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THE SOURCES OF AL-ṬABARĪ'S *TAFSĪR*

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE *ISNĀD*S IN HIS COMMENTARY ON *SŪRAT AL-FĀTIḤA* 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.

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A. References

- Abbott	Nabia Abbott, *Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition.*
- *A'lām*	al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām.*
- *Ansāb*	al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb.*
- Ibn 'Asākir	Ibn 'Asākir, *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Dimasq.*
- *Bā'ith*	Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bā'ith al-Ḥathīth Sharḥ Ikhtiṣār 'Ulum al-Ḥadīth.*
- *Baghdād*	al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād.*
- *Bidāya*	Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya.*
- Birkeland	H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Qur'ān.*
- Brockelmann	C. Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī.*
- *Buldān*	Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān.*
- *Burhān*	al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*
- Burton	J. Burton, *An Introduction to the Ḥadīth.*
- Cooper	J. Cooper, *The Commentary on the Qur'ān.*
- Al-Dāwūdī	al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn.*
- *Durr*	al-Suyuṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr.*
- *Fatāwā*	Ibn Taymīyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā.*
- *Fatḥ*	Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.*
- *Futūḥ*	al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān.*
- Goldziher	I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies.*
- *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*	I. Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn fī Asmā' al-Mu'allifīn wa-Āthār al-Muṣannifīn.*
- *Ḥilya*	Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā' wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfiyā'.*
- *Ḥuffāẓ*	al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāẓ.*

- *Ḥusn*	al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍara.*
- *'Ibar*	al-Dhahabī, Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān, *al-'Ibar fī Akhbār man Ghabar.*
- *Ikmāl*	Ibn Mākulā, *al-Ikmāl.*
- *Inbāh*	al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt ilā Anbā' al-Nuḥāt.*
- *Iṣāba*	Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba.*
- *Isrā'īliyyāt*	Abū Shahba, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa-al-Mawḍū'āt fī Kutub al-Tafsīr.*
- *Istī'āb*	Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Aṣḥāb.*
- *Itqān*	al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*
- *Jarḥ*	Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *al-Jarḥ wa-al-Ta'dīl.*
- *Kabīr*	al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr.*
- Kaḥḥāla	'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn.*
- *Kamāl*	al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl.*
- *Kāmil*	Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh.*
- *Kāshif*	al-Dhahabī, *al-Kāshif li-man-lahu Riwāya fī al-Kutub al-Sitta.*
- Ibn Kathīr	Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm.*
- *Khulāṣa*	al-Khazrajī, *Khulāṣat Tadhhīb Tahdhīb al-Kamāl.*
- *Kifāya*	al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya fī 'Ilm al-Riwāya.*
- *Lamaḥāt*	Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāgh, *Lamaḥāt fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*
- *Lisān*	Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mīzān.*
- *Lubb al-Lubāb*	al-Suyūṭī, *Lubb al-Lubāb fī Taḥrīr al-Ansāb.*
- *Lubāb*	Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb.*
- *Lughāt*	al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' wa-al-Lughāt.*
- *Ma'rifa*	al-Basawī, *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh.*
- *Majrūḥīn*	Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Majrūḥīn min al-Muḥaddithīn wa-al-Ḍu'afā' wa-al-Matrūkīn.*
- *Mashāhīr*	Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Mashāhīr.*

- *Miftāḥ*	Ṭāshköprüzāde, Abū al-Khayr Aḥmad b. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn, *Miftāḥ al-Sa'āda wa-Miṣbāḥ al-Siyāda fī Mawḍū'āt al-'Ulūm.*
- *Mir'āt al-Jinān*	al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-Jinān wa-'Ibrat al-Yaqẓān fī Ma'rifat ma-Yu'tabar min Ḥawādith al-Zamān.*
- *Mīzān*	al-Dhahabī, Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān, *Mīzān al-I'tidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl.*
- *MS*	A manuscript copy of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr, Jāmi' al-Bayān*, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, MS 212/JJ.
- *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*	'Ādil Nuwayhiḍ, *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn.*
- *Mufassirīn*	al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn.*
- *Muḥallā*	Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Muḥallā.*
- *Muntaẓam*	Ibn al-Jawazī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam.*
- *Muqaddima*	Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima.*
- Muslim	Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ.*
- *Al-Mustadrak*	al-Ḥākim al-Nīsāburī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn.*
- *Mustaṭrafa*	al-Kattānī, Muḥammad, *al-Risāla al-Mustaṭrafa.*
- Nadīm	Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist.*
- *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*	Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira.*
- *OTT*	F. Leemhuis, *Origins of the Tafsīr Tradition.*
- *Qafw*	Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Qafw al-Athar fī Ṣafw 'Ilm al-Athar*
- *Qawā'id*	al-Qāsimī, *Qawā'id al-Taḥdīth.*
- *QS*	J. Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies.*
- *Qurrā'*	Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-Nihāya fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā' al-Kibār.*
- *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*	al-Khawānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā' wa-al-Sādāt.*

