al-Miṣrī ~ ... al-Zuhār</td>
<td>30 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq</td>
<td>25 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ 'Amr al-Wāsiṭī ~ Hushaym al-Wāsiṭī</td>
<td>19 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Ḥibbān al-Marwazi ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazi</td>
<td>18 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kūfī ~ Sharīk al-Kūfī</td>
<td>15 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Muslim b. Ibrāhīm</td>
<td>12 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ismā'īl al-Yamanān ~ 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Yamanān ~ Wahb al-Yamanān</td>
<td>11 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Nu'aym al-Kūfī</td>
<td>11 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Ādām ~ Abū Ja'far ~ Qatāda</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa al-Baṣrī ~ Shibl al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ 'Aṭā' al-Makkī</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5</td>
<td>Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rāzī ~ Abu Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī'</td>
<td>5 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Masters from whom al-Ṭabarî narrates more than 400 times are Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, and Muḥammad b. Bashshār. We will treat them individually, as follows.

3. Third major master: Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī¹
(d.248/862)

The frequency of this narrator’s output qualifies him to be the third major source to whom al-Ṭabarî refers most in his *Tafsīr*. The number of *isnāds* which al-Ṭabarî narrates from him is 533, or 6.3% of the total number of 8,424 *isnāds*.

Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī is considered to be one of the most famous scholars and narrators, and has been described as “a receptacle of knowledge.”² Abū Zar‘a said, “Whoever misses Ibn Ḥumayd’s knowledge will need to go down with ten thousand ḥadīths,”³ meaning that anyone who has not heard Ibn Ḥumayd himself will need to hear from his students, or in other words the *isnad* will go down in rank and lose some of its value because he has not heard from the master himself. The shorter the *isnad* was and the fewer narrators it had, the higher and stronger was its authority.⁴ Biographical accounts of Ibn Ḥumayd testify to the fact that he left many literary works and books in which he compiled his narrations. Abū Ḥātim said, “Ibn Ḥumayd came to Baghdad. We took his books and distributed them among us. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was with us too, and we found nothing but goodness in them.”⁵ Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Dāmaghānī said, “When Hārūn b. al-Mughīrah,⁶ one of Ibn Ḥumayd’s masters, died, I asked Ibn Ḥumayd to tell me all that he had heard.” Muḥammad b.

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¹ Ibn Ḥumayd was very famous in the disciplines of Ḥadīth, *Sūra*, and *Maghāzi*. He took his knowledge from scholars like Jarīr b. Abīl-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī. See *Shadharāt*, 3:223; *Tahdhib*, 5:84; *Baghdād*, 2:162; *Mīzān*, 3:49; *Tadhkira*, 2:490; *Nadīm*, 291.

² *Shadharāt*, 3:223.

³ *Tahdhib*, 5:84.

⁴ See on the issue of “high” (fāṭī) and “low” (nāzīl) *isnāds*, *Taqqiyād*, 215; *Tadrib*, 159; *Ulūm*, 255; *Bāʾith*, 159.

⁵ *Jarīr*, 7:232.

⁶ We shall see later that Hārūn b. al-Mughīrah was one of Ibn Ḥumayd’s important masters from whom Ibn Ḥumayd narrated frequently and extensively.
'Isā al-Dāmaghānī also said, "Ibn Ḥumayd showed us books which contained three hundred and sixty ḥadīths which he had heard from Hārūn b. al-Mughirah." 7 Yāqūt said, "Al-Ṭabarī narrated and wrote down more than one hundred thousand ḥadīths and reports from Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī." 8 Al-Ṭabarī said, "We used to write down [traditions] of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, and he used to come to us during the night and ask us about what we had written and he read them to us." 9 Al-Ṭabarī also said, "We used to go to Aḥmad b. Ḥammād al-Dawlabī, who was in one of the villages of Rayy, not very far from Rayy. We then ran like madmen to catch up with Ibn Ḥumayd’s session." 10

From these indications by Ibn Ḥumayd’s biographers, it is clear that he was recognized as a famous scholar and narrator who compiled and accumulated his knowledge, from which al-Ṭabarī narrated and documented some one hundred thousand ḥadīths. This explains why al-Ṭabarī refers to Ibn Ḥumayd so extensively. We may conclude that Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī was a major source upon whom al-Ṭabarī relied in his Tafsīr, and was considered one of his most important masters in interpretation.

It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one technical term whenever he transmits isnāds from his master Ibn Ḥumayd. The following statistical Table shows that al-Ṭabarī always uses the term ḥaddathana (he narrated to us) when transmitting from Ibn Ḥumayd. Ḥaddathana is a term used by the Hadith scholars to indicate that the information they narrate comes by sama' (hearing directly from the master); 11 it also indicates that written documents were used while transmitting. al-Ṭabarī’s exclusive use of ḥaddathana coincides with our earlier statement that al-Ṭabarī was referring directly when quoting from this master Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī and that he wrote from him many narrations.

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7 Toḥdhiḥ, 85.
8 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:50.
9 Ibid., 18:49-50.
10 Ibid.
11 See on al-Ṭabarī’s technical terms of transmission, Chapter V.
Frequency of the term ḥaddathanā as used by al-Ṭabarī while narrating from his master Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ḥaddathanā</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This significant result shows that al-Ṭabarī followed a certain methodology in applying terms to transmit isnāds from every single master. This consistent use of ḥaddathanā (with plural pronominal suffix) indicates that he heard from his master directly while attending sessions among other pupils, and this corresponds with the previously noted statement of al-Ṭabarī concerning himself that he used always to attend Ibn Ḥumayd’s sessions among others to learn and write from the master.

In considering the masters from whom Ibn Ḥumayd himself narrates, we notice that there are just 19 masters from whom he narrates the 533 isnāds and, further, we find that al-Ṭabarī chooses to cite Ibn Ḥumayd’s narrations mostly from only 6 of these. These masters are: 1. Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī¹² (d. AH 191), from whom Ibn Ḥumayd narrates 260 times (49%); 2. Jarīr b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī¹³ (AH 110-188), from whom he narrates 112 times (21%); 3. Yaḥyā b. Wāḍīl al-Marwāzī¹⁴ (d. after AH 190), from whom he narrates 45 times (8.5%); 4. Ḥakkām b. Salamah al-Rāzī¹⁵ (d. AH 190), from whom he narrates 45 times (8.5%); 5. Mihrān b. Abī ‘Umar al-Rāzī¹⁶ (d. after AH 180), from whom he narrates 21 times (4%); and 6. Hārūn b. al-Mughīrah al-Rāzī¹⁷ (d. after AH 180), from whom he narrates 18 times (3.3%). The following Table and Pie Chart show Ibn Ḥumayd’s most quoted masters, from whom al-Ṭabarī narrated extensively.

¹² Ibn Ma‘īn, Tārīkh, 226; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:38; Kabīr, 4:84; Jarḥ, 4:168; Mīzān, 3:192; Shadharāt, 2:420; Siyār, 9:49,50.
¹³ He was an authoritative source whose books, according to Ibn ‘Ammār, were sound (ṣāhīh), authentic, and acceptable. Al-Dhahabī quoted several narrations confirming that he was the author of some books. See Ibn Sa‘d, 7:381; Tabaqāt Khalīfah, 1300 and 3167; Kabīr, 2:214; Jarḥ, 2:505; Baghdādī, 7:253; Kamāl, 192; Mīzān, 1:394; Tahākhārī, 1:271; Siyār, 9:9; Kāshīf, 1:182.
¹⁵ Ibn Sa‘d, 7:38; Tabaqāt Khalīfah, 3168; Kamāl, 310; ‘Ibar, 1:303; Kāshīf, 1:244; Shadharāt, 1:325.
¹⁶ Tahādkhīb, 5:553; Jarḥ, 8:310.
¹⁷ Tahādkhīb, 6:12; Kabīr, 4:2:225.
### Ibn Ḥumayd’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salamah al-Rāzī</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarīr al-Rāzī</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahyā al-Marwazi</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥakkām al-Rāzī</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mihrān al-Rāzī</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hārūn al-Rāzī</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (14)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19 Masters</strong></td>
<td><strong>533</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of Ibn Ḥumayd’s narrations from these six most quoted masters is 498 isnāds (93.8% of the total of his 533 isnāds narrated by al-Ṭabarī). The remaining 35 isnāds (6.2%) are dispersed among 14 other masters. When we look at the second generation in al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds through his master Ibn Ḥumayd, i.e. the masters of Ibn Ḥumayd’s masters, we notice that the previous 6 masters of Ibn Ḥumayd also narrated extensively from others. This shows al-Ṭabarī as being selective in narrating from strands of isnāds through his master Ibn Ḥumayd, without narrating on a large scale from other strands. The findings are as follows.
3.1. The strand of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah b. al-Ḥaḍl al-Rāzī

This strand is repeated 260 times, or in 49% of the total number of Ibn Ḥumayd’s narrations. In turn, Salamah b. al-Ḥaḍl al-Rāzī narrates from 4 masters 260 times (49%). He narrates extensively from 1 master, named Muhammad b. Ishaq al-Madani18 (d. 151/768), the author of a Sīra (biography of the Prophet). Salamah narrates from him 256 times (98.5%). He narrates the remaining 4 isnāds (1.5%), making a total of 260 times, from the other 3 masters shown in the following Table and Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ishaq</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salamah’s most quoted master

Therefore, the first strand of isnāds repeated extensively, resulting in the Ibn Ḥumayd ~ Salamah b. al-Ḥaḍl strand of isnāds, is Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī ~ Ibn Ishaq al-Madani. This strand recurs 256 times, or in 98.5% of cases.

18 He was one of the most knowledgeable scholars in Sīra and Maghāzī, and was among the first to write a book on the Sīra (The Prophet’s Biography). He composed a book entitled al-Khulafa’ (on the four well-known Rāshīdūn caliphs after the Prophet) and other books. See Kābir, 1:40; Jarḥ, 7:191-194; Baghdad, 1:214-234; Wafayāt, 4:276, 277; Tadhkira, 1:172, 174; Mīzān, 3:468-475; Tahdhīb, 9:38-46; Shādharat, 1:230; Sīyār, 7:36, 37.
We may conclude that Ibn Ishāq is a major source to whom al-Ṭabarî refers frequently. When we look at the generation of Ibn Ishāq’s masters, we see that al-Ṭabarî narrates Ibn Ishāq’s own opinions 39 times (15.2% of 256 isnāds) and links Ibn Ishāq’s narrations to earlier masters 217 times (84.8%). Al-Ṭabarî narrates from the 24 masters appealed to by Ibn Ishāq, narrating extensively from 4 of them. See the following Table and Pie Chart which illustrate this situation.

**Ibn Ishāq’s most quoted masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Muḥammad</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dāwūd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahb b. Munabbih</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The word ‘missing’ indicates that the isnād ends at the generation of Ibn Ishāq and no narrators are mentioned afterward. This means that al-Ṭabarî is quoting Ibn Ishāq’s own opinions 39 times, or on 15.2% of all occasions.

**Ibn Ishāq's most quoted masters**

Other
13.8%

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wahb b. Munabbih</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dāwūd</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibn Abī Muḥammad 74.7%
The 4 most quoted masters of Ibn İshāq, via Ibn Ḫumayd ~ Salamah, are as follows:

3.1.1. Ibn İshāq ~ Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad Mawla (patron of) Zayd b. Thābit al-Madani19 (d. ca. AH 110)

Al-Ṭabarî narrates 162 times (74.5% of the total 256 isnāds) using this isnād. In turn, Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad narrates 162 times from 3 masters, and extensively from 2 masters who were considered prominent Followers (Tābi‘ūn): Sa‘īd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī20 (45-95/665-714), from whom Muḥammad narrates 80 times (49.3%); and ‘Ikrimah Mawla b. ‘Abbās al-Madani21 (25-105/645-723), from whom he also narrates 80 times (49.3%). Moreover, Muḥammad Ibn Abī Muḥammad narrates the remaining 2 isnāds from his final master, Zayd b. Thābit al-Madani22 (d. AH 55). See the following Table and Pie Chart.

**Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad’s masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sa‘īd b. Jubayr</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ikrimah</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Thābit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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19 Tahdhib, 5:277.

20 A prominent follower and disciple of Ibn ‘Abbās. He is considered to be one of the earliest commentators on the Qur’ān. Historians attributed to him a book on tafsīr. See Ibn Sa’d, 6:256; Ṭabaqat Khalīfa, 2534; Ḳabīr, 3:4612; al-Ma’rīf wa-al-Tārikkh, 1:712; Jarḥ, 2:1-9; Wafayāt, 2:371; al-Dawrūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:181; Shadharāt, 1:108; Tadhkira, 1:71; Sīyar, 4:321; Tadhkira, 1:76; Sezgin, 1:184.

21 He was a very famous commentator and a student of Ibn ‘Abbās, from whom he learnt the interpretation of the Qur’ān. He wrote a book on tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Ibn Sa’d, 5:287; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 280; Jarḥ, 7:7; Tadhkira, 1:95; Mızān, 3:93; al-Dawrūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:380; Sīyar, 5:12; Sezgin, 1:177; Zunūn, 430; Hadīyyat al-Ārifin, 1:661.

22 Tahdhib, 2:233; Usd al-Ghāba, 2:278-279.
Ibn Abī Muḥammad’s masters

The two most quoted narrators, Saʿīd b. Jubayr and ʿIkrimah, each narrate from one master, the Companion ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās, 160 times (98.7%). The *isnād* becomes as follows:

\[\text{Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī} \sim \text{Salamah al-Rāzī} \sim \text{Ibn Ṣahāq al-Madani} \]

\[\text{Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad al-Madani} \rightarrow \text{Saʿīd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī} \rightarrow \text{Ibn 'Abbās} \]

\[\text{‘Ikrimah Mawla Ibn ‘Abbās} \]

This strand is repeated 160 times (98.7%) by al-Ṭabarī in order to quote the *Tafsīr* narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās. Biographical details relating to Saʿīd b. Jubayr and ʿIkrimah indicate that they were both very devoted students of Ibn ʿAbbās and this fact coincides with the result we arrived at in the case of this strand. We notice that the first half of this *isnād* includes two men from Rayy, namely Ibn Ḥumayd and Salamah. The other two are from Medina. They are Ibn Ṣahāq and Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad.

3.1.2. Ibn Ṣahāq ～ rajul (a man)

This is how this *isnād* appears in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr*. Al-Ṭabarī says, “... Ibn Ṣahāq from a man (rajuļ),” without identifying who the man is. This *isnād* is repeated 15 times (6.9% of the total 256 *isnāds*). In turn, this unknown man narrates from 2 masters. One of them was Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī, from whom he narrates once. He
narrates extensively 14 times from the master Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī.\textsuperscript{23} The isnād stops at Wahb b. Munabbih and al-Ṭabarī narrates his sayings on tafsīr. The strand is as follows:

\[
\text{Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī} \rightarrow \text{Salamah al-Rāzī} \rightarrow \text{Ibn Ishāq al-Madanī} \rightarrow \text{a man} \rightarrow \text{Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī.}
\]

This isnād is repeated 14 times. It is another isnād to which al-Ṭabarī refers to narrate the Tafsīr by Wahb b. Munabbih. We have seen that al-Ṭabarī narrates from Wahb via another isnād to which we referred previously, as part of the strands of isnād of al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī, the second major source of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds.

3.1.3. Ibn Ishāq al-Madanī ~ Dāwūd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Madanī\textsuperscript{24}

This isnād is repeated five times (2.3\% of the total 256 isnāds). Dāwūd b. al-Ḥusayn narrates the same number of times from ‘Ikrimah Mawli‘ Ibn ‘Abbās al-Madanī and ‘Ikrimah narrates an equal number of times from Ibn ‘Abbās. The isnād goes as follows:

\[
\text{Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī} \rightarrow \text{Salamah al-Rāzī} \rightarrow \text{Ibn Ishāq al-Madanī} \rightarrow ‘Ikrimah al-Madanī \rightarrow \text{Ibn ‘Abbās.}
\]

We notice in this isnād that all four men, starting with Ibn Ishāq and leading to Ibn ‘Abbās, come from one area, namely Medina. We have seen that al-Ṭabarī narrates from ‘Ikrimah ~ Ibn ‘Abbās via another strand to which we referred previously as part of the strands of isnād of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī ~ Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Madanī.

3.1.4. Ibn Ishāq ~ Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī

This isnād is repeated five times (2.3\% of the total 256). It stops at Wahb when al-Ṭabarī narrates Wahb’s own sayings. We notice in this isnād that Ibn Ishāq

\textsuperscript{23} His biographical details have been mentioned previously.

\textsuperscript{24} Siyār, 6:166; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 259; Tārīkh Khalīfa, 411; Kabīr, 3:231; Jarḥ, 3:408, 409; Mizān, 2:506; Shadharāt, 1:192.
narrates directly from Wahb without an intermediary, while in the previous isnād (no. 3.1.2) he narrates from him through an unknown person referred to as “a man”. In view of the fact that Ibn Ishāq died in AH 151 and Ibn Wahb died in AH 110, these two men could in fact have met each other. This enables us to conclude that it was possible that Ibn Ishāq narrated from Ibn Wahb both directly and indirectly. Ibn Ḥajar25 states that Ibn Ishāq narrated “high” (‘āli) and “low” (nāzīl) isnāds, meaning that he narrated direct isnāds from prominent masters, and equally narrated from them through an intermediary, as he did here when he narrated several times from Ibn Wahb via “a man” and sometimes directly.

To summarize with regard to the most quoted isnāds branching from Ibn Ishāq al-Madani, we witnessed how all these isnāds, even though having Ibn Ishāq al-Madani as a source, were conveyed to al-Ṭabarī via his master Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī in his narrations from his master Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī, from whom he narrates 260 isnāds (49% of the total 533 isnāds), which means that almost one half of Ibn Ḥumayd’s narrations came through Salamah b. al-Faḍl. On his part, Salamah narrates most of his narrations, i.e. 256 isnāds (98.4%), from his master Ibn Ishāq al-Madani, by the following isnād: Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī ~ Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Madani. Therefore, the source from which al-Ṭabarī benefitted through his master Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī was the narrations by Salamah b. al-Faḍl from his master Ibn Ishāq, the famous historian of Sīra (the Prophet’s biography). In exploring the relationship between the Qur’ānic disciplines found in the contexts of narrations which al-Ṭabarī cites via Ibn Ishāq from these most cited narrators, we find that almost all of these narrations are based on Sīra, Maghāzi, and stories uttered by either Ibn ‘Abbās or the story-teller Wahb b. Munabbih, or sometimes by Ibn Ishāq himself, the main source here and the author of books on Sīra and Maghāzi. This may support the hypothesis that al-Ṭabarī obtained his knowledge from specific individuals. Thus, it is quite conceivable that the source he intended to refer to is Ibn Ishāq’s books.

25 Tahdhib, 5:31-32.
3.2. The strand of Ibn Ḫumayd al-Rāzī ~ Jarīr b. ʿAbd al- Ḥamīd al-Rāzī

This strand recurs 112 times (21% of the total 533 isnāds). We find that Jarīr narrates from 21 masters, but mostly from 6 of them, from whom he takes 91 isnāds (81.3%), while from the rest, i.e. the remaining 15 masters, he takes 21 isnāds (18.7%). See the following Table and Pie Chart which illustrate this result.

**Jarīr al-Rāzī's most quoted masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mansūr</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Miqsam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿAsim</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿAbd al-Malik</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Aʾmash</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(15)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pie Chart of Jarīr's most quoted masters**

- Other: 18.8%
- Layth: 4.5%
- Al-Aʾmash: 4.5%
- ʿAbd al-Malik: 5.4%
- ʿAsim: 6.3%
- Ibn Miqsam: 26.8%
- Mansūr: 33.9%

These 6 principal masters of Jarīr al-Rāzī are as follows:
3.2.1. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ Manṣūr b. al-Muʿtamir al-Kūfī\textsuperscript{26} (d. AH 133)

Jarīr narrates from Manṣūr 38 times (33.9%). In turn, Manṣūr narrates from 11 masters, but mainly from 3, who namely are: 1- Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī al-Kūfī\textsuperscript{27} (d. AH 96), the famous scholar of jurisprudence and Follower (Tābi‘ī) from whom Manṣūr narrates 12 times (32.4%); 2- Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makki, from whom Manṣūr narrates 10 times (27%); and 3- al-Ḥakam b. Abān al-‘Adanī al-Yamānī\textsuperscript{28} (AH 80-154), from whom he narrates 5 times (13%). Therefore, the total number of isnāds narrated by Manṣūr from these 3 is 27 (72.9%). The remaining 11 isnāds (27.1%) are narrated from the remaining 8 masters. It is possible to conclude that these 3 narrators were the sources upon whom Manṣūr b. al-Muʿtamir relied in reporting most of his narrations.

3.2.2. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ Mughīrah b. Miqsam al-Kūfī\textsuperscript{29} (d. AH 133)

Jarīr narrates 30 times (26.7%) from Mughīrah. It was stated that Mughīrah had a written document which people transferred from hand to hand, by his permission (ijāza) and through which they narrated from him.\textsuperscript{30} We find that Mughīrah narrated 29 times from 8 masters. One isnād stops at Mughīrah, where al-Ṭabarānī narrates an interpretation attributed to Mughīrah himself. Mughīrah narrates extensively from 2 masters: Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 10 times (33.3%), and ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bī al-Kūfī\textsuperscript{31} (19-103/640-721), from whom he narrates 9 times (30%). Thus, Mughīrah narrates nearly two thirds of his narrations, 19 isnāds (63.3%), from Ibrāhīm and al-Sha‘bī (both of whom were Kufans). The remaining 11 isnāds (36.6%) are narrated by Mughīrah from his other 6 masters.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibn Sa‘d, 6:337; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 164; Tārīkh Khalīfa, 404; Kabūr, 7:346; Jarḥ, 8:177; Shadharāt, 1:189; Siyār, 5:402.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibn Sa‘d, 6:270; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 1140; Kabūr, 1:333; Wafayāt, 1:25; al-Ma‘rīfa wa-al-Tārikh, 2:10; Jarḥ, 1/1:144; Ḥuffāz, 29; Siyār, 6:250.

\textsuperscript{28} Tahdīḥ, 1:572.

\textsuperscript{29} Tahdīḥ, 1:572; Kabūr, 4:322; Jarḥ, 8:228, 229; Tadhkira, 1:143; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 165; Siyār, 6:10; Ibn Hajar, Fath, 945; Shadharāt, 1:191.

\textsuperscript{30} Siyār, 6:12.

3.2.3. Jarir al-Razi ~ 'Aşim al-Aḥwal al-Baṣri

Jarir narrates 7 times (6.25%) from 'Aşim. We noted earlier that al-Ṭabarī narrates from 'Aşim via his master al-Muthannā al-Āmulī. So, this is another isnād employed by al-Ṭabarī tracing a narration back to 'Aşim al-Baṣri.

3.2.4. Jarir al-Razi ~ 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān al-Kūfī

Jarir narrates from 'Abd al-Malik 6 times (5.3%). In turn, these 6 narrations were reported by 'Abd al-Malik from his master 'Atā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki (27114/647-732). The isnād stopped at 'Atā' where al-Ṭabarī cites 'Atā's own sayings on tafsīr. It is noticed that 'Atā' was a well-known commentator. Historians attributed to him a book on the discipline of tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur'ān and another one entitled Gharib al-Qur'ān.34

3.2.5. Jarir al-Razi ~ al-A'mash b. Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Kūfī (d. AH 147)

Jarir narrates from al-A'mash 5 times (4.4%). Al-A'mash was a famous scholar who obtained the knowledge available from masters in his native Kufa.

3.2.6. Jarir al-Razi ~ Layth b. Abī Sālim al-Kūfī (d. AH 138)

Jarir narrates 5 times (4.4%) from Layth, who in turn narrates these reports from the well-known commentator Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makki.

Thus, the total number of narrations taken by Jarir from the above 6 masters was 91 isnāds (81.3%). The other 21 isnāds (18.7%) were narrated from 15 other masters. Hence, it can be concluded that these 6 narrators were the sources of Jarir b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī, to whom he referred more than others. We may note that Jarir has been described as a “receptacle of knowledge”, who compiled narrations from earlier scholars. So it is possible to conclude that Jarir is a common link and main source for a cluster of some 112 isnāds gained by him. It may be noticed that all

32 Biographical details concerning whom have been given earlier.
33 He has been introduced previously.
34 A manuscript copy of Gharib al-Qur'ān is said to be kept in 'Atif Library, Turkey. See Sezgin, 1:188; Zunūn, 453; Hadīyyat al-'Arifīn, 1:554.
35 Ibn Sa'd, 6:342; Tārīkh Khalīfah, 232, 424; Jarḥ, 4:146; Bagdād, 9:3; Waṣāyāt, 2:400 - 403; Tadhkira, 1:154; Sīyar, 6:226.
36 Huffaz, 67.
37 Ibn Sa'd, 6:243; Tārīkh Khalīfah, 420; Kabūr, 7:246; Jarḥ, 7:177; Tahdīhīb, 8:465, 468; Shadhārat, 1:207-212; Sīyar, 6:179.
38 Huffaz, 116.
narrators of this strand Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzi ~ Salamah al-Rāzi ~ Jarīr al-Rāzi were men of Rayy. We notice also that 5 of Jarīr’s masters out of 6 came from Kufa and only one from Basra. We noted from biographical sources that Jarīr grew up in Kufa and then moved to Rayy.39

3.3. The strand of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzi ~ Yaḥyā b. Wāḍîḥ al-Marwazi

This strand recurs 45 times (8.4% of the total 533 isnāds). Yaḥyā narrates these 45 isnāds from 13 masters, but mostly from 2 of them. See the following Table, which illustrates this result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥusayn</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ubaydullāh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (11)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two narrators most quoted by Yaḥyā al-Marwazi are as follows:

3.3.1. Yaḥyā al-Marwazi ~ al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid al-Marwazi40 (d. AH 157)

Yaḥyā al-Marwazi narrates 22 times (48.8%) from al-Ḥusayn. In turn, al-Ḥusayn narrates these isnāds from 5 masters, with most narrations from 1 of them, i.e. Yazīd b. Abī Sa‘īd al-Nahwī al-Marwazi41 (d. AH 131). Al-Ḥusayn narrates 18 isnāds (81.8%) from Yazīd al-Marwazi, who in turn, narrates from just 2 prominent followers: ‘Ikrimah al-Makki, from whom he narrates 11 times (61%), and al-Ḥasan al-Basrī, from whom he narrates 7 times (39%).

39 Ibid.
41 Tahdhib, 6:209.
3.3.2. Yahyā al-Marwazī ~ ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Abdullāh al-‘Atakī al-Marwazī\(^{42}\) (d. after AH 160)

Yahyā al-Marwazī narrates 6 times (13.3\%) from ‘Ubaydullāh al-Marwazī. In turn, ‘Ubaydullāh narrates 6 times from 3 masters, without extensive narrations from any of them. It is seen in this isnād that Yahyā al-Marwazī narrates extensively from 2 masters (28 times = 62.2\%) who were from his home town Marw. Thus, both al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqīd and ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Abdullāh bore the surname al-Marwazī. Similarly, al-Ḥusayn’s master, Yazīd al-Naḥwī, was also from Marw. As a result, this isnād is attributed by scholars to the one town, i.e. Marw.

3.4. The strand of Ibn Ḫumayd al-Rāzī ~ Ḫakkām b. Salamah al-Rāzī

This strand is repeated 42 times (7.8\% of the total 533 isnāds). Ḫakkām narrates these 42 times from 8 masters, but mostly from 2 of them. See the following Table which illustrate this result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Anbasah b. Sa‘īd</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Amr b. ‘Awn</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (6)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These 2 most quoted masters are as follows: 1- ‘Anbasah b. Sa‘īd al-Rāzī\(^{43}\) (d. ca. AH 180), from whom Ḫakkām narrates 23 times (54.7\%). The isnād after ‘Anbasah b. Sa‘īd ramifies into ten branches without any noticeable repetition; 2- ‘Amr b. ‘Awn al-Wāṣiq\(^{44}\) (d. AH 223), from whom Ḫakkām narrates 11 times (26.1\%). In turn, Ibn ‘Awn narrates from 4 masters, but mostly from Mansūr b. al-Mu‘tamir, from whom he narrates 6 times (54.5\%). In the case of the first isnād, which recurs 23 times (54.7\%), it may be noted that all its narrators are from the town of Rayy, thus: Ibn Ḫumayd al-Rāzī ~ Ḫakkām al-Rāzī ~ ‘Anbasah al-Rāzī.

\(^{42}\) Tahdhib, 4:20.
\(^{43}\) Tahdhib, 4:415; Kabūr, 4:1:35; Ibīn Sa‘īd, 6:407; Jarḥ, 6:399.
\(^{44}\) Tahdhib, 4:37; Shadharāt, 3:106.
3.5. The strand of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Mihrān al-Rāzī

This strand is repeated 21 times (2.2% of the total 533 isnāds). Mihrān narrates this from 2 masters, but mainly from 1 of them. See the following Table which highlight this result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān al-Thawrī</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another narrator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This most quoted master is Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kufī, from whom Mihrān narrates 20 times (95%). The isnād stops at Sufyān (16 times, 80%) where al-Ṭabarī narrates Sufyān’s own Tafsīr. Sufyān continues on 4 further occasions to narrate from 2 of his masters without narrating extensively from either of them. The aim of this strand, I assume, is to narrate Sufyān’s sayings and his opinions in tafsīr. We noted earlier that Sufyān left number of books, including one entitled Kitāb al-Tafsīr.

3.6. The strand Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Hārūn b. al-Mughīra al-Rāzī

This strand is repeated 18 times (3.3%), when Hārūn narrates from 3 masters, but mainly from 1 of them. See the following Table which illustrates this result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Anbasah b. Sa‘īd</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(2)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hārūn’s most quoted master is ‘Anbasah b. Sa‘īd al-Rāzī, from whom Hārūn narrates 14 times (77%). In turn, ‘Anbasah narrates this number from 8 masters, but mostly from ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 5 times (27.7%). Ibn Abī Najīḥ, in turn, narrates this number from 3 followers without extensive narration from any particular one of them. The aim of this strand, as may be
noticed, is to report the narrations of ‘Anbasah al-Rāzī. Al-Ṭabarī also narrates from ‘Anbasah via another strand, which we referred to previously in the strand of isnād number 4. Perhaps ‘Anbasah was the source of this narration. It is again to be observed that natives of Rayy predominate in this isnād.

I would like to emphasize that the most quoted strands, stemming from Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, generally pass through two generations of Followers, mainly Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī al-Kūfī, Mujāhid al-Makki, ‘Ikrimah al-Madanī, Maņṣūr al-Kūfī, and Wahb b. Munabbih. These scholars are well known for their deep knowledge in fiqh (jurisprudence) and tafsīr as well as in history. The following Pie Chart illustrates that 50.1% of Ibn Ḥumayd isnāds are attributed to Followers; 44.5% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās (the well-known Companion and scholar of tafsīr and jurisprudence) and only 5.4% are ascribed to the Prophet (i.e. Ḥadīth traditions). This reinforces the hypothesis that Ibn Ḥumayd specialized in quoting the narrations of fiqh, tafsīr, and history reported by two generations of both the Followers and the Companions, with an approximate balance, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Prophet
5.4%

Companions
44.5%

Followers
50.1%
4. Fourth major master: al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan (d. 272/887)

Al-Qāsim is the fourth major reference in al-Ṭabarī’s  *Tafsīr*. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-Qāsim 431 *isnāds* (5.1% of the total 8,424 *isnāds*). In some places in his  *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī states his master’s name as al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan, but in many other places he suffices by mentioning only the first name, al-Qāsim. However, his full name is al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd Abu Muḥammad al-Hamdānī al-Ṣā'īgh.¹

An examination of al-Qāsim’s masters reveals that he narrates from 7 masters. He narrates very extensively (423 *isnāds*, or 98.1%) from only 1 master, al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣṣīḥ² (226/841), and narrates the remaining 8 *isnāds* (1.9%) from 6 other masters (see the following Table and Pie Chart which highlight this result).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣṣīḥ</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (6)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹  *Baghdād*, 12:432, 433.
² He was known as Sunayd. He was a commentator and  *Muḥaddith* (narrator), who classified interpretations. See  *Tadhkira*, 2:456;  *Khulāṣa*, 137;  *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1:209;  *Mīzān*, 2:236;  *Ḥuffāz*, 204;  *Tahdīḥ*, 4:244.
Al-Qāsim’s most quoted master

Other
1.9%

Al-Ḥasayn al-Maṣīṣī
98.1%

The above Table and Pie Chart clearly show how al-Qāsim quoted very extensively from the one master, al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣīṣī.

The biographers of al-Ḥusayn state that he was the compiler of a Qur’ānic 
*Tafsīr* and, since al-Ṭabarī narrated this large percentage of *isnāds* (98.1%) from his master al-Ḥusayn, to the extent that almost all *isnāds* are through al-Ḥusayn, it may be concluded that the source which al-Ṭabarī meant to benefit from was the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣīṣī, whose interpretations reached al-Ṭabarī through the latter’s master al-Qāsim.

We have noted previously, in reference to the terminology used by al-Ṭabarī in reporting *isnāds* in his *Tafsīr*,3 that where al-Ṭabarī consistently uses the term ḥaddathanā (it was narrated to us) in narrating *isnāds* from his masters, the indication is that he was narrating directly from his master with his master’s permission, either orally, or in most cases, via a documented work handed to him by his master. Al-Ṭabarī employs this terminology in 97.7% of all of his narrations from al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn. Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that al-Ṭabarī was referring to a written document which reached him by *ijāza* (licence) when quoting directly from his master al-Qāsim. The frequency of this term’s occurrence, represented in the following Table, supports this hypothesis.

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3 See on al-Ṭabarī’s use of technical terms of transmission, i.e. Chapter V.
Frequency of the term *ḥaddathanā* as used by al-Ṭabarī while narrating from his master al-Qāsim via al-Ḥusayn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanā</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanī</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table shows that 421 times (with 97.7% out of 431 isnāds) al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanā*, while with only 10 isnāds (2.3%) he employs the term *ḥaddathanī*. This underlines my suggestion that in most cases, when using the term *ḥaddathanā*, he is citing al-Ḥusayn’s *Tafsīr* via his master al-Qāsim, whose licence he has to narrate to others. By contrast, on the few occasions he uses the term *ḥaddathanī*, he is probably citing narrations transmitted via other people to him from the same master, i.e. al-Qāsim. If we compare the last Table with the previous one, that referring to al-Qāsim’s masters, we notice an almost parallel situation, strengthening my argument that on the 97.7% of occasions on which al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanā*, he is citing the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥusayn al-Maşışi, whose name recurs in an approximately equal proportion of times (98.1%). Our conclusion is therefore that when Ṭabarī uses the phrase “*ḥaddathanā al-Qāsim*” (al-Qāsim has narrated to us), the indication is that he heard the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥusayn from al-Qāsim as he attended his sessions among other pupils, while in the case of the remaining 8 isnāds narrated by al-Qāsim from other masters, al-Ṭabarī uses the phrase “*ḥaddathanī al-Qāsim*” (al-Qāsim has narrated to me), indicating that al-Ṭabarī alone heard from al-Qāsim these 8 isnāds via another source.

Al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maşışi himself narrates from 20 masters, but mostly from 4 of them, as shown in the following Table and Pie Chart.

### Al-Ḥusayn’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥajjāj</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hushaym</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahyā b. Wādiḥ</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Al-Ḥusayn's most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ḥāmid</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (16)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table and Pie Chart show that al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣṣīṣ narrates in the main from 4 masters, who were as follows: 1- al-Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad al-Maṣṣīṣ (d. AH 206), from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 362 times (85.6%); 2- Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāṣīṣī (d. AH 183), from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 24 times (5.7%); 3- Yaḥyā b. Wāḍīḥ al-Marwazī, from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 8 times (1.9%); and 4- Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid al-Yaṣḥūrī Abu Sufyān al-Baṣṣīṣ (d. AH 182), from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 7 times (1.7%). These most quoted masters are discussed under the following strands.

1 See Ibn Maʿin, Tārīkh, 102; Ibn Saʿd, 7:333; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfah, 3056; Kabīr, 2:380; Jarḥ, 3:166; Naḍīm, 37; Baghdād, 8:236; Tadhkira, 1:345; Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirūn, 1:127; Siyar, 9:447; Shadharat, 2:15.

2 Ibn Maʿin, Tārīkh, 512; Kabīr, 1:69; Jarḥ, 7:231; Baghdād, 2:257; Kamāl, 1190; Siyar, 9:39; Mizān, 3:529; Kāshīf, 2:36.

We have already noted that al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣiṣī narrates from al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī 362 times (or 85.5% of the total number of al-Ḥusayn’s narrations). These 362 narrations were narrated by al-Ḥajjāj from 12 masters, from 5 of whom he narrates extensively, as shown in the following Table and Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Jurayj</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>92.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Miṣhar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarīr</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubārak</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (7)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>362</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pie Chart of al-Ḥajjāj’s most quoted masters

[Pie Chart image]

These masters most quoted by al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī are as follows.
4.1.1. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Mašīṣī ~ Ibn Jurayj al-Makkī

As is shown in the above Table and Pie Chart, al-Ḥajjāj narrates very extensively from his master ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Jurayj al-Makkī\(^6\) (80-150/699-767). In fact, al-Ḥajjāj narrates from him 324 times (89.8% of the total isnāds narrated by al-Ḥajjāj). In his turn, Ibn Jurayj narrates 254 times (78.6% of his narrations) from 26 masters. The isnād stops 69 times (21.3%) at Ibn Jurayj’s generation, where Ṭabarī narrates Ibn Jurayj’s own Tafsīr. We noted in our historical study of Ibn Jurayj that he was among the first to write and compile material on various disciplines in books. He was famous as the author of a book on tafsīr and this is presumably what was dictated by him to his student al-Ḥajjāj. Therefore, it is possible to consider Ibn Jurayj as a source for the narration of tafsīr. Al-Dhahabī said, “Al-Ḥajjāj narrated and documented the Tafsīr of his master Ibn Jurayj after obtaining his master’s permission to do so. Al-Ḥajjāj also narrated other books from Ibn Jurayj.”\(^7\) This shows that Ibn Jurayj was a major source upon whom al-Ḥajjāj depended extensively. Ibn Jurayj licensed his student al-Ḥajjāj to narrate his Tafsīr, and al-Ṭabarī frequently benefited from this Tafsīr, which reached him via his master al-Qāsim via al-Ḥusayn al-Mašīṣī, the student of al-Ḥajjāj. This strand is repeated 324 times (89.8%). Therefore, it seems that the main source of this strand was Ibn Jurayj al-Makkī.

The isnād goes back before Ibn Jurayj 254 times (78.6%), in which Ibn Jurayj narrates from 26 masters. He narrates extensively from 6, 5 of whom were Tābi‘un (Followers) and 1 a Ṣaḥābī (Companion). These 6 were: 1- Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī, from whom Ibn Jurayj narrates 89 times (34.9%); 2- ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 54 times (21.2%); 3- the Companion ‘Abdullāh b.

\(^6\) The first person to document knowledge in Mecca, ‘Abdullāh b. Ṭahmās, said, “I asked my father, ‘Who was the first person to write books?’ He replied, ‘Ibn Jurayj.’” Ibn Uuyayna said, “I heard Ibn Jurayj saying, ‘No one has documented knowledge like I did.’” Yahyā b. Sa’id al-Qaṭṭān said, “We used to call Ibn Jurayj’s books The Trust.” Some historians state that he documented some one thousand ḥadīths. His writings and reports of the sayings of the Companions and the Followers in interpretation are very extensive. See Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 283; Kabīr, 5:422; Baghdād, 10:400; Wafāyat, 3:163; Kamāl, 857; Tadhkira, 1:169; Mizān, 2:659; Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn, 1:352; Siyār, 6:325; Kahhala, 6:183.

\(^7\) Nadīm, 37.
‘Abbās, from whom he narrates 48 times (18.8%); 4- ‘Ikrima al-Makki, from whom he narrates 13 times (5.1%); 5- ‘Abdullāh b. Kathīr al-Makki8 (AH 48-122) from whom he narrates 11 times (4.3%); and 6- ‘Āṭā’ b. Abī Muslim al-Khurasānī9 (AH 50-135), from whom he narrates 9 times (3.5%). These 6 masters may be considered Ibn Jurayj’s major sources since it was on them that he most relied for his narrations and in compiling his Tafsīr. See the following Table which illustrates this outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mujāhid</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Āṭā’</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Abbās</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ikrima</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abdullāh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Khurasānī</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (20)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>324</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The word “missing” indicates that the isnād stops at the generation of Ibn Jurayj, where al-Ṭabarī cites Ibn Jurayj’s own opinions in his Tafsīr. The total number of narrations taken by Ibn Jurayj from these 6 masters is 224 (87.8% of the total number of isnāds of his narrations). The remaining 31 isnāds (12.2%) Ibn Jurayj took from another 20 masters.

It is clear that Ibn Jurayj took the major portion of his narrations from famous commentators who were either Tābi‘ūn (Followers) or, in the case of one of them, a Companion, i.e. Ibn ‘Abbās. 5 of these came from Mecca. Ibn Jurayj himself came from Mecca. Only one of his masters, ‘Āṭā’ b. Abī Muslim, was from Khurasān.

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8 He is one of the seven well-known reciters of the Qur’ān. See Tārīkh Khalīfa, 282; Kabīr, 5:181; Jarḥ, 5:144; Komāl, 762; Ṭabagāt al-Qurra’ al-Kibār, 1:433-444; Siyyar, 5:318.
9 Ibn Sa’d, 7:379; Tārīkh Khalīfa, 410; Ṭabagāt Khalīfa, 313; Kabīr, 6:474; Jarḥ, 6:334; Komāl, 941; Huffāz, 60; Shadharāt, 1:192, 193; Siyyar, 6:140.
4.1.2. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī ~ Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī al- Баṣrī\(^{10}\) (d. AH 167)

Al-Ḥajjāj narrates 11 times (3%) from Abū Bakr. In turn, Abu Bakr al- Баṣrī narrates from 3 people, but mostly from the 2 following: al-Ḥasan al- Баṣrī, from whom Abū Bakr narrates 5 times; and Qatāda al- Баṣrī, from whom he narrates 5 times. These 2 narrators are well-known scholars in tafsīr and both of them came from Basra, as did their student Abū Bakr.

4.1.3. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī ~ Abū Mi’shar al-Madani\(^{11}\) (d. AH 180)

Al-Ḥajjāj narrates 10 times (2.7%) from Abū Mi’shar. Abu Mi’shar himself narrates from 2 masters, with more extensive narration from 1 of them, Muḥammad b. Qays al-Madani\(^{12}\) (d. AH 120), from whom Abū Mi’shar narrates 6 times. Both Abū Mi’shar and his master came from Medina.

4.1.4. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī ~ Jarīr b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī (d. AH 188)

Al-Ḥajjāj narrates 5 times (1.3%) from Jarīr, while Jarīr narrates the same number of times from his master, al-Ḥasan al- Баṣrī.

4.1.5. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣiṣī ~ Mubārak b. Faḍāla al-Баṣrī\(^{13}\) (d. AH 165)

Al-Ḥajjāj narrates 5 times (1.3%) from Mubārak. In turn, Mubārak narrates the same number of times from his master al-Ḥasan al- Баṣrī. Both Mubārak and al- Ḥasan were from Basra.

It may be noticed regarding the above 4 isnāds that the person from whom al- Ḥajjāj narrates mostly was al-Ḥasan al- Баṣrī. Al-Ḥajjāj narrates from him via 3 chains of transmission and a total of 15 times (57.6%) out of the total of 26 narrations reported by al-Ḥajjāj from his masters’ masters through the above 4 isnāds.

4.2. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣiṣī ~ Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Вāṣiṭī (d. AH 183)

Al-Ḥusayn narrates from Hushaym 24 isnāds (5.6% of the total 423 isnāds). We know from Hushaym’s biography that he was an extensive narrator. Ya‘qūb al-

\(^{10}\) Tahdhib, 6:315.

\(^{11}\) His name is Najīh b. ‘Abd al-Ｒahmān al-Sindī al- Madani. Tahdhib, 5:610.

\(^{12}\) Tahdhib, 5:264.

\(^{13}\) Tahdhib, 5:365.
Dawraqi\textsuperscript{14} said, “Hushaym had twenty thousand ḥadīths.”\textsuperscript{15} This may explain the extent to which al-Ṭabarī refers to Hushaym via his master al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣḥī, not only here but al-Ṭabarī also via other masters. We have previously noted how he referred to him via his master, al-Muthanna al-Āmulī. In this isnād Hushaym narrates extensively (8 times = 33.3\%) from the 1 source, al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭāt al-Kufī\textsuperscript{16} (d. AH 145). Al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭāt narrates from 4 masters in most of his narrations, but principally from ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki, from whom he narrates 5 times (62.5\%).

4.3. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣḥī ~ Yaḥyā b. Wāḍīḥ al-Marwazi

Al-Ḥusayn narrates 8 times (1.8\% of the total 423 isnāds) from Yaḥyā. Yaḥyā himself narrates from 2 masters, but especially from ‘Ubayd b. Sulaymān al-Bāhili al-Kūfī,\textsuperscript{17} from whom he narrates 6 times (75\%). ‘Ubayd b. Sulaymān narrates the same number of times from his master al-Ḍāḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī\textsuperscript{18} (d. 105/723). It seems that al-Ṭabarī meant to narrate from the Tafsīr of the famous commentator al-Ḍāḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim via this strand of reporters. Biographical sources relating to al-Ḍāḥḥāk assert that he wrote a tafsīr.

4.4. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣḥī ~ Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid al-Yashkūrī Abū Sufyān al-Baṣrī\textsuperscript{19} (d. AH 182)

Al-Ḥusayn narrates from Muḥammad al-Yashkūrī 7 times (1.6\%). Al-Yashkūrī narrates the same number of times from his master Ma’mar b. Rāshid al-

\textsuperscript{14} One of al-Ṭabarī’s famous masters who will be discussed later, together with his isnāds.
\textsuperscript{15} Shadharāt, 2:375.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibn Sa’d, 6:359; Ṭabaqāt Khalifā, 369,414,421; Kabīr, 2:378; Jarḥ, 3:152-156; Wafayāt, 2:54-56; Ṭadhkira, 1:186 - 187; Siyār, 7:68.
\textsuperscript{17} Kabīr, 3/1:499.
\textsuperscript{18} The author of a Tafsīr. His biographical details have been mentioned previously. See also Siyār, 4:598; Ṭabaqāt, 1:216; Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn, 1:237.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibn Ma’in, Tārīkh, 512; Kabīr, 1:69; Jarḥ, 7:231; Baghdād, 2:257; Kamāl, 1190; Siyār, 9:39; Mizān, 3:529; Kāshif, 2:36.
Baṣrī\(^{(20)}\) (d. AH 153). Ma’mar b. Rāshīd himself narrates from 3 masters, but especially from Qatāda al-Baṣrī, the famous Tābī‘ī. It may be noticed regarding this isnād that, after al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣṣīḥ, all its narrators (Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid, Ma’mar, Qatāda) are from Basra.

We have now completed the description and analysis of the repeated strands of isnād which branched from al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣṣīḥ. It is clear that these 4 masters were the main sources upon whom al-Ḥusayn relied and from whom he benefited in his compilation of the works of the Companions and the Followers. It is possible that he assembled all this and documented it in his Tafsīr.\(^{(21)}\) The total number of narrations by al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣṣīḥ from these 4 sources is 401 isnāds (95%). The narrations of the other 22 isnāds amount to 5% of the total number of 431 isnāds, which al-Ḥusayn narrates from 16 other masters. (We have passed over these because they are only a few and in order not to branch out into any examination of extraneous matter).

I would like to emphasize here that these isnāds (the most quoted strands), which stem from al-Qāsim, usually reach back to the generation of the Followers, mainly to Mujāhid al-Makkī, Qatāda al-Baṣrī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim and ‘Ikrima al-Makkī. These scholars are well known for their deep knowledge of tafsīr and for their written documents in this field. The following Table and Pie Chart show that 76.1% of al-Qāsim’s narrations are attributed to Followers; 21.8% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly to ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, the well-known scholar of tafsīr; and only 2.1% are ascribed to the Prophet. This underlines the hypothesis that al-Qāsim specially favoured quoting tafsīrs that belonged to the generation of the Followers.

\(^{(20)}\) Ibn Ḥībbān said, “He was a master scholar a ḥāfiq (memorizer), and a pious man. See Ibn Sa‘d, 5:397; Khulāṣa, 328; Tadhkira, 1:190; Ibar, 1:220; Huffāz, 88; Shadharāt, 1:235.

\(^{(21)}\) Most of his biographers affirm that he wrote a Tafsīr. See above, p. , f.n. no. 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>431</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet

2.1%

Companions

21.8%

Followers

76.1%

It may be significant that the same result, depicted in the above Table and Pie Chart, was also arrived at concerning al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, since we discovered that 75.8% of his narrations were cited from the generation of the Followers, 21.9% were cited from the generation of the Companions, and finally only 2.3% were ascribed to the Prophet. Thus, both al-Muthannā and al-Qāsim seem to have made a speciality of citing Tafsīrs of the generation of the Followers.

Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā is the fifth in order of the masters most frequently referred to by al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī narrates 429 (5.1% out of the total 8,424) isnāds through him. Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā himself narrates from 2 masters, but especially and repeatedly from 1 of them, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī al-Yamānī² (126-211/744-826), from whom he narrates 428 isnāds, or 99.8% of all his narrations. He narrates only once (0.2% of his narrations) from 1 other master, as indicated in the following Table and Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Razzāq</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā's most quoted master

Other 0.2%

'Abd al-Razzāq 99.8%

¹ His name also appears as al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Rabi’ al-Jurjānī. His birth place was Jurjān, but he later became a resident in Baghdad. Biographers state that his major teacher was ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī. See Tahdhib, 1:515; Baghdād, 7:453.

² His biographical details have been given earlier.
Among the books written by ‘Abd al-Razzāq are Kitāb al-Tafsīr and Kitāb al-Muṣannaf fī al-Aḥādīth wa-al-Āthār. Therefore, there were original sources written during the time of the generation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (the second century AH), from which al-Ṭabarī may have benefited frequently, through his master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā. We noted, when we discussed the isnāds of al-Muthannā (al-Ṭabarī’s second major master), that al-Ṭabarī quoted ‘Abd al-Razzāq through his master’s master via the following strand: al-Muthannā ~ Ishaq ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq. Therefore, there were original sources written during the time of the generation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (the second century AH), from which al-Ṭabarī may have benefited frequently, through his master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā. We noted, when we discussed the isnāds of al-Muthannā (al-Ṭabarī’s second major master), that al-Ṭabarī quoted ‘Abd al-Razzāq through his master’s master via the following strand: al-Muthannā ~ Ishaq ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq.4 In the present isnād, al-Ṭabarī narrates directly from ‘Abd al-Razzāq from his master (al-Ḥasan ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq). This is called a “high” (‘ālī) isnād by Ḥadīth scholars, because the number of narrators in the chain of isnād is less than in the other cases, since there is only one person, al-Ḥasan, between al-Ṭabarī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq. By contrast, in the other isnād, there are two narrators, al-Muthannā and Ishaq, between al-Ṭabarī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq. The reason for this is usually the age of the narrator involved. Thus, if a narrator lived a long life, like al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā (al-Ṭabarī’s master here), who lived 83 years (or 85 years, as some said),6 which is a relatively long life, then this longevity enabled al-Ṭabarī to meet grand masters such as al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī. This seems to imply that Ishaq, who was the master of al-Muthannā in the other isnād, did not live long, so that al-Ṭabarī did not meet him in person, but took from him through al-Muthannā ~ Ishaq ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq. This shows that in citing his isnāds, al-Ṭabarī attempted to search out and narrate from “high”, i.e. valuable isnāds, even if the quest compelled him to travel from Amul, his native town, to Baghdad7 to meet with al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī and obtain such narrations as those with the isnād here of al-Ḥasan ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq.

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4 These two books were mentioned earlier, when we discussed the life of ‘Abd al-Razzāq.
5 I.e. the first strand.
6 On “high” (‘ālī) and “low” (nāzīl) isnāds, see Tadrīb, 2:159. The “high” isnād is one with few narrators, while the “low” isnād is one which has a relatively large number of narrators. The high isnād is better than the low one, because the chances of defect and error are less. However, a low isnād may be better if its narrators are known to be more reliable, knowledgeable, or better memorizers (ḥāfizes) than those of the high isnād. Concerning both ‘ālī and nāzīl isnāds, there are full explanatory sections in the books on ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth. See e.g. Ibn al-Ṣalāb, ‘Ulūm, 255; al-ʿIrāqī, Taqyyid, 215; Ibn Kathīr, Bāṯīth, 159; Ibn al-Ḥanbali, Qafw, 197; Taysīr, 180.
7 Tadhīb, 1:515.
When we consider the technical term used by al-Ṭabarî to narrate isnâds from his master al-Ḥasan, as from 'Abd al-Razzâq, we notice that he most frequently used ḥaddathanā each time he narrates through this isnâd, i.e. al-Ḥasan ~ 'Abd al-Razzâq. Only in a very few cases did use the term ḥaddathanî. See the following Table which illustrate this finding.

**Frequency of the terms Ḥaddathanā and Ḥaddathanî as used by al-Ṭabarî**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanā</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanî</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>429</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our consideration of the terms used in narrating and conveying isnâds, we noted that the term ḥaddathanā meant that al-Ṭabarî heard directly from his master in a situation where the master reads from a ṣaḥīfa (written document) and the listening student writes what he hears while attending a session among other students. This may suggest that al-Ṭabarî possibly heard the narration of 'Abd al-Razzâq's documents directly from his master al-Ḥasan and had his master's permission to obtain or write down these works. Moreover, when comparing the proportional use of this term ḥaddathanā (98.6% of all occasions) with the proportional reappearance of 'Abd al-Razzâq (99.5% of all occasions), the original source of this isnâd, we discover that there is almost equivalence between them. This seems to confirm the fact that al-Ṭabarî consistently used the term ḥaddathanā when authenticating his narration by appeal to a specific source concerning which he had obtained his master’s permission to record it.

In considering the generation of the masters of 'Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣan‘ānî, we find that 'Abd al-Razzâq narrates these 427 isnâds from 20 masters, from 6 of whom he narrates extensively, as illustrated in the following Table and Pie Chart.

to travel for the sake of learning and obtaining isnâds, when he was twelve years old. Yāqūt (Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 18:50) says that al-Ṭabarî entered Baghdad before the year 241/855. Cf. al-Ṭabarî’s biography.
'Abd al-Razzāq’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ma’mar</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Jurayj</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Uyayna</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Šamad</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥasan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (16)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>428</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foregoing Table and Pie Chart clearly demonstrate that the person most quoted by ‘Abd al-Razzāq is Ma’mar b. Rāshid al-Yamanī. The masters most quoted by ‘Abd al-Razzāq are further detailed in the following strands.

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 337 times, or 78.9% of all his narrations, from his master Ma’mar b. Rāshid. In turn, Ma’mar narrates this same percentage from 32 masters, but mostly from the 8 named in the following Table and Pie Chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qatāda</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Zuhrī</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥasan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayyūb</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ṭāwūs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Najīḥ</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Aslam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (24)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>337</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier. It was reported that he wrote a number of books. See A’lām, 8:190; Kaḥḥāla, 12:309
Ma'mar's most quoted masters

Once more, the preceding Table and Pie Chart clearly show that the person most cited by Ma'mar was Qatāda. The masters most quoted by Ma'mar are further investigated under the following isnāds.

5.1.1. Ma'mar ~ Qatāda al- Başrí (60-117/680-735)

Ma'mar narrates the majority of his isnāds (200, or 59.3% of the total of his narrations) from Qatāda. Since Ma'mar was from Yemen while Qatāda was from Basra, we must ask how this geographical divide was bridged. The answer, however, appears simple since, although Ma'mar was originally from Basra, he later moved to Yemen and settled there. One of his major students there was ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣān‘ānī al-Yamanī.9 ‘Abd al-Razzāq benefited from Qatāda al- Başrí via his master Ma'mar, who had become a resident of Yemen. Historians say that among Qatāda’s works was his book Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Ma'mar’s 200 narrations from Qatāda fit with what we know about Qatāda (61-118/680-736),10 since he was among those who wrote in the field of tafsīr in the latter part of the first century AH.11 Al-Ṭabarī refers to this Tafsīr and benefited greatly from it in his Jāmi‘ al-Bayān.

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9 Tahdīḥ, 5:500.
10 Al-Baghdādī, Ḥadīyyat al-‘Ārifīn, 1:834.
11 Cf. the dates of Qatāda’s life time.

Ma'mar narrates from al-Zuhrī 34 times (10.1% of his narrations). The isnād stops at al-Zuhrī 13 times, where al-Ṭabarī quoted al-Zuhrī’s own opinions. The remaining 21 isnāds, al-Zuhrī narrates from 13 masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them.

Al-Zuhrī was a famous muḥaddith who narrated many ḥadīths from the Prophet, the Companions, and the Followers. Historians state that al-Zuhrī left a book containing narrations on the maghāzi (conquests) of the Prophet.12

5.1.3. Ma'mar ~ Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī13 al-Baṣrī14 (AH 68-131)

Ma'mar narrates from Ayyūb 15 times (4.4% of his narrations). We have earlier noted that Ma'mar was originally from Basra, but later moved to Yemen. Perhaps he had heard and transmitted from Ayyūb al-Baṣrī while he was in Basra. Then Ma'mar transmitted Ayyūb’s knowledge to the people of Yemen during his residence there and ‘Abd al-Razzāq, the student of Ma'mar, benefited from it. Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī narrates the 15 isnāds referred to above from 8 masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them.

5.1.4. Ma'mar ~ al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21-110/642-728)

Ma'mar narrates 16 times (4.7% of his narrations) from al-Ḥasan. The isnād stops at al-Ḥasan, where al-Ṭabarī narrates al-Ḥasan’s own Tafsīr. It is known that both Ma’mar and al-Ḥasan were from Basra. Some narrators have criticized Ma’mar’s narrations from al-Ḥasan because Ma’mar was only 15 years old when al-Ḥasan died in 110/728. In reply to this objection, Ibn Ḥibbān observed that Ma’mar narrated from al-Ḥasan via Qatāda al-Baṣrī.15

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12 Zubū, 1460; Wāfi, 65.
13 Lubāb, 2:13.
14 ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī said, “Ayyūb has some eight hundred ḥadīths.” Ibn ‘Ulayya said, “Ayyūb’s ḥadīths are two thousand.” See Ibn Sa’d, 7:246-251; Ḥilya, 1:130-132; Tahdīḥ, 1:397; Shadharāt, 1:181; Khulāṣa, 42; Siyar, 6:15.
15 Tahdīḥ, 1:484.
5.1.5. Ma’mar ~ ‘Abdullāh b. Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān al-Yamanī\(^{16}\) (d. AH 132)

Ma’mar narrates 14 times (4.1% of his narrations) from Ibn Ṭāwūs and on each occasion these narrations were reported by Ibn Ṭāwūs from his father Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān al-Yamanī\(^{17}\) (33-106/653-724). The isnād stops at Ṭāwūs, where al-Ṭabarī narrates the sayings of Ṭāwūs himself in his Tafsīr. Therefore, the source of this isnād is Ṭāwūs, the famous Follower commentator and faqīh. It will be noticed that all the men in this isnād were from Yemen (Ma’mar settled in Yemen while Ibn Ṭāwūs and his father Ṭāwūs were both natives of the region).

5.1.6. Ma’mar ~ ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makki\(^{18}\)

Ma’mar narrates 13 times (3.8% of his narrations) from Ibn Abī Najīḥ. In turn, Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates from 2 masters, but mainly from Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makki, from whom he narrates 11 times, or 84% of the total narrations of Ibn Abī Najīḥ. The main source of this isnād is Mujāhid’s Tafsīr.

5.1.7. Ma’mar ~ a man (unnamed person)

“From a man”\(^{19}\) is the way in which this part of the isnād is written by al-Ṭabarī, so that the identity of this narrator remains unknown. Ma’mar narrates from this unnamed person 6 times (1.7% of all his narrations). When we look at the generation of this person’s masters, we see that he narrates from 3 of the well-known Followers, but without narrating extensively from any one of them. These masters were ‘Īkrīma al-Makki, al-Ḥasan al- Başrī, and ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki.


\(^{17}\) Ibn Ṭāwūs was a Persian who was ordered by the King, Kīsrā, to occupy Yemen. Ibn Sa’d, 5:537; Tābaqāt Khaliṣa, 287; Tārīkh Khaliṣa, 236; Kābîr, 4:365; Ṣaghīr, 1:252; Wafayāt, 2:509; Kamāl, 623; Tādhkīra, 1:90; Qurra’, 1:341; Tahāhīb, 5:8; Ḥuffāz, 34; Siyār, 5:38.

\(^{18}\) Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier.

\(^{19}\) This is how the man is referred to in all 6 occurrences of this isnād, demonstrating how meticulous al-Ṭabarī was in transmitting isnāds exactly as he found them, keeping the anonymity of the man as he found him. If he had been fabricating these isnāds, he would have used the name of a narrator fit for this place and the matter would be settled, but this did not happen.
5.1.8. Ma‘mar ~ Zayd b. Aslam al-Madani\(^{20}\) (d. 136/753)

Ma‘mar narrates 5 times (1.4% of all his narrations) from Zayd. The *isnād* stops at Zayd 4 times, where al-Ṭabarī narrates Zayd’s own *Tafsīr*. Zayd narrates the remaining 1 *isnād* from 1 of his masters. Historians record that Zayd b. Aslam\(^{21}\) wrote a commentary on the Qur’an, which his son ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd transmitted *in toto*. We will see later, when discussing al-Ṭabarī’s seventh major master, that this *Tafsīr* have is cited by al-Ṭabarī 396 times.

We have completed the description and analysis of the repeated *isnāds* branching from Ma‘mar b. Ṛashīd al-Ġaṣrī al-Yamanī.

The total number of Ma‘mar’s narrations from these *isnāds* is 303, or 90% of all his narrations. The other 34 *isnāds* (10%) he narrates from his other 24 masters. The 8 masters most quoted by Ma‘mar, whom we reviewed above, constitute the main sources on which Ma‘mar relied in narrating the bulk of his narrations. It may be concluded that Ma‘mar was a major source on whom his student ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī depended and from whom he benefited in compiling his two books, *Tafsīr* and *Muṣannaf*. Then came al-Ṭabarī, who used all this material and recorded it in his own interpretation.

5.2. Strand of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī ~ Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī\(^{22}\) (97-161/716-778)

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 33 times (7.7% of all his narrations) from Sufyān, who in turn reported all these narrations from 20 masters, but without extensive narrations from any one of them.

The source of this strand is Sufyān al-Thawrī. Sufyān was known as the author of several books, including *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr*; and *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr*.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{21}\) *Zunūn*, 448; *Kaḥṭīl*, 4:189.

\(^{22}\) Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier.

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 13 times (3% of all his narrations) from Ibn Jurayj, who in turn narrates this same number of narrations from 6 masters, with relatively extensive narration from 1 of them, ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki, from whom Ibn Jurayj narrates 7 times (53.8% of all his narrations). The rest of Ibn Jurayj’s isnāds are narrated from 5 other masters, as shown in the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Aṭā’</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (5)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we consider the generation of ‘Aṭā’, we see that the isnād stops at him 5 times, while the remaining 2 isnāds he narrates from 2 of his masters. We may conclude that the source behind this strand of isnād is Ibn Jurayj. We learnt previously that he was a famous commentator. He was, in fact, considered to be one of the first scholars to have written books, among them Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, al-Sunan, and Manāsik al-Ḥajj.25

5.4. Strand of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣa‘īdī ~ Sufyān b. ‘Uuyayn al-Kūfī

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 12 times (2.8% of all his narrations) from Ibn ‘Uuyayn, who in turn narrates these same narrations from 7 masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them. The aim of this isnād is to narrate Ibn ‘Uuyayn’s Tafsīr, referred to by bibliographers as Ibn ‘Uuyayn’s Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān.27

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23 See Wāfī, 13:94 - 96; Nadīm, 1:225; Rawḍāt al-Jannāt, 316; Tādhīb, 6:353.
24 Biographical details have been given earlier.
25 Zunūn, 437 - 1008; Wafayāt, 1:359; Tadhkira, 1:160 - 162; Baghdād, 10:400-407.
27 Nadīm, 1:226, Zunūn, 439.
5.5. Strand of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī ~ ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma‘qil al-Yamani\(^{28}\) (d. AH 183)

‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 6 times (1.4% of all his narrations) from ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, who in turn narrates these same narrations from his uncle Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamani\(^{29}\) (24-114/645-732). Historians relate that Wahb b. Munabbih composed such works as *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān* and *Qiṣāṣ al-Mulūk wa-al-Anbiyā‘*.\(^{30}\) Consequently, the aim of this strand is to refer to Wahb b. Munabbih’s documents. This isnād has a Yemeni character since all its members, from ‘Abd al-Razzāq to Wahb, were from Yemen.


‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 5 times (1.1% of all his narrations) from al-Ḥasan al-Khurasānī, who in turn narrates all these narrations from 1 master, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī. The isnād stops at al-Ḍaḥḥāk, where al-Ṭabari narrates al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s own *Tafsīr*. We noticed earlier that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was famous as a commentator on the Qur‘ān and produced a written commentary under the title *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*.\(^{32}\)

I would like to draw attention to the fact that these isnāds, branching from al-Ṭabari’s master, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī, reach back to the generation of the Followers, i.e. mainly to Qatāda al- Başrī, al-Zuhrī, Ayyub al-Sikhtiyānī, al-Ḥasan al- Başrī, Tāwūs al-Yamanī, Mujāhid al-Makkī, Zayd b. Aslam al-Madānī, ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamānī, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī. Those scholars are known for their competency in the field of *Tafsīr* and other Qur‘ānic disciplines. The following Table and Pie Chart illustrate that 81.1% of

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\(^{28}\) Biographical details have been given earlier.

\(^{29}\) Biographical details have been given earlier.


\(^{31}\) According to biographical sources, there exists no person with this name who could have narrated from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim. There could have been an error in writing the name. It is more likely that his name was al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Khurasānī, who originated from Basra and later moved to Khurasān. See *Tahdhīb*, 1:516.

\(^{32}\) A’lām, 3:310; Kahḥāla, 5:27.
al-Hasan b. Yahyā’s isnāds go back to Followers, while 16.1% go back to the generation of the Companions, and only 2.8% go back to the Prophet himself. This evidence supports the hypothesis that al-Hasan b. Yahyā al-Baghdādi made a speciality of quoting Tafsīrs produced by the generation of the Followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have completed the description and analysis of the isnāds branching from al-Ṭabari’s master al-Hasan b. Yahyā. It has become clear that one strand of isnād branched out and was repeated most. This was al-Hasan b. Yahyā ~ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, which was repeated 427 times, or in 99.5% of all the total isnāds of al-Ṭabari’s master al-Hasan b. Yahyā. This leads us to conclude that the source from which al-Ṭabari benefited the most was the narrations and isnāds of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī in the fields of Qur’ānic exegesis and Ḥadīth. Some of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s works, like his Tafsīr and Muṣannaf, have reached us. These are sources upon which
al-Ṭabarī depended through 6 clusters of *isnāds* (out of 20 strands of *isnāds*) that branched out from ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī. These 6 clusters account for a total of 406 *isnāds*, or 95% of all 427 *isnāds* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq. The other 21 *isnāds* (4.9%) are divided between 14 other branches of *isnāds*.

It has become quite clear that the cluster repeated most among these 6 is that narrated by ‘Abd al-Razzāq from his master Ma‘mar b. Rāshid al- Başrī, then al-Yamanī, from whom ‘Abd al-Razzāq narrates 337 times, or 83% of the total 6 strands of *isnāds* branching from ‘Abd al-Razzāq and accounting for 406 *isnāds*. The remaining 69 *isnāds* (17%) are divided among the other 5 strands.

It was found that Ma‘mar was a main source for ‘Abd al-Razzāq. It was also found that Ma‘mar also had a main source on whom he depended more than others. This was the famous Follower, Qatāda, from whom he narrates 200 times (59.3% of all his *isnāds*). Historians state that Qatāda composed a book on *Tafsīr*. He was among the first to write in this field in the late first century and early second century A H. The other 5 strands have also been linked to written sources produced by famous scholars who were also Followers. These specialists in the discipline of *Tafsīr* and writers of books in this field were Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Jurayj, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥim, and Wahb b. Munabbih, the last of whom was famous for his knowledge in history and *Qīṣāṣ* (pious tales). Finally, we have seen that these most quoted strands branched from al-Ṭabarī’s master al-Ḥasan and were mainly linked by citations attributed to the generation of the Followers.

The frequency of this narrator’s output qualifies him to be the sixth major master to whom al-Ṭabarī refers most in his Tafsīr. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from him 412 isnāds (4.9% out of the total of 8,424 isnāds). Muḥammad b. Bashshār was a recognized scholar in ḥadīths narrated from the Prophet, the Companions and the Followers and he obtained the nickname Bundār;² because he brought together and compiled many narrations in different disciplines, but particularly in the discipline of fiqh. It will be seen later that most of his compilations were produced in his native town of Basra. Abū Dāwūd said, “I narrated from Bundār something like five thousand ḥadīths.”³ This statement clearly reflects Ibn Bashshār’s vast knowledge in narrating traditions. Evidently he was an important source who accumulated many narrations and it was on this account that al-Ṭabarī so frequently and extensively referred to him in many places in his Tafsīr.

The technical term most consistently used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate isnāds from Ibn Bashshār is ḥaddathanā and, less frequently, ḥaddathani, as illustrated in the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanā</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathani</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we have previously noticed in discussing of the introductory terms used by al-Ṭabarī before relating isnāds, the term ḥaddathanā indicates that he narrated

¹ Tadhkira, 2: 511; Khulāṣa, 280; Ḥabar, 2:3; Ḥuffāṣ, 226; Siyār, 12:144; Baghdād, 2:101; Kabīr, 11:49.
² Bundār originally means a person who is competent in the discipline of Fiqh. Thus, Ibn Bashshār was given this nickname because he compiled many disciplines in the field of jurisprudence. Tuhdīlā, 2:5.
³ Tadhkira, 2:511.
directly from his master while among a group of people. It also indicates that al-Ṭabarî may have heard from his master via a documented work read to him, among others, by the master himself, while the students listened and wrote down what they heard. Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that al-Ṭabarî narrated these isnāds from a compilation written by Ibn Bashshār, who permitted its narration to his students, among whom was al-Ṭabarî. We may conclude that written and oral transmissions were in circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarî and before. As for the 5 occurrences of the term ḥaddathanā, they indicate that al-Ṭabarî alone heard from Ibn Bashshār these 5 isnāds via another source. Or it may perhaps be assumed that they are the result of a transcriptional error, the scribe having written ḥaddathanā 5 times in error for ḥaddathanā. If this is so, then al-Ṭabarî is consistent in using only one term, i.e. ḥaddathanā, in introducing the isnāds he narrated from his master Ibn Bashshār.

In considering the masters from whom Ibn Bashshār himself narrates, we find that there were 45, but most of his isnāds come from just 14 of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Mahdī</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Wahhāb</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Ja'far</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu’ammil</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahyā al-Qaṭṭān</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-A’lā</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī ‘Adī</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū ‘Āṣım</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu’ādh</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Aḥmad</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Bakr</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Mas‘adah</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazid b. Harun</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Dawud</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (31)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>412</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibn Bashshār's most quoted masters

These most quoted masters are discussed in the following strands:


Ibn Bashshār narrates 126 of his isnāds (30.3% of the total of 412 isnāds) from Ibn Mahdī. Ibn Ḥanbal said that Ibn Mahdī used to document what he preserved. In his last days Ibn Mahdī himself said, with some regret, “It would have been better if I had written down the explanations beside each ḥadīth I narrated.”

This confirms the fact that he preserved his narrations in written documents.

When considering the generation of Ibn Mahdī’s masters, we discover that he narrates these 126 isnāds from 14 masters, but he narrates the majority (105 isnāds, or 84%) from only 2. The following Table illustrates this result.

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4 Ibn Ma’in, Tārīkh, 359; Ibn Sa’d, 7: 297; Tārīkh Khalīfah, 68; Jarḥ, 1/ 251, 262; Baghdād, 10: 24; Ḥīya, 9: 3 63; Kamāl, 820; Kāshif, 2: 187; Tahdhib, 6: 279; Ḥuffāz, 139; Siyar, 6: 279.

5 Jarḥ, 1: 262.
Ibn Mahdi’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufyān</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu’bāh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(12)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two most quoted masters are as follows:

6.1.1. Sufyān al-Thawrī, from whom Ibn Mahdi narrates 99 isnāds (79.2% of the total 126 isnāds). This demonstrates how Sufyān was a major source for Ibn Mahdi, since the bulk of Ibn Mahdi’s isnāds, in fact more than three quarters of his total isnāds, arrived from Sufyān. In his turn Sufyān narrates these 99 isnāds from 49 masters, but mainly from four of them, as shown in the following Pie Chart.

Sufyān al-Thawrī's most quoted masters

These 4 masters most quoted by Sufyān are as follows:

6.1.1.1. Maヌr b. al-Mu’tamir al-Kufī, from whom Sufyān narrates 9 isnāds (9.2% of the total 99 isnāds). In turn, Maヌr narrates from 2 masters, but without extensive narration from either of them.
6.1.1.2. ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makķī, from whom Sufyān narrates 8 times (8.2%). Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates these 8 isnāds from just one master, Mujāhid al-Makķī, the well-known scholar of tafsīr. The isnād stops at Mujāhid where al-Ṭabarī cites his Tafsīr.

6.1.1.3. Al-Mughīra b. Miqsam al-Kūfī, from whom Sufyān narrates 7 times (7.1%). Al-Mughīra himself narrates from only one master, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha’ī al-Kūfī, the famous scholar of fiqh. Sufyān narrates 7 times from him. After that the isnād stops in cases, where al-Ṭabarī benefited from Ibrāhīm’s own opinions on tafsīr and fiqh.

6.1.1.4. ‘Amr b. ‘Abdullāh Abū Ishāq al-Subay‘ī al-Kūfī (AH 29-127), from whom Sufyān narrates 6 times (6.1%). Abū Ishāq, in turn, narrates from 5 masters, almost all in equal measure and without extensive narration from any one of them.

These 4 narrators are those most quoted by Sufyān and must be considered his main sources. Sufyān narrates from them a total of 30 isnāds, amounting to 30.6% of the total of 99 isnāds, or nearly a third. He narrates the remaining 69 isnāds (69.4%), the other two thirds, from 35 other masters. It is noticeable that Sufyān and three of his four main narrators were all from the city Kufa, the exception being Ibn Abī Najīḥ who came from Mecca.

6.1.2. Shu‘bāh b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī (82-160/701-777), from whom Ibn Mahdī narrates 6 isnāds (4.8% of the total 126 isnāds). In turn, Shu‘bāh narrates from 5 masters, but with no extensive narration from any one of them. There is no doubt that Shu‘bāh was a main source for Ibn Mahdī. Historians state that Shu‘bāh wrote a Tafsīr and another book on Ḥadīth entitled al-Gharā‘ib fī al-Ḥadīth.

Consequently, both Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shu‘bāh b. al-Ḥajjāj were major sources for Ibn Mahdī, who relied on them in transmitting the majority of his narrations. It is historically established that both Sufyān and Shu‘bāh wrote documents in the disciplines of tafsīr and Ḥadīth. We should observe, as indeed we have done on a number of occasions previously, that whenever Sufyān’s name

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6 Tahdhib, 4: 356,359.
7 A muḥaddith, commentator. Wāfī, 14: 39,40; Shadharāt, 1:247; Tahdhib, 2: 498; Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, 2:85,86.
appears in the isnād, he usually becomes a major source for a cluster of isnāds.⁸ Here we notice that the isnād up to Sufyān recurs 99 times, or nearly 80% of 126 isnāds. Soon after him the isnād splits into 49 branches.


Ibn Bashshār narrates 36 isnāds (8.7% of 412 isnāds) from ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was known to have a written document in which he narrated traditions. Al-Fasawī said, “‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s document is more accurate than any other book.”¹⁰ When we look at the generation of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s masters, it is seen that he narrates from 4 masters, but mostly from the following three:

6.2.1. Ayyūb al Sikhtiyānī al-Baṣrī¹¹ (AH 68-133), from whom ‘Abd al-Wahhāb narrates 16 isnāds, amounting to 44.4%, or nearly half, of his isnāds. Ibn al-Madīnī stated that Ayyūb put together a compilation of “around eight hundred ḥadīths.” It may be noticed that all the narrators involved in this isnād are from Basra. In turn, Ayyūb narrates from 9 masters, with no extensive narration from any one of them. Hence the isnād stops.

6.2.2. Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd b. Qays al-Anṣārī¹³ (d. AH 143), from whom ‘Abd al-Wahhāb narrates 12 isnāds, amounting to 33.3%, or nearly a third, of his isnāds. Ibn al-Madīnī stated that Yaḥyā narrated something like three hundred ḥadīths. In turn, Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd narrates from 7 masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them.

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⁸ See, for example, notes on al-Ṭabarī’s fifth major master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, strand no. 2.
⁹ Ibn Ma‘in, Tārīkh, 378; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:289; Tārīkh Khalīfa, 466; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 1905; Kabīr, 6: 97; Ṣaḥḥār, 2:272; Jarḥ, 9:71; Baghdād, 11:18; Kamāl, 872; Tadhkira, 1: 321; Mizān, 2: 680; Kāshf, 2: 221; Ḥuffāz, 133.
¹⁰ Ibn Ma‘in, Tārīkh, 378; Siyyar, 9: 238.
¹¹ Ibn Sa‘d, 7:246,251; Ḥifya, 3: 2,14; Kamāl, 134; Tadhkira, 1: 130,132; Khulāṣa, 42; Siyyar, 6:15.
¹² Shadharāt, 2: 135.
¹³ Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 270; Kabīr, 8: 275,276; Jarḥ, 9:147; Kamāl, 1499; Ḥuffāz, 57; Shadharāt, 2:200; Siyyar, 5:468.
¹⁴ Shadharāt, 2:200.
6.2.3. ‘Awf b. Abi Jamila al-Baṣrī\(^{15}\) (AH 58-146), from whom ‘Abd al-Wahhāb narrates 7 times (19.4%). Many ḥadīth scholars narrated from ‘Awf.\(^{16}\) ‘Awf narrates from 4 of masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them. It may be noticed that all the narrators of this isnād, i.e. Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Baṣrī ~ ‘Awf al-Baṣrī, are Basrans.

The number of isnāds narrated by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb from these 3 masters comes to a total of 35, or 97.2% out of the total of 36 isnāds. This leaves only 1 isnād, which ‘Abd al-Wahhāb narrates from another person. We notice that 2 of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s most quoted masters were from Basra as well as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and only Yahyā is described as a Medinan.

6.3. The strand of Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Ja’far al-Baṣrī\(^{17}\) (d. AH 193)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 25 isnāds (6% of 412 isnāds) from Muḥammad b. Ja’far. Ibn Mahdī said, “We used to benefit from Muḥammad b. Ja’far’s book, especially in what he narrated from Shu’bah.” Ibn al-Mubārak said, “If people differ in opinion regarding the narrations of Shu’bah, Muḥammad b. Ja’far’s book was their arbiter,”\(^{18}\) meaning that it was their most reliable source. In turn, Muḥammad b. Ja’far al-Baṣrī himself narrates from 3 masters, but mostly from Shu’bah b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 18 isnāds (72% of the total 25 isnāds).

It may be noticed that Ibn Bashshār narrated from Shu’bah via two branches, firstly through his first master ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī al-Baṣrī, previously mentioned in the first strand, and secondly through Muḥammad b. Ja’far al-Baṣrī, as is the case here. With regard to the first strand, we have noted while discussing its narrators that Shu’bah was a well-known scholar who produced a book on tafsīr. So Shu’bah is a source from whom Ibn Bashshār benefited via two isnāds. It may be

\(^{15}\) Tārīkh Khalīfa, 226; Tabaqāt Khalīfa, 219; Kābir, 7:58; Ṣaghīr, 2:85; Jarḥ, 7:15; Kamāl, 1066; Tadhkira, 1:137; Sīyar, 6:383; Mīzān, 3:305.

\(^{16}\) Tadhkira, 4: 422,423.

\(^{17}\) Tadhkira, 1: 300; Tadhīb, 9: 96; Khulāṣa, 282; Shadharāt, 1:333; Ibn Sa’d, 7/ 2: 49; ‘Ibar, 1:311; Mīzān, 3:502; Huffāz, 131.

\(^{18}\) Huffāz, 131.
noticed that all the narrators of this isnād (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Baṣrī ~ Shuʿbah al-Baṣrī) are Basrans.

When investigating the generation of Shuʿbah’s masters, we find that he narrates from 3 narrators, but mostly from the 2 following:


6.3.2. Qatāda b. Daʿāma al-Baṣrī, from whom Shuʿbah narrates 5 times (27.7% of Shuʿbah’s 18 isnāds). Qatāda himself narrates from 3 masters fairly evenly. It may be noticed that all the narrators of this isnād (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Baṣrī ~ Shuʿbah al-Baṣrī ~ Qatāda al-Baṣrī) come from Basra.

The number of isnāds narrated by Shuʿbah from these two most quoted masters totals 15, or 83.3% of 18. Three other isnāds (16.7%) Shuʿbah narrates from another person. It may be concluded that Abū Bishr al-Baṣrī and Qatāda al-Baṣrī are Shuʿbah’s major sources. It is apparent that all the most quoted narrators in this strand come from Basra.

6.4. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Muʾammil b. Ismāʿīl al-Baṣrī20 (d. AH 205)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 24 (5.8%) of his isnāds from Muʾammil. Ibn Ḥajar stated that “Muʾammil used to write down his narrations in books.”21 We find that Muʾammil narrates from only 1 master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kufī, from whom he narrates all his 24 isnāds. In turn, Sufyān narrates from 10 masters, but mostly from ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 8 times (33.3% of the total of his narrations). Ibn Abī Najīḥ himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from just

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19 Ṭabaqāt Khāliṣa, 325; Kabīr, 2:186; Ṣaghīr, 1:320; Jarḥ, 2:473; Kamāl, 207; Siyār, 5: 465.
20 Kabīr, 4:2:49; Tahdhib, 5:586.
21 Tahdhib, 5:586.
1 of them, Mujāhid al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 7 times (87.5% of all his narrations).