- Ibn Sa'd	Muḥammad b. Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*.
- *Ṣaghīr*	al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Ṣaghīr*.
- Schacht	Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*.
- Sezgin	F. Sezgin, *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-'Arabī*.
- *Shadharāt*	Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*.
- *Sīyar*	al-Dhahabī, Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān, *Sīyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*.
- Al-Subkī	al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyā al-Kubrā*.
- *Ṭabaqāt*	Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *al-Ṭabaqāt*.
- *Tadhkira*	al-Dhahabī, Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*.
- *Tadrīb*	al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*.
- *Tafsīr*	al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*.
- *Tahdhīb*	Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*.
- *Taqrīb*	Ibn Ḥajar, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*.
- *Taqyīd*	al-'Irāqī, *al-Taqyīd wa-al-Īḍāḥ bi-Sharḥ Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.
- *Tārīkh*	Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *al-Tārīkh*.
- *Tashīl*	'Adawī, *al-Tashīl*.
- *Taysīr*	Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān, *Taysīr Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth*.
- *Thiqāt*	Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*.
- *'Ulum*	Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *'Ulum al-Ḥadīth*
- *Usd al-Ghāba*	Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba fī Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥāba*.
- *Wafayāt*	Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān fī Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān*.
- *Wāfī*	al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt*.
- *Mu'jam*	Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*, or *Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma'rifat al-Adīb*.
- *Ẓuhr*	Aḥmad Amīn, *Ẓuhr al-Islām*.

- *Ẓunūn*	Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa-al-Funūn.*

It should be noted that two versions of the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī 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 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī and Marmaduke Pickthall, although in some passages slight modifications have been made.

B. General Abbreviations

AH	= *Anno Hijri*
b.	(followed by a name) = ibn
BH	before the Hijra
ca.	= *circa* about
cf.	= compare
d.	= died
ed.	= edited or editor
eds.	= editors
e. g.	= for example
esp. ch.	= especially chapter
f. n.	= footnote
lit.	= literally
MS	= manuscript
n.d.	= no date

[1] No date is given.

no.	= number
nos.	= numbers
n.pl.	= no place
n.publ.	= no publisher
p.	= page
pp.	= pages
s.	= *sūra* (in the Qur'ān)
scil.	= namely
trans.	= translated or translator
v.	= verse
via	= through
viz	= that is to say; namely
vol.	= volume

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-Suyūtī 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

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[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 Yaḥyā 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.

It should be remembered, however, that all these are merely interpretations of limited numbers of verses and chapters of the Qur'ān. For further information on this issue, see chapter II on "Origins and Development of the *Tafsīr*", and compare also the chapter entitled "Introduction to al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*." See also al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:371; Sezgin, 1:204, 277, 2:223; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:211, 281, 2:730.

[2] The book known as *Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk* (The History of Nations and Kings).

[3] Sezgin, 1/2: 159.

[4] See al-Dhahabī, *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."[7]

Basing itself on the Tradition literature, al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* is the broadest and the first extant comprehensive commentary on the Qur'ān in terms of preserving the largest amount of explanation and the detailing of many *isnāds*.[8] Traditional Qur'ānic exegesis reached its apogee with this *Tafsīr*, which reflects favourably al-Ṭabarī's comprehensive knowledge and vast erudition. Al-Ṭabarī was a genuine polymath in every facet of traditional scholarship, including *tafsīr*, Ḥadīth, history, *fiqh*, grammar, and poetry. For him all these areas of knowledge had become an indivisible unit. Regarding al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* and his competence in this discipline, al-Suyūtī said,

> The interpretation by al-Ṭabarī is the best and greatest of all interpretations because it is based on the authority of transmission by chains of *isnāds* that go back to the interpretations of the Prophet's Ḥadīth, Companions (*Ṣaḥāba*), Followers (*Tābi'ūn*), and their followers (*Tābi' al-Tābi'īn*). Al-Ṭabarī is also concerned in his *Tafsīr* with investigating many of the narrations he quotes. He evaluates them and gives his preferences to those he consider most correct. He discusses *i'rāb* (syntax or parsing) and employs his *ijtihād* (legal opinion). In this sense he exceeds the interpretations by Muḥammad b. Yazīd, known as Ibn Mājah [209-273/824-887],[9] Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh al-Ḥākim [321-405/933-1014],[10] Aḥmad b. Mūsā, known as Ibn Mardawayh [323-410/935-1019],[11] Abū al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān [270-354/884-965],[12] and Ibn al-Mundhir [544-606/1150-1210].[13] [14]

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[7] See Goldziher, al-Madhāhib al-Tafsirīyya (*Interpretation Ideologies)*, 107.