The source which we should notice in this strand is Sufyān al-Thawrī since he is the common link in these isnāds. As we noted, Sufyān was a compiler who wrote in the field of tafsīr and other disciplines. Sufyān was frequently considered a major source in a number of the previous strands.

6.5. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qāṭṭān al-Bāṣrī²² (AH 120-198)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 23 isnāds (5.5% of 412 isnāds) from Yaḥyā al-Qāṭṭān. Yaḥyā said about himself that he used to write down reports and traditions handed down from the Prophet and the Companions."²³ Al-Dhahabi stated that Yaḥyā used to compile his narrations and write them down in books.²⁴ Yaḥyā narrates these 23 isnāds from 7 masters, but mostly from 1 master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 14 times (60.8% of the total number of his narrations). In turn, Sufyān narrates from 10 masters almost equally. So, the main source of this strand is again Sufyān al-Thawrī,²³ as was often the case with most of the strands investigated earlier.


Ibn Bashshār narrates a number of 23, or 5.5%, of all his isnāds from ‘Abd al-A‘lā. Ibn Ḥajar mentioned that ‘Abd al-A‘lā used to compile ḥadīths and reports from his masters.²⁷ In this selection, ‘Abd al-A‘lā himself narrates from only one

²² Ibn Ma‘in, Tārikh, 645; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:293; Tārikh Khalīfah, 468; Kabīr, 8:276; Jarḥ, 9:150; Kamāl, 1497; Tadhkira, 1:298; Kāshīf, 3:256; Huffāz, 125; Sīyar, 9:175.
²³ Jarḥ, 248.
²⁴ Sīyar, 9:184,185.
²⁵ Compare with the previous isnād.
²⁶ Ibn Ma‘in, Tārikh, 339; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:290; Tārikh Khalīfah, 458; Kabīr, 6:73; al-Ma‘rīfa wa-al-Tārikh, 1:180; Jarḥ, 6:28; Kamāl, 760; Tadhkira, 1:296; Mizān, 2:531; Kāshīf, 6:146; Sīyar, 9:242.
²⁷ Tahātib, 3:311.
master, Jarîr b. Ḥâzim al-Baṣrî,\(^{28}\) from whom he narrates all his 23 isnāds. This means that all of ‘Abd al-Aʿlāʾ’s isnāds came from 1 narrator, Jarîr. In turn, Jarîr narrates from 2 masters, mostly from Qatâda al-Baṣrî alone, from whom he narrates 22 times (95.6% of all his narrations). Qatâda narrates from 8 masters, but most of his narrations come from 1 master, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî, from whom Qatâda narrates 8 times (36.3% of 22 isnāds). The source to be considered here is Qatâda al-Baṣrî. He was known to be one of the first to compile written documents and he composed a book on *tafsîr* al-Ṭabarî refers to hundreds of times in his *Tafsîr* via different strands, which we will group together in a later stage. (see Chapter VII below).

It may be noticed that all the narrators in this isnād (Ibn Bashshâr al-Baṣrî ~ ‘Abd al-Aʿlā al-Baṣrî ~ Jarîr al-Baṣrî ~ Qatâda al-Baṣrî ~ al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî) come from the city of Basra.

6.7. The strand of Ibn Bashshâr ~ Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Adī al-Baṣrî\(^{29}\) (AH 120-194)

Ibn Bashshâr narrates 22, or 5.3%, of all his isnāds from Ibn Abī ‘Adī. Ibn Abī ‘Adī himself narrates from 9 masters, but mostly from the following:

6.7.1. Jarîr al-Baṣrî, from whom Ibn Abī ‘Adī narrates 7 times (31.8% of all his narrations). In turn, Jarîr narrates all 7 isnāds from 1 master, Qatâda al-Baṣrî.

6.7.2. ‘Awf b. Abī Jamîla al-Baṣrî, from whom Ibn Abī ‘Adī narrates 7 times. ‘Awf himself narrates from 3 masters, but with no extensive narration from any one of them.

It will be noticed that the narrators of this strand in its two branches come from Basra, thus:


‘Awf al-Baṣrî.

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\(^{28}\) *Tahdhib*, 1: 365, 366; *Shadharât*, 2: 312.

It should be noted with regard to these two most quoted narrators, i.e. Jarir and ‘Awf, that Ibn Bashshār narrates from them via other strands mentioned earlier.30


Ibn Bashshār narrates 20 (4.8%) of his isnāds from Abū ‘Āṣim. Historians state that Abū ‘Āṣim produced a written document on ḥadīth.32 When we look at the generation of Abū ‘Āṣim, we find that he narrates from 2 masters, thus:

6.8.1. 'Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj al-Makki, from whom he narrates 11 times in relating 20 isnāds, i.e. in 55% of his narrations.

Ibn Jurayj himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from ‘Ata’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki, from whom he narrates 8 times (72.7% of all his narrations). The isnād stops at ‘Ata’ 7 times, while in 1 more isnād ‘Ata’ narrates from another master.

6.8.2. Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, from whom Abū ‘Āṣim narrates 9 times (45% of all his narrations). Sufyān narrates from 5 masters almost equally. The isnād stops at Sufyān, making him the main link for a cluster of isnāds.

The total number of isnāds narrated by Abū ‘Āṣim al-Ḍahḥāk b. Makhlad from Ibn Jurayj and Sufyān is 20.


Ibn Bashshār narrates 18 (4.3% of his isnāds) from Mu‘ādh. Mu‘ādh used to compile the ḥadīths and reports he narrated in books, in which he recorded more than 10,000 traditions.34 In turn, Mu‘ādh narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from just one of them, Hishām al-Dastuwā‘ī35 al-Baṣrī36 (d. AH 153), from whom he narrates 17

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30 Cf. strands 2 and 6.
31 Ibn Sa’īd, 7:295; Tārikh Khalīfa, 474; Kabīr, 4:336; Saḥīḥ, 2:324; Jarḥ, 4:463; Kamāl, 617; Kāshīf, 2:36; Ḥuffāz, 156; Mīzān, 2:325; Tadhkira, 1:366; Sīyar, 9:480.
32 Wāfī, 14:84; Kahlālā, 5:27.
33 Ibn Ma’in, Tārikh, 572; Kabīr, 7:366; Saḥīḥ, 2:289; Jarḥ, 8:249; Kamāl, 1340; ‘Ibar, 1:334; Mīzān, 4:133; Tadhkira, 136; Khulāṣa, 380; Shadharāt, 1:359; Sīyar, 9:372.
34 Kamāl, 1340.
35 Lubāb, 1:319.
times (94.4% of all his narrations). Hishām himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from Qatāda al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 16 times (94.1% of all his narrations). In turn, Qatāda narrates from 12 masters, without extensive narration from any one of them. We noted earlier that Qatāda was one of the first to compile a Tafsīr. It may be noticed that all the narrators in this isnād (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Mu‘ādh al-Baṣrī ~ Hishām al-Baṣrī ~ Qatāda al-Baṣrī) are from Basra.

6.10. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī al-Kūfī Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh37 (d. AH 203)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 17 (4.1% of all his isnāds) from Abū Aḥmad. Al-Dhahabī states that Abū Aḥmad used to narrate from a written document.38 He himself said, “I would not worry if Sufyān al-Thawrī’s book were stolen from me since I have learnt it all by heart.”39 Abū Aḥmad narrates these 17 isnāds from one master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī. Sufyān himself narrates from 10 masters, without extensive narration from any one of them. Therefore, the source for this strand is again Sufyān, thus once more showing how Sufyān was a major source for a number of isnāds.40

6.11. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Muḥammad b. Bakr al-Bursānī41 al-Baṣrī (1019)42 (AH 203)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 13 (3.1%) of his isnāds from Muḥammad b. Bakr. Muḥammad himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from ‘Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 9 times (69.2% of all his isnāds). Ibn Jurayj

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36 Tahdhib, 6: 31-32; Shadharat, 2: 245.
37 Ibn Ma‘in, Ṭārikh, 523; Ibn Sa‘d, 6: 402; Ṣabaqāt Khalīfa, 1334; Kabūr, 1:133; Šaghīr, 2:298; al-Ma‘rifa wa-Ṭārikh, 1:157; Ṣarḥ, 7:297; Kamāl, 1218; Mizān, 3:595,596; Tudkhira, 1:357; Kāshīf, 3:60; Wāfi3:303; Ḥṣaffāz, 152; Siyar, 9:529.
38 Siyar, 9:530.
39 Kamāl, 1218.
40 Refer to isnād numbers 1, 3, 4, and 8.
41 Lubāb, 1:117.
42 Ibn Ma‘in, Ṭārikh, 506; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:297; Ṣa‘bāq Khalīfa, 471; Kabūr, 1:48; Šaghīr, 2:299; Ṣarḥ, 7:212; Kamāl, 1177; Mizān, 3:492; Tahdhib, 9:77; Siyar, 9:421.
narrates from 6 masters almost equally. We have noted earlier that Ibn Jurayj was one of the first scholars to compile written documents in the Hijaz area.

6.12. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Ḥammād b. Mas'ada al-Baṣrī (AH 202)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 6 (1.4%) of all his isnāds from Ḥammād. Ḥammād himself narrates all these isnāds from 1 master, ‘Awf b. Abī Jamīla al-Baṣrī. In turn, ‘Awf narrates from 2 masters almost equally. It will be noticed that all the narrators in this isnād (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Ḥammād al-Baṣrī ~ ‘Awf al-Baṣrī), come from Basra. This is the third strand in which Ibn Bashshār narrates via ‘Awf.


Ibn Bashshār narrates 6 (1.4%) of his isnāds from Yazīd. Yazīd said about himself, “I learnt by heart twenty-four thousand hadīths with their isnāds, and as for the scholars of al-Shām, I retain twenty thousand hadīths.” One of the books written by Yazīd was his Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān. Yazīd, in turn, narrates from 3 masters almost equally.

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43 See p. 226,227.
44 Shadharāt, 2: 226,227.
46 Cf. strands 2 and 6.
47 Ibn Ma’in, Tārikh, 677; Ibn Sa’d, 7:314; Tārikh Khalīfa 472; Kabūr, 8:368; Saghīr, 2:307; Baghdādī, 4:337; Kamāl, 1543; Hūfajj, 132; Kashīf, 3:287; Shadharat, 2:16; Siyar, 9:358.
48 Shāmiyyīn is the name of people living in the region of al-Shām, gathering the states of Syria, Jordan and part of Lebanon.
49 Baghdādī, 14:339.
50 Nadīm, 1: 228; Zunūn, 461.

Ibn Bashshār narrates 5 (1.2\%) of his isnāds from Abū Dāwūd, the author of the famous Musnad.\(^{52}\) Abū Dāwūd himself narrates from 3 masters almost equally, thus making Abū Dāwūd the major link for a cluster of isnāds branching from this strand.

One should emphasize that these isnāds branching from al-Ṭabarī’s master Ibn Bashshār reach back to the generation of the Followers, i.e. mainly to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda al-Baṣrī, and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha’ī. Those scholars are known for their deep knowledge in the field of fiqh and tafsīr. We notice that two of these scholars are from Basra, as were Ibn Bashshār and most of his narrators. The following Table and Pie Chart show how nearly 60\% of Ibn Bashshār’s isnāds go back to Followers, while just over 30\% go back to the generation of the Companions, mainly ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar, and ‘Ā’isha the Prophet’s wife. The remaining 10.5\% of reports are ascribed to the Prophet. This evidence supports the hypothesis that Ibn Bashshār made a speciality of citing tafsīr produced by scholars of the generation of the Followers, particularly those of Basra such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{51}\) Ibn Ma’in, Tārīkh, 229; Ibn Sa’d, 7: 298; Tārīkh Khaliṣa, 24: 472; Kabīr, 4: 10; Şaghīr, 2: 299; Baghdād, 9: 24; Kamāl, 537; Tadhkira, 1: 351; Kāshīf, 2: 392; Khulāṣa, 151; Siyar, 9: 378; Miẓān, 2: 203.

\(^{52}\) Tadhkira, 1: 351; Kahḥāla, 4: 262. His book al-Musnad still exists and is in circulation as a source of Ḥaddith material.
This completes our discussion of the isnāds branching from al-Ṭabarī’s master Ibn Bashshār. The total number of isnāds narrated by Ibn Bashshār from these 14 masters is 364, or 88.3% of all his 412 isnāds. The remaining 48 isnāds (11.6%) are distributed among 31 other masters. Ibn Bashshār’s frequent reference to these narrators indicates that they were his main sources. This is consistent with our findings that almost all these well-known scholars of Ḥadīth compiled written documents and left many books in the disciplines of Ḥadīth and tafsīr. Al-Ṭabarī benefited from all these sources through his master Ibn Bashshār.

It may be noticed that Muḥammad b. Bashshār and his most quoted masters are from the city of Basra. In fact, 12 of Ibn Bashshār’s most cited masters, who account for 341 (93.6%) of the 364 isnāds related by him, are from Basra. The only other two masters referred to by Ibn Bashshār - Abu Aḥmad al-Zubayrī from Kufa and Yazīd b. Hārun from Wāṣīt- are from nearby Iraqi cities.

These are the strands of the repeated isnāds that ramified from Ibn Bashshār. We have noticed in reviewing these strands that one person is mentioned repeatedly and that is Sufyān al-Thawrī. This name is found in strands numbers 1, 4, 5, 8, and 10, where it is repeated 163 times, or 44.8% of all the 364 isnāds narrated by Ibn Bashshār from these 14 most quoted masters. Since therefore nearly half of Ibn
Bashshār’s narrations refer back to Sufyān al-Thawrī, we may conclude that Sufyān was a major source for Ibn Bashshār and that Ibn Bashshār was a major source of Sufyān’s Tafsīr for al-Ṭabarī.

This supports my hypothesis that most of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds came from written sources, since we have noticed that most of the historians who refer to Sufyān mention that he narrated thousands of traditions and compiled them in books, in particular al-Jāmi’ al-Kabīr, al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣagīr, and al-Tafsīr.\(^\text{53}\)

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SECTION THREE

Masters from whom al-Ṭabarî narrates more than 300 times. These are: Yūnus al-Miṣrī, Abū Kurayb, and a missing master.

7. Seventh major master: Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-Aʿlā al-Miṣrī (170-264 AH)

Yūnus al-Ṣadafi al-Miṣrī must be ranked the seventh major master in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr on account of the frequency with which al-Ṭabarî reports from him. Al-Ṭabarî narrates from Yūnus 396 isnâds (4.7% of the total 8,424 isnâds).\(^1\) In some places of his Tafsîr al-Ṭabarî gives the name of this person as Yūnus b. ‘Abd al- Aʿlā al-Ṣadafi, while in many other places he suffices by giving only the first name, Yūnus.\(^2\)

An examination of Yūnus’s masters reveals that he narrates from 13 masters but extensively from 1, ‘Abdullâh b. Wahb al-Miṣrî (125-197/743-813),\(^3\) from whom he narrates 374 times (94.5% of the total 396 isnâds). The remaining 22 isnâds (5.5%), are dispersed among another 12 masters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Wahb</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (12)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) See Table no. 1.


\(^3\) See Muʿjam al-Mufassîrîn, 1:328; Tadhkira, 1:304; Zunûn, 440; Shadharât, 1:347; Wafayât, 3:36.
Pie Chart of Yūnus's most quoted master

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Wahb</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, Ibn Wahb is the most significant master among the 13. It is noticeable that both Yūnus and his master Ibn Wahb are from Egypt. According to his biography, Ibn Wahb was master in the disciplines of both *tafsīr* and *fiqh*, with valuable transmission. Abū Zur‘a stated, “I have looked at and observed some thirty thousand narrations reported by Ibn Wahb, and I do not know if there exists among them even one questionable narration.” This may explain why al-Ṭabarī refers to this scholar, via his master Yūnus, hundreds of times. One of Ibn Wahb’s written works was *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*.

By counting the frequency of *isnāds* and noting the biographical information concerning narrators in the strand flowing from Yūnus, it seems quite likely that we are dealing here with some narrations which could have originated from primary sources that were considered in the pre-Ṭabarī period to be major works of *tafsīr*. This is supported by the statistical result obtained when counting the narration terms used by al-Ṭabarī to transmit from his master Yūnus. The following Table shows that al-Ṭabarī almost always uses the term *haddathānī* when transmitting *isnāds* from Yūnus. *Haddathānī* is a term used by scholars of Ḥadīth to indicate that the information they narrate comes from a written source. Al-Ṭabarī employs this

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6 See Chapter V, on the technical terms of transmission used by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*.
terminology in almost 95% of all his narrations. Consequently, it would appear that when quoting from his master Yūnus, al-Ṭabarī is in fact referring to a written document. See the following Table which illustrates this finding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathānī</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathānā</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our discussion of terms used by al-Ṭabarī in transmitting ḯsnāds, we noted that the term ḥaddathānī could indicate that al-Ṭabarī heard from a master via a written work whose narration was licensed to him by his master Yūnus. The above Table shows that al-Ṭabarī uses the term ḥaddathānī 376 times (in 94.9% of the 396 ḯsnāds) while he employs the term Ḥaddathānā only 20 times (5.1%). This may suggest that in most cases, when using the term ḥaddathānī, al-Ṭabarī is quoting from Yūnus via a written work, which may be the Taṣfīr written by Ibn Wahb (previously mentioned), whereas in a few cases when he uses the term Ḥaddathānā, he is referring to different sources. In addition, we may note the fact that the proportional use of the term ḥaddathānī and the appearance of the scholar Ibn Wahb show an equal percentage!

Although Ibn Wahb narrates these 374 Ḯsnāds from 36 masters, he reports the bulk of his narrations, i.e. 317 Ḯsnāds (85%), from only 3 of them, viz:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Zayd</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mālik b. Anas</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Yazīd</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(33)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ibn Wahb's most quoted masters

Other 15.2%
Ibn Yazīd 3.7%
Mālik b. Anas 8.0%

These most quoted masters are as follows:

1- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam al-Madānī (d. 182/798), from whom Ibn Wahb narrates extensively i.e. 273 times (73%). The isnād stops at ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd 264 times (96.7% of 273 times), where al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn Zayd’s own sayings on tafsīr. The remaining 9 isnāds, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd narrates from 5 others masters, but mainly from his father, Zayd b. Aslam (d.136/753), from whom he narrates 4 times. Biographers state that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd composed a number of books on Qur’ānic disciplines, such as Tafsīr al-Qur’ān and al-Nāsikh wa-al-Mansūkh. Regarding ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd’s Tafsīr, Sezgin reports that it contains lexicographical explanations of the phrases of the Qur’ān. It seems that this Tafsīr was an important source for al-Ṭabarī, because he employs it hundreds of times in his Tafsīr, by the following isnād: Yūnūs ~ Ibn Wahb ~ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd. What can be safely concluded here is that this isnād, Yūnūs ~ Ibn Wahb ~ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd, goes back to an ancient written source on tafsīr which

7 Kābīr, 2/1:385; Lugḥāt, 1:200; Tadhkīrāt, 3:395; Tadhkīrā, 1:132; Shadharāt, 1:194; Zunūn, 448; Jarḥ, 1:551; Mu’jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:197; Kahḥāla, 4:189; Sezgin, 2:24.
8 Mu’jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:265.
9 Sezgin, 1:201.
originated during the second half of the second century AH, because ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd, the author of this *Tafsīr*, died in 182/798.

Regarding the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to quote from ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd’s *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī consistently employs only the one term ḥaddathānī whenever he refers to this *Tafsīr*, via the following ḵisnād: Yūnūs ~ Ibn Wahb ~ Ibn Zayd. The following Table illustrates this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ḥaddathānī</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This crucial statistical result supports the hypothesis that when he uses the term ḥaddathānī, via the ḵisnād Yūnūs ~ Ibn Wahb, al-Ṭabarī is in fact quoting from the written source which is ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd’s *Tafsīr*.

2- Mālik b. Anas al-Madānī (93-179/712-795), the well-known faqīḥ (jurisprudent), from whom Ibn Wahb narrates 30 times (8%). The ḵisnād stops at Mālik, where al-Ṭabarī cites Mālik’s own opinions, and, 16 times, Mālik continues to narrate from 13 of his masters. Hence, Mālik is the common link for a number of ḵisnāds and a main source of Ibn Wahb, since the ḵisnād starts to diverge into several branches after Mālik. Ibn Wahb was considered to be a follower of the Mālikī school of *fiqh*. He learnt from Mālik and accompanied him for twenty years. Mālik produced works, among them *Gharīb al-Qur‘ān* and, of course, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*.

3 - Yūnūs b. Yazīd al-Ayyūl, from whom Ibn Wahb narrates 14 times (3.7%).

It should be noted that most of the ḵisnāds flowing from al-Ṭabarī’s master Yūnūs reach back to the generation of the Followers, mainly, as we have seen earlier, to ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Zayd Aslam. This Follower scholar was well-known for his competence in *tafsīr* and wrote a book on the subject. The following Table and Pie

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11 *Kahfala*, 8:168.

12 Muf’jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:328.

Chart illustrate the fact that 84.8% of Yūnus’s isnāds are attributed to Followers, 11.1% are attributed to the Companions, and only 4.1% are ascribed to the Prophet (i.e. Ḥadīth). This supports the hypothesis that Yūnus specialized in citing the tafsīrs belonging to the generation of the Followers and, in particular, the Tafsīr produced by the commentator ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concludes the discussion of the strands branching off from the Yūnus al-Miṣrī ~ Ibn Wahb al-Miṣrī isnād, which reappears 374 times (94.5%) out of the 396 isnāds narrated by al-Ṭabarī from his seventh major master, Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā al-Ṣadafī al-Miṣrī. It is to be noted that Ibn Wahb depended upon 3 major masters out of 36. It is also noticeable that the most quoted strand, branching from Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb isnād, is the one of Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb ~ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam, which reappears 273 times (in 73% of the total 374 isnāds). The significance of this strand is that it goes back to a written source on tafsīr produced by the later narrator,
i.e. ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Zayd. We noted that this *Tafsîr* must have been written during the second half of the second century AH. Our statistical examination supports Sezgin’s statement that al-Ṭabarî refers to ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Zayd b. Aslam’s *Tafsîr* hundreds of times. In fact, he makes 273 citations in interpreting only the two *Sûras al-Fâtiha* and *al-Baqara*. 
8. Eighth major master: Abū Kurayb, Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’ al-Kūfī (d. AH 248)\textsuperscript{14}

According to the frequency of his appearance in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr*, Abū Kurayb must be accounted the eighth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates most. Al-Ṭabarī refers to him 388 times (in 4.6% of the total 8,424 isnāds).

In some places of his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī cites his master’s name as Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’, but in many other places he simply gives his agnomen, i.e. Abū Kurayb. This extensive narration by al-Ṭabarī from Abū Kurayb may be illuminated by a number of statements made by Abū Kurayb’s biographers. Abū ‘Alī al-Nisābūrī stated that he heard Abū al-‘Abbās b. ʿUqda acknowledging Abū Kurayb to be a trustworthy narrator and classifying him upon all of his masters, claiming that in Kufa alone, Abū Kurayb compiled and reported more than three hundred thousand narrations.\textsuperscript{15} Many Ḥadīth scholars ranked Abū Kurayb as the principal master above all other scholars in Kufa during his lifetime.\textsuperscript{16} He was described as “a receptacle of narration.”\textsuperscript{17} Al-Ṭabarī traveled to Kufa in order to meet and benefit from Abū Kurayb. In the company of other students, al-Ṭabarī learned from Abū Kurayb numerous narrations and when al-Ṭabarī proved his scholarly qualification to his master Abū Kurayb, the latter permitted him to report his narrations to others. Historians state that al-Ṭabarī reported more than one hundred thousand narrations from Abū Kurayb.\textsuperscript{18} Abū Kurayb left many written works.\textsuperscript{19} These quotations confirm that al-Ṭabarī had met with Abū Kurayb and learned many narrations directly from him. This may explain al-Ṭabarī’s frequent citations from this scholar. Subsequently, we will see that most of Abū Kurayb’s masters and his master’s masters, were connected with Kufa. This may also corroborate the previous statement that most of the isnāds narrated by Abū Kurayb were fixed in Kufa, just as we noted earlier (when discussing and describing al-Ṭabarī’s fifth major master, i.e. Ibn Bashšār) that Ibn

\textsuperscript{14} *Tadhkira*, 2:497; *Khulāṣa*, 303; *Shadharāt*, 2:119; Ibn Sa’d, 6:289; *Ibar*, 1:453.

\textsuperscript{15} See Ḥuffāẓ, 217.


\textsuperscript{17} *Tadhkira*, 2:497.


\textsuperscript{19} *Tadhkira*, 2:497.
Bashshār and the majority of his most cited masters and his master’s masters were connected with Basra. This clearly indicates that al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds were fixed in certain places, which may suggest that al-Ṭabarī traveled to different cities, such as Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, and Cairo, in order to obtain certain isnāds emanating from certain scholars.

Al-Ṭabarī consistently applies just one technical term whenever he narrates isnāds from his master Abū Kurayb. The following statistical Table shows that al-Ṭabarī always uses the term ḥaddathana when transmitting isnāds from Abū Kurayb. According to the Science of Hadīth, ḥaddathana is a term used to indicate that the information transmitters cite comes by direct listening to the master in the company of other students. al-Ṭabarī employs this terminology in all of his narrations. Consequently, this statistical result coincides with the earlier statement that when citing from his master Abū Kurayb, al-Ṭabarī is in fact reporting directly what he heard among other attendants. See the following Table which illustrates this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathana</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the generation of Abū Kurayb’s masters, we notice that they totaled 66 masters. We find that al-Ṭabarī chooses to narrate from Abū Kurayb via 11 masters only, from whom he selects to narrate frequently and more extensively than from others. These were: 1- ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Zayyāt al-Kūfī (d. AH 195), from whom Abū Kurayb narrates 74 times (19.1% of the total 388 isnāds); 2- Wāki’ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī (129-197/746-812), from whom he narrates 49 times (12.6%); 3- ‘Abdullāh b. Idris al-Kūfī (AH 115-192), from whom he narrates 39 times (10%); 4-

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20 See discussion of al-Ṭabarī’s seventh major master, Yūnus al-Miṣrī.

21 Jarḥ, 3/1:152.

22 Tadhkira, 1:306; Sezgin, 1:273; Baghdād, 13:466; Mīzān, 4:335; Kabīr, 4/2: 179; Nadim, 226; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:394; al-Dāwūdi, Ṭabagāt, 2:257; Mu’jam al-Mufassirīn, 2:719.

23 Tadhkira, 1:282; Khulāṣa, 161; Lubāb, 1:501; Ansāb, 3:152.
Yūnus b. Bukayr al-Kūfī (d. AH 199), from whom he narrates 39 times (10%); 5-
Yahyā b. Zakariyyā b. Abī Za‘ida al-Kūfī (123-183/741-799), from whom he narrates 18 times (4.6%); 6- Hushaym b. Basir al-Wāṣiṭi (d. 183/799), from whom he narrates 16 times (4.1%); 7- Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh al-Kūfī (AH 95-193), from whom he narrates 15 times (3.8%); 8- Yahyā b. Yaman al-Kūfī (d. 189/805), from whom he narrates 12 times (2.1%); 9- Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ātiyya al-‘Awfi al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 8 times (2.1%); 10- Yahyā b. Ḥamīd al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 7 times (1.8%). The following Table and Pie Chart show these masters most quoted by Abū Kurayb.

Abu Kurayb’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Uthmān</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakī’</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Idrīs</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Bukayr</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Za‘ida</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hushaym</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Yamān</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ‘Ātiyya</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahyā b. Adam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Tadhkira, 1:326; Tahdhib, 11:434; Khulāsā, 379; Shadharāt, 1:357; ‘Ibar, 1:331; Mizān, 4:477; al-Nujām al-Zāhirā, 2:165; Ḥuffāz, 137.
27 Tahdhib, 11:306; Kāhi, 6/2:133; ‘Ibar, 1:304; Shadharāt, 1:325; Qurra, 2:345; Tadhkira, 186; Sezgin, 1:202; Aḥām, 8:177.
29 Qurra, 2:364; Khulāsā, 361; Nadīm, 227; Tadhkira, 359; Shadharāt, 2.8; al-Dawūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:360; Mīr ‘al-Jinān, 2:10; Muṣ‘al al-Mufassirīn, 2:725.
30 Jarḥ, 1/1:500; Lubb al-Lubāb, 1:256.
The total number of Abū Kurayb’s narrations from these 11 most cited masters is 285 isnāds (73.6% of 388 isnāds). The remaining 103 isnāds (26.4%) are dispersed between the another 55 masters.

It is noticeable that Abū Kurayb himself and 10 of these narrators are connected with the town of Kufa and only one narrator is connected with Wāṣiṭ. This may substantiate the previously noted statement of Abū al-‘Abbās that Abū Kurayb’s narrations were established in Kufa.

When looking at the generation of the masters of these 11 masters most quoted by Abū Kurayb, we find that they too narrate extensively from others. This shows al-Ṭabarī as being selective in reporting strands of isnāds via his master Abū Kurayb, without reporting on a large scale from other strands. These 11 most cited strands are as follows.

This strand recurs 74 times (19.1% of 388 isnāds). In turn, ‘Uthmān narrates from 5 masters, but mainly from 1, Bishr b. ‘Imāra al-Kūfī,31 from whom he narrates 70 times (94.6%). Bishr himself reports this amount of isnāds from 1 master, Abū Rawq ‘Aṭiyya b. al-Hasan al-Kūfī (d. after105/723).32 In turn, Abū Rawq narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from al-Ḍāḥhāk b. Muzāhim al-Khurasānī (d. 105/723), from whom he reports 69 times (98.6%). Al-Ḍāḥhāk narrates this amount from 1 master, Ibn ‘Abbās, the famous Companion. The source of this strand was quite probably al-Ḍāḥhāk since he has been described as the author of a Tafsīr which contained narrations ascribed to his master Ibn ‘Abbās.33

8.2. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Waki‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 49 times (12.6%). Waki‘ narrates from 27 masters, i.e. the strand branches out after Waki‘ into 27 directions. So the source of this strand is Waki‘ himself since he was the common link in tens of isnāds and the greater part of a cluster of isnāds remained with him. Historians regarded Waki‘ as a well-known scholar who was competent in different disciplines including Ḥadīth and tafsīr. Some historians state that he wrote many books, among them Tafsīr al-Qur’an.34


This strand reappears 39 times (10.1%). The strand branches into 24 directions after Ibn Idrīs, without any specific concentration in narration from any one of his masters. Apparently, Ibn Idrīs was the common link in these branches and the person whom al-Ṭabarī meant to consult. Al-Dhahabī states that Ibn Idrīs reported many narrations in writing and was acknowledged as a trustworthy narrator.35

31 Jarḥ, 2:362; Kabūr, 1/2:81.
33 Sezgin, 1:186; Mu’jam al-Mufassirīn, 1:237.
34 Sezgin, 1:273; Nadīm, 226; Mu’jam al-Mufassirīn, 2:720.
35 Siyār, 9:42-48. See also Ibn Ma‘īn, Tārikh, 2:295; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:389; Ṭabāqāt Khalīfah, 1303; Tārikh Khalīfah, 460; Kabūr, 5:47; Baghdād, 9:415; Tadhkira, 1:283; Ḥuffāz, 118.
8.4. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yūnus b. Bukayr al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 39 times (10.1%). Although Ibn Bukayr reports from 4 masters, he narrates the bulk of his narrations, 34 isnāds (87.2%), from 1 person, Muḥammad b. Ishaq, the well-known scholar and author of the Prophet’s biography (Sīra). In turn, Ibn Ishaq reports from 4 masters, but mainly from Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad (the mawlā of the Companion Zayd b. Thābit), from whom he narrates 31 times (91.2% of 34 isnāds). The strand after Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad branched out into two main directions, as follows:

- Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad ~ ‘Ikrima al-Makkī, which recurs 15 times (48.3%).
- Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad ~ Sa‘īd b. Jubayr al-Makkī, which recurs 14 times (45.1%).

Both of these two famous Follower scholars, ‘Ikrima and Sa‘īd, narrate from 1 master, ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, the well-known Companion and scholar of tafsīr. So al-Ṭabarī refers to this strand in order to quote the tafsīr narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās. We have noted earlier that this isnād is cited by al-Ṭabarī via his fourth major master, Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī. This indicates that al-Ṭabarī benefited from this isnād via two ways, one from Kufa, i.e. via Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yūnus b. Bukayr al-Kūfī, and the other from Rayy,36 i.e. via Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī. The total number of citations from both of these ways amounts to 290. Hence, this strand, is another confirmation of the fact that Ibn Ishaq (d. 151/768), whom we know as a scholar and author, was a major source upon whom al-Ṭabarī relied to cite hundreds of isnāds. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find adequate information about Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad, the source upon whom Ibn Ishaq mainly depended to narrate from.37

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36 See notes on al-Ṭabarī’s fourth major master.
37 See strand no. 1 of Ibn Ḥumayd, al-Ṭabarī’s third major masters.
8.5. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yaḥyā b. Abī Zāʿida al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 18 times (4.6%). It branches into 12 directions after Yaḥyā, without specific concentration in narration upon any particular source. It appears that Yaḥyā is the common link for these 12 branches. Ibn Abī Zāʿida was famed for being a competent scholar in different disciplines including fiqh and Ḥadīth. He left written works including al-Sunān fī al-Ḥadīth and al-Shurūṭ wa al-Sūjīlāt.38


This strand recurs 16 times (4.1%). Hushaym is the source of this strand because it starts to split into 12 branches right after him, each pertaining to a master, without emphasis on any one of them. We saw earlier, in our investigation of a number of strands, that if Hushaym is present in a strand, he is usually also the source, just as here he is the source of the present strand. One of Hushaym’s written works is Tafsīr al-Qur’ān.

8.7. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Abū Bakr ‘Ayyāsh al-Kūfī

This strand reappears 15 times (3.8%). After Abū Bakr the strand starts to branch out, into 6 directions, without any extensive narration from any one particular person. So the common link in this strand is Abū Bakr. According to biographical details written concerning him, Abū Bakr was a well-known scholar in Ḥadīth, tafsīr, and many other disciplines. He compiled numerous collections of narrations. Ibn Ḥanbal said, “There exist only authentic narrations in Abū Bakr’s books.”39


This strand recurs 12 times (3.1%). In turn, Yaḥyā narrates from 6 masters, but mainly from Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, from whom he reports 5 times (42%). So the source of this strand is Sufyān, who is always an important source if he appears in

38 Nadim, 1:226; Baghdaḍ, 14:114-119; Ḥadīyyat al-ʿArifīn, 2:513.
39 Siyar, 8:497.
an isnād. It may be noted that Sufyān (97-161/716-778) was the author of a number of books, including a Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān.


This strand recurs 8 times (2.1%). Ibn ‘Atiyya al-‘Awwī himself narrates from 3 masters, but mainly from Sharīk b. ‘Abdullāh al-Nakha‘ī al-Kūfī (AH 95-177), from whom he narrates 5 times (62.5%). In turn, Sharīk reports this amount of isnāds from one master, Khuṣayf b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazarī and then al-Kūfī (d. AH 136). Afterwards the strand branches out into two directions, so that the source is Khuṣayf. Khuṣayf used to teach his students and dictate narrations to them from a written document.

8.10. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yaḥyā b. Ādām al-Kūfī

This strand reappears 8 times (2.1%). In turn, Yaḥyā reports from 6 masters, but without extensive narration from any one of them. It may be noted that Yaḥyā was the author of a book in the field of Qur‘ānic studies, entitled Mujarrad Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān.

8.11. Strand of Abū Kurayb ~ Jābir b Nūḥ al-Ḥimmānī al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 7 times (1.8%). After Jābir the strand branches out into 5 directions. So the common link is Jābir. Jābir was known as a scholar of narration who reported and compiled narrations from ancient scholars such as al-A‘mash, ‘Abd al-Malik b Abī Sulaymān, and ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Umar.

It should be noted that al-Ṭabarī’s eighth most quoted master, Abū Kurayb, reported narrations mostly from the Companions, mainly from Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Alī b.

40 Ibn Sa’d, 7:180; Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa, 319; Kahīr, 3:228; Saghīr, 2:46; Kāmil, 373; Mizān, 1:653-654; Shadharāt, 1:206; Sīyār, 6:145.
41 Jarḥ, 1/2:403.
42 Nadīm, 227; Qurra, 2:364; Ḥadiyyat al-‘Arifīn, 2:514; Mu’jam al-Mufassirūn, 2:725.
43 Jarḥ, 2:500.
Abī Ṭalib, who were both competent in the field of *tafsīr*. In addition, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalib was known for his extensive knowledge in the discipline of *fiqh*. Abū Kurayb also narrated from Followers, such as Mujāhid b. Jābr al-Makkī, Sa‘īd b. Jūbār al-Makkī, and ‘Aṭā‘ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī. It may be noted here, and for the first time, that one of al-Ṭabarī’s most quoted masters, i.e. Abū Kurayb, reported a large number of ḥadiths going back to the Prophet as their source. This underlines the possibility that Abū Kurayb specialized in citing *tafsīrs* that belonged to the generation of the Companions, the Followers, and, most notably, to some extent that of the Prophet. See the following Table and Pie Chart which illustrate this finding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We now came to the end of our discussion regarding these 11 most quoted strands ramifying from Abū Kurayb.

The total number of *isnāds* narrated by Abū Kurayb from these 11 clusters is 285, or 73.6% of all his 388 *isnāds*. The remaining 103 *isnāds* (26.4%) are distributed
among 55 other masters. Abū Kurayb’s frequent reference to these 11 masters seems to indicate that they were the sources on whom he mostly depended in transmitting his narrations. This is consistent with our finding concerning these well-known scholars of *tafsīr* that almost all of them compiled written documents and left many books in the disciplines of *tafsīr, fiqh*, and Ḥadīth. Al-Ṭabarī benefited from all these sources by reporting in his *Tafsīr* from his master Abū Kurayb. It should be noted that Abū Kurayb and almost all of his *isnāds’* narrators came from Kufa. In fact, 10 of Abū Kurayb’s most cited masters, along with their masters, were from Kufa, leaving only one narrator, Hushaym in strand no. 6, who came from Wāṣīt. This finding coincides with the previously cited statement of Abū al-‘Abbās b. ‘Uqda that, in Kufa, Abū Kurayb narrated and compiled more than three hundred thousand *isnāds*. We have noticed in reviewing these strands that one source frequently reappears (via strand no. 9) and elsewhere, via al-Ṭabarī’s third major master, Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī. This source is Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Madanī (the author of the Prophet’s *Sīra*), to whom al-Ṭabarī refers a total of 290 times. It is seen that al-Ṭabarī benefits from Ibn Ishāq via two strands: one from Kufa, as here via Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yahyā b. Bukayr al-Kūfī, and the other from Rayy, via Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamān al-Rāzī. The distinctive characteristic of Abū Kurayb, among all of al-Ṭabarī’s 7 major masters discussed above, is that he reported the large amount of 73 ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet. This may indicate that Abū Kurayb specialized in reporting Prophetic Ḥadīths as well as reports from the Companions, and that when al-Ṭabarī referred to him, he aimed to cite such ancient narrations.

Bishr must be ranked the ninth major master to whom al-Ṭabarī mostly refers in his *Tafsir*. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from this person 346 times (i.e. in 4.1% of the total 8,424 isnāds). "Bishr b. Ma‘ādh al-‘Aqadī" is the way in which al-Ṭabarī states his name in some places of his *Tafsir*, while in many other places he simply gives his first name, i.e. Bishr. Biographers state that Bishr used to teach his students by dictating the narrations to them from a written document. Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, "My father [i.e. Abū Ḥātim] wrote from Bishr many narrations."  