[8] *Isnād* (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-Ṣalāḥ, 13; J. Burton, 199; Juynboll, *Tradition*, 19.

[9] See *Tadhkira*, 636; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:272; *'Ibar*, 2:51; *Wafayāt*, 4:279; Sezgin, 1:377. See also chapter on "Origins and Development of the *Tafsīr*".

[10] See *Baghdād*, 5:473; *Wafayāt*, 1:613; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:64; *Lisān*, 5:232; *Tadhkira*, 3:227; *Wāfī*, 3:320; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Qurrā'*, 2:185; *Zunūn*, 55, 144, 165, 292; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:59.

[11] See *Wāfī*, 8:201; *Tadhkira*, 1050; *'Ibar*, 3:102; *Shadharāt*, 3:190; *Iṣfahān*, 1:168; al-Dawūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:93; *Mustaṭrafa*, 26; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 4:245; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1:71.

[12] A Portion of Ibn Ḥibbān's *Tafsīr* exists in the Library of the University of Istanbul. See *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:511; *Wāfī*, 2:317; *Lisān*, 5:112; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 3:342; *Shadharāt*, 3:16; *Miftāḥ*, 2:15; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:44.

[13] See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 17:71; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 13:54; *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 585; *Shadharāt*, 5:22; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:2; *Zunūn*, 182, 437; *Wafayāt*, 4:141.

[14] *Itqān*, 2:538. For further appreciative comments on the importance of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, see the chapter entitled "Introduction to his Interpretation."

Here, our principal concern is to identify the value of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* with regard to the sources which he depended upon in compiling it. 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, some of which, unfortunately, have not reached us, such as the *Tafsīrs* of the Companion Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), Mujāhid (d. 104/722),[15] and Qatāda (d. 118/736), while some others have reached us, such as the *Tafsīrs* of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) and 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827).[16] However, many of the sources which al-Ṭabarī used and which existed during his lifetime remain lost.

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 Ḥadīth study, i.e. the transmitting of narrations.[17] Al-Ṭabarī's method of referring to *isnāds* and using them extensively is clearly evidenced in his *Tafsīr*.[18]

Analysis of the statistical and historical dimensions applied in this dissertation and the types of disciplines found in the contents in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, supplemented by the results of comparing the terms of transmission used by al-Ṭabarī for transmitting his *isnāds*, lead me to conclude that al-Ṭabarī 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 *isnāds*, 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'ānic 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

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[15] Sezgin (1:71) stated that a manuscript copy of the *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid exists in Dār 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 *isnād* as reference is standard in al-Ṭabarī's writing, even in his *Tārīkh*.

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-Ṭabarī mentions at the beginning of each *isnad*, I have reached the conclusion that al-Ṭabarī uses the terms *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me) or *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us) in connection with *isnāds* 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 *ḥuddithtu* (it was narrated to me) when he has obtained his material from books which he had not obtained permission to narrate. Thus, permitted *isnāds* are more often preceded by *ḥaddathanā* or *ḥaddathanī*.[19] In this respect, the general conclusion can be drawn that for the majority of al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*, 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* and its *isnāds* in the eyes of both Muslim and Western scholars

When discussing traditional exegesis, Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406) mentions, as an example, the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī and accuses him of not arranging or organizing his narrations and classifying their *isnāds* according to a clear method. Ibn Khaldūn used the phrase *'ashwā'ī*, which may be translated "random quotation". He said, "This type of interpretation [*tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr* (interpreting the Qur'ān 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 *isnāds* and narrations." [20] A similar view is adopted by J. Cooper, who argues that the first objective of al-Ṭabarī in compiling his *Tafsīr* was to bring together everything that existed on the subject of exegetic Tradition, transmitted from orthodox Sunnī authorities, thus excluding, for example, Shī'ī exegesis. Cooper adds, "Often al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Dhahabī argued that al-Ṭabarī cited all these extensive *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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, such as the Tunisian scholar Muḥammad al-Fāḍil b. 'Āshūr (d. 1284/1867),[23] who wrote,

> Those who regard al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* as being solely dependent on the transmitted narrations are only taking into account its external form, containing [as it does] many *isnāds* and transmitted traditions. They do not contemplate al-Ṭabarī'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 ḥadīths which it incorporates, al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* is usually judged to be a particularly important example of *tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr*. Yet *Jāmi' al-Bayān* 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's *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-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*.[26] The purpose of this last area of research is to determine whether these *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] *Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:212.
[23] See *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:378; *'Idda*, 2:151; Kaḥḥāla, 10:102.
[24] Ibn *'Āshur, A-Tafsīr wa-Rijāluh*, 36.
[25] Jane D. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Hermeneutics*, 48.
[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-Umam 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 *Fihrist* 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

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[27] Jawād 'Alī, "Maṣādir Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī", *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī*, 1 (1950) 143-231; II (1951) 135-190; III (1954) 46-56; and X (1961) 425-436.