With regard to the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to transmit isnāds from his master Bishr, it appears that in most cases al-Ṭabarī consistently uses the term ḥaddathana. The following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarī almost always employs this term when transmitting isnāds from Bishr. Ḥaddathana is a term used by Ḥadīth scholars to indicate that narrations are reported directly from the master by one who attended the master’s sessions among other students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathana</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanī</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>346</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This may suggest that al-Ṭabarī, among others, wrote down from Bishr 336 isnāds (97.1%). In addition, al-Ṭabarī reports alone from Bishr the remaining 10 isnāds (2.9%). Looking at the generation of Bishr’s masters, we find that he narrates from 6 masters, but mainly from 1, Yazīd b. Zuray’ al-Baṣrī (d. AH 182), 45 from whom he narrates 340 times (98.2%). The remaining 6 isnāds (1.8%), Bishr reports from another 5 masters. According to Ibn Sa’d and Yahyā al-Qaṭṭān, Yazīd was recognized as a trustworthy narrator, who reported numerous ḥadīths.46 In turn,

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44 *Jarḥ*, 2:368.
45 *Tadhkira*, 1:256; *Khulāṣa*, 371; Ibn Sa’d, 7/2:44; *Ibar*, 1:284.
46 *Huffāẓ*, 110.
Yazīd narrates these 340 isnāds from 3 masters, but mainly from Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Aruba al-Baṣrī (70-156/689-773),47 from whom he narrates 338 times (99.4%). According to biographical details written concerning him, Ibn Abī ‘Aruba was a famous scholar who wrote a number of books, among them those entitled al-Tafsīr48 and al-Sunan.49 He is known to have been a pupil and close companion of the Tābi‘ī scholar, Qatāda b. Da‘āma al-Baṣrī (61-118/680-736).50 Sa‘īd narrates all the 338 isnāds from his master Qatāda al-Baṣrī. So the frequency of narrations coincides with the historical information that Sa‘īd was a close colleague of Qatāda and that he narrated from him hundreds of times. The isnād stops at Qatāda where al-Ṭabarī cites Qatāda’s own sayings on Tafsīr. Qatāda was a well-known commentator who left some books including a Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān. Sezgin said, “It seems that this source of Tafsīr written by Qatāda, was very large since al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādī and al-Ṭabarī refer to it very frequently.”51 Our statistical examination is in line with Sezgin’s statement that al-Ṭabarī employs Qatāda’s Tafsīr extensively; at least this is so in the part which is the subject of our study, i.e. al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr on Sūras al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara. We have seen that al-Ṭabarī refers to Qatāda’s Tafsīr 338 times. It is noticeable in reviewing this isnād that all its narrators were from Basra. So it is an isnād which has been established in one area. Qatāda’s Tafsīr was one of the ancient works written on tafsīr during the second half of the first century AH. Al-Ṭabarī refers to this Tafsīr and benefited from it on a large scale.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the fact that most of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds flowing from his major master Bishr b. Ma‘ādh reach back to the generation of the Followers, mainly, as we have seen earlier, to Qatāda al-Baṣrī and occasionally to the Prophet. As for the sayings of the Companions, al-Ṭabarī did not cite any narration via his master Ma‘ādh that belonged to the generation of the Companions.

47 Wāfī, 13:88; Nadīm, 1:227; Tahdhib, 4:63-66; Shadharāt, 1:239; Kabīr, 2/1:504; Mashāhīr, 158; Ibn Sa‘d, 7:273; Sezgin, 1:264.
48 Nadīm, 1:227.
49 Mu‘jam al-Mufassirūn, 1:211.
50 Tahdhib, 4:63; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:403; Shadharāt, 2:35; Sezgin, 1:26; Kabīr, 4/1:177; Jarḥ, 3/2:126; Zunūn, 456.
51 Sezgin, 1:189.
This supports the view that Ma‘ādh specialized in narrating statements attributed to the Followers and, in particular, the *Tafsīr* of Qatāda. See the following Table, which illustrates this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>97.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Al-Ṭabarī’s tenth major master: A missing master

In reviewing the isnāds flowing from this master, we are faced with a situation different to the previous one because on 335 occasions (3.9% of the total 8,424 isnāds), al-Ṭabarī consistently transmits isnāds using a technical term different to those used previously since here he uses ḥuddithtu (it has been narrated to me). According to the Science of Ḥadith, this terminology indicates that the narrator is transmitting isnāds indirectly. In other words, it means that an intermediate person is missing at the beginning of the isnād (i.e. from al-Ṭabarī’s side) and that al-Ṭabarī is in fact narrating from his master’s master and omitting mentioning his immediate master from whom he quoted these isnāds. This kind of transmitting can be explained in either of two ways. Either this missing intermediary is a suspected narrator, whose name is therefore omitted, or these isnāds are gained from a written source but without having obtained permission from its author to narrate to others, so that the narrator (in this case al-Ṭabarī) uses this term ḥuddithtu to show that these isnāds are imperfect and that they reached him indirectly. It may be presumed that on these 335 occasions, al-Ṭabarī is citing a written source which he obtained but without having obtained its author’s permission to narrate to others.52 When investigating the masters of this missing master of al-Ṭabarī, we discover that they amounted to 22, but al-Ṭabarī mainly and extensively cites from only 3 of them, viz: 1- ‘Ammār b. al-Ḥasan, from whom he narrates 228 times (68.1% of the total 335 isnāds); 2- al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj al-Baghdādi,53 from whom he narrates 46 times (13.7%); and 3- al-Minjāb b. Al-Ḥārith al-Tamīmi,54 from whom he narrates 36 times (10.7%). The number of isnāds al-Ṭabarī cites from these 3 narrators total 310 (92.5% of the total 335 isnāds). The remaining 25 isnāds (7.5%), al-Ṭabarī distributes among another 19 narrators. See the following Table.

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52 See Chapter V on al-Ṭabarī’s technical terms of transmission.
53 Jarh, 3:62.
54 Ibid., 8:443.
Al-Ṭabarî’s masters from whom he narrates indirectly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Ammār</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥusayn</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Minjāb</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (22)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of these 3 most quoted narrators reveals the following strands.

10.1. Strand of a man ~ ‘Ammār b. al-Ḥasan

This strand recurs 228 times (68.1%). It has proved impossible to discover any adequate information about ‘Ammār despite thorough searching in books of biography. In turn, ‘Ammār narrates from one master, ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Ja’far al-Rāzī. Ibn Abī Ja’far himself narrates these 228 isnāds from his father Abū Ja’far al-Rāzī. Finally, Abū Ja’far narrates from 13 masters, but mainly from al-Rabī’ b. Anas al-Baṣrī (AH 90-160), from whom he narrates 197 times (86.5%). The remaining 31 isnāds (13.5%), Abū Ja’far narrates from another 12 masters. This indicates that the main purpose of this strand was to consult the Tafsīr of al-Rabī’ b. Anas, the well-

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55 Such as Tahdhib, Jarḥ, Ibn Sa’d, and Huffāẓ.
known commentator on the Qurʾān and the author of a *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*. It may be noticed that al-Ṭabarī refers to this *Tafsīr* elsewhere by perfect and permitted *isnāds* through his second major master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, via strands nos. 1 and 5. Al-Ṭabarī cites al-Rabiʿ’s *Tafsīr* 147 times via strand no. 1 and 79 times via strand no. 5. This is evidently further support for the hypothesis that by employing different *isnāds*, al-Ṭabarī in fact intended to benefit from certain sources in *tafsīr* which reached him through diverse branches of *isnāds*. It may be suggested that large sections of this *Tafsīr* were employed by al-Ṭabarī in his own *Tafsīr Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*. Thus, the number of references to al-Rabiʿ’s *Tafsīr* made in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* via his master al-Muthannā total 226, whereas, here, via the strand of a man ~ ‘Ammār, he refers to it 197 times. So the total number of quotations taken by al-Ṭabarī from this *Tafsīr* amount to 423. These frequent and extensive citations may suggest that al-Ṭabarī obtained some sections of this *Tafsīr*, with permission and some without. Al-Rabiʿ’s *Tafsīr* is one of the earliest sources on *tafsīr* since al-Rabiʿ lived before 139/759.

10.2. Strand of a man ~ al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj al-Baghdādī (d. AH 252)57

This strand reappears 46 times (13.7%). In turn, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj narrates this same number of narrations from 1 master, Abū Maʿādh al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Naḥwī al-Marwāzī (d. 211/826). Abū Maʿādh similarly narrates from 1 master, ‘Ubayd b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī,59 who in turn narrates from 1 master, al-Ḍahhāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d. 105/723), the well-known scholar of *tafsīr*. The *isnād* stops at al-Ḍahhāk, where al-Ṭabarī cites al-Ḍahhāk’s own sayings on *tafsīr*. Thus, this *isnād* runs from beginning to end via one narrator in each generation, going back to a source on *tafsīr* by al-Ḍahhāk60 written during the second half of the first century.

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59 *Jarḥ*, 5:408.
60 His book on *tafsīr* is entitled *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*. See *Sezgin*, 1:186; *Muʿjam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:237; Kahhāla, 5:27.
AH. This is not the first time al-Ṭabarī refers to al-Ḍahḥāk’s *Tafsīr*, since he does refer to it a number of times via other strands. This *Tafsīr* is considered as one of the ancient written sources on *tafsīr*.

10.3. Strand of a man ~ al-Minjāb b. al-Ḥārith

This strand recurs 36 times (10.7%). Al-Minjāb narrates from 2 masters, but mainly from 1, Bishr b. ‘Imāra al-Khatḥ’amī,61 from whom he narrates 35 times (97.2%). In turn, Ibn ‘Imāra narrates this same number of narrations from 1 master, Abū Rawq. Abū Rawq similarly narrates from 1 master, al-Ḍahḥāk al-Khurasānī. The *isnād* stops twice at al-Ḍahḥāk, from whom al-Ṭabarī quotes 2 sayings on *tafsīr*, and the remaining 32 times al-Ḍahḥāk continues to narrate from his master ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās. Although, like the previous strand, this goes back to al-Ḍahḥāk, the aim here is to consult Ibn ‘Abbās’s *Tafsīr*, whereas the purpose of the previous strand was to refer to al-Ḍahḥāk’s own sayings on *tafsīr*. It is clear that the source (common link) in both strands is al-Ḍahḥāk. Many historians affirm that al-Ḍahḥāk wrote a book on *tafsīr*, which may have reached al-Ṭabarī but in sections via different *isnāds*. Some parts contain the *tafsīr* of al-Ḍahḥāk himself, while some others contain what al-Ḍahḥāk narrated from his master Ibn ‘Abbās.

Summary

We have seen in our discussion that 335 times al-Ṭabarī cites *isnāds* indirectly, as is evident from his use of the term *ḥuddithtu*, which indicates that he is quoting imperfect *isnāds*. This in fact reflects al-Ṭabarī’s honestly in the manner of citing his *isnāds*. This leads us to the probable conclusion that al-Ṭabarī was referring to written sources which had been handed to him but without his having obtained their authors’ permission. On 310 occasions (i.e. in 92.6% of the total 335 *isnāds*), al-Ṭabarī quotes from three main strands, which go back to three portions of *Tafsīrs* written by two famous *Tabi‘ūn scholars* of *tafsīr*, al-Rabi’ b. Anas al-Baṣrī and al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī. It is noticeable that elsewhere via other strands in

his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī refers to these scholars hundreds of times by perfect and permitted isnāds. What implication can be drawn is that these sources of tafsīr reached al-Ṭabarī in sections, some of which he obtained by permitted isnāds while some others were handed to him in the form of books without his having obtained their authors’ licenses. It is also noticeable that parts of these sections go back to the authors themselves, such as strands nos. 1 and 2, where the isnāds stop respectively at al-Rabī’ and al-Ḍaḥḥāk, both of whom were authors of books on tafsīr. Some other parts, via another isnād, go back even earlier to the generation of the Companions, as is the case with the third strand, where al-Ḍaḥḥāk goes further back to narrate from Ibn ‘Abbās. It is evident that in narrating these numerous isnāds, al-Ṭabarī is not just gathering haphazard isnāds but is employing different sorts of isnād in an attempt to consult specific sources on tafsīr which were produced in early times by well-known scholars, i.e. those of the first and second centuries AH.
SECTION FOUR

Masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates less than 300 times. These are the remaining 11 most quoted masters.

11. Eleventh major master: Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī (166-252/782-866)¹

Yaʿqūb must be considered the eleventh major master to whom al-Ṭabarī refers in his Tafsīr on account of the frequency with which he narrates from this master. He narrates from him 295 isnāds (3.5% of the total number of 8,424 isnāds).

Yaʿqūb, who came from Baghdad, was a devoted scholar of Tafsīr and Ḥadīth. He traveled to many places for the purpose of seeking knowledge and gathering traditions. He compiled written documents and the six authentic and well-known Ḥadīth scholars² narrated from him. Al-Dāwūdī affirmed that among the books compiled by Yaʿqūb was one on Tafsīr.³

Thus we may safely conclude that the reason for al-Ṭabarī’s frequent reference to his master, Yaʿqūb, was that Yaʿqūb was in fact an important source in tafsīr since he compiled numerous narrations from earlier scholars. Al-Ṭabarī greatly benefited from in compiling his Jāmiʿ al-Bayān.

When considering the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate isnāds from his master Yaʿqūb, we find that in more than 90% of instances al-Ṭabarī uses the term ḥaddathani, whereas in less than 10% of instances he uses the term ḥaddathanā (see the following Table illustrating this finding).

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² Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah.
³ Al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:377.
According to Hadith scholars, this term *haddathani* indicates that the narrator alone heard the narrations from his master. It may also indicate that he narrated from his master via a written work which, in our case, may possibly be the *Tafsīr* of Yaʿqūb.

In considering the masters from whom Yaʿqūb himself narrated, we find that he narrates from 12 masters, but mostly from the two following:

11.1. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrahim b. Miqsam al- Başrī⁴ and then al-Baghdādī (110-193/728-809)

Ismāʿīl is known as Ibn ʿUlayya. Yaʿqūb narrates from him 155 isnāds (52.5% of 295 isnāds). This means that Yaʿqūb narrates nearly more than half of his total isnāds from his master, Ibn ʿUlayya. Ibn ʿUlayya, who was known as a commentator on the Qurʾān, was originally from Basra, was brought up in Kufa, and then moved to Baghdad where Yaʿqūb met him. Many historians affirm that Ibn ʿUlayya compiled a book of *tafsīr*, simply entitled *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*.⁵ Therefore, Ibn ʿUlayya was an important source for Yaʿqūb b. Ibrahim, al-Ṭabarī’s master.


From whom Yaʿqūb narrates 122 isnāds (41.3% out of 295) from Hushaym, who was known to be a scholar of *tafsīr* and *fiqh*. He resided in Baghdad where he taught Ḥadīth. Yaʿqūb al-Dawraqī said about his master, Hushaym, “He used to learn by heart twenty thousand ḥadīths. Among the books he compiled was *Tafsīr al-

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⁵ *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirin*, 1: 87.
Hushaym was also another important source for Ya'qūb, taking into account that he was a famous scholar who compiled a number of books.

Al-Ṭabarī did not restrict himself to citing Hushaym through his master, Ya'qūb, but also cited him many times via other masters. So, for example, he refers to him 19 times via his second major master, al-Muthannā. He also refers to him 24 times via his fourth major master, al-Qāsim.8

It is noticeable that whenever Hushaym is mentioned in the isnād, he is in most cases the common link for clusters of isnāds. Thus it seems that Hushaym was an essential source upon whom al-Ṭabarī depended in transmitting many isnāds. It is to be noted that both Ya'qūb al-Dawraql and his two main masters, Ibn 'Ulayya and Hushaym, resided in Baghdad and took it as their home. For this reason, it seems quite possible that they actually met each other while living in the same place. See the following Table and Pie Chart, which illustrate the frequency of narrations cited by Ya'qūb from these two most quoted masters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn 'Ulayya</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hushaym</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(10)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is to be noted that both Ya'qūb al-Dawraql and his two main masters, Ibn 'Ulayya and Hushaym, resided in Baghdad and took it as their home. For this reason, it seems quite possible that they actually met each other while living in the same place. See the following Table and Pie Chart, which illustrate the frequency of narrations cited by Ya'qūb from these two most quoted masters.

6 Ibid, 2: 712.
7 See strand no. 7.
8 See strand no. 2.
Ya'qūb's two most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hushaym</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn 'Ulayya</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ya'qūb narrates from these 2 masters a total of 272 isnāds (94% of the total 295 isnāds). The remaining 18 isnāds (6.1%), Ya'qūb narrates from his other 8 masters.

It is noticeable that there is a parallel finding between the results illustrated in this Table and those in the preceding Table in that the latter Table shows that Ya'qūb quoted more than 90% of times from 2 masters, while the former Table indicates that 1 technical term indicating transmission (ḥaddathani) was used by al-Ṭabarī more than 90% of the times when he narrated from his master Ya'qūb. This coincidence may be explained by the probability that al-Ṭabarī is in fact narrating from these 2 most cited narrators, i.e. Ibn 'Ulayya and Hushaym, via his master Ya'qūb. This may suggest that al-Ṭabarī is actually referring to written documents, which may possibly be their written Tafsīrs previously mentioned. This is in addition to the fact that using the term ḥaddathani could mean that the narrator is referring to a written book which he obtained by permission. Thus, we may safely conclude that oral and written transmissions were in circulation during that time, i.e. at the beginning of the second century AH.

When we look at the generation of the masters of both Ibn 'Ulayya and Hushaym, we find that they narrated from many different masters.
First: we find that Ibn 'Ulayya narrates the 155 isnāds via 32 masters. However, he narrates 90 of the isnāds (58.1%) from only 6 masters, viz: 1- Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī al-Baṣrī (AH 68-131), from whom Ibn 'Ulayya narrates 36 times (23.2%); 2- Ibn Jurayj al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 12 times (7.7%); 3- Sa'īd b Abī 'Aruba al-Baṣrī (d. AH 156), from whom he narrates 12 times (7.7%); 4- Layth b. Abī Sulaym al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 10 times (6.5%); 5- Dāwūd b. Abī Hind al-Baṣrī (d. 139/756), from whom he narrates 10 times (6.5%); and 6- Yūnus b. 'Ubayd al-Kūfī (d. AH 140), from whom he narrates 10 times (6.5%). The remaining 65 isnāds (41.9%), Ibn 'Ulayya narrates from another 26 masters. See the following Pie Chart, which illustrates this finding.

Ibn 'Ulayya's most quoted masters

- Ayyūb: 23.2%
- Ibn Jurayj: 7.7%
- Ibn Abī 'Aruba: 7.7%
- Layth: 6.5%
- Ibn Abī Hind: 6.5%
- Yūnus b. 'Ubayd: 6.5%
- Other: 41.9%

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9 Tadhkira, 1: 130; Tahdhib, 1: 297; Khulāṣa, 26; Shadharāt, 1: 181; Ibn Sa'd, 14: 712; 'Ibar, 1: 172; Huffāz, 52.

10 Tadhkira, 1: 177; Tahdhib, 4: 63; Khulāṣa, 120; Shadharāt, 1: 139; Ibn Sa'd, 22: 712; 'Ibar 1: 225; Huffāz, 78.

11 Jarḥ, 7: 177.

12 Tadhkira, 1: 146; Khulāṣa, 94; 'Ibar, 1: 189; al-Dāwūdī, Tābāqāt, 1: 169; Shadharāt, 1: 208; al-Nujūm al-Zāhirā, 1: 342; Kabīr, 12: 231.

When we look at the generations of these 6 masters most quoted by Ibn 'Ulayya, we find that the *isnāds* after them are scattered through many branches on a large scale. However, we do find one *isnād* which recurs many times, to such an extent that it does not fail to attract our attention; that is the *isnād* of Sa'īd b. Abī 'Aruba, who narrates all his 10 *isnāds* from one master, Qatāda al-Baṣrī. On a number of previous occasions we have discovered that al-Ṭabarī greatly benefited from Qatāda’s *Tafsīr*, not only as transmitted via his master Ya‘qūb al-Dawraqī, as is mentioned here, but also via other masters whom we have discussed earlier. We know that Qatāda left a written document on the *Tafsīr* of the Qur’ān, which must be considered one of the most ancient *Tafsīrs* in view of the fact that Qatāda died in 118/736.

Second: Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī narrates 122 *isnāds* from 37 masters, but mostly from 5 of them, as follows: 1- al-Mughīra b. Miqsam al-Kūfī (133/750), from whom he narrates 19 times (15.6%); 2- Abū Bishr Ja’far b. Īyās al-Wāsiṭī, from whom he narrates 13 times (11.5%); 3- ‘Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 14 times (10.7%); 4- Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Kūfī (d. 136 AH), from whom he narrates 10 times (8.2%); and 5- al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭā’a al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 10 times (8.2%). The total number of the *isnāds* which Hushaym narrates from these 5 most cited masters is 66 *isnāds* (54.1% of the total 122 *isnāds*). He narrates the remaining 56 *isnāds* (45.9%) from another 32 masters. See the following Pie Chart.

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14 *Wāfi*, 26: 43; *Nadīm*, 1: 226; *Khulāṣa*, 12: 313. One of al-Mughīra’s books is his *Kitāb al-Farā‘īd*.  
15 *Jarḥ*, 2: 473.  
16 *Jarḥ*, 2: 366.  
18 *Jarḥ*, 3: 154.
Hushaym's most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-Mughīra b. Miqsam</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū Bishr</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Malik</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ḥajjāj b. Artaḍ</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other 45.9%

This clearly indicates that more than half of his isnāds, Hushaym narrates from only 5 out of 37 masters. It is noticeable that 4 of these 5 masters were from Kufa and only 1 came from Wāsiṭ. This may suggests that Hushaym traveled to Kufa to seek knowledge from scholars there.

When we look at the generation of the masters of these 5 most quoted narrators, we find that the isnāds after them are quite divergent. Therefore, we can safely say that these 5 are in fact the main sources upon whom Hushaym depended in transmitting his narrations. It is quite possible that he recorded these narrations in his book, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān. Thereafter came Yaʾqūb (al-Ṭabarī’s master), who benefited from what his two masters, Ibn ʿUlayya and Hushaym, had gathered. He then documented all this information and recorded it in his Tafsīr, upon which al-Ṭabarī depended and which he cites on numerous occasions in his own Tafsīr. At this point we may underline the fact that al-Ṭabarī’s transmission from his master, Yaʾqūb, and Yaʾqūb’s transmission from his two masters, Ibn ʿUlayya and Hushaym, were both supported by written documents as well as oral recording, as we have seen earlier.

This is in addition to the fact that al-Ṭabarī followed the rules set down by the scholars of Ḥadīth on the transmission of narrations. These rules state that the student (the successor) has to gain knowledge from his master (the predecessor) through permission or license.
Finally, I would like to emphasize that the isnāds stemming from Ya’qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī generally pass through one generation of the Followers, mainly ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki and al-Ḥasan al-Ḥasrī. These scholars are well known for their competence in tafsīr. The following Table and Pie-Chart illustrate the fact that 64.7% of Ya’qūb’s isnāds are correlated with Followers (Tābi’ūn), 24.4% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and 10.8% are ascribed to the Prophet (Ḥadīth traditions). This strengthens the likelihood that Ya’qūb specialized in quoting the narrations reported by the Followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet
10.8%
Companions
24.4%
Followers
64.7%
12. Twelfth major master: Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Al-‘Abbās al-Bāhili al-Baghdādi (d. AH 249)¹⁹

Muḥammad b. ‘Amr must be considered the twelfth major master to whom al-Ṭabarī frequently refers. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* 260 times (i.e. in 3.1% of the total 8,424 isnāds).

It is noticeable that in most cases (i.e. in more than 90%), al-Ṭabarī consistently uses just one technical term whenever he transmits isnāds from his master Muḥammad b. ‘Amr. The following statistical Table shows that al-Ṭabarī almost always uses the term *haddathanī* when transmitting isnāds from Muḥammad b. ‘Amr. *Haddathanī* is a term used by Hadīth scholars to indicate that the narrator alone attended the narration of this piece of information from his master. It may also mean that the narrator is quoting from a book which he obtained by permission from his master.²⁰ We will see later that more than 90% of his isnāds were via his master Muḥammad b. ‘Amr. Al-Ṭabarī is in fact consulting the *Tafsīr* written by Mujāhid. This may support the hypothesis that al-Ṭabarī is in fact referring to a written work (i.e. Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr*) when transmitting isnāds from his master Muḥammad b. ‘Amr al-Bāhili.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Haddathanī</em></td>
<td>239</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Haddathanā</em></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Muḥammad himself narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from 1 alone, i.e. al-Dāḥḥāk b. Makhla al-Makkī (122-212/740-828).²¹ See the following Table and Pie Chart.

¹⁹ *Baghdād*, 9:112.

²⁰ See Chapter V on al-Ṭabarī’s Style of transmission in narrating isnāds from his masters.

Muḥammad b. ‘Amr’s most quoted master

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Makhlad</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(4)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In turn, Ibn Makhlad narrates from 7 masters but most consistently from one master, ‘Īsā b. Maymūn al-Makkī (d. 130/748),22 from whom Ibn Makhlad narrates 246 times (96%). The remaining 10 isnāds he narrates are dispersed among another 6 masters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Īsā b. Maymūn</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(6)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Ibn Makhlad's most quoted master

Other
3.9%

Ṭsā b. Maymūn
96.1%

When we look at the masters of Ṭsā b. Maymūn, we find that he narrates from 4 masters but mostly from just 1, ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīh al-Makkī (d. AH 131), from whom he narrates 242 isnāds (98.3%), while the remaining 4 isnāds he narrates from another 3 masters. The isnād stops 8 times at Ibn Abī Najīh, when al-Ṭabarî narrates Ibn Abī Najīh’s own opinions on tafsīr. Ibn Abī Najīh, for his part, narrates 234 isnāds from 6 Tābi‘īn masters, but mostly from Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (21-104/642-722), from whom he narrates 224 isnāds, while the remaining 10 isnāds he narrates from another 5 masters.

The isnād stops at Mujāhid 224 times, when al-Ṭabarî narrates the Tafsīr of Mujāhid itself. Many historians assert that Ibn Abī Najīh was one of the most distinguished students of Mujāhid and that from him he heard the Tafsīr of the Qur’ān.23 Thus, we may safely conclude that what al-Ṭabarî intended by narrating from his master, Muḥammad b. ‘Amr, was primarily to cite Mujāhid’s Tafsīr through the isnād of Muḥammad b. ‘Amr ~ al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad al-Makkī ~ Ṭsā b. Maymūn al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīh al-Makkī ~ Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī.

Isnāds stemming from al-Ṭabarî’s master Muḥammad b. ‘Amr frequently reach the generation of the Followers, mainly, as we have seen above, via the most

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23 Siyar, 6: 126.
frequently cited *isnād* link, Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī. The following Table and Pie Chart illustrate that 95% of Muḥammad b. ‘Amr’s *isnāds* are attributed to Followers, 4.6% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, and only 1 *isnād* (0.4%) is ascribed to the Prophet (Ḥadīth tradition).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* is considered to be one of the most important and ancient *Tafsīrs*, with its history stretching back to the end of the first century AH. Biographers assert that Mujāhid left a written *Tafsīr* upon which scholars such as al-Shāfi‘ī, and al-Bukhārī depended. Al-Bukhārī included many quotations from Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* in his book, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Ṭabarī also depended upon it through the *isnād* we have just mentioned. It is noticeable that all the narrators mentioned in this *isnād* were from Mecca except for al-Ṭabarī’s master, Muḥammad b. ‘Amr, who came from Baghdad.
It is also noted that al-Ṭabarî narrates Mujāhid’s *Tafsîr* not only via his master, Muḥammad b. ‘Amr, but also via other isnāds, some of which we have previously talked about. These isnāds will be statistically analysed and studied at the end of this chapter. (See Chapter VII on Discussion).

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā must be considered the thirteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī principally narrates ḥadīths in his Taṣfīr. He narrates from him 210 isnāds (2.5% of the total 8,424). Ibn al-Muthannā was a well-known scholar of Ḥadīth. Al-Khaṭīb wrote of him, “He was a trustworthy, pious, prudent, and reliable scholar, whose Ḥadīth is taken as firm evidence by all Ḥadīth scholars.” Al-Khaṭīb al-Bağdādī, Ibn al-‘Imād al-Ḥanbālī, and al-Dhahābī asserted that Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā was one of al-Ṭabarī’s major masters.

It is to be noted that al-Ṭabarī almost always uses the same technical term whenever he transmits isnāds from his master Ibn al-Muthannā. The following Table shows how in more than 90% of instances he uses the term ḥaddathana when transmitting isnāds from his master Ibn al-Muthannā. Ḥaddathana is a term used by Ḥadīth scholars to indicate that the information they narrate comes by direct hearing, in the company of other disciples, from the master via a written document. The conclusion to be drawn here is that al-Ṭabarī may have traveled to Basra in order to hear from Ibn al-Muthannā in the company of others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathana</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathani</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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25 Baghdād, 2: 162.

26 Kahhāla, 11:172.

27 Yāqūt, Mu‘jam, 18:50.

28 Shadharāt, 2:126.

29 Tadhkira, 2:512.

30 According to his biographical details (see Chapter 1), we know that al-Ṭabarī did travel to Basra and to many others places in search of knowledge.
We find that there were 32 masters from whom Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā narrates 210 isnāds, and out of these al-Ṭabarī chose to cite Ibn al-Muthannā’s narrations from only 5 masters. They were those from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates repeatedly and more extensively than others. They were:

1- Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Baṣrī (d. AH 193),31 from whom he narrates 82 times (39%); 2- ‘Abd al-Wahhab b. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Baṣrī (d. AH 194),32 from whom he narrates 22 times (10%); 3- Muḥammad b. Abī ‘Adī al-Baṣrī (d. AH 194),33 from whom he narrates 20 times (9.5%); 4- ‘Abd al-Aʿlā b. ‘Abd al-Aʿlā al-Baṣrī (d. AH 189),34 from whom he narrates 15 times (7.1%); 5- Wahb b. Jarīr al-Baṣrī (d. AH 206), from whom he narrates 10 times (4.8%); 6- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 9 times (4.3%); and 7- Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, from whom he narrates 9 times (4.3%).

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā narrates a total of 167 isnāds (79.5% of the total 210 isnāds) from these 7 masters, whereas he narrates the remaining 43 isnāds (20.5%) from another 25 masters. See the following Table.

### Ibn al-Muthannā’s most quoted masters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Jaʿfar</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Wahhab</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī ‘Adī</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Aʿlā</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahb b. Jarīr</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Dāwud</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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31 Tadhkira, 1: 305; Tahdhib, 9: 96; Khulāṣa, 181; Shadharāt, 1: 333; Ibn Saʿd, 7/2: 49; ‘Ibar, 1: 311; Mīzān, 3: 502.
32 Tadhkira, 1: 321; Khulāṣa, 210; Shadharāt, 1: 340; ‘Ibar, 1: 314; Huffāz, 133.
It is to be noted that Muhammad b. al-Muthanna and 6 of his masters were all men of Basra, leaving only Abū Dāwūd, who came from Hamdān. This, however, may suggest that, far from inventing ḥadīths, Ibn al-Muthanna transmitted only well-authenticated ḥadīths, in fact mostly the narrations of scholars of his own town. Furthermore, we will shortly see that all these 7 masters, including Abū Dāwūd, narrated only from Basran scholars.

We can now move on to look at the masters from whom these 7 masters narrated via the following strands:


This isnād recurs 82 times (39%). According to his biographical details, it appears that Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar compiled a number of books in which he gathered many narrations, especially those he took from his master, Shuʿba al-Baṣrī. Ibn Mahdī said, “We used to benefit from what Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar had gathered from the
narrations of Shu’ba.”\(^{35}\) Ibn al-Mubārak said, “Whenever people differ with regard to the narrations of Shu’ba, then Muḥammad b. Ja’far’s book stands as a judge among them.”\(^{36}\)

From this statement it seems quite clear that Ibn Ja’far wrote what he narrated from his master, Shu’ba. Therefore, when we look at the masters of Muḥammad b. Ja’far, we find that he narrates from 3 masters, but mostly and most extensively from his master, Shu’ba b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī (82-160/701-777), from whom he narrates 71 times (97%), whereas he narrates the remaining 3 isnāds (3%) from another 2 masters. Shu’ba was known to be an eminent scholar of Ḥadīth and tafsīr. He compiled a book on tafsīr under the title *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*.\(^{37}\)

When we look at the generation of Shu’ba’s masters, we find that he narrates from 30 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. The isnād then stops at him and he becomes a common link and a main source for a cluster of isnāds.  

Al-Ṭabarî benefited from his narrations. We noted earlier that Shu’ba left a compilation on tafsīr. This was written down by his student, Muḥammad b. Ja’far. It is to be noted that all the narrators in this isnād were from Basra.

13.2. The strand of Ibn al Muthanna al-Baṣrī ~ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Baṣrī

This isnād recurs 22 times. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb used to record and compile into books what he had heard from his masters. Thus, his biographer, al-Fasawī, said, “The book compiled by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb is one of the most sound and valuable books,”\(^{38}\) and Ibn Mahdī said, “‘Abd al-Wahhāb used to narrate traditions from a book.”\(^{39}\)

When we look at the generation of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s masters, we find that although he narrates from 4 masters, he narrates mostly from Dāwūd b. Abī Hind al-

\(^{35}\) *Huffāz*, 126.

\(^{36}\) *Ibid*.


\(^{38}\) *Baghdād*, 11: 19.

\(^{39}\) *Al-Ma’rifa wa-al-Tārikh*, 1: 650.
Basri (d. 139-756), in fact 12 times (54%). In other words, more than half of 'Abd al-Wahhāb’s narrations were via Dāwūd. In turn, Dāwūd narrates from 7 different sources without concentrating on any particular one. Therefore, we can safely consider Dāwūd b. Abī Hind as a main source here. According to a biographical notice concerning him, Dāwūd was a well-known scholar of tafsīr and Ḥadīth, to whom al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and other famous scholars of Ḥadīth referred. He compiled a book on tafsīr under the title Tafsīr al-Qurʾān.40

The same remark we made about the previous isnād applies here as well, i.e. all the masters mentioned here are from Basra.


This isnād reappears 20 times (9.5%). Ibn Abī ‘Adī narrates from 5 masters, but most of all from the following two: Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 9 times (45%) and Dāwūd b. Abī Hind al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 5 times (25%). The proportion of isnāds narrated by Ibn Abī ‘Adī from these two masters is thus 70%, while the remaining 30%, or 6 isnāds, Ibn Abī ‘Adī narrates from another 3 masters. When we consider the masters of Shu‘ba and Dāwūd, we find that they do not narrate extensively from any particular master; in other words, the isnād stops at them in both strands 1 and 2. In this case, they are the two common links in narration for clusters of isnāds.


This isnād recurs 15 times (7.1%). ‘Abd al-A‘lā narrates from 3 masters, but mostly from Dāwūd b. Abī Hind, from whom he narrates 9 times (60%), while the remaining 6 isnāds he narrates from 2 other masters. Dāwūd in turn narrates from 5 masters without extensive narration from any one of them, so the isnād stops at him.

40 Al-Dawūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1: 169.

This isnād recurs 15 times (7.1%). This same amount of isnāds, Wahb b. Jarīr narrates from 1 master, Shu’ba b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī. Shu’ba himself narrates from 8 masters equally. Therefore, the isnād stops at him.

13.6. The strand of al-Muthannā ~ Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī al-Hamdānī

This isnād recurs 9 times (4.3%). In turn, Abū Dāwūd narrates from 6 masters, but largely from Shu’ba b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī alone, from whom he narrates 4 times (44.4%). Shu’ba himself narrates from 5 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. So the isnād stops at Shu’ba as the source upon whom al-Ṭabarī relies.


This isnād is repeated 9 times (4.3%). Ibn Mahdī himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from Shu’ba al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 6 times (66.7%). In turn, Shu’ba narrates from 5 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. The source which al-Ṭabarī intends to refer to is in fact Shu’ba.

From our study of the 7 strands originating from al-Ṭabarī’s master, Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā, we find that these strands lead only to the two famous scholars, Shu’ba al-Baṣrī and Dāwūd b. Abī Hind al-Baṣrī. Shu’ba reappears in strands 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 at the rate of 100 times, and Dāwūd reappears in strands 2, 3, and 4 at the rate of 26 times. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of isnāds centre upon these two scholars, Shu’ba and Dāwūd, and, as we have seen, each one of them was considered as a scholar who had compiled a book on tafsīr. Evidently they are the two sources al-Ṭabarī intends to benefit from via his master, Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā.

Finally, it is to be noted that 6 of the narrators we have just discussed, who formed part of the recurring isnāds previously mentioned, were connected with the city of Basra. This indicates that al-Ṭabarī, through his narration from his master, Muḥammad, b. al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī, intends to consult and benefit from what had
been narrated by the scholars of Basra and particularly from the two Basran scholars Shu'ba and Dāwud b. Abī Hind.

Most strands flowing from Ibn al-Muthanna generally pass through two generations of the Followers, i.e. mainly via al-Ḥakam b. Abān al-Baṣrī, Shurayḥ al-Qādī, and ‘Amīr al-Sha'bi. The following Table illustrates the fact that more than 48% of Ibn al-Muthanna’s isnāds are attributed to the generation of the Followers; 40% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar; and nearly 12% are ascribed to the Prophet (i.e. Ḥadīth traditions).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>88.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet 11.9%

Followers 48.1%

Companions 40.0%
14. Fourteenth major master: Aḥmad b. Iṣḥāq al-Ahwāzī (d. AH 250)\textsuperscript{41}

Aḥmad b. Iṣḥāq must be considered the fourteenth most important master from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates, on the basis of the 181 isnāds (2.6% of the total 8,424 isnāds) containing his name in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr.

In considering the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate from his master Aḥmad, we notice that on most occasions (91.2%) al-Ṭabarī employs the term ḥaddathānā. Ḥaddathānā is a transmission term used to indicate that the narrations cited come by samaṭ (hearing directly from the master while attending his sessions among other pupils). On only 8.8% of occasions did al-Ṭabarī use the term ḥaddathanī.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathānā</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanī</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In turn, Aḥmad narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from the 1 master, Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī, i.e. Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullāh al-Kūfī (d. AH 203),\textsuperscript{42} from whom Aḥmad narrates 176 times (97.2%).

It appears that Abū Aḥmad obtained the book compiled by his master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī. Abū Aḥmad himself said, “It makes no difference to me if Sufyān’s book were to be stolen from me because I have learnt it by heart.”\textsuperscript{43} Ibn Numayr said, “Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī is a trustworthy scholar with a sound book.”\textsuperscript{44} It is clear that Abū Aḥmad compiled a book, either by learning the same book from his master Sufyān as seems to be indicated by the former of the above statements, or

\textsuperscript{41} Tahdīlīb, 1:14.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibn Maʿīn, Tārīkh, 253; Ibn Saʿd, 6: 402; Ṭabaqāt Khālīfah, 1334; Kahīr, 1: 133; Sāghīr, 2: 298; Jarīḥ, 7: 297; Mīzān, 3: 595; Tadhkīra, 1: 357; Kāshīf, 3: 60; Wāfi, 3: 303; Tahdīlīb, 9: 254.
\textsuperscript{43} Sīyar, 9: 530.
\textsuperscript{44} Kamāl, 1218.
by himself compiling a book, or by making a copy of Sufyān’s book as may be indicated by the latter statement.

Although Abū Āhmad narrates from 33 masters, we discover that he mostly narrates from the following 4: 1- Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 56 times (31.8%); 2- Isrā’īl b. Yūnus al-Kūfī (d. AH 162), from whom he narrates 31 times (17.6%); 3- Sharīk b. ‘Abd al-A’lā al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 24 times (13.6%); and 4- Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī, from whom he narrates 15 times (5.6%). The total number of isnāds narrated by Abū Āhmad from these 4 masters is 121 (69%), whereas the remaining 55 isnāds (31%) he narrates from another 29 masters. The following Pie Chart illustrates this situation.

**Abū Ahmad’s most quoted masters**

- Sufyān al-Thawrī: 31.8%
- Isrā’īl: 17.6%
- Hushaym: 5.7%
- Sharīk: 13.6%
- Other: 31.3%

When we look at the generation of masters of these 4 most quoted narrators, we find that the isnāds ramify into many branches, so that we do not find that the isnāds cluster around any particular name that would attract attention. For this reason, our statistical analysis stops at these 4, who constitute the sources from whom Abū Āhmad al-Zubayrī took knowledge.

In our previous study of these 4 masters, with the exception of Isrā’īl b. Yunus, we noticed that they were famous for teaching and transmitting narrations, and

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45 Tadhkira, 1: 214; Tahdhīb, 1: 261; Ibn Sa’d, 6: 260; Lubāb, 1: 531; Mīzān, 1: 208; Ḥuffāz, 90.
each of them compiled a book from which he taught his students. As for Isrä‘îl b. Yûnus, he also used to teach his students from a book and they wrote down what he taught them, as was reported by Ibn Ma‘în.46 Thus, we can state that these 4 masters were the sources upon whom Abû Aḥmad al-Zubayrî depended for the narrations which he gathered and recorded. As we have previously stated, he had in his possession the book compiled by his master Sufyân al-Thawrî himself.

It seems quite possible that the source upon which al-Ṭabarî depended most in narrating the isnâds via his master Aḥmad b. Ishaq, may well have been the narrations gathered and compiled by Abû Aḥmad al-Zubayrî from his 4 most quoted masters mentioned above.

It is quite possible that al-Ṭabarî benefited from the document of Sufyân, which was in existence up to the time of his master’s master, Abû Aḥmad, or at least that he benefited from what Abû Aḥmad al-Zubayrî had compiled and copied from his master Sufyân.

It becomes clear that Abû Aḥmad al-Zubayrî and three of his masters, Sufyân al-Thawrî, Isrä‘îl, and Sharîk, were all from one town, i.e. Kufa, except for Hushaym, who was from Wâṣît, notwithstanding also in Iraq.

Finally, we should note that the isnâds stemming from al-Ṭabarî’s major master, Aḥmad b. Ishaq, generally reach to the generation of the Followers, mainly to Sa‘îd b. Jubayr al-Makkî and Mujâhid al-Makkî. The following Table illustrates the fact that 68.5% of Aḥmad b. Ishaq’s isnâds go back to Followers; 28.7% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalîb, and only 2.8% are ascribed to the Prophet. This points to the likelihood of Ibn Ishaq’s preference for quoting the narrations of the Followers.

46 Siyâr, 7: 357.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet
2.8%

Companions
28.7%

Followers
68.5%
15. Fifteenth major master: Sufyān b. Wākī’ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī\textsuperscript{47}

Sufyān is, in order of reference, the fifteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī’s Ṭafsīr 145 times (in 1.7% of 8,424 isnāds).

Regarding the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate from his master Sufyān, the following statistical Table shows that he almost always uses the term ḥaddathana (96.6%) whenever he transmits isnāds from his master Sufyān. Ḥaddathana is a term used by the Ḥadith scholars to indicate that the information they narrate comes by direct listening from the master in attendance among other students. By contrast, only 5 times (3.4%) does al-Ṭabarī use the term ḥaddathanī.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathana</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathanī</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sufyān was known to have narrated from his father, Wākī’, the famous Tābī’ī scholar. When we look at the generation of Sufyān’s masters, we find that he narrates from 24 masters, but mostly from his father, Wākī’ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī (129-197/746-812),\textsuperscript{48} from whom he narrates 105 times (72% out of 145 isnāds), whereas he narrates the remaining 40 isnāds (28%) from another 23 masters.

In turn, Wākī’ himself narrates from 37 masters, but mainly from the following two: 1- Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 39 times (37%); and 2- Isrā’īl b. Yūnus al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 11 times (10.4%). This indicates that more than half of Wākī’s isnāds came via these 2 masters, whereas the remaining 55 isnāds came via another 35 masters.

\textsuperscript{47} Jarḥ, 4: 231.
\textsuperscript{48} Tadhkira, 1: 306; Sezgin, 1: 273; Baghdād, 13: 466; Ḥilya, 8: 368; ‘Ibar, 1: 324; Miṣān, 4: 335; Kabīr, 4/2: 179; Nadīm, 226; Ibn Sa’d, 6: 394; Mashāhīr, 173; Zunūn, 461; al-Dawūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2: 357.
When we look at the masters of al-Thawrī and Isrā’īl, we find that the isnāds after them are greatly diversified, so that we do not find a certain group which attracts attention. Therefore, it is possible to consider these two masters, al-Thawrī and Isrā’īl, as the two main sources (common links) of Wākī', from whom al-Ṭabarī chooses to narrate. However, the main source of the isnāds which came via al-Ṭabarī’s master, Sufyān b. Wākī’, was Wākī’. This is because Sufyān narrates more than 70% of his isnāds from his father, Wākī’. Wākī’ was known to be a scholar of tafsīr, a jurisprudent, and an author who compiled a number of books including a Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Sezgin noted, “Al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035)⁴⁹ employed this Tafsīr in compiling his book, Tafsīr al-Kashf wa-al-Bayān.”⁵⁰ Al-Ṭabarī may well have benefited from this Tafsīr.

The isnāds flowing from al-Ṭabarī’s master Sufyān usually pass through the generation of the Followers, mainly Mujāhid al-Makkī and ‘Āmir al-Sha’bī al-Kūfī (d. AH 105). The following Table and Pie-Chart illustrate the fact that 69% of Sufyān’s isnāds were correlated to the generation of the Followers; 19.3% were attributed to the Companions, mainly ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās; whereas 11.7% were ascribed to the Prophet as Prophetic ḥadīths. This seems to suggest that Sufyān preferred to cite the narrations of scholars among the Followers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴⁹ He is Ahmad b. Muhammad. Wāfī, 7:307; al-Dāwūdī, Tabaqāt, 1:65; Shadharāt, 3:23; Wafayāt, 1:79; Tadhkira, 1090; Żunūn, 1496.
⁵⁰ Sezgin, 1: 273.
The Prophet: 11.7%
Companions: 19.3%
Followers: 69.0%
16. Sixteenth major master: Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī (d. 276/889)\textsuperscript{51}

He must be considered the sixteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. He recurs in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* 117 times (in 1.3% of the total 8,424 isnāds).

Muḥammad b. Saʿd narrates the same number of isnāds (i.e. 117) from his father, Saʿd b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAwfī, who, in turn, narrates the same number from his uncle al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAṭīya al-ʿAwfī. Al-Ḥusayn himself narrates the same number of isnāds from his father al-Ḥasan b. ʿAṭīya al-ʿAwfī, who, in turn, narrates the same number from his father ʿAṭīya al-ʿAwfī. Finally, ʿAṭīya narrates the same number from the Companion ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās. This is where the isnād stops and al-Ṭabarī narrates the *Tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās via this one isnād 117 times.

It is evident that this isnād continues without interruption from the beginning up to the narrator before last (i.e. Ibn ʿAbbās) through members of one family with the surname al-ʿAwfī, in the following pattern:


It is clear that the intention underlying this isnād is to cite the reports on *tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās. This is because Ibn ʿAbbās’s *Tafsīr* represents the source that al-Ṭabarī paid attention to, referring to it and reporting extensively this isnād which originated from one family. Al-Ṭabarī was not the only one to refer to this isnād, since Ibn Abī Ḥātim (240-327/854-938),\textsuperscript{52} the author of *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīm*, also employed this isnād in his *Tafsīr*. Al-Suyūtī said, “Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported largely through al-ʿAwfī from Ibn ʿAbbās.”\textsuperscript{53}

It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one technical term whenever he transmits this isnād via his master Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī. The

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\textsuperscript{51} Lisān, 5:174; Zunūn, 454; Ḥadīyyat al-ʿArūfīn, 2:19; Baghdādī, 5:322; Wāfī, 3:89.

\textsuperscript{52} Tadhkira, 829; Ḥuffāẓ, 17; al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 1:279; Miẓān, 2:587; Zunūn, 436; Sezgin, 1:446.

\textsuperscript{53} Itqān, 2:1233.
following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarî always uses the term ḥaddathānī when transmitting this isnâd (i.e. the ‘Awfî family isnâd).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaddathānī</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously noted, ḥaddathānī (he narrated to me) may mean that the author referred to a book in order to cite the information. This may well be the case in this isnâd, where al-Ṭabarî consistently committed himself to using the one technical term ḥaddathānī whenever he intended to cite this isnâd, thereby indicating that he is in fact quoting from a written document on Tafsîr which includes sayings on tafsîr attributed to Ibn ‘Abbâs. This document was inherited by the ‘Awfî family till it, or a copy of it, reached al-Ṭabarî, who benefited from it, as also did his colleague, Ibn Abî Ḥâtim.

We know that Ibn ‘Abbâs was one of the most famous commentators among the Companions. More than one historian states that Ibn ‘Abbâs left a compilation dealing with tafsîr.55 Some other books are attributed to him.56 Ibn ‘Abbâs’ Tafsîr is considered the first attempt to interpret the Qur’ân linguistically. It is also considered the first attempt to produce a written interpretation of the Qur’ân before the end of the first century AH. This Tafsîr, almost in its entirety, remained in the possession of al-Ṭabarî, who quoted it via a number of isnâds discussed earlier. In fact, al-Ṭabarî benefited from the reports of Ibn ‘Abbâs in his Tafsîr thousands of times, which will be statistically analysed in Chapter VII, entitled “Discussion”.

We will add some historical information concerning the members of the ‘Awfî family mentioned in the above isnâd because scholars of tafsîr and Ḥadîth have some comments on this isnâd.

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54 See Chapter V on al-Ṭabarî’s Style of transmission in narrating isnâds from his masters.
55 See Ibn ‘Asâkir, Târîkh, 9; 238-244; Wâfi, 15; 47.
56 Mu’jam al-Mufassîrîn, 1: 311.
- Muḥammad b. Saʿd, al-Ṭabarī’s master, is Muḥammad b. Saʿd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Aṭīya b. Saʿd b. Junāda al-‘Awwī from the clan of ‘Awwī b. Saʿd. Since his death is occurred in Rabiʿ al-Akhīr 276/889, it is most likely that al-Ṭabarī met him and transmitted from him the Tafsīr of Ibn ʿAbbas. But he is considered to have been weak in transmitting hadiths. However, al-Dārāquṭnī judged him to be a ṣaduq (reasonable narrator).

- Muḥammad’s father, Saʿd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-‘Awwī, was judged by Ibn Ḥanbal as weak and considered by him as unfit to narrate Ḥadīth.58

- Saʿd’s uncle, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Aṭīya al-‘Awwī (d. AH 201), was the judge of Baghdad for some time and was, according to Ḥadīth scholars, not fully satisfactory or an acceptable transmitter of ḥadīth. Thus Ibn Maʿīn, Ibn Saʿd, Abū Ḥātim, and al-Nasāʿī judged him to have been weak in transmitting ḥadīth.59

- Al-Ḥusayn’s father, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Aṭīya b. Saʿd al-‘Awwī, was also considered as unacceptable (in the transmission of ḥadīth) by the scholars of Ḥadīth such as al-Bukhārī, Abu Ḥātim, and Ibn Ḥibbān.60

- As for al-Ḥasan’s father, ‘Aṭīya b. Saʿd b. Junāda al-‘Awwī, scholars of Ḥadīth differed with regard to his narrations. Some, like Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Maʿīn, said that he was trustworthy in transmitting traditions, while others, such as Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Ḥātim, and al-Nasāʿī, said that he was weak.61

From biographical notes on the narrators in this isnād, it becomes clear that they are related to one family from the clan of ‘Awwī b. Saʿd, which is a branch of the larger clan of Banu Wāʾil b. ‘Īyād b. Yashkur b. Bakr b. Wāʾil. The available biographical information also shows that these people, who figure in our investigated isnād, were historically known and inherited a document on tafsīr attributed to Ibn

59 Ibn Saʿd, 7/2: 74; Jarḥ, 1/2: 48; Majrūḥīn, 167; Baghdād, 8: 29-32; Lisān, 2: 278.
60 Kabīr, 1/2: 299, Jarḥ, 1/2: 26, Majrūḥīn, 158; Tahdhib, 2: 294.
62 Baghdād, 5: 322-323.
‘Abbās, the famous Companion commentator on the Qur’ān. The fact that the people in this isnād (i.e. the ‘Awfī family) were considered weak transmitters of Ḥadīth is not a matter of importance in the present context since they are not responsible for narrating hadiths belonging to the Prophet, but are rather narrating a Tafsīr compiled by Ibn ‘Abbās.
17. Seventeenth major master: Hannād b. al-Sarī al-Kūfī (152-243/769-857)\textsuperscript{63}

He must be considered the seventeenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī's \textit{Tafsīr} 91 times (in 1% of the total 8,424 \textit{isnāds}). Hannād was considered the principal master of Kufa during his scholarly life. He used to teach traditions to his students, who wrote down what they heard from him. Ibn Ḥanbal was once asked, “Who do we write down [traditions] from in Kufa?” and he replied, “Stick to Hannād b. al-Sarī.”\textsuperscript{64} Similarly, Qutayba said, “I have never seen Waki’ respecting anyone [scholars of Ḥadith] so much as he respects Hannād.” Al-Nasā’ī commented that he was a trustworthy scholar in narrating Ḥadith. Hannād compiled a large book on \textit{tafsīr}. Perhaps it was this book that al-Ṭabarī used to narrate from Hannād.

It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one technical term whenever he transmit \textit{isnāds} from his master Hannād. The following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarī always uses the term \textit{ḥaddathanā} when transmitting \textit{isnāds} from Hannād.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Ḥaddathanā}</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Ḥaddathanā} is a term used by Ḥadith scholars to indicate that the narrations they transmit come by \textit{sama‘} (hearing directly from the master which in attendance among others). It may also indicate narrating by using a written document. Al-Ṭabarī’s exclusive use of \textit{ḥaddathanā} can be explained by the fact that he may have heard among others the \textit{Tafsīr} of Hannād and been permitted by Hannād a copy of his book, to which al-Ṭabarī refers.

\textsuperscript{63} Tadhkira, 2: 507-508; Tahdhib, 11: 70; Qurrā’, 2: 107; A’lām, 9: 101; Sezgin, 1: 165-166; Nadīm, 291; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18: 5; Wādi, 2: 285, Lubāb, 2: 102, Brockelmann, 3: 158.

\textsuperscript{64} Tahdhib, 11: 70.
When we look at the generation of Hannād's masters, we find that he narrates from 24 masters, but nearly three quarters of his isnāds come from only 6 of them, as follows:

1- Wākī b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, from whom Hannād narrates 23 times (25%); 2- Abū al-Ḫwaṣ Sallām b. Sālim al-Kūfī (d. AH 179),65 from whom he narrates 11 times (12.1%); 3- ‘Abdah b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī (d. AH 180),66 from whom he narrates 10 times (11.0%); 4- Yahyā b. Abī Zā’īda, from whom he narrates 8 times (8.8%); 5- ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Yazīd, from whom he narrates 8 times (8.8%); and 6- ‘Abd al-Ḫaṭīm b. Sulaymān al-Rāżī, from whom he narrates 6 times (6.6%).

**Hannād's most quoted masters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wākī</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abū al-Ḫwaṣ</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abdah</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Zā’īda</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn Abī Yazīd</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Ḫaṭīm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (18)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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65 Tadhkira, 1: 250; Khulāṣa, 135; Ibar, 1: 274; Ḥuffāẓ, 106.
66 Tadhkira, 1: 312; Khulāṣa, 211; Shadharāt, 1: 320; Ibn Sa’d, 6: 272; Ibar, 1: 299; al-Nujūm al-Zāhirā, 2: 127.
The total number of the isnāds narrated by Hannād from these 6 most quoted masters is 66 (72.6%), i.e. almost three quarters of his isnāds came via these 6, whereas he narrates the remaining 25 isnāds (27.5%) from another 18 masters.

When we look at the isnāds after these 6 masters, we find that they were divergent except for their inclusion of Wakī b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, who, to some extent, narrates from one master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī, more than others. Wakī narrates from him 7 times (30%) in a total number of 23 isnāds.

We noted on a previous occasion that both Wakī and his master, Sufyān al-Thawrī, compiled written documents on tafsīr. Hannād benefited from his 6 masters, who were primarily his main sources, and perhaps he recorded all that he took from them in his large book on tafsīr previously mentioned. Then came his student, al-Ṭabarī, who benefited from his knowledge and cited many of his narrations in his Tafsīr; particularly those which came via Wakī and his master, Sufyān al-Thawrī.

It is noticeable that all the people referred to in this isnād came from Kufa. Thus, it seems apparent that al-Ṭabarī, via his master Hannād, who is also connected with Kufa, intended to benefit from the knowledge of the scholars of Kufa.

We should observe that the isnāds flowing from Hannād pass through the generation of the Followers, mainly Sa‘īd Jubayr al-Makkī. The following Table and Pie Chart illustrate that 48.4% of Hannād’s isnāds are attributed to the generation of
the Followers; 33.0% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib; and 18.7% are ascribed as Prophetic ḥadīths.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
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<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Eighteenth major master: Abū Hishām al-Rifā‘ī, Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Kūfī (d. 248/862)\(^\text{67}\)

Abu Hishām must be considered the eighteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr 68 times (in 0.8% of 8,424 ḥadīth). He was known to be a scholar of tafsīr, a scholar of qirā‘āt (Qur’ānic readings) as well as a master of Ḥadīth. He resided in Baghdad. Among the books he left was one on the qirā‘āt of the Qur’ān.

It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī almost exclusively uses one technical term whenever he transmits ḥadīth from his master Abū Hishām al-Rifā‘ī. The following statistical Table shows that on more than 97% of occasions al-Ṭabarī uses the term ḥaddathanā when transmitting ḥadīth from Abū Hishām. We have frequently noted that this term ḥaddathanā indicates that the narrator is referring directly to ḥadīth he received from his master in attendance among other students. Only twice (2.9%) does al-Ṭabarī narrate alone from Abū Hishām, as is indicated by his use of the term ḥaddathanī.

<table>
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</thead>
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<td>Ḥaddathanī</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In turn, Abū Hishām narrates from 21 masters, from one of whom he narrates more than any other. This was Wāki’ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 14 times (20%). Wāki’ himself narrates from 9 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. It is noticeable that the narrators in this ḥadīth, from the beginning up to Wāki’, were from Kufa. It may be suggested that the source upon which al-Ṭabarī depended was what he had gathered from his master Abū Hishām al-Rifā‘ī al-Kūfī. Al-Ṭabarī also benefited from his book on the qirā‘āt of the Qur’ān and cited it on a number of occasions in his Tafsīr.

\(^{67}\) Siyār, 11: 180; Hadiyyat al-‘Arifin, 2: 15.
Finally, we may note that these *isnāds*, flowing from al-Ṭabarî's master Abū Hishām, correlate with the generation of the Followers, mainly Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab and 'Alqama al-Kūfī. The following Table illustrates the fact that 73.5% of Abū Hishām's *isnāds* are attributed to the generation of the Followers; whereas 25% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib; and only 1 *isnād* is ascribed to the Prophet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet
1.5%
Companions
25.0%
Followers
73.5%

He is the nineteenth and final major master from whom al-Ṭabarî mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr 66 times (in 0.7% of the total 8,424 isnāds). According to biographical information recorded concerning ‘Amr, it becomes apparent that he was a scholar of tafsîr and Ḥadîth who took up residence in Baghdad. He compiled a number of books, among which were Kitâb al-Tafsîr, al-Musnad, al-‘İlal, and al-Târîkh.

It is possible that al-Ṭabarî consulted directly with his master ‘Amr through the books which the latter left, particularly his Tafsîr.

Al-Ṭabarî almost always uses just one technical term in transmitting isnāds from his master ‘Amr b. ‘Alī. The following Table reflects the fact that he transmitted 95.5% of ‘Amr’s isnāds introducing them by the term ḥaddathana, whereas he transmitted only 3 isnāds introducing them by the term ḥaddathani.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>95.5</td>
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<td>Ḥaddathani</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the generation of ‘Amr’s masters, we find that he narrates from 23 masters and that he narrates from the following three Basrâns more than others taken individually: 1- ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Mahdî al-İbṣrî, from whom he narrates 11 times (16.7%); 2- al-Ḍâlîhâk b. Makhîd al-İbṣrî, from whom he narrates 10 times (15.2%); and 3- Yaḥyâ al-Qaṭṭân al-İbṣrî, from whom he narrates 5 times (7.6%). See the following Pie Chart.

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68 Tafsîr al-Muntabih, 3: 1188; Tadhkira, 2: 487; Tahdîhîb, 8: 80; Shadharât, 2: 120; al-Dâwûdî, Ṭabaqât, 2: 17; ‘Ibar, 1: 454; Kahâla, 8: 11; Ḥuffâz, 211.
Thus, almost 40% of 'Amr b. 'Ali's narrations came via these 3 masters. All of them - Ibn Mahdi, Al-Ḍahḥāk b. Makhlod, and Yahyā al-Qaṭṭān - were known to have been authors who compiled collections of ḥadīths. Therefore, it is possible to consider them as main sources for 'Amr. Al-Ṭabarī benefited from all that was compiled by his master 'Amr.

It is to be noticed that the narrators mentioned in this isnād - 'Amr and his 3 main masters, Ibn Mahdi, Ibn Makhlod, and al-Qaṭṭān - all came from Basra. Thus, al-Ṭabarī intended to benefit from the knowledge of the scholars of Basra by consulting his master 'Amr b. 'Ali al-บาشري.

Al-Ṭabarī's isnāds stemming from his master 'Amr b. 'Ali most frequently correlate with the generation of the Followers, mainly al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makki. These scholars were well known for their extensive knowledge in tafsīr and fiqh. The following statistical Table shows how 75.8% of 'Amr's isnāds reached back to the Followers; 18.2% reached back to the generation of the Companions, mainly 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās; and only 4 isnāds (6.1%) are ascribed to the Prophet.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companions</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>93.9</td>
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<td>The Prophet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Prophet
6.1%

Companions
18.2%

Followers
75.8%
SECTION FIVE

Masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates between 10 and 45 times (consisting of 20 masters).

This section contains a brief statement and analysis of the masters of al-Ṭabarī from whom his transmissions of isnāds range between 10 and 45 occurrences. These masters are 20 in number and from them al-Ṭabarī narrates a total of 492 isnāds (i.e. 5.8% of the total 8,424 isnāds). We observe first that these 20 masters, along with the 19 most quoted masters (previously analysed), constitute all the masters from whom al-Ṭabarī transmitted isnāds between 10 and 1,677 times.¹ The total number of isnāds al-Ṭabarī narrates from all these 39 (18% out of the total 208 masters) is 7,989 (i.e. 95% of the total 8,424 isnāds), whereas the remaining 435 isnāds (5%) are scattered among another 169 masters (82%). It may thus be concluded that it is from a small number of masters, i.e. 39, or less than a quarter of the total (18% of the total 208 masters), that al-Ṭabarī cites the largest number of his isnāds.

The 20 masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrated between 10 and 45 times are as follows:


Al-Ṭabarī narrates 45 isnāds (i.e. 0.5% of the total 8,424 isnāds) from Abū al-Sā‘īb. In turn, Abū al-Sā‘īb narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from 2, ‘Abdullāh b. Idrīs al-Awḍī (d. AH 192)³ and Abū Mu‘āwiyah Muḥammad b. Khāzīm al-Ḍarīr (AH 113-194),⁴ from each of whom Abū al-Sā‘īb narrates 16 times (35.6%). The total number of narrations via these two narrators amounts to 32 isnāds (71% of the total 45). As for Ibn Idrīs, the isnād after him diverges into 9 branches, without extensive narration from any one of them. So Ibn Idrīs could be considered a common link and a main source for a cluster of isnāds. On the other hand, we notice that Abū Mu‘āwiyah (the other narrator most quoted by Abū al-Sā‘īb) narrates from 3 masters, but mainly

¹ See on al-Ṭabarī’s first major master, Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī.
² See Jarḥ, 4:269.
³ See Tadhkira, 1:279; Khulāṣa, 161; ’Ibar, 1:308; Lubāb, 1:501.
⁴ See Ibn Ma‘īn, Tārikh, 512; Jarḥ, 7:246; Kabūr, 1:74; Mızān, 4:575; Tadhkira, 1:294; Tahdhib, 9:137; Kāshif, 3:27.
from 1, al-'A'mash, from whom he narrates 14 times (87.5% of the total 16). Al-
'A'mash himself narrates from 6 masters, but mostly from 1, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī al-
Kūfī (46-96/666-715), from whom he narrates 9 times (64.3%). Al-Nakha'ī was
known for his competence in the disciplines of both tafsīr and fiqh, and his biographers state that he left a book on tafsīr.

21. Aḥmad b. Ḥāzim al-Ghifārī (d. AH 276)⁶

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 42 times (i.e. 0.5% of the total 8,424 isnāds) from Aḥmad. In turn, Aḥmad narrates from 4 masters, but mostly from Abū Nuʿaym al-Fadl b. Dukayn al-Kūfī (130-219/748-834), from whom he narrates 37 times (88.1% of the total 42 isnāds). After Abū Nuʿaym, the isnād diverges into 20 branches. It can be safely concluded that the source whom al-Ṭabarī intends to consult is Abū Nuʿaym since he was a famous mufassir and has also been considered a scholar by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (the two leading scholars of Ḥadīth). Al-Dawūdī asserts that one of Abū Nuʿaym’s compilations was a book on tafsīr.⁸

22. Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭalīb al-Zabirqān (AH 180-275)⁹

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 41 times (0.5%) from Yaḥyā. Yaḥyā himself narrates from 3 masters, but mainly from Yazīd b. Hārūn al-Wāsiṭī (118-206/736-821), from whom he narrates 33 times (80.5%). In turn, Yazīd narrates from 1 master, Juwaybir b. Saʿīd al-Azdī. Similarly, Juwaybir narrates from 1 master, al-Ḍahḥāk b. Muzāḥim. It has been noted on several previous occasions, in reference to different strands, that al-Ḍahḥāk was a well-known commentator and wrote a book on tafsīr. Al-Ṭabarī refers to him hundreds of times. So the main source of these isnāds, ramifying from Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭalīb, is the Tafsīr of al-Ḍahḥāk.

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⁵ Tahdīl, 1:177; Tadhkira, 73; Wafayāt, 1:6; Ibn Saʿd, 6:188; Žumūn, 1:430.
⁷ See al-Dawūdī, Tabaqāt, 2:29; Tadhkira, 1:372; Kabīr, 4:118; Baghdād, 12:346; Nadim, 283; Mizān, 3:35; Shadharāt, 2:46.
⁸ Al-Dawūdī, Tabaqāt, 2:29.
⁹ See Jarḥ, 9:134.
23. ‘Ali b. Sahl al-Ramlī (d. AH 245)\(^{10}\)

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 40 times (0.5%) from Ibn Sahl. In turn, Ibn Sahl narrates from 6 masters, but mainly from 1, Zayd b. Abī al-Zarqā’,\(^{11}\) from whom he narrates 22 times (55%). Zayd himself narrates from 4 masters, but extensively from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from whom he narrates 19 times (66.6%). The isnād stops at Sufyān, where al-Ṭabarī cites Sufyān’s own sayings on tafsīr. It will be noticed that this is not the first time Sufyān becomes a major source, since for a number of clusters of isnāds, analysed earlier, Sufyān was a common link and a main source. However, we notice here that al-Ṭabarī’s citations via Sufyān are different than the previous ones. Here al-Ṭabarī cites the interpretation of Sufyān himself, whereas, earlier, Sufyān was often a transmitter and common link for groups of isnāds. So it could be concluded that by transmitting this chain of isnād, al-Ṭabarī meant to consult the interpretation of Sufyān himself. According to biographical reports, Sufyān was a famous commentator and a muhaddith (traditionist) who wrote a book on tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-Karīm.\(^{12}\)

24. Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-A’lā al-Ṣan’ānī (d. AH 245)\(^{13}\)

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 38 times (0.5%) from Ibn ‘Abd al-A’lā. In turn, Ibn ‘Abd al-A’lā narrates from 8 masters, but mainly from Mu’tamir b. Sulaymān al-Taymi, from whom he narrates 22 times (65.8%). Mu’tamir himself narrates from 9 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. It is possible that the source which al-Ṭabarī intends to benefit from is Mu’tamir since he was a famous scholar of both Ḥadīth and tafsīr, and wrote a book in traditional exegesis.

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\(^{10}\) See Jarḥ, 6:189.  
\(^{11}\) See Jarḥ, 3:575.  
\(^{13}\) Tahdhib, 1/1:174; Jarḥ, 8:16.
25. Muḥammad b. ‘Abbūlāh b. ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. AH 273),

26. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Bayān al-Qānnād (d. AH 270),

27. Ḥamīd b. Masʾāda al-Sāmī al-Baṣrī (d. AH 265), and

28. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Rahlām al-Barqī (d. AH 270)

These are the masters through whom al-Ṭabarī narrated between 25 and 33 times. However, since the isnāds directly after them diverge into many branches, every one of them may be considered a main source for a cluster of isnāds.

29. The Prophet Muḥammad

For 24 times (0.3% of the total 8,424 isnāds) al-Ṭabarī narrates Prophetic ḥadīths without mentioning their isnāds. This practice of citing material without isnāds may possibly be explained by the fact that since these isnāds are not authentic (ṣaḥīḥ) and they did not satisfy al-Ṭabarī’s requirements for authenticity, they are consequently omitted. This practice of cutting off the isnād and stating only the text (matn) is a method known among the scholars of Ḥadīth. Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), for instance, from the same century as al-Ṭabarī, sometimes breaks from his usual habit of supplying an isnād for each item of information, by quoting directly without isnād. He simply writes, ‘So and so said,’ and gives that person’s interpretation of the meanings of the words and expressions from the sura in question, or he gives the information without citing any source.18 Regarding this practice, Ibn Ḥajār notes that at times al-Bukhārī cites information from Ibn ‘Abbās without isnād because the chain of transmission did not satisfy his requirements for authenticity.19 Therefore, al-Ṭabarī may have intended to practise the same thing. In addition, it has become apparent to me in the course of examining these 24 ḥadīths with apocopated isnāds that al-Ṭabarī’s use of the isnād as proof was for the purpose of examining the meaning of a word, or the identification of an expression in the Qur’ān. In other words, these 24 ḥadīths, which al-Ṭabarī cites in his Tafsīr for interpreting the two

14 See Waʿīf, 3:224; Siyar, 8:262.
15 See Jarḥ, 6:8.
16 See Jarḥ, 3:229.
17 See Tadhkira, 2:135.
19 Tahdhib, 7:450.
suras, al-Fāṭiḥa and al-Baqara, are not intended to explain the meanings of any verses of the Qur’ān, nor as proofs of a ḥukum of the Sharī‘a (Islamic Law). For this reason, it may be assumed that al-Ṭabarī did not trouble to mention their isnāds. According to the scholars of Ḥadīth and tafsīr, such as al-Bukhārī, previously referred to, this is an unobjectionable approach in determining secondary or marginal matters.

30. ‘Ali b. Dāwud al-Tamīmī (d. AH 272)

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 22 times (0.3%) from ‘Ali b. Dāwud. In turn, ‘Ali narrates from 1 master, ‘Abdullāh b. Šāliḥ al-Miṣrī. Similarly, Ibn Šāliḥ himself narrates the same amount of times from 1 master, Mu‘āwiya b. Šāliḥ, who, in turn, narrates from 1 master, ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalḥa, and, finally, Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa narrates from 1 master, the Companion ‘Abdullāh b. Abbās. The isnād stops at Ibn Abbās, where al-Ṭabarī narrates the Tafsīr of Ibn Abbās. We may note that this is not the first time al-Ṭabarī cites Ibn Abbās’s Tafsīr, the one documented in the Şahīfa (Document) compiled by ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalḥa. Al-Ṭabarī does quote this isnād (‘Abdullāh b. Šāliḥ ~ Mu‘āwiya ~ ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalḥa ~ Ibn Abbās), but via his second major master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī. So this isnād, via al-Ṭabarī’s master ‘Ali b. Dāwud, is another confirmation supporting the previous one. See the following diagram which illustrates these two chains.

The total number of al-Ṭabarī’s citations through these two chains of isnād amounts to 146 times. It seems safe to conclude that, in different places throughout his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī may cite the whole document of this Tafsīr (Şahīfa). Thus, it is found, by examining other parts of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, that this isnād recurs in many other places.

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21 The third strand.
31. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Baṣrī (d. AH 253)22

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 22 times from Yaḥyā. Similarly, Yaḥyā narrates from 1 master, ‘Abd al-A‘lā al-Tha‘labī al-Baṣrī (d. AH 189). In turn, ‘Abd al-A‘lā narrates from 1 master, Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Aruba al-Baṣrī (70-156/689-773). Afterwards the isnād diverges into 6 different branches. Since this is the case, we may perhaps consider Ibn Abī ‘Aruba as a main source. Ibn Abī ‘Aruba apparently left a book on tafsīr, from which, according to Sezgin, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Ḥajar benefited a great deal.23

32. Mujāhid b. Mūsā (d. AH 244)24

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 16 times from Mujāhid b. Mūsā. Similarly, Ibn Mūsā narrates from 1 person, Yazīd b. Hārūn al-Wāsiṭī (118-206/736-821).25 Then the isnād diverges into 8 different branches. This means that the main source is Yazīd, who was known as a commentator and the author of a book entitled Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān.26

33. ‘Ubayd b. Ismā‘īl al-Habbarī27


34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39- These are the numbers of the remaining masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates between 10 and 15 times. Since the isnāds after them diverge into many other branches, they themselves could be considered main sources. They are as follows: Tamīm b. al-Muntaṣir al-Wāsiṭī,30 ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Kharrāz

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22 See Jarḥ, 8:124.
23 See notes on al-Ṭabarī's ninth major master.
24 See Tahdhib, 10:44; Kāhir, 4/1:413; Baghdād, 13:265.
25 See Tadhkira, 317; Baghdād, 14:337; Nadīm, 228; Żunun, 461; al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn, 1:141. Sezgin, 1:205.
26 Ibid.
27 See Jarḥ, 5:402.
28 See Tadhkira, 1:327; Khulāsa, 184; Shadharat, 1:357; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:275; Huffāz, 137.
29 Cf. al-Ṭabarī’s twentieth master.
30 See Tahdhib, 1:514; Jarḥ, 2:444.
(d. AH 260),\textsuperscript{31} Muḥammad b. ʾImāra al-Asadī (d. AH 255), Sawwār b. ʿAbdullāh al-ʾAnbārī,\textsuperscript{32} Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abī al-Shawārib (d. AH 258),\textsuperscript{33} and finally Muḥammad b. Maʿmar b. Ribʿī al- Başrī (d. after AH 250).\textsuperscript{34} Thus, we reach the end of our analysis of al-Ṭabarī’s masters, from whom he narrated from 10 up to 1,677 times. Transmissions from the remaining 169 masters, completing the total 208 masters, range between 1 and 9 times. We pass over analysis of them for fear of unnecessary elaboration and because the number of isnāds stemming from them amounts to only 435 (i.e. 5% of the total 8,424 isnāds). The following Table gives a statistical overview of the frequency of isnāds flowing from these 169 masters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of masters</th>
<th>Frequency of citations (isnāds)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (169)</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{31} See Baghdad, 11:374.
\textsuperscript{32} See Jarḥ, 4:270.
\textsuperscript{33} Huffāz, 247.
\textsuperscript{34} See Tadhkira, 2:563; Khulāṣa, 307; Huffāz, 219.
PART THREE

IMPLICATIONS
Chapter VII

DISCUSSION

The Sources of al-Ṭabari’s *Tafsīr* and the Possibility of its containing written Documents

The evidence of the foregoing statistical and biographical study demonstrates that in the course of citing his *ismāds*, al-Ṭabari was accustomed to referring to a select group of *ismāds* more than to others, as has been shown in our earlier discussion of his most cited strands. It is also to be noted that these *ismāds* were transmitted via a very small number of his masters, in fact, not more than 19 out of the total 208 masters. We come to this finding via precise statistics and percentage calculations made of the 8,424 investigated *ismāds*. Moreover, it becomes clear that these selected and most frequently quoted *ismāds* were deemed important because they go back to the principal ancient sources. It was from these that al-Ṭabari took the bulk of his narrations. We have suggested that these sources were probably written materials, in the form of books, i.e. *ṣuḥuf* (documents), and *muṣannafat* (compilations), which were composed by well-known scholars over the generations of the pre-Ṭabari period. Their authors were in a few cases Companions but, in most cases, Followers, or those who followed them (*tābi‘ al-tābi‘īn*). From this it would seem that al-Ṭabari intended to consult the oldest possible authorities in compiling his *Tafsīr*. While this hypothesis is suggested by our statistical study of al-Ṭabari’s *ismāds* and these *ismāds*’ narrators, it is additionally supported by our historical study involving further investigation into the biographical details concerning these most cited narrators mentioned in the *ismāds*, in an attempt to discover the reason behind al-Ṭabari’s frequent citations from them. Support has also been found in the technical terms which al-Ṭabari used to transmit these *ismāds*, which also indicate the same result.

These sources, in my opinion, constitute evidence which may enable us to draw more definite conclusions about the early development of traditional exegesis
aimed at determining whether the early ascriptions of isnāds were generally valid. We have here, in addition, confirmation that, from early times on, the transmission of tafsīr was usually connected with written documents.¹

Our purpose in the present chapter is to present, with adequate discussion, the branches of isnāds which go back to these main sources and upon which al-Ṭabarī chiefly depended in compiling his Tafsīr. It should be noted that our discussion will concentrate only on those isnāds which al-Ṭabarī refers to frequently and extensively, i.e. 10 times and over.

In view of the variety of chains of isnād going back to these sources, I have divided this chapter into three parts according to the ultimate sources, viz: (1) the Companions, (2) the Followers, and (3) those who followed after them (tābi al-tābiʿīn).

However, before dealing with these sources, it will be useful to look at two main sources, one of which is not included in our previous statistical analysis of the exegetical narrations of the Companions, Followers, and those who followed them. These additional sources are, firstly, the Qurʾān, esteemed to be its own best interpreter,² and, secondly, the Prophetic Ḥadīth. Since, in many places in his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī employs these sources in interpreting the Qurʾān, we need to include them here in order to give a reasonably true picture of al-Ṭabarī’s references in all their variety and abundance. To all of these sources he also adds his own knowledge, his independent views, and his own understanding of the meanings of the Qurʾān.

1. Al-Ṭabarī’s references to the Qurʾān as a source for interpreting the Qurʾān itself

Al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr is, in general, a characteristically traditional exegesis since it contains reports handed down from important early Muslim authorities. But this is not always the case, because it is plain from the evidence of the Tafsīr that al-Ṭabarī would, as a first step, undertake the interpretation of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān itself,

¹ See the Introduction.
² See Itqān, 2:1197.
in the belief that the Qurʾān does interpret itself. Thus, what the Qurʾān refers to briefly in one place is given in detail in another place. Interpreting the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān is a method derived from the Prophet Muḥammad, who, for example, interpreted the word ẓulm (evil-doing) as shirk (polytheism), in the verse, “Those who believe, and have not confounded their belief with evil-doing (ẓulm), to them belongs the true security; they are rightly guided.” He uses as evidence of this meaning the verse, “And when Luqmān said to his son, admonishing him, ‘O my son, do not associate others with God. To associate others with God is a mighty wrong (ẓulm),’” Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others narrate that the Companion ‘Abdullāh b. Masʿūd said that when the verse “Those who believe and have not confounded their belief with evil-doing...” was revealed to the Prophet, his Companions were much troubled and said to the Prophet, “O Prophet, who among us does not do evil to himself?” He replied, “It is not what you think! Have you not heard the saying of the pious man, Luqmān, ‘... to associate others with God is a mighty wrong.’ It is shirk (polytheism).”

Whoever examines al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr will find frequent evidence of his using the Qurʾān as an important source for clarifying the meaning of the verses of the Qurʾān. The following are further examples:

I) Commenting on the verse, “God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering,” al-Ṭabarī states that God made the seal for the hearts and the ears, but for the eyes alone He put a covering. In support of this, he refers to another verse: “Hast thou seen him who has taken his desire to be his god, and God has led him astray with knowledge, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and laid a covering on his eyes?”

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4 Al-ʾAnʾām, VI:82.
5 Luqmān, XXXI:13.
6 See al-Bukhārī, Sahih, No. 32; Muslim, Sahih, No. 124.
7 Al-Baqara, II, 7.
8 Tafsīr, 1:262.
9 Al-Jāthiya, XLV, 23.
II) Al-Ṭabarî differentiates between *aqsat* (equitable) and *qasatā* (to deviate) when interpreting the verse, "... that is more equitable (*aqsat*) in God’s sight, more upright for testimony," deducing that *qasatā* means *jāra* (to act iniquitously) as in the verse, "But as for those who have deviated (*qāṣītūn*), they will be fuel for the Fire." Thus, *qāṣītūn* means *jāʾirūn* (those who commit iniquities).

III) In interpreting the verse, "... and let a party (*tāʾifā*) of the believers witness their chastisement," al-Ṭabarî interprets the word *tāʾifā* (party) as referring to a group consisting of from one up to a thousand persons or more. In support of this meaning he quotes another verse in the Qurʾān: "If two parties (*tāʾifatān*) among the believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them." Therefore, there is no limit to the number of persons involved in a party. A party can be one, two, three, or even a thousand persons or more.

IV) In interpreting the verse, "You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love," al-Ṭabarî says, "This is similar to the verse, ‘They give food for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the captive’ and the verse ‘... and preferred others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion.’"

V) In interpreting the verse, "Those who look not to encounter us say, ‘Why have the Angels not been sent down on us, or why do we not see our Lord?’" al-Ṭabarî says,

God says, ‘The *mushrikūn* (non-believers), who fear Our encounter and Our punishment, say, ‘Why does God not send us Angels to tell us that Muḥammad is truthful in what he is telling us, or why do we not see God and He would tell us that Himself?’” as God said about them in another verse: ‘They say, ‘We will not believe thee till thou makest a spring to gush forth

10 *Al-Baqara*, II, 282.
11 *Tafsîr*, 6:77.
12 *Al-Nîr*, XXIV, 2.
15 *Al-ʾImrān*, III, 92.
16 *Al-Hashr*, LIX, 9.
17 *Al-Furqān*, XXV, 21.
from the earth for us”\(^{18}\) and the verse goes on to say, ‘or thou bringest God and the Angels as a surety.’\(^{19}\)

VI) Al-Ţabarī deduces from the Qur‘an that the most likely meaning of the verse, “[The Prophet said,] ‘O my Lord, behold, my people have taken this Qur‘an as a thing to be shunned,’”\(^{20}\) is that they do not wish to hear the Qur‘an. He says, “This meaning is more favoured as an interpretation of the verse, as God informs us that they say, ‘Do not listen to this Qur‘an and talk idly about it,’ and that is their shunning of it.”\(^{21}\) He is referring to a verse from Sūrat Fussilat which says, “The unbelievers say, ‘Do not listen to this Qur‘an and talk idly about it; happily you will overcome.”\(^{22}\)

Examples of his interpretation of the Qur‘an by the Qur‘an are plentiful and can be found in scattered places by any reader of his Tafsīr. It may thus be concluded that one of al-Ţabarī’s important sources in compiling his Tafsīr was the Qur‘an.