[28] See Sezgin, 1/2:161 and H. Horst's comments on narration in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*: "*Zur Überlieferung im Koran Kommentar Tabari's*", *ZDMG*, 103 (1953), 290-307.

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."[29] In an article contained in his study of the narration of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, Horst went as far as to say that al-Ṭabarī could have used the full text of some earlier interpretations, and taken some quotations from other written sources.[30] The research contained in the present study investigates the late narrators, i.e. al-Ṭabarī's masters, who are common for several *isnād* clusters, and then those before them (masters of al-Ṭabarī's masters), followed by those who preceded these, until we reach the oldest common link name which preceded the branching of the *isnād*. The purpose of this is to reach the names of authors and compilers of documents which al-Ṭabarī used hundreds of times as sources for his *Tafsīr*.

The reliability of *tafsīr* 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-Zurqānī and al-Dhahabī,[31] both of whom rely on al-Suyūtī, 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 *tafsīr* from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn Mas'ūd, and Ibn 'Abbās, al-Suyūtī expresses his suspicion of many chains of transmission that go back to textual exegesis attributed to the Companions and particularly those attributed to Ibn 'Abbās.[32] Al-Shāfi'ī (150-204/767-819), who is one of the four leading *fuqahā'*, said, "Most of the *tafsīr*s traced to Ibn 'Abbās are not reliable. The authentic ones do not exceed more than around 100 statements."[33] It is also reported that Ibn Ḥanbal (164-241/780-855) said, "Three things are based on nothing: the *tafsīr*, the *malāḥim* (battles), and the *maghāzī* (conquests)."[34] Al-Dhahabī 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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[29] Wansbrough, *QS*, 119-246. Cf. Fred Leemhuis, *OTT*, 15, 16.
[30] H. Horst, *ZDMG*, 103 (1953), 290-307.
[31] *Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufasīrūn*, 1:215.
[32] *Itqān*, 2:1250.
[33] *Ibid.*, 2:1233.
[34] *Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:47.

transmitted by suspected persons, which have been incorporated into the *tafsīr* tradition.[35]

In Western studies, of course, the view that, because of the general untrustworthiness of *isnāds*,[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.[37] In this view he was followed by Birkeland,[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.[39] Only towards the end of the first century did opposition from the ultra-pious circle to all interpretation of the Qur'ān arise, fading away only around the year 200/815 when *tafsīr* was subjected to the strict methods of transmission critique.[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.[41] *Haggadic*, or narrative, exegesis is, according to Wansbrough, chronologically the earliest type of Qur'ānic exegesis, to be followed successively by other exegetical types such as *halakhic*, legal, *masoretic*, or textual exegesis.[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

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[35] *Ibid.*, 1:48.
[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.
[37] Leemhuis, *OTT*, 16.
[38] H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oslo, 1955).
[39] A similar view is voiced by al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:34-36.
[40] Birkeland, 42.
[41] Wansbrough, *QS*, 144.
[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 *tafsīr*s 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 *isnād*s 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 *Ṣaḥīfa* (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 ʿAlī b. Abi 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 ʿAbbās 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 Saʿīd b. Jubayr as intermediaries.[48] Sezgin concludes that since Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear the *Tafsīr* directly from Ibn ʿAbbās, he must have received it in a copy written by Ibn ʿAbbās 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 ʿAbbās'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 ʿAbbās, 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-Ḍaḥḥāk 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-Fātiḥa* 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-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*

It is obvious that within the books of *tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr* (traditional exegesis), such as the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī,[57] 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.[58] 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.[59] 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-Ṭabarī'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.[60]

1- In citing his *isnāds*, does al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī quotes a large number of points in traditional exegesis for which he mentions different types of *isnāds*. As far as these

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[57] Or Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm musnadan 'an al-Rasūl wa-al-Ṣaḥāba wa-al-Tābi'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-Ṭabarī'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 ~ Aṣbāṭ ~ 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*, *ḥaddathanī*, *ḥuddithtu*, and, more rarely, *qāla* and *sami'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'(*ṭuruq* or *alfāẓ al-taḥammul wa-al-adā'*).[63]

7- There is an evident disparity in the frequency according to which al-Ṭabarī employs these different expressions. For instance, *ḥaddathanā* and *ḥaddathanī* 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 *ḥaddathanī* 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?