Furthermore, in interpreting the Qur‘an by the Qur‘an, al-Ţabarī is considered a master and an examplar. Many commentators followed his pattern. Al-Suyūṭī said, “Valued scholars have agreed that no comparable work of interpretation has ever been written.”\(^{23}\) Ibn Kathīr\(^{24}\) benefited greatly from him in this respect.\(^{25}\) However, Ibn Kathīr would mention, along with every interpreted verse, all the meanings related to it, no matter how far that would take him. He would, for example, mention five or six verses to support his interpretation.\(^{26}\) This is a point on which Ibn Kathīr has been criticized. It is contrary to al-Ţabarī’s way, which is more limited in this matter. Al-Ţabarī was content to mention only one or two verses as evidence for the meaning proposed. This is an acceptable and indeed praiseworthy approach,

\(^{18}\) Al-Isrā’, XVII, 90.
\(^{19}\) Al-Isrā’, XVII, 92.
\(^{20}\) Al-Furqān, XXV, 30.
\(^{21}\) Tafsīr, 19:7.
\(^{22}\) Fussilat, XLI, 29.
\(^{23}\) Itqān, 2:1237.
\(^{24}\) I.e. Ismā‘il b. Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā‘, known as Ibn Kathīr, a historian and a commentator as well as faqīh (d. 774/1373), the author of Tafsīr Al-Qur‘ān al-‘Azīm, and Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya.
\(^{26}\) See, for example, what he states in interpreting verse no. 55 of Sūrat al-Mu‘minīn, (XXIII): Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, 3:247; 3:186.
necessitated by the situation, since every verse is interpreted in its place. Should any other verses be similar to it in meaning, these would then be indicated and whatever is to be said about them, or whatever has already been said about them, if it preceded the verse being interpreted, would be mentioned. Al-Ṭabarī avoids mentioning all the other similar verses in order that the subject may not become unduly drawn out.

2. Al-Ṭabarī’s references to Prophetic ḥadīths in interpreting the Qur’ān

In a number of scattered places, in fact in 521 isnāds, or 6.2% of the total 8,424 isnāds, al-Ṭabarī sought the interpretation of the Qur’ān in the words of the Prophet. The following pie chart illustrates the percentage of references in which al-Ṭabarī relied upon sayings handed down from the Prophet himself, in relation to the percentages of reports in which he benefited from the testimony of the generations of the Companions and their Followers.

However, it is difficult to discuss these chains of isnād reaching back to the Prophet because the recurrence of every single chain of isnād of these ḥadīths is less than 10 times. They are therefore excluded from our consideration,27 with the

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27 I have limited my research to investigating only those isnāds recurring 10 times and over.
exception of two styles of narration which attract our attention and may be briefly discussed as follows.

**First style:** It is noticeable that on 24 occasions (0.3% of the total 8,424 isnāds), al-Ṭabarî narrates Prophetic ḥadīths without mentioning their isnāds. He cuts off the isnād and directly quotes the ḥadīth, introducing it by the words, “The Prophet said.” This practice of citing material without isnāds may be explained in two possible ways. Either these ḥadīths with apocopated isnāds were widely known among the people and deemed to be sound ḥadīths, so that there was no particular need to recount their isnāds, or the isnāds of these ḥadīths were considered ghayr sahih (inaccurate) and failed to satisfy al-Ṭabarî’s requirements for authenticity, and so were omitted. This practice of cutting off the isnād and quoting only the statement is a method known among the scholars of Ḥadīth. Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), for instance, from the same century as al-Ṭabarî, sometimes breaks away from his usual habit of supplying the isnād for each item of information and quotes the ḥadīth directly without its isnād. He simply writes, “So and so said,” and gives that person’s interpretation of the meanings of the words and expressions from the sūra in question, or he gives the information without citing any source. Regarding this practice, Ibn Ḥajar notes that al-Bukhārī cites information from Ibn ‘Abbās at times without isnād because the chain of transmission did not satisfy his requirements for authenticity. Accordingly, al-Ṭabarî may have been following the same practice. This is one possibility. On the other hand, however, it has become apparent to me in my examination of these 24 ḥadīths with apocopated isnāds that al-Ṭabarî’s use of the isnād as a proof was for the purpose of examining the meaning of a word, or the identification of an expression in the Qur’ān. In other words, these 24 ḥadīths without isnāds, which al-Ṭabarî cites in his Tafsīr in the course of interpreting the two sūras, al-Fātiha and al-Baqara, are not intended to explain the meanings of the verses of the Qur’ān nor to overrule its interpretation, nor as proofs of a ḥukum of the

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28 In the Muwatta’ of Mālik there are 61 ḥadīths without an isnād. Also in the Sunan of al-Dārimi there are a number of ḥadīths with interrupted isnāds. See Ra‘uf, Ḥadīth literature, 273, 275.
30 Tahdhib, 7:450.
Sharī'a (Islamic Law). For this reason, as I assume, al-Ṭabarī did not bother to mention their isnāds. According to the scholars of Ḥadith and tafsīr, such as al-Bukhārī, Mālik, and al-Dārimī, as we have previously mentioned, this is an unobjectionable approach in determining secondary or marginal matters.

**Second style:** It is noticeable that 10 times al-Ṭabarī narrates a fully transmitted isnād, reaching back to the Prophet, as exemplified in the following diagram:

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               Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Miṣrī
                  /             \
               /                \
             Ibn Wahb al-Miṣrī
                 /             \
              /                \
           Mālik b. Anas al-Madānī
                 /             \
              /                \
           Ibn Shīhāb al-Zuhrī
                 /             \
              /                \
             'Urwa b. al-Zubayr
                 /             \
              /                \
             'Ā‘ishā

The Prophet
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However, as was noted earlier in our statistical analysis, Mālik b. Anas is in fact the main source because the isnād from al-Ṭabarī’s master Yūnus down to Mālik recurs 30 times. This is in addition to Mālik’s being the author of the Muwaṭṭa’. The isnād after Mālik diversifies into different branches, except that the links, as illustrated above, starting from al-Zuhrī and reaching back to the Prophet, recur 8 times. What can be concluded here is that al-Ṭabarī benefited from Prophetic Ḥadiths, in a repetitive manner, via one of his main sources, i.e. Mālik b. Anas.

The Ḥadith quotations in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, supplied with or without isnāds, clearly indicate that al-Ṭabarī was much concerned to seek out the interpretation uttered by the Prophet. If he managed to discover an interpretation spoken by the Prophet, or even if the Ḥadith, repeated between disciplines, helped one to know the meaning of the Qur’ān, he would be content with these sources.

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31 See f.n. no. 27.
32 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 7.2.
Examples of his citing interpretations of Qur'anic passages in words spoken by the Prophet are many and appear in different places, which can be found by any reader of his Tafsir. However, here we may focus on the following example. It concerns al-Ṭabari's interpretation of the verse, “Guard strictly your (five daily) prayers, especially the wustā (middle prayer).” For illumination on the meaning of the word wustā, al-Ṭabari cites 120 traditional exegeses ascribed to the Prophet, Companions, and Followers. Among them 46 are Prophetic hadiths said by the Prophet himself, 57 are reports attributed to the Companions, and 17 are statements traced to the Followers. All these traditions are cited as evidence in support of five different opinions regarding which of the five daily prayers is indicated by the word wustā, or whether in fact it could indicate any one of the five daily ritual prayers, since it is not known for certain which one is meant. After citing all these opinions, al-Ṭabari states his preference for the first one referred to, that is, that wustā is the ‘agr (afternoon) prayer. He narrates 71 out of the 120 traditions in support of his preference. These narrations include 36 Prophetic hadiths, 26 Companions’ reports, and only 9 reports of Followers. In conclusion, al-Ṭabari states, “The most preferable of these interpretations is that which is presented and demonstrated by the ample number of hadiths ascribed to the Prophet, which state that the correct interpretation of wustā is that it refers to the afternoon prayer.”

In interpreting the verse which touches on the practice of the Ḥajj (pilgrimage), “...And if any of you is ill (after putting the ihram), or has an ailment in his scalp (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer a sacrifice,” al-Ṭabari cites 26 different chains of isnād to only one hadith ascribed to the Prophet, all transmitted on the authority of the one Companion, Ka‘b b. ‘Ujra. Three versions of this hadith are similar in meaning and al-Ṭabari uses them to explain the cause for this verse’s revelation (sabab al-nuzul). It is stated that when Ka‘b b. ‘Ujra, while performing the Ḥajj in the year of al-Ḥudaybiyya, became

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33 Al-Baqara, II, 238.
34 Ibid., 5:220.
35 Ibid., 5:221.
36 Al-Baqara, II, 196.
ill with a skin disease on his head or insects in his hair, he had to shave his head before completion of the *Hajj*. The Prophet authorized him to shave his head, but since it is prohibited to do this while in *ihram* during the *Hajj* ritual, the Prophet ordered Ka‘b to make *fidya* (compensation) by performing one of three options, as stated in the above verse: he should either fast three days, or feed six poor persons, or offer a sacrifice by slaughtering a sheep. Al-Ṭabarî then goes on to discuss the jurisprudential matter concerning *fidya*, whether it was obligatory and should be performed before or after shaving the hair. Al-Ṭabarî argues that *fidya* would become obligatory after shaving. He deduces this by referring to 23 different versions, all similar in meaning, of Ka‘b’s ḥadīth. He writes, “Since the Prophet instructed Ka‘b to do *fidya* after he commanded him to shave, so *fidya* becomes obligatory and should be performed after shaving, otherwise he is free not to do so.”³⁷ Al-Ṭabarî dismisses the other opinion, once again by referring to other versions of the same ḥadīth of Ka‘b, which contain information that supports his argument.

These two examples, among many others, show that if al-Ṭabarî managed to find the interpretation of Qur’ānic passages in some words spoken by the Prophet, or contained in ḥadīths that explain the meaning of the Qur’ān, he would rest content and would not be much concerned to collect anybody else’s interpretation, even though they might have said the same thing.³⁸ Therefore, it may be concluded that ḥadīths handed down from the Prophet himself were one of al-Ṭabarî’s principal sources.

3. The Companions as sources

It seems, from our investigation of the 8,424 *isnāds*, that al-Ṭabarî was influenced by and benefited from written *Tafsīr*, transmitted to him through chains of *isnāds*, from the Companions, Followers, and those who followed the Followers (*tābi‘* al-ṭabi‘īn). We have seen that he depended very much on their narrations and

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³⁷ Ibid., 4:60.
³⁸ For further examples, see the ḥadīth narrated by al-Ṭabarî in relation to the incident of *ifk* (falsehood) mentioned in e.g. *Sūrat al-Nūr*, while interpreting verses no. 11 and following, *Tafsīr*, 18:71, Bulāq edition.
sayings. Perhaps Yāqūt was near to the truth when he said, “Al-Ṭabarī mentions the sayings of the Companions, Followers, and those who followed the Followers.”39


39 Most of the Companions and Followers referred to by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr have been introduced in Chapter VI.

40 We may wonder why Yāqūt limited al-Ṭabarī’s isnād to Ibn ‘Abbās as five, whereas they are more than that, in fact seven chains of isnād, as will be mentioned later. The same applies to the isnād of Mujāhid b. Jabr, Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, and al-Ḏḥḥāk b. Muzāhimm, which are also greater in number than Yāqūt indicates. Mu‘jam, 18:64.

41 Biographical sources indicate that both Ibn Abī Aslama and Ibn Jurayj wrote books on tafsīr, but unfortunately they are lost. It is known for certain that these two Tafsīrs contained sayings and opinions on interpretation, extracted from various exegetical works transmitted by tradition, such as al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, Ibn Abī Ḥāṭim’s Tafsīr; and al-Suyūtī’s tafsīr entitled al-Durr al-Manṭūr fi al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma‘thūr.

42 He is a different person from Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān. Some historiographers mistakenly confounded the two. However, according to biographical sources, most Ḥadīth scholars such as Ibn Ma‘īn, Ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Daraquṭnī considered Muqāṭil b. Ḥayyān as a truthful, reliable narrator. Ibn Khuzayma, however, was sceptical regarding his narrations. It has been stated that he wrote a book on tafsīr. Sezgin wrote, “This Tafsīr is one of Ṭabarī’s sources in his Tafsīr al-Kasḥf wa-al-Bayān as well as al-Ṭabarī, who refers to this tafsīr in his Jami‘ al-Bayān. Al-Khaṭib al-Baghdādī obtained, by ṭārīkh (permission), a copy of it” (Sezgin, 1:197). See also Ṭadhkira, 1:174; Khulāṣa, 330; Mīzān, 4:171; al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:329; Lisiṣ, 6:82; Kābīr, 4:213; Tahdhib, 10:277; Zunūn, 459.

43 Al-Bukhārī says that al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Mahdī rejected Muhammad b. al-Sā‘ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), whereas al-Nasā’ī says that many trusted him as a commentator. Among his books is the Tafsīr al-Ḳur‘ān, a manuscript copy of which is in the library of Istanbul. Sezgin wrote, “This Tafsīr was not used by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr, but he used a little of it in his history book” (Sezgin, 1:193). See also al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:144; Wafiṣ, 3:83; Ibar, 1:206; Ḥadīṣyarat al-‘Arīfīn, 2:7; Zunūn, 457; Wafayat, 4:309; Nadīm, 95; Tahdhib, 9:178; Mīzān, 3:556; Kaḥhāla, 10:15.

44 Scholars hold different opinions regarding Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān b. Bāṣhr al-Kalbī al-Azīdī (d. 150/767). Some said he was trustworthy in narration, while others said he was kaḍīḥāb (a liar). Al-Suyūtī wrote, “Muqāṭil himself was deemed not dependable.” Sezgin wrote, “His Tafsīr cannot be relied on, as he gave way to his imagination in explaining ... he would use old interpretations without mentioning their isnāds and without him having the right to narrate them.” Three books on tafsīr are attributed to Muqāṭil: Kitāb Khams Mi‘at ‘Ayān min al-Ḳur‘ān, Tafsīr al-Ḳur‘ān (which is large), and Nawaḍīr al-Tafsīr. See Sezgin, 1:198. See also al-Dāwūdī, Ṭabaqāt, 2:330; Ibn Sa‘īd, 7:373; Baghdād, 8:160; Itqān, 2:1232; Kaḥhāla, 12:317.

45 On Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqīḍī (130-207/747-823), al-Dhahabī commented, “Scholars agreed on rejecting his work. Although he was a man of great knowledge, he was not familiar with Ḥadīth.
these were all suspect in his opinion. However, when he reverts to history and biography and the stories of the Arabs, he narrates through these and others, such as Hishām al-Kalbī, especially in cases where there is no other possible reference and narration except them. In these words Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī sums up the sources upon which al-Ṭabarī depended in compiling his Tafsīr.

We will now begin to analyse the chains of isnād leading to the Companions, Followers, and those who followed them, from whom al-Ṭabarī reported, as main sources, to a large extent. Our statistical study will help us to determine to what extent Yāqūt’s statement is close to the fact. In this connection we must try to answer the question, are these sources, which Yāqūt mentions, the only ones from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates frequently and extensively, or are there others? In addition, we need to ask, are these sources, which al-Ṭabarī employed in his Tafsīr, connected with written documents?

In respect to Yāqūt’s assertion that al-Ṭabarī did not narrate from suspected and questionable narrators such as Muqṭātil b. Sulaymān, al-Kalbī, and al-Wāqīdī, this is quite correct, because our statistical study, which is based on an investigation and statistical count of all the narrators recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds to whom reference is made in interpreting the two sūras, al-Fātihā and al-Baqara, confirms that these suspect persons are not mentioned at all, except for al-Kalbī, who, however, appears just once in an isnād which is mentioned in only one place. Moreover, if we examine the narration transmitted via al-Kalbī, it appears that this is not in fact an interpretation concerning the meaning of a verse, but more likely an anecdotal story which is not cited as proof of a hukum (juristic law). Al-Ṭabarī only mentions it in

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He was, however, prominent as a historian and would narrate from every source.” One of his books is Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. See; Baghdādī, 3:3; Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:277; Tahdhīb, 9:363; ibar, 1:353; Mizān, 3:662; Wafayāt, 4:348; Zunūn, 460; Nadīm, 1:98.

46 The narrations of Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sā’īb al-Kalbī al-Kūfī (d. 204/819) are considered false. He was pronounced not dependable by Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Daraqūṭnī, and Ibn ‘Asākir. He produced many musannafāt (literary works), exceeding 150 in number. See Mizān, 4:304; Hadīyyat al-ʿArīfīn, 2:805; Kahhāla, 13:150.

47 Yāqūt, Mu’jam, 18:65.

48 Tafsīr, 1:216.
the course of considering one among ten opinions concerning the meaning of the opening letters *alif-lām-mām*.49

We will start with the interpretations of the Companions as sources used by al-Ṭabarî. These people were contemporary to the revelation of the Qur’ān and they knew its meanings. Al-Ṭabarî reports much of their knowledge and jurisprudence, but he narrates extensively the interpretations of the two well-known commentators, Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd.

Ibn ‘Abbās

The most knowledgeable person on Qur’ānic matters was the famous Companion ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās.50 Al-Ṭabarî reports frequently from him via many chains of isnād, of which we may note the following. The first group of chains of isnād comprises 4 isnāds which lead back to ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās. The two first chains only differ in the last narrator, i.e. al-Ṭabarî’s masters, as shown in the following diagram.

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### Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa’s *Ṣaḥīḥa* (Document)

#### Isnād 1

- Al-Muthannā al-Āmulī
- ‘Alī b. Dāwūd al-Tamīmī
  - Abū Šāliḥ ‘Abdullāh b. Šāliḥ al-Juḥanī al-Miṣrī
  - Mu‘āwīya b. Šāliḥ
  - ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa al-Hāshimī
  - ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās

#### Isnād 2

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49 Tafsīr, 205-224.

50 The Companion ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās was known as ḥabr al-umma (the learned man of the nation) and *tarjumān al-Qur’ān* (the explainer of the Qur’ān), or abū al-tafsīr (the father of the interpretation of the Qur’ān). He grew up at the beginning of the Prophet’s time and accompanied the Prophet while still young. Many ḥadīths were reported through him. He is considered reliable and knowledgeable in a wide variety of subjects. A book on *tafsīr* is attributed to him, with the title *Tānwīr al-Miṣbaḥ min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*. See Isāba, 2:330; Isābī ‘Ab, 3:33; Usd al-Ghaba, 3:390.

51 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 2.3.

52 See on al-Ṭabarî’s master no. 30.
As we have noted earlier in our statistical and analytical study, isnād 1, via al-Ṭabarī’s master al-Muthannā, recurs 122 times and isnād 2, via al-Ṭabarī’s master ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, appears 22 times. It is to be noticed that the source of both these isnāds is ‘Alī b. Ṭalḥa’s written document on tafsīr. It is highly likely that al-Ṭabarī obtained a copy of this tafsīr and cited its narrations in hundreds of scattered places in his Tafsīr. This isnād, ‘Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Mu‘āwiyā b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, is considered the best chain of isnād through Ibn ‘Abbās. However, it is said that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear directly from Ibn ‘Abbās. Al-Bukhārī, nevertheless, included his narration in his Sahīh because the intermediary between ‘Alī and Ibn ‘Abbās is known to be either Mujāhid b. Jabr or Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. Thus, Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) said, “Once the intermediary is identified, there is no harm in the narration.” Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) said, “In Egypt there is a document on tafsīr, reported by ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, to the effect that if a man travelled to Egypt for the sake of seeing it, his trip would not be a wasted.” Ibn Ḥajar commented on this by saying, “This document was with Abū Ṣāliḥ (the scribe of al-Layth b. Sa‘d) and was narrated through Mu‘āwiyā b. Ṣāliḥ through ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa through Ibn ‘Abbās, while al-Bukhārī reported it through Abū Ṣāliḥ. Al-Bukhārī relied on it in his al-Jāmi’ al-Sahīḥ, where he narrates through Ibn ‘Abbās.” Al-Dhahābī said, “Generally speaking, this is the most authentic chain of isnād from Ibn ‘Abbās. Suffice it to say that as al-Bukhārī approved of it, this is a proof of its authenticity.” Sezgin concludes that since ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa did not transmit directly from Ibn ‘Abbās, he must have received it written by Ibn ‘Abbās himself. We have suggested that al-Ṭabarī, when transmitting through ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa via his two masters, al-Muthannā and ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, may actually have been quoting from a copy of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa’s document, since al-Ṭabarī almost always, i.e. in 92% of the 122 times,

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53 ‘Alī b. Dāwūd (d. AH 262) is considered the thirtieth major master among the 39 masters most quoted by al-Ṭabarī. See Section five, Chapter VI.

54 For more details regarding this source, see on al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, al-Muthannā, 2.3.

55 liqān, 2:1231.

56 ibid.

57 ibid., 2:1230.

58 Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn, 1:78.

59 Cf. the literature review in the Introduction.
uses one technical term of transmission, *haddathaní*, whenever he narrates through this *isnád* and this term would appear to indicate that al-Ṭabarí had most probably obtained a permitted written copy of this *Tafsîr*.

**Al-‘Awfi's *Tafsîr***

*Isnád* 3

Muḥammad b. Sa‘d al-‘Awfi

Sa‘d al-‘Awfi

Al-Ḥusayn al-‘Awfi

Al-Ḥasan al-‘Awfi

‘Āṭiyya al-‘Awfi

Ibn ‘Abbâs

*Isnád* 3 recurs 117 times without variation. It is an example of a one-family *isnád* as all its narrators come from the same family, al-‘Awfi. In our statistical and analytical study, we suggested that since all the narrators in this *isnád* belong to one family, they may have inherited a written document of a piece of work containing narrations on *tafsîr* from Ibn ‘Abbâs. This *tafsîr* may possibly have reached al-Ṭabarí via his master Muḥammad b. Sa‘d al-‘Awfi, who permitted him a copy of it. Moreover, as was noted, al-Ṭabarí consistently uses one technical term, *haddathaní*, whenever he transmits via his master Muḥammad b. Sa‘d al-‘Awfi and this term may indicate that al-Ṭabarí had been permitted a written copy of this source. 62 Al-Suyūṭî said, “Al-Ṭabarí and Ibn Abî Ḥātim (240-327/854-938) narrated largely through al-‘Awfi from Ibn ‘Abbâs.” 63 In examining Ibn Abî Ḥātim’s *Tafsîr,* 64 we discover that he too uses the same *isnád* reaching down to Ibn ‘Abbâs. So this is another indication strengthening our argument that this source was in fact a written *tafsîr* which was in

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60 See the chapter on al-Ṭabarí’s Technical Terms of Transmission.
61 See on al-Ṭabarí’s major master no. 16.
62 See the chapter on al-Ṭabarí’s Technical Terms of Transmission.
63 *liqān*, 2:1233.
circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarî and Ibn Abî Ḥātim, in the third century AH, and both benefited from it.

**Ibn ‘Abbās’s Tafsīr via al-Ḍaḥḥāk**

*Iṣnād 4*65

Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī

‘Uthmān b. Sa‘d al-Kūfī

Bishr b. ‘Imāra al-Kūfī

Abū Rawq ‘Atiyya b. al-Ḥasan al-Kūfī

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī

*Iṣnād 5*66

a missing master

Al-Minjah b. al-Ḥārith

Ibn ‘Abbās

As we have seen in our analytical study, al-Ṭabarî narrates frequently via these *iṣnāds*. In fact, he narrates 74 times via *iṣnād 4* and 36 times via *iṣnād 5*, so that the total number of citations via both of them is 110. It has been noted that al-Ḍaḥḥāk left a written compilation on *tafsīr* containing *tafsīrāt* (interpretations), some consisting of his own sayings67 and others being narrations attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās.68 Al-Ṭabarî may have referred to this source of *tafsīr* via the two above-mentioned *iṣnāds*. However, for *iṣnād 5* al-Ṭabarî consistently uses only one technical term, ḥuddithtu. We have previously discussed the meaning of this term and concluded that it indicates that the *iṣnād* is narrated indirectly and that the last narrator, i.e. al-Ṭabarî’s master, has been omitted, or was unknown. This practice may be simply explained by the fact that, when transmitting this *iṣnād*, al-Ṭabarî is quoting from a written book. Thus, he uses this term to indicate this situation and to differentiate between what he quotes via complete authorized, permitted *iṣnāds*, such as *iṣnāds* 1, 2, 3, and 4, and what he quotes from a written document, handed down to him without permission, as in *iṣnād 5*. This may suggest that al-Ṭabarî obtained the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk in two portions,

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65 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 8.1.
66 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 10.
67 We will shortly discuss the chains of *iṣnād* going back to al-Ḍaḥḥāk himself.
68 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 8.1.
one by a permitted and fully transmitted isnād and the other handed down to him without complete transmission, or with an imperfect isnād.

**Muḥammad b. Ishāq’s compilation**

*Isnād 6*  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī} \\
\text{Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Muḥammad b. Ishāq} \\
\text{Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad (the mawla of Zayd b. Thābit)}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Saʿīd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī} \\
\text{‘Ikrima al-Madānī (the mawla of Ibn ‘Abbās)}
\end{array} \\
\text{Ibn ‘Abbās}
\]

*Isnād 7*  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī} \\
\text{Yūnus b. Bukayr al-Kūfī}
\end{array}
\]

*Isnād 6* is narrated 260 times, whereas *Isnād 7* occurs 39 times. Therefore, the total number of citations for both these isnāds amounts to 299. It will be noted that the common link in these isnāds is Ibn Ishāq. So al-Ṭabari may, via these two isnāds, have intended to consult the compilation of Ibn Ishāq, which dealt mainly with Sīra (the biography of the Prophet) and Maghāzī (islamic military expeditions).

**ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Jurayj**

*Isnād 8*  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī} \\
\text{Al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Mašīṣi}
\end{array} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Al-Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad al-Mašīṣi} \\
\text{ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Jurayj}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Mujāhid} \\
\text{Ibn ‘Abbās}
\end{array}
\]

---

69 See on al-Ṭabari’s major master no. 3.1.1.  
70 See on al-Ṭabari’s major master no. 8.4.  
71 See on al-Ṭabari’s major master no. 4.1.
Isnād 8, together with its branches, via al-Ṭabarī’s master al-Qāsim, reappears 431 times. The source of this isnād, as we have suggested in our analytical study, is a written piece of work classified as tafsīr and written by Ibn Jurayj, who, according to biographical sources, permitted its narration to his student al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīḥī. As is shown in the diagram, the al-Qāsim ~ Ibn Jurayj isnād has several branches, which may, in turn, have later reached back to earlier sources. The chain of isnād of Ibn Jurayj ~ Ibn ‘Abbās, which we are concerned with here, is considered a mursal isnād, because there is a time gap, involving a missing narrator, between the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās, who died in 68/687, and the next narrator, Ibn Jurayj, who was alive between 80/699 and 150/767. This being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that Ibn Jurayj may have received a copy of the Tafsīr of Ibn ‘Abbās written by Ibn ‘Abbās himself, because he did not hear it directly from him. Alternatively, he may have received the Tafsīr of Ibn ‘Abbās via ‘Aṭā’ al-Khurasānī, or ‘Ikrima, or ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ, but he sometimes omitted mentioning them and simply transmitted directly from Ibn ‘Abbās.

Ibn ‘Abbās’s Tafsīr by al-Suddī

Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī

‘Amr b. Ḥammād al-Qannād al-Kufī

Asbāṭ b. Naṣr al-Hamdānī

Abū Mālik

Abū Ṣāliḥ

Murra

Al-Suddī

Ibn ‘Abbās

Ibn Mas‘ūd

Some of the Companions

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72 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 4.1.

73 A mursal hadith is an isnād reported as from a Companion by a Tābi‘ī Ṣaghīr (Follower from the second generation), but lacking identification of the Tābi‘ī Kabīr (Follower from the first generation). See Burton, Introduction, 200.

74 See on al-Ṭabarī’s first major master.
Al-Ṭabarānī cites this isnād very frequently (it accounts for 21% of the whole 8,424 investigated isnāds). The chain of isnād up to Ibn ‘Abbās via his two students, Abū Mālik and Abū Ṣāliḥ, recurs 833 times. We find that the common link in this isnād is al-Suddī, who must have received information from earlier sources. Ibn ‘Abbās, via Abū Mālik and Abū Ṣāliḥ, was among these sources. Al-Suyūṭī said, “Al-Ṭabarānī reports to a large extent from al-Suddī’s Tafsīr via al-Suddī ~ Abū Mālik ~ Abū Ṣāliḥ ~ Ibn ‘Abbās.”

To conclude, when considering the 9 chains of isnād briefly analysed here, reaching up to Ibn ‘Abbās, which al-Ṭabarānī cites frequently and extensively, attention is attracted by the fact that almost all of them refer back to a main source, either by perfect isnāds, such as these of Ibn Isḥāq, al-‘Awfī, al-Suddī, or sometimes by imperfect isnāds, such as that of Ibn Jurayj. Most of these sources were in fact written documents, compiled by well-known scholars, which may have reached al-Ṭabarānī, through the generations, by both oral and written transmissions. Finally, regarding Yāqūt’s limiting al-Ṭabarānī’s isnāds through Ibn ‘Abbās to five, we have seen in our investigation that they are, in fact, actually six. This accounts only for the most frequent ones and does not include those variant isnāds which we have not mentioned and which occur infrequently.

‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd

Generally, al-Ṭabarānī benefits from the Tafsīr of Ibn Mas‘ūd on a large scale, narrating from him no less than 530 times. On 513 of these occasions, al-Ṭabarānī cites Ibn Mas‘ūd’s own Tafsīr, but in the remaining 17 isnāds cited by al-Ṭabarānī Ibn Mas‘ūd narrates ḥadīths from the Prophet. There are many isnāds of al-Ṭabarānī which lead through to Ibn Mas‘ūd. We have mentioned earlier isnād 9 through al-Suddī ~ Murra ~ Ibn Mas‘ūd. This isnād recurs 425 times, in cases where al-Ṭabarānī benefits from sayings on tafsīr from Ibn Mas‘ūd himself. It should be noted that Murra al-

75 Itqān, 2:1232.
76 Further detailed analysis can be found in Chapter VI.
77 A very famous Companion (d. 32/653). He is considered to be one of the first mufassirūn (commentators) and readers of the Qur’ān. He was the principal scholar of the tafsīr school in Kufa. He was the servant of the Prophet and narrated many ḥadīths. See Isṭī‘āb, 3:187; Usd al-Ghāba, 3:384; Isāba, 2:368.
Hamdānī, the intermediary between al-Suddī and Ibn Mas‘ūd, was one of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s important students.\(^78\)

One of the isnāds of al-Ṭabarī through Ibn Mas‘ūd is the following:

\[
\text{Isnād } 10^{79} \quad \text{Isnād } 11^{80}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Muḥammad b. Bashshār} \\
\text{‘Abdullāh b. Abī Yazīd} \\
\text{Al-‘A’mash} \\
\text{Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī} \\
\text{‘Alqamah} \\
\text{Ibn Mas‘ūd}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā}
\end{array}
\]

The total recurrence of isnāds 10 and 11, is 15 times. The narration of ‘Alqamah, who is Ibn Qays (d. 62/681),\(^81\) via Ibn Mas‘ūd, is considered one of the most reliable isnāds, as ‘Alqamah was one of the most prominent of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s students and the person most familiar with Ibn Mas‘ūd.\(^82\) These two isnāds reached al-Ṭabarī via one or other of two of al-Ṭabarī’s major masters, Ibn Bashshār and Ibn al-Muthannā.

‘Abdullāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb

Al-Ṭabarī transmits reports from Ibn ‘Umar 160 times. On 136 occasions, the isnād stops at Ibn ‘Umar. Al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds transmitted through Ibn ‘Umar are variant and diverse. The one which recurs the most frequently is the following:

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\(^78\) Tahdhib, 10:88; al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirīn, 1:121.

\(^79\) See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 6.

\(^80\) See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 13.

\(^81\) Tahdhib, 7:276; Baghdađ, 12:296; Shadharāt, 1:7; Żūnūn, 1:430.

\(^82\) al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirīn, 1:119.
This isnād, Ibn ‘Umar ~ Nāfi’, leads down, via different branches to al-Ṭabarī’s masters al-Ḥasan, Ya’qūb, and Ibn al-Muthannā, 100 times and on all these occasions the isnād stops at Ibn ‘Umar and al-Ṭabarī cites the sayings of Ibn ‘Umar himself on the verses of the Qur’ān. So Ibn ‘Umar can be considered a main source for al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr.

‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib

Al-Ṭabarī transmits from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib 126 times. On 111 of these occasions he cites sayings on tafsīr attributed to ‘Alī himself, while on the remaining 15 occasions he cites ‘Alī’s narrations of ḥadīths from the Prophet. Al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds through ‘Alī are diverse and there is no specific repeated pattern in the isnāds that attracts attention, except that most of ‘Alī’s narrations come via three of al-Ṭabarī’s major masters: Ibn Bashshār, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, and Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā. Through these persons al-Ṭabarī cites 55 times from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

83 See, for instance, on al-Ṭabarī’s major masters nos. 5.1 and 11.1.
Al-Ṭabarī narrates through many of the Companions other than those we mentioned above, but he did not cite frequently through them. These included ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘Ā’isha, Abū Hurayra, Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqās, Ubayy b. Ka‘b, and many others. Al-Suyūṭī said, “As for Ubayy b. Ka‘b, there is a document narrated by Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī via al-Rabī‘ b. Anas via Abū al-‘Āliya through Ubayy. This is a reliable isnād. Al-Ṭabarī narrates a lot through it.”

4. Sources among the Tābi‘ūn (Followers of the Companions)

Here, we will discuss those to whom al-Ṭabarī refers most frequently and who are mentioned in the section which we have examined.

Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī

Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Mujāhid’s Tafsīr very extensively and refers to him often. In fact, the total number of al-Ṭabarī’s narrations via Mujāhid amounts to 989. Out of these, al-Ṭabarī cites Mujāhid’s own opinions on tafsīr 906 times and 54 times he narrates Mujāhid’s transmissions through Ibn ‘Abbās. In the remaining 29 quotations (out of the 989), al-Ṭabarī transmits Prophetic hadiths through Mujāhid, mostly via the following isnād: Mujāhid ~ Ibn Abī Laylā ~ Ka‘b b. ‘Ujra ~ the Prophet.

Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Mujāhid through various chains of isnād. One of the most frequent of these is that of Ibn Abī Najīḥ ~ Mujāhid, from which al-Ṭabarī reports to a large extent, in fact nearly 500 times, through 4 chains of isnād, as follows:

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84 Itqān, 2:1233.
85 I.e. the Section containing 8,424 isnāds which al-Ṭabarī employs to interpret the two suras, al-Fātiha and al-Baqara.
86 See, for example, Tafsīr, nos. 3340, 3341, 3342, 3343, 3345, 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349, 3350, 3351, and 3358.
Isnad 13 recurs 231 times, isnad 14 recurs 224 times, isnad 15 recurs 16 times, and isnad 16 recurs 11 times. It is evident that, via these chains of isnad and many others, al-Ṭabarî intended to benefit from Mujāhid’s opinions on tafsîr. Mujāhid’s Tafsîr is, in fact considered to be one of the most important and ancient Tafsîrs, with its history stretching back to the end of the first century AH. Biographers assert that Mujāhid left a written Tafsîr upon which scholars such as al-Shâfi‘î and al-Bukhârî depended. It is to be noticed that the main common link between these isnâds and Mujāhid is Ibn Abî Najîh. Many historians assert that Ibn Abî Najîh was one of the most distinguished students of Mujāhid and that from him he heard the tafsîr of the Qur‘ān.

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87 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 2.2.
88 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 12.
89 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 6.1, 2.
90 See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 5.1.6.
91 Such as the following:
Ibn Thawr Shabāba b. Sawwār ‘Abdullâh b. Numayr
Ma‘mar b. Râshîd Warqâ‘
Ibn Abî Najîh
Mujāhid

I pass over these isnâds because they recur less than 10 times.
Isnad 17\textsuperscript{92}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
Al-Qāsim \\
\hspace{1cm} Al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣṣīḥī \\
\hspace{1cm} Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣṣīḥī \\
\hspace{2cm} Ibn Jurayj \\
\hspace{4cm} Mujāhid
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Isnad 17, which recurs 90 times, provides another route to Mujāhid’s Tafsīr.

Isnad 18\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī \\
\hspace{1cm} Salamah al-Rāzī \\
\hspace{2cm} Jarīr al-Rāzī \\
\hspace{3cm} Manṣūr b. al-Muṭtamir \\
\hspace{5cm} Mujāhid
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Isnad 18 recurs 10 times.

There are, in fact, other isnāds from which al-Ṭabarī reports through Mujāhid, but they recur less than 10 times.\textsuperscript{94} The same comment made earlier, regarding Yaqūt’s statement that al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds via Mujāhid were three, is applicable here, since they are, in fact, more than that.\textsuperscript{95} Extrapolating from the statistical and the biographical analysis of the fixed Ibn Abī Najīḥ ~ Mujāhid chain of transmission, or that of Ibn Jurayj ~ Mujāhid, enables us to conclude that the reason for al-Ṭabarī’s extensive narration of these isnāds is that they lead back to an

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\textsuperscript{92} See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 4.1.1.

\textsuperscript{93} See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 3.2.1.

\textsuperscript{94} See, for instance, on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 3.2.6.

\textsuperscript{95} Perhaps Yaqūt had in mind only those of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds through Mujāhid starting from earlier authorities such as Ibn Abī Najīḥ ~ Mujāhid, or Ibn Jurayj ~ Mujāhid, or Manṣūr ~ Mujāhid, and so he cut off the later informants of the isnāds leading to al-Ṭabarī. If this is the case, then his observation may be regarded as, more or less, close to fact.
important source of *tafsīr*, uttered by Mujāhid, which he himself, or at least his students Ibn Abī Najīḥ or Ibn Jurayj, recorded in a written document.

Qatāda b. Daʿāma al-Baṣrī

Al-Ṭabarī benefits much from the sayings and narrations of Qatāda. In fact, his narrations via Qatāda total 754. On 552 occasions, al-Ṭabarī cites Qatāda’s own sayings on *tafsīr*, while in the remaining 202 cases al-Ṭabarī narrates Qatāda’s narrations from others. Among those from whom Qatāda narrates extensively are the two well-known scholars, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, from whom Qatāda narrates 35 times, and Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab al-Madānī, from whom he narrates 29 times.

There are many *isnāds* through Qatāda employed by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*. The most frequent of these are the following:

*Isnād 19*  
Bishr al-Baṣrī  
Yazīd b. Zurrayr al-Baṣrī  
Ibn Abī ‘Aruba al-Baṣrī  
Qatāda al-Baṣrī

*Isnād 20*  
Yaʿqūb al-Dawraqī  
Ibn ‘Urayya al-Baṣrī

*Isnād 19* recurs 338 times, whereas *isnād 20* recurs 10 times. Biographers assert that Ibn Abī ‘Aruba was a close colleague of Qatāda and that he narrated from him hundreds of times.

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96 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 9.
97 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 11.1.3.
Isnād 21 recurs 200 times, isnād 22 recurs 9 times, and isnād 23 recurs 10 times. We have suggested that since al-Ṭabarī refers extensively to Qatāda via these most cited isnāds and through many others, his intention may have been to cite material from Qatāda’s *Tafsīr*. Historians state that Qatāda composed a book on *tafsīr* entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. They even assert that his *Tafsīr* was very large since al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Ṭabarī refer to it very frequently. Qatāda was considered one of the first scholars to write in the field of *tafsīr* in the late first and early second centuries AH.

**Al-Ḍāḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim**

We have seen earlier, i.e. via the chains of isnāds 4 and 6, that one of the most frequently cited isnāds from Ibn ‘Abbās is the isnād via al-Ḍāḥḥāk. Al-Ṭabarī narrates no less than 331 times from al-Ḍāḥḥāk. On 202 occasions he cites al-

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98 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 5.1.1.
99 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 2.1.3.
100 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 4.4.
101 Such as the following:

```
    Al-Muthannā
     /       \
  Adam       Al-Qāsim
     |       /\
  Abū Ja’far       Al-Ḥusayn

    Al-Ḍāḥḥāk
```

---
Dāhḥāk's own opinions on *tafsīr*, while on the remaining 129 occasions he cites al-
Dāhḥāk’s narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās. It is evident that al-Dāhḥāk must be
considered one of al-Ṭabarī’s main sources in his *Tafsīr*. Some of the most frequently
cited *isnāds* by al-Ṭabarī through al-Dāhḥāk are the following:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Isnād 24}^{102} & \text{Isnād 25}^{103} & \text{Isnād 26}^{104} \\
\text{Al-Muthannā} & \text{Al-Muthannā} & \text{Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭālib} \\
\uparrow & & \uparrow \\
\text{Ishāq} & \text{Suwayd} & \text{Yazīd b. Hārun} \\
\uparrow & & \uparrow \\
\text{Abū Zuhayr} & \text{Ibn al-Mubārak} & \\
\end{array}
\]

\text{Juwaybir}

\text{al-Dāhḥāk}

*Isnād* 24 recurs 56 times, *isnād* 25 recurs 10 times, and *isnād* 26 recurs 39 times. So
the total number of citations through these three *isnāds* is 105, in all of which al-
Ṭabarī cites al-Dāhḥāk’s own sayings on *tafsīr*.

\begin{itemize}
\item[102] See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 2.1.2.
\item[103] See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 2.4.
\item[104] See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 22.
\end{itemize}
Among the isnāds in which al-Ṭabarī reports from al-Ḍahḥāk extensively are the following two:

![Diagram of isnāds]

Al-Ṭabarī’s citations through isnād 27 are 46 and through isnād 28 they are 35. It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī did not mention from whom these two chains of isnād reached him. He regularly applies the one technical term ḥuddithtu whenever he transmits via them. Ḥuddithtu indicates that he did not hear directly from a master, yet may actually be citing from a written book, of which he obtained a copy but without having obtained permission, or a license to cite from it.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam’s Tafsīr

Al-Ṭabarī quotes from Ibn Zayd 273 times and consistently via only one isnād, viz:

![Diagram of isnād 29]

Biographers note that Ibn Zayd was well known as the author of a tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. Al-Ṭabarī consistently employs just one technical term of transmission

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105 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 10.1.
106 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 10.2.
107 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 7.
whenever he uses this isnād, i.e. ḥaddathānī, which indicates, as we have demonstrated earlier,¹⁰⁸ that al-Ṭabarī is in fact quoting from a written source, in this case Ibn Zayd’s Tafsīr. It seems that this Tafsīr was an important source for al-Ṭabarī, as he refers to it hundreds of times in his interpretation only of the sūras al-Fāṭiḥa and al-Baqara. The implication of this may be that in his interpretation of the whole of the Qur’ān, al-Ṭabarī may have referred to this Tafsīr thousands of times. We may, however, safely conclude that this isnād, Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb ~ Ibn Zayd, goes back to an ancient written source which originated during the second half of the second century AH.¹⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarī possibly cites passages throughout this Tafsīr in scattered places of his own Tafsīr.

Al-Rabī’ b. Anas

Al-Ṭabarī often cites statements on tafsīr from al-Rabī’. Statistically, al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-Rabī’ 450 times. As for sayings and opinions uttered by al-Rabī’ himself, al-Ṭabarī cites these 338 times and almost all the remaining 122 (out of the 450) references go back earlier via al-Rabī’ through his master Abū al-‘Āliya.

Specimens of al-Ṭabarī’s most frequently cited isnāds through al-Rabī’ are as follows:

\[\text{Isnād 30}^{110} \quad \text{Isnād 31}^{111}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{a missing master} & \quad \text{Al-Muthannā} \\
\text{‘Ammār b. al-Ḥasan} & \quad \text{Ishāq} \\
\text{Ibn Abī Ja’far al-Rāzī} & \quad \text{‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Dashtakī} \\
\text{Abū Ja’far al-Rāzī} & \\
\text{Al-Rabī’} & \\
\end{align*}\]

Isnād 30 recurs 197 times, while isnād 31, with its two branches, reappears 152 times.

As we have seen in our statistical and analytical study, the significance of these

¹⁰⁸ See chapter on the terms of transmission, i.e. Chapter V.
¹⁰⁹ See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 7.
¹¹⁰ See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 10.1.
¹¹¹ See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master nos. 2.1.1 and 2.1.5.
frequent citations via these two isnāds and others lies in the fact that they reach back to an early written source, entitled Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, which contained opinions on tafsīr expressed by al-Rabī’b. This Tafsīr reached al-Ṭabarī through a perfect, complete permitted isnād (isnād 31) and through an imperfect, unpermitted isnād (isnād 30).

Abū al-ʿAlīya

In connection with isnāds 30 and 31, we have seen that al-Ṭabarī also, 112 times, benefits from al-Rabī’b’s narrations but via his master Abū al-ʿAlīya, as seen in the following two isnāds:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Isnād 32} & \quad \text{Isnād 33} \\
\text{Al-Muthannā} & \quad \text{a missing master} \\
\quad \text{Adam} & \quad \text{‘Ammār b. al-Ḥasan} \\
\quad \text{Ibn Abī Ja‘far al-Rāzī} & \quad \\
\quad \text{Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī} & \quad \text{Al-Rabī’} \\
\text{Abū al-ʿAlīya} & \quad \\
\end{align*}\]

Al-Ṭabarī makes reference 79 times through isnād 32 and 10 times through isnād 33. It is evident that al-Ṭabarī intended, via these isnāds, to cite Abū al-ʿAlīya’s Tafsīr and not al-Rabī’b’s. Abū al-ʿAlīya is well known as a competent commentator and authority on the exegesis of the Qur’ān, who produced a book on tafsīr entitled Tafsīr al-Qur’ān. So it may be concluded that al-Ṭabarī intended, via these isnāds, to quote from Abū al-ʿAlīya’s Tafsīr.\(^{114}\)

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\(^{112}\) See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 2.5.1.

\(^{113}\) See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 10.1.

\(^{114}\) Al-Suyūṭī said, “As for Ubayy b. Ka‘b, there is a document on tafsīr narrated by Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī via al-Rabī’b. Anas via Abū al-ʿAlīya. This is a perfect and reliable isnād. Al-Ṭabarī narrates a lot through it” (Itqān, 2:1233). So it may be deduced that the original source of these four isnāds, through al-Rabī’b and through Abū al-ʿAlīya, is the exegesis of the Companion Ubayy b. Ka‘b.
'Atā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī

The amount of citations and narrations in which al-Ṭabarî benefits from 'Atā’ totals 309. Out of these, 222 times al-Ṭabarî cites 'Atā’’s own sayings on tafsîr; whereas on the remaining 87 occasions, al-Ṭabarî cites 'Atā’’s narrations but through others, mainly Ibn ‘Abbâs. Therefore, 'Atā’ must be considered a main source in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsîr. The most frequently cited isnâds of al-Ṭabarî through 'Atā’ are:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Isnâd 34}^{16} & \text{Isnâd 35}^{17} & \text{Isnâd 36}^{18} \\
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Al-Qâsim} \\
\text{Al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣîṣî} \\
\text{Al-Ḥajjâj al-Maṣîṣî}
\end{array} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Abî ‘Amr} \\
\text{Abî ‘Āṣim}
\end{array} & \text{Ibn Bashshâr}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{Ibn Jurayj al-Makkî} \]

These three isnâds recur 70 times in total.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Isnâd 37}^{19} & \text{Isnâd 38}^{20} \\
\text{Al-Muthanna} & \text{Muḥammad b. ‘Amr} \\
\text{Abî Ḥudhayfa} & \begin{array}{c}
\text{Abû ‘Āṣim} \\
\text{‘Īsâ b. Maymûn}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{Ibn Abî Najîh} \]

\[\text{115} \quad \text{‘Atā’ b. Abî Rabāḥ (27-114/647-732) was one of the most respected Followers and was also considered to have been one of Ibn ‘Abbâs’s most eminent students. ‘Atā’ was born in Yemen, grew up in Mecca, and there he became the Muftî and a scholar of Ḥadîth narration. Among the books he wrote are Tafsîr al-Qur’ān and Gharîb al-Qur’ān. A copy of the latter work is preserved in 'Āṭīf Library in Istanbul. See Tadhkira, 1:92; Wafayât, 1:318; Zunûn, 453; Sezgin, 1:188; al-Tafsîr wa-al-Mufassûrûn, 1:183.} \]

\[\text{116} \quad \text{See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 4.1.1.} \]

\[\text{117} \quad \text{See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 5.3.} \]

\[\text{118} \quad \text{See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 6.8.} \]

\[\text{119} \quad \text{See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 2.2.} \]

\[\text{120} \quad \text{See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no.12.} \]
These two isnāds recur 26 times in total. We may conclude that since al-Ṭabarī refers to ‘Atā’'s sayings and narrations hundreds of times, ‘Atā’ must be considered a main source for al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. According to biographers, ‘Atā’ wrote a book on tafsīr and another one entitled Gharīb al-Qur’ān. So is it possible that al-Ṭabarī may have consulted these written sources.

Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī

The total number of al-Ṭabarī’s citations from Wahb is 51. Almost all these citations relate to information concerning stories of prophets (qaṣaṣ al-anbiya’) such as the stories of Adam and Moses. Some also relate to reports spoken by Wahb regarding the invisible world (ghaybiyyāt). Wahb’s narrations reached al-Ṭabarī through various ways, the most frequent of which are the three following:

![Diagram of Isnāds]

Together these isnāds occur 25 times. As we saw in the analytical study, isnāds 40 and 41 were successively transmitted in one family which lived in Yemen. Thus, Ḥasan b. Yahyā transmitted from his uncle ‘Abd al-Razzāq, and the following:

Al-Ṭabarī also frequently cites Wahb’s narrations via the following isnād:

---

121 See, for instance, Tafsīr, 742, 995, 1178, 1232, 5626, 5627, 5631, 5636, 5652, 5655, 5659, 5661, 5677, 5680, 5707, 5740, 5893, 5910, 5938, and 5957.
122 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 2.1.4.
123 See Tafsīr, 5598.
124 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 5.6.
Al-Ṭabarî cites isnād 42 20 times. We may safely conclude that al-Ṭabarî’s frequent citations via these isnāds can be explained by the fact that he wished to quote from written sources produced by Wahb. Wahb was, in fact, the author of a number of books, including Kitāb al-Anbiyāʾ and Kitāb al-Qadar.\(^{126}\)

Saʿīd b. Jubayr

Al-Ṭabarî cites many statements emanating from Saʿīd b. Jubayr. The total number of narrations from Ibn Jubayr in al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsīr amounts to 322. Some 123 of these end with Ibn Jubayr, in cases where al-Ṭabarî is presumably citing Ibn Jubayr’s own opinions on tafsīr, while the remaining 199 go back to Ibn ʿAbbas. So Ibn Jubayr must be considered a main source for al-Ṭabarî’s Tafsīr. We have seen earlier that among the isnāds via Ibn ʿAbbās most frequently cited by al-Ṭabarî is the transmission of Saʿīd as from Ibn ʿAbbās. However, we will here mention two isnāds through Saʿīd which end with him, in cases where it is evident that al-Ṭabarî intended to consult Saʿīd b. Jubayr’s own sayings on tafsīr.

\(^{125}\) See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 3.1.2.

\(^{126}\) See on al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 2.1.4.
Taken together, these two isnāds occur 15 times in al-Ṭabarī’s Taḥsīr. Ibn Jubayr was, in fact, known as one of the most learned scholars among the Tābiʿūn in Qur’ānic studies. He wrote a book on taḥsīr, which was considered to be an important source in this discipline. Al-Ṭabarī may have consulted this taḥsīr since his citations from Ibn Jubayr’s narrations and sayings are in their hundreds.

‘Ikrima the mawla of Ibn ‘Abbās

Al-Ṭabarī benefited from the opinions of ‘Ikrima on quotations of taḥsīr and from his narrations via Ibn ‘Abbās, as some 302 citations testify. 121 of these end with ‘Ikrima, in cases where al-Ṭabarī is presumably citing statements uttered by ‘Ikrima himself, while in almost all the remaining 181 citations (out of the total 302), al-Ṭabarī cites ‘Ikrima’s narrations but via Ibn ‘Abbās. It has been mentioned earlier that among the well-known isnāds of interpretation via Ibn ‘Abbās are the isnāds narrated through ‘Ikrima. Specimens of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds through ‘Ikrima are as follows:

127 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 14.
128 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 6.3.
129 Muʿjam al-Mufassirīn, 1:208.
130 ‘Ikrima b. ‘Abdollāh (25-105/645-723), of Berber descent, was a trustworthy and very learned scholar in taḥsīr and one of Ibn ‘Abbās’s students. He was accused of uttering heretical doctrines of the Khawārij (a sect who rebelled against ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭalib), but he was defended by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, who said of him that he was trustworthy and an established scholar in interpretation. See Jarḥ, 7:9; Tahdhib, 7:263; Mīzān, 3:93; Shadharāt, 1:130.
The total frequency of these four different isnāds amounts to 36 occurrences, in contexts where al-Ṭabarī cites ʿIkrima’s own opinions on tafsīr. It may be noted that ʿIkrima was a famous commentator on the Qurʾān and that he wrote a book entitled Tafsīr al-Qurʾān. Biographers state that this Tafsīr contained reports and statements, some spoken by ʿIkrima himself and others transmitted by ʿIkrima from Ibn ʿAbbās. Al-Ṭabarī may well have consulted this Tafsīr; as he cites ʿIkrima’s narrations and sayings hundreds of times.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

Al-Ṭabarī reports al-Ḥasan’s sayings and narrations 250 times. Out of these, on 219 occasions, he cites al-Ḥasan’s own sayings on tafsīr. The remaining 31 occurrences are narrations reported through al-Ḥasan but via others, mainly ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

Some of the isnāds al-Ṭabarī employs to narrate from al-Ḥasan are the following:

131 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 4.1.1.
132 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 3.3.
133 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 15.
134 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 11.1.
Al-Ṭabarī refers to these isnāds via al-Ḥasan 43 times. It should be noted that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī wrote a book on tafsīr which some scholars regard as one of the most famous ancient interpretations. It is said that this Tafsīr was written down by al-Ḥasan’s student Ibn ‘Ubayd, the one mentioned in isnād 50. Sezgin says that al-Ḥasan’s Tafsīr was employed by al-Tha’labī (d. 427/1035) in his tafsīr entitled al-Kashf wa-al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wil al-Qur’ān. This statement of Sezgin may illuminate al-Ṭabarī’s frequent citations from al-Ḥasan.

Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī

Al-Ṭabarī benefits from al-Nakha‘ī’s sayings and narrations 244 times. Out of these, on 165 occasions, al-Ṭabarī cites al-Nakha‘ī’s own sayings, whereas on the remaining 79 occasions he reports his narrations but via others, mainly his master ‘Alqama al-Nakha‘ī. One of the isnāds of al-Ṭabarī through him is:

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136 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master nos. 4.1.2, 4, 5.
137 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 11.1.6.
138 See on al-Ṭabarī’s major master no. 5.1.4.
Al-Ṭabarî cites from Ibrāhîm via these isnāds 36 times. Another isnād al-Ṭabarî uses to cite from Ibrāhîm is the following:

\[\text{Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzî} \rightarrow \text{Salamah al-Rāzî} \rightarrow \text{Jarīr al-Rāzî} \rightarrow \text{Manṣūr al-Kūfî} \rightarrow \text{Ibrāhîm}\]

Al-Ṭabarî makes reference through this isnād 12 times. It may be noted that Ibrāhîm is considered to be one of the well-known scholars of interpretation.\(^\text{144}\)

5. Sources from the generation of the Ṭabi‘ al-Ṭabi‘în or Ṣighār al-Ṭabi‘în (Followers of the Followers).

There were many other scholars in tafsīr, apart from those already mentioned, from the generation of the Ṭabi‘în through whom al-Ṭabarî reports and from whom

\(^{140}\) See al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 6.1.3.

\(^{141}\) See al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 11.2.

\(^{142}\) See al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 3.2.1.

\(^{143}\) See al-Ṭabarî’s major master no. 3.2.1.

\(^{144}\) See Tahdhib, 1:177; Tadhkira, 73; Wafayât, 1:6; Ibn Sa‘d, 6:188; Zumun, 1:430.
he benefits to a large extent in his *Tafsīr*. Instead of mentioning these individually, I have mentioned those above as samples of the others.

After these came a group of scholars who followed the Followers and a group who followed later on. They wrote on interpretation and compiled the statements of those who came before them in *muṣannafāt* (literary works of traditions). Al-Ṭabarī benefits from these works, and includes a lot of their information in his *Tafsīr*.

It has been noted earlier, in our statistical and analytical study, that al-Ṭabarī cites hundreds of times from scholars of the generation of the *Tābi‘ al-Ṭābi‘īn*, such as al-Suddī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn al-Mubārak, ‘Abd al-Razzāq, and Ibn Ishāq. It is noticeable that almost all of these scholars left written sources, mainly in *tafsīr* but also in Ḥadith, *Ṣira* (biography of the Prophet), history, and *fiqh*. Since al-Ṭabarī refers frequently and extensively to these scholars (e.g. he refers to al-Suddī 1,677 times and to Sufyān 524 times), it is possible that he may, in fact, be citing from their written sources, most of which reached al-Ṭabarī by permission, i.e. via complete transmitted isnāds over the generations. Consequently, in these cases al-Ṭabarī uses the technical terms ḥaddathanī or ḥaddathanā. Some other sources apparently reached him but without permission, via imperfect isnāds, and in these cases al-Ṭabarī uses the term ḥuddithtu to indicate this difference. We will now list briefly these works and the names of their authors, supplemented by a statement of the number of times al-Ṭabarī cited them in his *Tafsīr*:


Ṣaḥīḥa (document) of Khuṣayf (d. 136/753): 45 citations.

*Tafsīr* of Ibn Abī Hind (d. 140/757): 95 citations.


*Tafsīr* of Shu’ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (82-160/701-776): 203 citations.


Compilation of Ḥammād b. Salamah al-Baṣrī (d. 167/783): 121 citations.
Compilation of Sharīk al-Nakha’ī (95-177 AH): 89 citations.


Book of Yahyā b. Abī Zā’ida (d. 182 AH): 30 citations.


Compilation of Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 194/810): 44 citations.


Compilation of Iṣḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 200 AH): 319 citations.


*Tafsīr* of Yahyā b. Ādam (d. 203/818): 12 citations.


In connection with the authors of these sources of interpretation and their different generations, al-Suyūṭī mentions a group of commentators among the Companions, the Followers, and those who followed them, saying,

These are the oldest of commentators, who received most of the sayings and narrations which they record directly from the Companions. After this generation of interpretation, many books on tafsīr were written which accumulated the narrations of the Companions and Followers ... and after them came Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabarī. His book Jāmi' al-bayān is the greatest on interpretation and the most splendid.145

Summary

What, we may ask, are the implications of all these most transmitted isnāds for the reconstruction of the early development of tafsīr? Extrapolating from the statistical study and analysis of the 8,424 investigated isnāds and the biographical details relating to narrators, as well as taking into account the implications of the technical terms of transmission, the following sketch may be drawn by way of a conclusion.

In considering the isnāds investigated, our attention is caught by the fact that in the interpretation of suras al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara alone, some 523 narrations are traced to the Prophet himself. This shows just how concerned al-Ṭabarī was to look for the interpretation of the Qur'ān as spoken by the Prophet.

Possibly in the time of Ibn 'Abbās, or perhaps even earlier in that of 'Ali b. Abī Ṭalib or Ibn Mas'ūd, as in the time of those scholars who came after, such as Mujāhid, al-Daḥḥāk, and al-Rabī' b. Anas, these people took great interest in investigating the meaning and interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān. Therefore, thousands of statements and narrations containing tafsīrāt (traditional exegesis) were quoted from them, as is evidenced in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. Our three lines of investigation may possibly indicate that independent materials on tafsīr were employed in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. These materials could have originated from primary sources which may have been considered, in generations before al-Ṭabarī, to be major

145 Itqān, 2:235.
works of tafsîr. Biographical notes relating to these most cited scholars suggest that most of these sources were written or compiled later with the help of many different orally transmitted isnâds. Most of these written sources were preserved and transmitted by perfect, complete, permitted isnâds, while some others were transmitted via imperfect, incomplete, unpermitted isnâds. It is even quite possible that already, at an early time, distinguished books such as the Şâhîfa of ‘Ali b. Abî Ṭalîha were in circulation. Moreover, it seems apparent from a variety of evidence that later writers found written sources from the generation of the Companions, e.g. Ibn ‘Abbâs, who left a written source compiled either by himself (isnâd 3), or by one of his students such as Mujâhid b. Jabr, or al-Ḍâhâk, or ‘Aṭâ’ b. Abî Rabâḥ, or Abû Mâlik, or Abû Ṣâliḥ. When we move on through the generation of the Tâbi’i Tâbi’in, a tafsîr tradition becomes even more in evidence, so that we may consider it certain that people like al-Suddî (d. 128/745), ‘Abdullâh b. Abî Najîh (d. 131/749 or 132/750), ‘Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj (d. 150/767), Ma’mar b. Râshid (d. 153/770), Muḥammad b. Ishâq (d.151/768), and others, in the earlier part of the first half of the second century AH, recorded and fixed in writing traditional exegesis. From the end of the second century onward, tafsîr material and sources of different kinds that could be considered authoritative on the basis of a sound isnâd were collected more and more into compilatory tafsîrs. This process had in fact started when the method of the living tradition, i.e. transmission by isnâd, had become fixed. It was developed and provided with a sound basis in accordance with the Science of Ḥadîth by scholars like ‘Abdullâh b. al-Mubârak (d. 181/797), Hushaym b. Bashîr (d. 184/799), ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣân’ânî (d. 211/827), and Ishâq b. al-Ḥajjâj al-Ṭâhûnî (d. 220/840), was continued by scholars like Mûsâ b. Hârûn al-Baghdâdî (d. AH 294), al-Muthânnâ al-Āmulî (d. after 240/862), Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Râzî (d. 248/862), and Muḥammad b. Bashshâr (d. 252/866), and was crowned by the achievement of Muḥammad b. Jarîr al-Ṭabarî (d. 311/923).

146 SeeIsnâd no. 1.
147 For further information and the names of scholars who came before al-Ṭabarî, reference may be made to the section dealing with description and analysis, i.e. in Chapter VI. Cf. also the chapter II, on the origins and development of tafsîr.
If we ask which works of earlier scholars were used by al-Ṭabarî in his *Tafsîr*, we may be certain that he used many of the works discussed previously, some of which were complete works while some others were only portions which reached al-Ṭabarî through various but specific chains of *isnâd*. This seems bolstered by the frequently recurring patterns found in some of al-Ṭabarî’s *isnâds*. It is therefore possible that the following books were available to him: the *Tafsîr* of al-Suddî, the *Ṣaḥīfa* of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭalha, the *Tafsîr* of the ‘Awfî family, the *Tafsîr* of Mujâhid, the *Tafsîr* of al-Ḍahhâk, the *Tafsîr* of al-Rabî’ b. Anas, the *Tafsîr* of ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Zayd b. Aslam, and books on *Maghâzi* and *Sûra*, especially that of Ibn Ishâq. Al-Ṭabarî also refers to other books, which have been included in the previous list. He may have referred to these sources, but only to extract excerpts. As for the remaining *isnâds*, which al-Ṭabarî transmits less than 10 times and have no specific pattern in their reappearance, in most cases these scattered *athâr* (reports) were probably only notes and various pieces of evidence cited to support an argument or to help in clarifying meanings of particular verses in the Qur’ân.
Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

The Authenticity of the Isnādās used by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr

In the Introduction we briefly discussed how both Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht viewed the isnād very sceptically. Here, I will try to show how we can ascertain whether, and to what degree, the isnād chains of transmission of traditions in al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr are reliable.

In our review and discussion of al-Ṭabarī's isnādās in the preceding two chapters, we have seen that oral and written transmissions were in existence and went hand-in-hand almost from the first century AH down to the time of al-Ṭabarī. We have also seen that the growth of transmission stemming from the narrations of the Prophet, the Companions, and the Followers in the second and third centuries AH was not primarily a growth of content, but largely represented the progressive increase of parallel and multiple chains of transmission.

Our examination of al-Ṭabarī's isnādās\(^1\) has demonstrated that al-Ṭabarī narrated the bulk of them via a very limited number of his masters; in fact 89% (i.e. 7,497 isnādās of all the investigated 8,424 isnādās) reached al-Ṭabarī through only 19 masters out of 208 in total, whereas he narrated the remaining 11% (i.e. 927 of the isnādās) via another 189 masters. This fact demonstrates that a very high percentage of al-Ṭabarī's isnādās came to him through a minority of persons, and we reached the conclusion that these 19 masters were al-Ṭabarī's major sources to whom he referred extensively and frequently to narrate isnādās.

We further noticed that from just 6 among these 19 masters al-Ṭabarī narrated more than half of his isnādās; in fact, 55% of the total 8,424 isnādās were narrated via the following 6 masters: 19.9% by Mūsā b. Hārūn, 13.3% by al-Muthannā, 6.3% by Ibn Ḥumayd, 5.1% by al-Qāsim, 5.1% by al-Ḥasan b. Yahyā, and 4.9% by Ibn

\(^1\) I.e. of our representative sample of 8,424 chains of isnādās, comprising approximately one third (i.e. 28%) of the isnādās in the entire work of al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr.
Bashshār. The remaining 45% of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds came from another 202 different masters. We concluded that the majority of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds were compiled from large sources corresponding to his most quoted masters. This enormous number of isnāds divided between a minority of masters led us to conclude that we may be dealing with originally independent works, written either by al-Ṭabarī’s masters or by earlier scholars.²

Now if these isnāds were fabricated and their author, in this case al-Ṭabarī, fictitiously narrated them, one might expect that he would have ascribed them arbitrarily to his 19 most cited masters. If this were the case, we might further expect that the structure of the relevant strands of isnāds, ramified from these 19 most cited masters, would be similar because they were put together at random, a procedure that Goldziher and Schacht proposed for certain links in the isnāds. Schacht stated, “The isnāds were often put together very carelessly. Any typical representative of the group whose doctrine was to be projected back on to an earlier authority, could be chosen at random and put into the isnād.”³ A similar view was held by Goldziher.⁴

However, this theory does not seem to match with the isnāds of al-Ṭabarī because, as we have seen, these isnāds were narrated, on the one hand, in groups of strands with a high percentage of frequencies and significant patterns of appearance and, on the other hand, there remains a minority of isnāds, i.e. 11%, dispersed among a very high number of masters, in fact 189 masters.

To make this clearer and to address the matter in question once again, I will summarize below the strands of isnāds attributed to the six most quoted masters, through whom al-Ṭabarī narrated almost 55% of his isnāds.⁵

1. Strands of isnāds of Mūsā b. Hārūn.⁶ We have seen that Mūsā narrated his 1,677 isnāds, or 19.9% of the total 8,424 isnāds, from just one master, ‘Amr b. Talḥa al-Qannād. This same percentage ‘Amr narrated from his master, Asbāṭ b. Naṣr. In

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² See Chapter VII, the discussion.
³ Schacht, Origins, 163.
⁴ See the Introduction.
⁵ For analysis of the strands of isnāds of the remaining 19 most quoted masters, one may refer to Chapter VI.
⁶ See note on al-Ṭabarī’s first major master, Chapter VI.
turn, Asbāṭ narrated virtually 19.8%, i.e. with the exception of just one isnād, from his master al-Suddī. The remaining one isnād (0.1%) Asbāṭ narrated from another master, Maṃṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir. So the isnāds remain in one line from the beginning up to al-Suddī, except for the one diversion relating to what Asbāṭ narrated from Maṃṣūr. When we move to the fifth generation, that of al-Suddī’s masters, it is clearly seen that the isnād after al-Suddī starts to branch out in several directions. We have seen that al-Suddī narrated from 9 masters, but al-Suddī narrated 99.6% (out of the 1,676) isnāds from just 3 masters, Murra (49.9%), Abū Mālik (24.9%), and Abū Ṣāliḥ (24.8%). The remaining 0.4% of isnāds are distributed among 6 other masters. Therefore, the largest percentage of the strand of isnād, Mūsā ~ 'Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī, is narrated from 3 persons.

2. Strands of isnāds of al-Muthannā.7 The amount of isnāds al-Ṭabarī cited via al-Muthannā was 13.3% (i.e. 1,118 of the total 8,424 isnāds). The most frequently quoted strands via al-Muthannā are as follows: 27.5% (of the 1,118 isnāds) go back to Ishāq al-Ṭāḥūnī, 21% go back to Abū Ḥudhayfa, 14.6% to ‘Abdullāh b. Śāliḥ, 9.2% to Suwayd, 8.9% to Ibn Abī Ḥādis, 5.9% to Ibn al-Minhāl, 2.0% to Ibn ‘Awn, 1.9% to Abū Nu‘aym, 1.6% to Ḥibbān b. Mūsā, and 1.1% to Muslim b. Ibrāhīm. The remaining 4.9% of isnāds are distributed among 30 other masters.

The frequency of recurrence of these 11 masters (routes) is 1,063, or around 95% of all of al-Muthannā’s 1,118 isnāds. This is a striking observation, as the source of the majority of narrations is ascribed to a minority of narrators.

An examination of the references to these 11 most cited masters by al-Muthannā reveals that they also narrated frequently and extensively from some masters more than from others. For instance, we see that Ishāq al-Ṭāḥūnī, the person most frequently cited by al-Muthannā, narrated from 35 masters and, further, Ishāq cited 83% of his isnāds from just 5 masters. The remaining 17% of isnāds Ishāq cited from another 30 masters. Also, when we examined Abū Ḥudhayfa’s narrations, we discovered that he narrated from 4 masters, but Abū Ḥudhayfa narrated 98.7% of his

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7 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, Chapter VI.
isnāds from just one person, Shibli b. 'Abbād al-Makkī. The remaining 1.3% of his isnāds Abū Ḥudhayfa narrated from 3 other masters.

3. Strands of isnāds of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī. The proportion of al-Ṭabarī’s narrations from Ibn Ḥumayd amounts to 6.3% (i.e. 533 isnāds out of the total 8,424). In considering the masters from whom Ibn Ḥumayd himself narrated, we found that there were just 19 masters, but that he mostly narrated from 6 of them, as follows: 49% go back to Salama al-Rāzī, 21% to Jarīr al-Rāzī, 8.5% to Ḥakkām al-Rāzī, 8.5% to Yaḥyā al-Marwazi, 4% to Mihrān al-Rāzī, and 3.3% to Hārūn al-Rāzī. The remaining 6.2% go back to another 14 different masters. These masters most quoted by Ibn Ḥumayd also narrated in an extensive manner from others. For example, Salama al-Rāzī narrated from 4 masters, but frequently and extensively from only one, Muḥammad b. Ishaq (the author of the Sīra), from whom Salama narrated 98.5% of his isnāds (i.e. 256 out of the total 260).

4. Strands of isnāds of al-Qāsim. Al-Ṭabarī narrated from this person 431 isnāds (5.1% of the total 8,424 isnāds). In turn, al-Qāsim narrated this amount from 7 masters, but frequently from just one, al-Ḥasan b. Dāwūd al-Maṣṣīṣī, from whom he narrated 98.1% of his isnāds (i.e. 423 of the total 431). The remaining 1.9% he narrated from another 6 masters.

5. Strand of isnāds of al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā. The number of isnāds stemming from this person is 429 (5.1% of the total 8,424 isnāds). We have seen that al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā narrated from only 2 masters, but particularly and repeatedly from one of them, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Yamanī, from whom he narrated 99.8% of his isnāds (i.e. 428 of the total 429). The remaining one isnād he narrated from another master.

6. Strands of isnāds of Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī. Al-Ṭabarī narrated from him 412 isnāds (i.e. 4.9% of the total 8,424). In considering Ibn Bashshār’s masters, we found that there were 45 of them, but most of his isnāds came from just 14 of them, as follows: 30.6% go back to Ibn Mahdī al-Baṣrī, 8.7% to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Baṣrī,
6.1% to Ibn Ja'far al-Baṣrī, 5.8% to Mu‘ammar al-Baṣrī, 5.6% to Yahyā al-Qāṭṭān al-
Baṣrī, 5.6% to ‘Abd al-A‘lā al-Baṣrī, 5.3% to Ibn Abī ‘Adī al-Baṣrī, 4.8% to Abū
‘Āṣim al-Baṣrī, 4.3% to Mu‘ādh al-Baṣrī, 4.1% to Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī, 3.1% to
Muḥammad b. Bakr al-Baṣrī, 1.5% to Ibn Mas‘āda al-Baṣrī, 1.5% to Yazīd al-
Wāṣīṭī, and 1.2% to Abū Dāwwūd al-Baṣrī. The remaining 11.8% of his isnāds are
distributed among 31 other masters.

These profiles indicate that each of these strands of isnāds, flowing from al-
Ṭabarī’s six major masters, has quite an individual character. It seems very
improbable that a forger arranging materials in a specific order and labelling them
falsely would have produced such highly divergent collections. Besides, we have to
bear in mind that these profiles, although on some occasions they seem to belong to
one place, such as Basra (see strands of Ibn Bashshār), are no more than coarse grids,
and differences emerge the more we go into details and ask, for instance, about such
issues as the geographic origins of the narrators and the formal peculiarities of the
narrations. Our investigation of the isnād structures in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr leads,
therefore, to the conclusion that the materials he placed under the names of his 19
most quoted masters are not the results of fictitious attributions which he invented
himself.

There are several other formal features of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds which indicate
that they are authentic. One of these is the fact, discussed earlier, that he was on some
occasions uncertain about the precise origin of an isnād and admitted this openly. On
335 occasions (in 3.9% of the total 8,424 isnāds), al-Ṭabarī transmitted isnāds using
the technical term ḥuddithtu. According to the Science of Ḥadīth, this terminology
indicates that the narrator is transmitting isnāds indirectly. This means that by using
this term al-Ṭabarī was, in fact, drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that these
isnāds are interrupted, incomplete. As an explanation for this practice, we reached the
conclusion that, when using this term, al-Ṭabarī may have been referring to a written
book handed to him but without his having obtained permission to narrate from it
from a contemporary master. This introduction of doubt, implied by use of the word
ḥuddithtu, must be seen as proof of al-Ṭabarī’s careful sifting of evidence, his
truthfulness, and his intention to reproduce the teachings of his masters, or sources, as exactly as possible. An actual forger would surely not have expressed such doubt, since it would undermine his main purpose, that of obtaining recognition for a definite and uninterrupted transmission, albeit an inauthentic one, from an acknowledged authority.

Furthermore, al-Ṭabarî gives the impression that he received exactly 24 ḥadîths directly from the Prophet himself, without mentioning their isnâds. That he actually did so is of course untrue. However, we have found that this practice by cutting off the isnâd and stating only the text (matn) was a method known among the scholars of Ḥadîth such as al-Bukhârî and al-Dârimî, who on some occasions did the same thing. We have mentioned two reasonable explanations for this practice. Either these 24 ḥadîths with apocopated isnâds were widely known among the people and deemed to be sound ḥadîths, so that there was no particular need to recount their isnâds, or al-Ṭabarî cited them from a written compilation which contained ḥadîths with no isnâds.

There are also some examples which indicate that indirect transmission was used by al-Ṭabarî in his Tafsîr, which might support the argument that his material was selected arbitrarily. In fact, however, he specifically labelled the sources from which the isnâds came.

Forgery seems even more unlikely because, as we have noted, on some occasions, al-Ṭabarî cites isnâds containing anonymous narrators. For instance, he quotes the following isnâds: Yûnus narrated from some of his companions (‘an ba’ḍi aṣḥâbîhī),12 Abû Hishâm al-Rifâ‘î narrated from a master whom he did not name (‘an shaykh lam yusammih),13 Jarîr narrated from a man (rajul) from al-Sha‘bî,14 and al-Ḥusayn from a man, etc.15 We may ask why we find some of the narrators introduced while others are not, such as: Abû al-Azhar al-Lakhmî- from Palestine- narrated to us, and an unnamed person- from Syria- narrated to me. All these examples, and others,
in my opinion, bear witness to the fact that these *isnāds* are authentic and that al-Ṭabarī cited actual sources.

Another observation supporting the view that al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* are reliable is that, in citing his *isnāds*, al-Ṭabarī attempted to search out and narrate from high (*āli*) *isnāds*, i.e. valuable *isnāds* with few links, even if the quest compelled him to travel to distant places to meet with celebrated scholars. For instance, we notice that when discussing the *isnāds* flowing from al-Muthanna (al-Ṭabarī's second major master), al-Ṭabarī cited from 'Abd al-Razzāq, an earlier scholar, as the main source, via the following *isnād*: al-Muthanna ~ Ishāq al-Ṭāḥunī ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq. Within the Science of Ḥadith, such an *isnād* is called a low (*nāzil*) *isnād*. Whereas, in other places, via his fifth major master, i.e. al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, al-Ṭabarī also quoted from 'Abd al-Razzāq as the main source, but here the *isnād* is shorter than the above one. This *isnād* is al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq. This *isnād* is called a high (*āli*) *isnād* because the number of narrators in the chain of *isnād* is less than in the above case, since there is only one person, al-Ḥasan, between al-Ṭabarī and 'Abd al-Razzāq. By contrast, in the other *isnād*, there are two narrators, al-Muthanna and Ishāq al-Ṭāḥunī, between al-Ṭabarī and 'Abd al-Razzāq. These examples, and many others, show that al-Ṭabarī tried his best to meet with grand masters such as al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā for the purpose of obtaining 'āli, authentic traditions.

Let us turn to our second area of enquiry employed in this research to examine al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*, that is the biographical literature, as noted above.16 We have seen how on many occasions the biographical literature, cited to introduce the narrators most frequently cited in the *isnāds*, helped point to the reason why these strands of *isnāds*, which al-Ṭabarī cited via his 19 major masters, are mentioned more frequently and extensively than others. These strands of *isnāds* often go back to earlier authentic sources composed by well-known scholars. Either these scholars were among al-Ṭabarī's masters or among those narrators who came earlier, which coincides broadly with our statistical findings.

16 See the Introduction.
According to his biographical details, at the age of nine until in his twenties, al-Ṭabarī remained in his birth place, Ḍmūl, studying and gathering knowledge about Ḥadīth. From the age of nine until the age of twenty, al-Ṭabarī spent ten years in his native town, learning from and attending the sessions of his second major master, al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḍmūlī. This information is arrived at by consideration of a statement by Ibn Kāmil, and it is also in accordance with al-Muthannā’s date of death, which was after AH 240, when al-Ṭabarī was almost twenty years old. When he reached the age of twenty, al-Ṭabarī began his journeys visiting other places where he could meet with other contemporary scholars. He began his journeys in search of knowledge and narrations by visiting the nearest inhabited places to his home town, Ḍmūl, and thus his first stopping place was Rayy. His visit to Rayy provided him with the opportunity of making contact with Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, al-Ṭabarī’s third major master. We have already noted how Yāqūt said, “Al-Ṭabarī narrated and wrote down more than one hundred thousand Ḥadīths and reports from Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī.” Al-Ṭabarī himself said, “We used to write down [the traditions] of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, and he used to come to us during the night and ask us about what we had written and he read them to us.” Al-Ṭabarī also said, “We used to go to Aḥmad b. Ḥammād al-Dawlabī, who was in one of the villages of Rayy, not very far from Rayy. We then ran like madmen to catch up with Ibn Ḥumayd’s session.” From Rayy al-Ṭabarī went to Baghdad where he met with many celebrated scholars, among them Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī (d. AH 294), his first major master on account of the frequency of his appearances in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. When visiting Kufa, al-Ṭabarī was able to meet with Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’ (d. AH 248), also one of his 19 major masters. According to biographical information, al-Ṭabarī narrated more than one hundred thousands traditions from Abū Kurayb. Historians state that when al-Ṭabarī proved his scholarly qualification to his master Abū Kurayb, after attending his sessions, the latter

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17 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, Chapter VI.
18 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s biography, Chapter I.
19 For references to these quotations, see note on al-Ṭabarī’s third major master, Chapter VI.
permitted him to report his narrations to others.\textsuperscript{20} From Kufa al-Ṭabari made his way to Basra where he met with the prominent scholar, Ibn Bashshār (d. 252/868), al-Ṭabari’s sixth major master. In 253/867 al-Ṭabari also visited Egypt, where he stayed until 257/870.\textsuperscript{21} There al-Ṭabari was fortunate to meet with his seventh major master, Yūnus al-Miṣrī (d. AH 264), from whom he obtained the \textit{Tafsîr} of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam.\textsuperscript{22} In Egypt, al-Ṭabari was also fortunate to obtain the Document (\textit{Ṣaḥīfa}) of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa on \textit{tafsîr}.

It is quite likely that on these journeys and occasions al-Ṭabari received the bulk of his material transmitted from these most cited authorities. The statements in the biographical literature about al-Ṭabari’s major masters thus coincide broadly with our statistical findings concerning these 19 most cited masters in al-Ṭabari’s \textit{Tafsîr}.

In addition, it is important to keep in mind, as we have concluded earlier, with regard to these 19 major masters, that their strands of \textit{isnād} often go back to principal, ancient, distinguished sources, written by well-known scholars, such as the \textit{Tafsîr} of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd; or that of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa (\textit{Ṣaḥīfa}), previously mentioned, from Ibn ‘Abbās; or the \textit{Tafsîr} of Mujāhid; or that of al-Daḥḥāk; or Qatāda; or Ibn Abī Najîlī; or Ibn Jurayj; or al-Suddī; or the Compilation of the \textit{Sīra} and \textit{Maghāzî} of Ibn Ishaq.\textsuperscript{23} Almost all of these works and others seem to be lost, but it is obvious, as we have discussed earlier, that they must have been the sources from which al-Ṭabari compiled his own \textit{Tafsîr}.

This evidence leads us to the conclusion that the bulk of the source material for the \textit{Tafsîr} of al-Ṭabari was written \textit{tafsîrs} and compilations containing hadîths and reports from older works of varying sizes, some of which were complete works while others were only portions which reached al-Ṭabari through various but specific chains of \textit{isnād}. These works can be reconstructed from the \textit{isnād} of the texts available to us and may enable us to draw more definite conclusions about the development of traditional exegesis.

\textsuperscript{20} See note on al-Ṭabari’s eighth major master, Chapter VI.
\textsuperscript{21} See al-Ṭabari’s biography, Chapter I.
\textsuperscript{22} See note on al-Ṭabari’s seventh major master, Chapter VI.
\textsuperscript{23} See Chapter VII, the discussion.
The question here is whether we can prove the authenticity of the isnâds which al-Ṭabarî received though these 19 most cited masters. This has to be decided for each master separately. As a test case, however, I have chosen to discuss the transmission of the al-Muthannâ b. Ibrâhîm al-Âmulî, which covers about 1,118 isnâds, i.e. 13.3% of the whole 8,424 investigated isnâds. The following conclusions are based on this sample.

According to the information al-Muthannâ gave about the origin of his isnâds, they are distributed among different authorities in a rather striking way, because they range from extensive narrations from a few persons to scattered narrations from many others. His masters were 41 in number. He quoted 1,063 isnâds, i.e. just over 95% of the total 1,118 isnâds, from only 11 masters. The remaining 55 isnâds (4.9%) are distributed among 30 other masters.

The largest part, about 27.5% was said to come from Ishâq b. al-Ṭâhuni; 21% came from Abû Ḥudhayfa al-Baṣrî; 14.6% came from 'Abdullâh b. Ṣâliḥ al-Miṣrî; 9.2% came from Suwayd al-Marwazi; 8.9% came from Ādam b. Abî Íyâs al-Khurasâni; 5.9% came from al-Ḥajjâj b. al-Minhâl al-Baṣrî; 2% came from 'Amr b. 'Awn al-Wâṣiṭî; 1.9% came from Abû Nu'aym al-Kûfî; 1.6% came from Ḥibbân b. Mûsâ al-Marwazi; 1.4% came from 'Abd al-Ḥamîd; and 1.1% came from Muslim b. Ibrâhîm al-Baṣrî. The remaining 4.9% was distributed among 30 other authorities as follows: five scholars taken together, 1.6% (5 isnâds each); two scholars taken together, 0.5% (3 isnâds each); seven scholars taken together, 1.3% (2 isnâds each); and, finally, seventeen scholars taken together, 1.5% (1 isnâd each).

This strange distribution of authorities in the work of al-Muthannâ argues, in my opinion, against the suggestion that he was a forger who projected his isnâds onto the preceding generation of scholars. Why would he have made the work of forgery so difficult for himself? Is it not more plausible to expect that a forger would mention only one, or at most a few, of the most famous older scholars, and these more or less with the same frequency? Why would he run the risk of having the entire forgery detected by introducing a host of additional minor informants?
There may be still another reasonable explanation for the varied distribution of al-Muthannā’s authorities. The frequency of al-Muthannā’s narrations from Iṣḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī may be illuminated by a statement quoted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, who said that he heard Abū Zur‘a saying that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dashtakī had written down and transmitted the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ānī, as it was narrated from Iṣḥāq al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥunī.24 There is still another explanation, which is that Iṣḥāq (AH 170-240) may have been the master of al-Muthannā (AH 205- after 240) over a longer period, since both of them were contemporaries for a long time. This conclusion is arrived at from a consideration of the dates of birth and death of each of them.

As a common practice at that time, al-Muthannā may have travelled to some other places where he met with celebrated scholars and sought knowledge from them, that is such persons as the two Basran scholars Abū Ḥudhayfā and Muslim b. Ibrāhīm, or the two Kufan scholars Abū Nu‘aym and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, or the two Marwāzī scholars Mūsā and Ḥībbān, or Ādam al-Khurasānī, or ‘Amr b. ‘Awn al-Wāṣīṭī, or the Egyptian scholar ‘Abdullāḥ b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī.

If al-Muthannā had been a forger who ascribed his texts more or less arbitrarily to certain older authorities, we would expect that the isnāds summarized under different names would not be essentially different from each other, at least formally. But if one studies the isnāds from his 11 most frequently cited masters (strands of transmissions), which amount to 95% of all the isnāds, it becomes clear that the differences are so significant that we have to regard them as coming from distinct and different sources.25

As we go further back reviewing and investigating the isnāds which stemmed from these 11 most cited masters by al-Muthannā, we end up with more or less the same result, that the narrations of the isnāds range from extensive narrations from a few persons to scattered narrations from many others. We see for instance, that Iṣḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī, al-Muthannā’s most cited master, narrates from 35 masters, but the majority of his isnāds came mainly via 5 masters, from whom Iṣḥāq narrates 256

24 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, no. 2.1.
25 For further details regarding these sources, see Chapter VII, on discussion.
isnāds, i.e. 83% of the total 308 isnāds. The remaining 17% came via the remaining 30 masters. So forgery seems unlikely to have occurred, at least in the most frequently cited strands of isnāds.

Let us focus on one of these 5 most cited strands of isnāds by Ishāq al-Ṭahūrī to see whether it is a true or false isnād. It is noticeable that Ishāq narrated almost 50% of his isnāds from ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Ja‘far al-Rāzī (d. AH 205). In turn, Ibn Abī Ja‘far narrated from 3 masters, but the majority of his isnāds, i.e. 98%, came via his father Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī (AH 90-160). Abū Ja‘far al-Rāzī on his own narrated from 6 masters, but mainly from 1, al-Rabī‘ b. Anas (d. 139/756), from whom he narrated almost 95% of his isnāds. According to biographical literature, Ibn Abī Ja‘far learned from his father Abū Ja‘far, and Abū Ja‘far heard the Tafsīr of al-Rabī‘ himself during their residence in a village called Burz. This biographical information confirms that there was a relationship between the son Ibn Abī Ja‘far and his father Abū Ja‘far, and a similar relationship between the disciple Abū Ja‘far and the master al-Rabī‘ b. Anas. This may help to explain the frequency of citations of some of the isnāds, such as the one here, more than others, and thus our statistical study coincides with the biographical information. The study of one source of transmissions originating during the late second century AH, i.e. the isnāds of al-Muthannā in the Tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī, shows that it is indeed possible in a large number of cases to separate trustworthy from suspicious isnāds of uncertain reliability.

When investigating al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds, especially those most frequently cited ones which came via his 19 most cited masters, we came across some remarkable variations which strengthen our argument. It was found that in some cases of hadiths transmitted via one of these 19 most cited masters, a certain group of isnāds was related to one region, as in the case of Ibn Bashshār, al-Ṭabarī’s sixth major master, who himself and the majority of his isnāds’ narrators were related to the city of Basran. In another case, we have seen that Abū Kurayb, al-Ṭabarī’s eighth major master, and his most cited master’s masters were connected with Kufa. This result is corroborated by a report saying that in Kufa alone, Abū Kurayb compiled and narrated

26 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s second major master, no. 2.1.1.
more than three hundred thousand narrations. This clearly indicates that some of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds originated in specific places, which may reflect how al-Ṭabarī travelled to different cities, such as Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, and Cairo, in order to obtain knowledge emanating from certain scholars.

Some relationship has also been discovered between these 19 major masters, or their master’s masters and narrators in each individual isnād, and the number of accounts transmitted from them. In one case the transmission of a particular isnād continues without interruption from the beginning up to the narrator before last (i.e. Ibn ‘Abbās) through members of one family with the surname al-‘Awfi, in the following pattern: Muḥammad b. Sa’d al-‘Awfi ~ Sa’d al-‘Awfi ~ al-Ḥusayn al-‘Awfi ~ al-Ḥasan al-‘Awfi ~ ‘Aṭiyya al-‘Awfi ~ Ibn ‘Abbās. In some cases the relationship is that of student to a master, as in the case al-Muthannā and Ishaq al-Ṭāhunī, or Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī and Salama al-Rāzī. There are other relationships, such as the transmission by a son from his father, as in the cases of Sufyān b. Waki‘ and Wakī‘, or that of Ibn Abī Ja‘far and Abū Ja‘far. Some of these relationships are almost exclusive, that is, the younger narrator transmitted only isnāds from the particular master or his father and from nobody else, as in the case of Mūsā b. Hārūn and ‘Amr al-Qānnād, or Ibn Tāwūs and Tāwūs, or Ibn ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr and ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr. Others relied more or less heavily on their most important masters. Examples of this can be found anywhere in the most cited strands of isnāds investigated earlier. In addition, there are isnāds where such relationships of disciples, masters, narrators, sons, and fathers do not dominate the transmission but in which we find many different narrators from different places, regions, and clans narrating from each other.

Al-Ṭabarī’s strands of isnāds which flow from his 19 major masters vary considerably in their proportions of narrations from the generations of the Prophet, Companions, and Followers. The total proportions of al-Ṭabarī’s citations from these

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27 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s eighth major master, Chapter VI.
28 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s seventh major master, Chapter VI.
29 See note on al-Ṭabarī’s sixteenth major master, Chapter VI.
30 See Chapter VI.
three categories are as follows: 4,423 isnāds (i.e. 52.5%) going back to the Companions, 3,480 isnāds (i.e. 41.3%) attributed to the Followers, and 521 isnāds (i.e. 6.2%) being hadiths ascribed to the Prophet. It is found that a large number, nearly 19%, of the strands of isnāds of Abū Kurayb alone contain Prophetic hadiths. In other collections, the proportion of this type of transmission oscillates between 9% and 12%, as in the cases of 4 of the major masters of al-Ṭabarī: Ya’qūb al-Dawraqī, Ibn al-Muthannā, Hannād b. al-Sarī, and Sufyān b. Waki’. Some have only a few Prophetic hadiths as in the case of 0.4% of the isnāds of Ibn Bashshār. Some have no Prophetic hadiths at all, like the isnāds of al-‘Awfl and Muḥammad b. ‘Amr. A high proportion of isnāds go back to the generation of the Companions, as is the case with the isnāds of Mūsā b. Hārūn, Ibn Ḥumayd, and al-‘Awfl. But there are remarkably few citations of the Companions in the isnāds of Muḥammad b. ‘Amr al-Bāhili and ‘Alī b. ‘Amr al-Ṣayrafī. A very high proportion of isnāds is found going back to the generations of the Followers and those who followed after them, as with the isnāds of al-Muthannā, al-Qāsim, and al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā.

The use of the isnād, or the mentioning of narrators for narrations, varies in the isnāds flowing from the 19 major masters of al-Ṭabarī. Isnāds from Mūsā b. Hārūn, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Jurjānī, Yūnus al-Miṣrī, and Aḥmād b. Ishaq al-Ahwāzī occur very rarely, while in the transmissions from Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, Ya’qūb al-Dawraqī, and al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī, divergent isnāds occur more frequently. They may be said to occur very frequently in the transmissions of al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, Abū Kurayb al-Kufī, Hannād al-Kufī, Ibn Bashshār al-巴西, and Ibn al-Muthannā al-巴西. This indicates that al-Ṭabarī was, more or less, influenced by the transmission of the Kufan and Basran isnāds and, of course, by the isnāds of the scholar of his native town, al-Muthannā, from whom he transmitted 45 strands of isnāds.

Remarkable differences are to be observed when examining the technical terms of transmission, that is, the method al-Ṭabarī employed to cite his isnāds. The two words ḥaddathānī and ḥaddathānā are used very frequently (on 95.7% of occasions), the term ḥuddīthtu is used on 4% of occasions, and the word qāla is used
on 0.3% of occasions. In other parts of his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī also uses other terms such as akhbaranī and akhbarananā, but very rarely. We have found an exclusive relationship between the use of these terms and al-Ṭabarī’s major masters. It is seen, for instance, that al-Ṭabarī consistently uses the term ḥaddathanī whenever he transmits isnāds from his first major master, Mūsā b. Hārūn, and from his sixteenth major master, Muḥammad b. Sa’d al-‘Awtī. The term ḥaddathanā is also used in some cases, consistently when transmitting isnāds from particular masters, e.g. the isnāds of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, Abū Kurayb, and Hannād b. al-Sarī. Al-Ṭabarī also uses both these terms, but more frequently preferring one of them, to introduce isnāds of other masters, such as Muḥammad b. ‘Amr al-Wāqidi, Ibn al-Muthannā, and Aḥmad b. Iṣḥāq al-Ahwāzī. As for the term ḥuddithtu, al-Ṭabarī employs it to introduce interrupted isnāds flowing from an anonymous person. He uses the word qala consistently to introduce 24 Prophetic hadiths, among 521 with no isnāds. The use of these terms in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr clearly indicates that each master (source) of isnāds, had an individual character of transmission. We have concluded that al-Ṭabarī’s usage of these terms must be seen as proof of his careful sifting of evidence, his truthfulness, and his intention to reproduce the teachings of his masters, or sources, as exactly as possible. So, al-Ṭabarī was honest, methodical, clear in transmitting isnāds, and a narrator of the truth in all that he cited.

The above brief discussion contains some of the most important results we have arrived at concerning the authenticity of isnāds, while examining the most frequently cited isnāds in the Tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī. Our analysis has focused on some features by which the differences among several chains of isnāds can be formally described. They indicate that each source (cluster of isnāds) has an individual character. This roundly contradicts the assumptions that these major masters, or even those who came earlier, produced all the characteristic variations, fabricated the isnāds themselves, projected them back on older narrators, or forged the transmission of isnāds or part of them. Such a diversity can hardly be the result of systematic forgery, but rather, must have developed over the course of time. Until the contrary is proven, we must therefore start from the assumption that the narrations for which
these most cited masters expressly stated persons as their authorities really came from those narrators and, thus, transmission from such persons as Mūsā b. Hārūn, al-Muthannā, Ibn Ḥumayd, al-Qāsim, al-Ḥasan b. Yahyā, and Ibn Bashshār must, in my opinion, be regarded as authentic.

There are a number of common explanations adopted by critics to reject the authenticity of ascriptions to narrators. In our case it is suggested that these most cited masters were not the actual forgers (or only partially the forgers), but that the forgeries were the transmissions of others, their contemporaries perhaps, those from whom they took the materials and then called them their own. Another possible explanation is that a later narrator, or narrators, arbitrarily used their names. These are the sort of arguments Schacht proposed, as for instance when he wrote, “The bulk of the traditions which go under his [Nāfi’s] name must be credited to anonymous traditions ...”31 But to suggest as an explanation for the contradictions in a transmission that instead of a single transmitter, named in the text, many anonymous forgers must have been at work cannot be accepted as a sound or scholarly argument because it shifts the problem from the level of facts, which can be checked, to the sphere of speculation. I do not argue against the possibility that there were forgers of isnāds and traditions over the generations of the early Islamic centuries. This even the scholars of Ḥadīth did not deny. But the mere fact that some isnāds and narrations were fabricated must not lead us to conclude that all of them are fictitious or that the genuine and the spurious cannot be distinguished with some degree of certainty.

31 Schacht, Origins, 179.
The main objective of this thesis has been to examine some questions, discussed in the introduction, concerning the value of al-Ṭabari's *Tafsir* with regard to its *isnāds*. In this thesis, as a first step, I have tried to give an answer to four major questions under dispute among both Muslim and Western scholars. These questions are as follows:

I. Did al-Ṭabari arrange his *isnāds* and narrations by citing them according to a systematic method, or are they presented randomly, in a haphazard way, with no objectives?

II. Did al-Ṭabari resort to material from written sources, or from various oral narrations, or from both? (In other words, we have investigated the possibility of his *Tafsir*'s containing written sources.)

III. Is the claim of the authors of the late second and third centuries (such as al-Ṭabari) that they merely passed on the material of older authorities, historically correct?

IV. According to the theory of Goldziher and Schacht concerning the authenticity of the *isnād*, which considerations are appropriate and what conclusions are to be drawn from the *isnāds* of al-Ṭabari's *Tafsir*?

Some other questions and considerations have also come up for review and I have tried to give an answer to them in different places throughout the preceding study. Among these questions are the following. What is the reason behind al-Ṭabari's mentioning some *isnāds* repeatedly and more extensively than others? In connection with this, does al-Ṭabari's evident confidence in some chains of transmission more than in others spring from a certain merit that characterizes them? Does al-Ṭabari draw his knowledge on *tafsīr* from specific individuals, such as scholars specializing in exegesis, jurisprudence, history, the Prophet's biography (*Sīra*), etc?

Since these questions and others touch closely upon al-Ṭabari's *isnāds* and narrations, in order to examine them I have tried to apply a new method,
concentrating on four main dimensions. Firstly, I have conducted a statistical study of the 8,424 isnāds (the research sample) which al-Ṭabarī employed to interpret the two sūras al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara. Secondly, I have undertaken a historical investigation into the narrators of the isnāds. Thirdly, a thorough investigation has been made of every single technical term of transmission which al-Ṭabarī used to transmit his isnāds. Fourthly and finally, I have in some places explored the relationship between the Qur’ānic disciplines found in the contexts of the reports and the narrators of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds, especially those from whom the isnād has branched. The purpose of this comparison was to discover whether al-Ṭabarī was resorting to narrations and works of a person or a number of persons who were specialists in certain fields.

But before summarizing the results of our main topic, treated in Part Two and Three, with regard to al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds and sources, I would like to draw attention to some of the important results arrived at in Part One, i.e. concerning the background information relating to al-Ṭabarī’s biography, the development of tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr Jāmi’ al-Bayān, and the methodology al-Ṭabarī as set out and followed in his Tafsīr. The purpose of this is to show that there is a definite coherence and uniformity of approach between the findings of Part Two and those of Part One. Thus, for instance, we find that this huge, indeed massive, amount of isnād material and narrations included in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr was gathered, as biographical information relating to al-Ṭabarī would seem to indicate, through his exerting the utmost effort to pursue knowledge, which entailed his making many journeys to meet with other celebrated scholars and gain knowledge from them. It has also been found that there exists an approximate agreement between the information found in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr concerning the main sources he refers to, and the information given in the literature on the development of traditional exegesis showing that these sources discovered within the isnāds of al-Ṭabarī were actually in existence and circulation during the pre-Ṭabarī period.

In Chapter One, in discussing the biography of al-Ṭabarī, we were able to refer to some thirty works, which, as far as I am aware, have never previously been
assembled for this purpose. Among these works two principal ancient sources were found to deal closely with al-Ṭabarī’s biography and these have provided us with most of our information. These two sources are the *Mu‘jam al-Udabā‘* of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī and the *Tārikh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭib al-Baghdādī. In this chapter we have ascertained al-Ṭabarī’s full name and genealogy. We believe we have been able to establish the exact dates of both his birth and death. A brief sketch has been provided concerning his life, family, and sources of income. We have seen that he devoted himself entirely to the acquiring of knowledge. It is further noted that, in addition to his being a man of knowledge, he was also a man of a noble character, renowned for his ascetic lifestyle, piety, forbearance, self-denial, truthfulness, good taste, and good nature, all of which characteristics raised his status in public esteem. His zealous quest for knowledge caused al-Ṭabarī to travel to many places such as Rayy, Wāsīt, Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, al-Shām (Damascus), Beirut, and Egypt, in order to meet with many celebrated scholars of his time. We have seen how, as a result of his single-minded devotion to learning, he refused to accept any governmental post, preferring to be independent and to continue to make knowledge and religion his principal concerns in life. Certainly, al-Ṭabarī was a prolific scholar, as may be concluded from the numerous books he left and the diversity of topics handled by him. Many scholars of his own time and later recorded their indebtedness to him for his contribution to scholarship and, in particular, to the Sciences of the Qurʾān (*ʿUlama‘ al-Qurʾān*), history, jurisprudence, language, and Ḥadīth. Having spent his life in learning, teaching, and serving knowledge, al-Ṭabarī died leaving behind him more than 43 books, as well as many students and admirers.

One of the aims of this thesis is to investigate the sources of al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* which originated before his time. It has been necessary to throw some light on the stages of exegesis and how it passed through the generations from the time of the Prophet down to the generation of al-Ṭabarī.

We have seen that the Prophet is considered to be the first exegete of the Qurʾān, that is, after the Qurʾān itself, which is esteemed to be its own best interpreter. But this does not mean that he interpreted the meanings of the Qurʾān
verse by verse; rather he explained the particularly problematic expressions and those verses which were obscure and needed clarification. We have pointed out that during the time of al-Ṭabarī, a number of well-known Ḥadīth scholars, such as al-Bukhārī, al-Nasāʾī, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Ḥākim, collected some samples of Prophetic exegesis. At this stage, during the second and third centuries AH, as is indicated by the circulation of a number of books entitled Tafsīr al-Qurʾān (e.g. those of the previously mentioned scholars), there were evidently independent and parallel developments in the discipline of tafsīr.

In the course of our investigating the views of those who criticized al-Ṭabarī for showing no concern to cite Prophetic exegesis in his Tafsīr, we have found that this is in fact not so. Thus, for example, in interpreting only the two sūras, al-Fāṭiḥa and al-Baqara, al-Ṭabarī cites 523 Prophetic ḥadīths, mostly based on traditional exegesis, a far larger amount of citations than those referred to by scholars such as al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, and al-Ḥākim.

The Companions took particular care in reflecting on the Qurʾānic text, seeking to comprehend its meanings, studying, and reciting it. They left a substantial amount of interpretation. Among the Companions recognized for their competence in tafsīr were Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Ubayy b. Kaʿb.

The Followers (Tābiʿūn) also took especial care in explaining the Qurʾānic verses. The most famous exegetes among the Followers were Mujāhid b. Jabr, Saʿīd b. Jubayr, ʿIkrima, Qatāda, Abū al-ʿAliya, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk. After them the second generation (Tābiʿal-Tābiʿīn) began to write independent books on traditional exegesis and to collect the sayings of the Companions and Followers. Among them were al-Suddī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shuʿba b. al-Ḥajjāj, and many others. It is evident throughout his Tafsīr that, in compiling his Tafsīr, al-Ṭabarī benefited from most of these scholars who preceded him, as well as from Prophetic ḥadiths.

The emergence of a full-blown work of tafsīr, such as Jāmiʿ al-Bayān, is startling evidence of the difference between the concern of an exegete (mufassir) and a traditionist (muḥaddith).
Since we are dealing specifically with al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsîr*, it has seemed appropriate to devote an introductory chapter to this book, touching upon such topics as the value of al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsîr* in the view of well-known scholars and the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsîr*. With regard to the former topic, we have found that many Muslim and some Western scholars praised this *Tafsîr*. Some indeed believed that *Jâmi` al-Bayân* is not simply a compilation of extant exegetical materials, but is a fully structured work demonstrating considerable insight and judgement, and that al-Ṭabarî was clearly aware of methodological issues, as is evident from the very first pages. Contrary to this view, there are others who criticized this *Tafsîr* for containing a lot of randomly quoted narrations. We have found that there was a story behind the compilation of this *Tafsîr*; that al-Ṭabarî initially planned his *Tafsîr* to be in thirty thousand pages, i.e. bigger than it is now, but then abridging it to three thousand pages. Investigating whether he or his students wrote the *Tafsîr*, we found that first al-Ṭabarî wrote his *Tafsîr*, then asked his students to copy it down while he dictated it to them. We have also found that al-Ṭabarî read his *Tafsîr* to his disciples more than once: once in AH 270 and once again in AH 283. It was also read to him in AH 306. Thus, al-Ṭabarî’s commentary has reached us after reading, copying down, and authentication by al-Ṭabarî himself and then by his students and his students’ students through the generations. We reached the conclusion that during the time of al-Ṭabarî there existed a master copy, in the handwriting and arrangement of al-Ṭabarî himself.

In Chapter IV, focusing essentially on the long Introduction with which al-Ṭabarî’s prefixed his *Tafsîr*, we discussed the principles on which his commentary was based, his general methodology in his *Tafsîr*. We have seen how specific examples witness to the fact that his *Tafsîr* was based not only on ‘hadîths and reports transmitted from the Prophet, Companions, and Followers, but also on his personal opinion (*ra`î*) as well as other rational methods of interpretation. We have seen how frequently in his discussion he dismissed many commentators who preceded him and rejected their opinions. We have also noticed how al-Ṭabarî placed importance on clarity of discourse (*bayân*) when people attempt to express the depths of their hearts.
and indicate the promptings of their souls. In fact, al-Ṭabarî adopted a comparative method, comparing the bayān of the people and the bayān of the Qurʾān, which is in fact the words of God. The ultimate purpose of al-Ṭabarî’s comparison was to conclude that the bayān of the Qurʾān is the most eloquent because it is uttered by God.

We have seen that al-Ṭabarî was convinced that knowledge relating to the interpretation of the Qurʾān can only be attained at three levels. These are classified into two main types: the muḥkam and the mutashābih. Under the muḥkam, al-Ṭabarî mentioned two levels of comprehension. First, there is that attaching to those verses which can only be interpreted by the Prophet Muhammad, because in al-Ṭabarî’s view, explaining the meaning of the Qurʾān is part of the Prophet’s message. Second, under muḥkam, according to al-Ṭabarî, is that level of comprehension attaching to those verses of which everyone who possesses knowledge of the language in which the Qurʾān was sent down knows their interpretation. The third level of knowledge is that relating to the ambiguous (mutashābih) verses which, according to al-Ṭabarî, is a sphere in which only God knows the interpretation.

We have seen through the examples cited in the course of the preceding study that when all external evidence was lacking as to the correct meaning of the Qurʾānic text, al-Ṭabarî often depended in his interpretation on the ostensible meaning of the words. It was his conviction, contrary to the view of many grammarians, that in the Qurʾān there are no redundant words and there are no expressions other than Arabic ones.

We have also considered al-Ṭabarî’s attitude towards the seven aḥruf (sing. ḥarf), i.e. the different ways in which the Qurʾān is said to have been revealed, and found that in al-Ṭabarî’s opinion, the umma (the Prophet’s community) chose to read the Qurʾān according to one ḥarf and excluded the other aḥruf. Finally, we have sought to explain some of the methods employed by al-Ṭabarî in interpreting the Qurʾān, such as his use of the word taʾwil instead of tafsīr, his use of references to linguistics, iʿrab (parsing or syntax), poems, and his more common method of
interpreting the Qur'ān verse by verse. We have seen that al-Ṭabarî followed a methodical system in interpreting Qur'ānic verses.

We will now attempt to provide brief answers to some of the main questions mentioned earlier, as well as to summarize some of the most important findings in Part Two and Three of the study while investigating the 8,424 isnâds which al-Ṭabarî employed to interpret the two sūras, al-Fātiha and al-Baqara.

With regard to the first question, it is evident that in citing his isnâds and narrations as well as in interpreting the verses of the Qur'ān, al-Ṭabarî was clearly aware of methodological issues and that it may be safely asserted that in compiling his Tafsîr, he was following a systematic method. We arrived at the conclusion that although al-Ṭabarî’s isnâds show variants and diversity, it is nevertheless evident that a certain method was followed by him in dealing with these isnâds. The foregoing statistical and biographical study followed by the investigation of the technical terms of transmission, as well as comparison of information found in the contents of the narrations with al-Ṭabarî’s most cited narrators, demonstrate that in the course of citing his isnâds, al-Ṭabarî was accustomed to referring to a select group of isnâds, in repetitive patterns, more than to others, as has been shown in our earlier discussion of his most cited strands. We also found that these isnâds were transmitted via a very small number of his masters, in fact, by not more than 19 out of the total 208 masters. We came to this finding on account of precise statistics and percentage calculations made of the 8,424 investigated isnâds. Moreover, it becomes clear that these selected and most frequently quoted isnâds were deemed important because they go back to the principal ancient sources. It was from these that al-Ṭabarî took the bulk of his narrations. We have suggested that these sources were probably written materials, in the form of books, i.e. șuḥuf (documents), and muṣannafât (compilations), which were composed by well-known scholars over the generations of the pre-Ṭabarî period. Their authors were in a few cases Companions but, in most cases, Followers, or those who followed them (Tâbî‘ al-Tâbî‘în). From this it would seem that al-Ṭabarî intended to consult the oldest possible authorities in compiling his Tafsîr. While this hypothesis is suggested by our statistical study of al-Ṭabarî’s
isnāds and these isnāds' narrators, it is additionally supported by our historical study involving further investigation into the biographical details concerning these most cited narrators mentioned in the isnāds, in an attempt to discover the reason behind al-Ṭabarī's frequent and extensive citations from them. Support has also been found in the technical terms which al-Ṭabarī used to transmit these isnāds, which also indicate the same result. Further support has also been found when exploring the relationship between the Qur'ānic disciplines found in the contexts of the reports and the most cited narrators of al-Ṭabarī's isnāds. All this evidence strongly suggests that definite criteria were followed by al-Ṭabarī in dealing with his isnāds.

Concerning the question of whether al-Ṭabarī referred to specific individuals to obtain his knowledge, we have seen, when exploring the relationship between the Qur'ānic disciplines found in the contexts of the reports in al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr and the narrators of al-Ṭabarī's isnāds, especially those from whom the isnād has branched, that when al-Ṭabarī wanted to cite information based on certain academic disciplines, he would resort to specific individual scholars. So, for instance, we have found that when he wanted to draw upon exegetical learning, he would repeatedly quote from a number of famous scholars specializing in exegesis, such as Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Masʿūd, and Mujāhid, whereas, when wanting to draw upon historical knowledge, or Sīra, al-Ṭabarī would quote information from scholars specializing in this field, such as Ibn Ishāq, the author of the Sīra, and Wahb b. Munabbih, the storyteller. He would similarly resort to specific individuals specializing in jurisprudence, such 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, al-Sha'bī, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, Abū Ḥanīfa, and Mālik, all known for their competency in fiqh. On linguistics and grammar, al-Ṭabarī preferred, in most cases, to cite from Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām and Yahya b. Ziyād al-Farrā'. This seems to confirm the hypothesis that in citing his narrations, al-Ṭabarī was following a systematic method.

By investigating the terms of transmission used by al-Ṭabarī to introduce his isnāds from his masters, we have found that for the majority of his isnāds, that is 95.7% of them, al-Ṭabarī used just two introductory terms- haddathanī and haddathanā- to indicate that the isnāds he transmitted following either of these two
terms were complete and permitted to him by a previous master. In reviewing the situation statistically, al-Ṭabarî used the term *haddathani* to introduce 50.2% of the whole 8,424 investigated isnāds. This means that more than half of his isnāds were introduced by this term. Moreover, al-Ṭabarî used the term *haddathani* to transmit from 139 of his 208 masters, but in most cases this term is employed to transmit from only 6 of them. The incidences adduced with this statistical result, supported by biographical information, testify to the fact that these persons were al-Ṭabarî’s masters from whom he heard alone, or person-to-person. Al-Ṭabarî also used the term *haddathana* frequently. In fact, he used this term to introduce 45.5% of all the investigated isnāds. He used the term *haddathana* to transmit isnāds from 142 of his 208 masters, but in most cases he used this term to quote from 13 out of the 142 masters. This indicates that these are the masters of al-Ṭabarî from whom he heard in the company of others and that when transmitting from them he used the term *haddathana*. Al-Ṭabarî also used *huddithtu* on 4% of occasions and, rarely (in only 0.3% of instances), *qāla*. This indicates how al-Ṭabarî followed a precise method in transmitting isnāds from his masters. Thus, if a report was narrated to him indirectly, then he would use either of the terms *huddithtu* or *qāla* to indicate this different mode of transmission. According to recognized usage in the Sciences of Ḥadīth, these two terms normally indicate narration using a book or a written document (*sahīfa*) containing ḥadīths without having obtained the previous narrator’s permission. Whoever is in possession of a copy from the last narrator has the right to narrate from it and prefixes narrated passages with terms such as *wajadtu* (I found), *huddithtu* (it was narrated to me), or *qāla* (he said). In his *Tafsīr* al-Ṭabarî normally uses the word *qāla* when he quotes a ḥadīth narrated from the Prophet and omits to mention its isnād. However, he does this in citing only 25 ḥadīths, i.e. in 0.3% of all the investigated isnāds. Al-Ṭabarî almost never uses the two terms *akhbarani* and *akhbarana*. We have suggested that since there is no major difference in the usage of any of the transmission terms *haddathani*, *akhbarani*, *haddathana*, or *akhbarana*, al-Ṭabarî may have sought consistency by choosing to use *haddathani* or *haddathana* instead of the other terms.
Al-Ṭabarī indicated the difference between what he quoted from permitted written documents which reached him by perfect isnāds, and what he quoted from non-permitted sources, i.e. books he had found without perfect isnāds. Having examined the technical terms used to denote the transmitting of narrations, we have reached the conclusion that al-Ṭabarī used the terms haddathanī (he narrated to me) or haddathana (he narrated to us) in connection with isnāds going back to written books which he had obtained permission to narrate, whereas he would precede the material by the word huddithtu (it was narrated to me) in connection with books which he had not obtained permission to narrate. Thus, permitted isnāds are more often preceded by haddathana or haddathanī.

We have reached the conclusion that oral and written transmission went hand-in-hand with al-Ṭabarī’s quotations from those scholars to whom he referred frequently and extensively. These scholarly sources flourished during the generations that preceded his own time, i.e. at the end of the first, and during the second and third centuries AH.

Possibly in the time of Ibn ‘Abbās, or perhaps even earlier in that of ‘Alī b. Abī Ţalib or Ibn Mas‘ūd, as in the time of those scholars who came after, such as Mujāhid, al-Ḍāḥīkā, and al-Rabī’ b. Anas, these people took great interest in investigating the meaning and interpretation of the verses of the Qur‘ān. Therefore, thousands of statements and narrations containing tafsīrāt (traditional exegesis) were quoted from them, as is evidenced in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. Our four lines of investigation may possibly indicate that independent materials on tafsīr were employed in al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr. These materials could have originated from primary sources which may have been considered, in generations before al-Ṭabarī, to be major works of tafsīr. Biographical notes relating to these most cited scholars suggest that most of these sources were written or compiled later with the help of many different orally transmitted isnāds. Most of these written sources were preserved and transmitted by perfect, i.e. complete, permitted isnāds, while some others were transmitted via imperfect, i.e. incomplete, unpermitted isnāds. It is even quite possible that already, at an early time, distinguished books such as the Sahīfa of ‘Alī b. Abī
Talḥa were in circulation. Moreover, it seems apparent from a variety of evidence that later writers found written sources from the generation of the Companions, e.g. Ibn ‘Abbās, who left a written source compiled either by himself or by one of his students, such as Muğāhid b. Jabr, al-Ḍahḥāk, ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ, or Abū Mālik, or Abū Śāliḥ. When we move on through the generation of the Tābi‘ al-Tābi‘īn, a tafsīr tradition becomes even more evident, so that we may consider it certain that people like al-Suddī (d. 128/745), ‘Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ (d. 131/749 or 132/750), ‘Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj (d. 150/767), Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), and Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq (d. 151/768), in the earlier part of the first half of the second century AH, recorded and fixed in writing traditional exegesis. From the end of the second century onward, tafsīr material and sources of different kinds that could be considered authoritative on the basis of a sound isnād were collected more and more into compilatory tafsīrs. This process had in fact started when the method of transmission by isnād had become fixed. It was developed and provided with a sound basis in accordance with the Sciences of Ḥadīth by scholars like ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubāрак (d. 181/797), Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799), ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211/827), and Iṣḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī (d. 220/840), was continued by scholars like Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baḥdādī (d. AH 294), al-Muṭhannā al-Āmulī (d. after 240/862), Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī (d. 248/862), and Muḥammad b. Baḥshār (d. 252/866), and was crowned by the achievement of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 311/923).

We have found that many works of earlier scholars were used by al-Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr; some of which were complete works while some others were only portions which reached al-Ṭabarī through various but specific chains of isnād. This fact seems bolstered by the frequently recurring patterns found in some of al-Ṭabarī’s isnāds. It is therefore possible that the following books were available to him: the Tafsīr of al-Suddī, the Ṣaḥīfa of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, the Tafsīr of the ‘Awfī family, the Tafsīr of Muğāhid, the Tafsīr of al-Ḍahḥāk, the Tafsīr of al-Rabī’ b. Anas, the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam, and books on Maghāzī and Sīra, especially that of Ibn Iṣḥāq.
This leads us to the conclusion that the bulk of the Jāmi‘ al-Bayān of al-Ṭabarî is a compilation of texts from older written works of varying size, which can be reconstructed, at least partly, from the isnāds of the texts.

As for the answer to the third question, having reached the previous conclusion that many ancient written sources can be found within the isnāds of al-Ṭabarî in his Tafsīr, these sources, in my opinion, constitute evidence which may enable us to draw more definite conclusions about the reconstruction of the early development of traditional exegesis, which aimed to determine whether the early transmissions of isnāds were generally valid. We have here, in addition, confirmation that, from early times on, the transmission of tafsīr was usually connected with written documents. So it may well be certain that the claim of the authors of the late second and third centuries AH, that they merely passed on material of older authorities, is historically correct.

In answer to the fourth question, we have found evidence according to which we may state that the theory of Goldziher and Schacht, that the isnāds are worthy of wholesale rejection as mere invention and fabrication, misses the point that many isnāds and traditions can be shown to spring from ancient sources in the primitive exegesis. The strange distribution of narrators in the isnāds of al-Ṭabarî, especially those isnāds springing from the 19 most cited masters, leads us to conclude that these names in the chains of transmission are truly the names of the people who transmitted these narrations. If these names were randomly attached to these isnāds and narrations by people who wished to borrow the prestige of these names, as Schacht suggested, one would not expect to find any consistent pattern in the isnāds being transmitted on their authority. I believe I have demonstrated that there are definite patterns in the chains of transmission attributed to the various narrators. Even going as far up the chains of transmission as Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Alî b. Abī Ṭālib, and other early authorities such as Mujāhid, Qatāda, ‘Aṭā’, Anas b. Mālik, or those who came after such as al-Suddī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Ibn al-Mubārak, chains of transmission referring to these people have a distinct character. If this argument is accepted, I think that it is reasonable to suggest that with the help of the early written sources, such as
the *Tafsir* of al-Ṭabarî containing information taken from early compilations of transmissions, such as those main sources found in al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsir*, where the Prophetic Ḥadîth is not the real object of the information but only part of it, we are now able to raise the question of the authenticity of the *isnād* and tradition anew.

It is clearly recognizable that al-Ṭabarî quotes a large number of points in traditional exegesis for which he mentions different types of *isnāds*. As far as these transmitted chains are concerned, we must ask the question, does he treat the traditions on the same footing, whether they are related to the Prophet himself, or to one or other of the Companions and Followers?

We have found that as a first step in interpretation, i.e. after the Qur‘ān itself which he esteemed to be its own best interpreter, al-Ṭabarî was much concerned to seek light on the interpretation of the Qur‘ān in words uttered by the Prophet himself. If he managed to find such words of interpretation, or information touching on interpretation, contained in Ḥadîths helping to explain the meaning of the Qur‘ān, he would be content with that. So Ḥadîths handed down from the Prophet himself were one of al-Ṭabarî’s principal sources. However, if he failed to find any such light on interpretation, he would then, as a second step, resort to the interpretation of the Companions, especially Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Mas‘ūd, and ‘Alî b. Abī Ṭālib, to whom in fact al-Ṭabarî referred hundreds of times. Eventually, as a third step, al-Ṭabarî would refer to the interpretation of the Followers and those who followed after them. From this it would seem that al-Ṭabarî intended to consult the oldest possible sources of commentary in compiling his *Tafsir*.

In conclusion, one can say that the claim that al-Ṭabarî cited his narrations in a haphazard way and that he presented the information he quoted in a random fashion with no objective, seems unlikely and contrary to the evidence which has been presented during the course of this work.

The numerous *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarî’s *Tafsir* help to inform us concerning the ancient sources which were written in the early days and in circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarî, and which, unfortunately, have not reached us. These sources, found within the *isnāds*, constitute evidence which may enable us to draw fairly positive
conclusions regarding the reconstruction of the early development of the *tafsīr* tradition.

Although al-Ṭabarī’s *isnāds* are various and diverse in their chains of transmission, narrators and technical terms of transmission, at the same time there does exist sufficient uniformity and characteristic patterns in the transmissions for one to be able to speak of certain identifiable features in the transmissions, narrators, and number of accounts al-Ṭabarī narrates from the main sources, etc. These significant patterns argue against the suggestion that all of these *isnāds* are forged and point instead to the genuine possibility that most of them are authentic.

Some specific points found in al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* which would benefit from further investigation and inquiry are as follows:

- What is the proportional ratio of al-Ṭabarī’s references to particular disciplines, such as Qur’ānic interpretation, jurisprudence, belief (‘*aqīda*), philology (*lugha*), Qur’ānic readings (*qirā‘at*), history, causes of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), acts of worship (‘*ibādāt*), and ethics (*akhlāq*)? Does he show a tendency to favour some particular disciplines above others?

- The narrations cited by al-Ṭabarī vary in length, so that he may quote long, medium, or short narrations to explain Qur’ānic verses. Sometimes he cuts short the narrations and gives the general sense, while at other times he quotes the whole narration including the explanation of the Qur’ānic verses. What was al-Ṭabarī’s reason for this practice?

- Considerable differences regarding the number of narrations al-Ṭabarī quoted for each verse are to be observed when checking the interpretation of the verses of the Qur’ān. Thus, in interpreting some few particular verses, al-Ṭabarī cites hundreds of narrations; for instance, he mentions 407 narrations in interpreting just verse 196 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 294 narrations for verse 197 of the same *sūra*, and 191 narrations for verse 238. By complete contrast he leaves some other verses without adducing any narrations for the sake of interpretation, or even on some occasions without interpretation at all, such as verses 12, 105, 120, 149, and 242 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*. So we may ask, what was the reason for his elaborating the interpretation of some particular verses and neglecting the interpretation of others?
We find on many occasions that al-Ṭabari mentions at the end of isnāds the word *mithlaku* (like it) or *nahwahu* (similar to it) and without stating the *main* (text) of the ḥadīth or report itself. Does this indicate an attempt made by al-Ṭabari to summarize his *Tafsīr* by reducing the number of repeated similar narrations, or was there some other reason for this practice?

The above are no more than examples of avenues for further investigation since there remain indeed many other intriguing matters in al-Ṭabari's *Tafsīr Jāmiʿ al-Bayān* which invite investigation.
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