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[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 *Taysīr*, 158.

9- It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī may use one particular *isnād*, as when he narrates, for instance, from the Follower 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam. In other cases he may use two *isnād*s, as when he narrates, for instance, from al-Rabī' b. Anas. By contrast, it is clear that al-Ṭabarī narrates from some commentators on the Qur'ān without having any particular transmitted chains through which he narrates from them; for example, al-Ṭabarī's *isnad*s reaching back to 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, 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-Ṭabarī 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-Shāfi'ī, while he rarely resorts to Abū Ḥanīfa and never mentions Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[64] Along with Mālik and al-Shāfi'ī, he also refers to Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, al-Sha'bī,[65] and some others. We may ask, what then is the reason behind his exclusion of Ibn Ḥanbal?

11- When al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī had confidence only in these two?[66]

12- With regard to al-Ṭabarī's references to the causes of the revelation (*asbāb 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-Ṭabarī's criticism of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his regarding him as only a Traditionist and not a jurist, see the chapter I, on al-Ṭabarī's biography.

[65] My examination shows that 90% of the narrations cited by al-Ṭabarī throughout the whole interpretation which were taken from the Follower, 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, 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 (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). This indicates that al-Ṭabarī took the information on jurisprudence from this particular individual more than from any other person. See F. al-Muftāḥ, "The Commentary of al-Sha'bī 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-Tabari 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-Fātiḥa* 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.[67] 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'ānic 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 Isḥāq, 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 *Tafsīrs* 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

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[68] A well-known commentator and writer of a *Tafsīr*. See *Kābīr*, 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, *Ṭabaqāt*, 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 (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), *Sīra*, supernatural stories (*ghaybiyyāt*), Qur'ānic quotations, abrogation (*al-nāsikh wa-al-mansūkh*), lexicography, and Qur'ānic readings (*qirā'āt*). 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 Qur'ān.

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-Fātiḥa* 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 ḥadīth 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.

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[70] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 1:8.

[71] Narrated by Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj. See his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:19. For further information regarding the importance of these two *sūras*, see 'Adawī, *Tashīl*, 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[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 Aḥmad and Maḥmūd Shākir.[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- *ḥaddathanī, ḥaddathanī*, etc- are similarly denoted by Arabic numerals.

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[72] Statistical Package for Social Sciences. This program can be found in the computing service, Main Library, University of Edinburgh.

[73] Published by Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1969.

- The various scholarly disciplines, such as interpretation, jurisprudence, history, doctrine, and Qur'ānic 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-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* with regard to the sources found in the *isnāds* which he depended upon in compiling his *Tafsīr*, the possibility of his referring to written sources, and the credibility of the *isnāds* 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī period, a general discussion is made of the origins and development of *tafsīr*. Chapters Three and Four

are intended as an introduction to al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*. In Chapter Three, I discuss such matters as the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's general method, the importance of knowing the meaning of the Qur'ān, al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's reliance on the ostensible (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the Qur'ān, the redundant letters in the Qur'ān, the language of the Qur'ānic expression, the Arabic dialects (*ḥarf*s) in which the Qur'ān was sent down, and, finally, al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s and sources. In Chapter Five, I study al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's narration of various *isnād*s. Evidence presented in this chapter points to al-Ṭabarī's use of *isnād*s as being selective according to a well-classified arrangement. This indicates that al-Ṭabarī did follow a certain method in citing his *isnād*s, and that the view that al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s 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 *JĀMI' AL-BAYĀN*

Chapter I

Al-Ṭabarī's Biography

1. His Name and Genealogy

Some authors say that his name is Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr[1] b. Yazīd b. Kathīr b. Ghālib al-Ṭabarī,[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-Ṭabarī was born at the end of 224/839 or the beginning of 225/840. This was mentioned by al-Ṭabarī himself to his student al-Qāḍī Ibn Kāmil[4] 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-Ṭabarī's life was al-Khaṭīb al- Baghdādī (392-463/1002-1071), who specified al-Ṭabarī's date of birth. He was followed by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (574-626/1178-1229), who dedicated a long chapter to al-Ṭabarī in his book, *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*. 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-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam*, 18:40; al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248), *Inbāh*, 3:89; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372), *Bidāya*, 11:145; Ibn al-Jawzī (510-597/1116-1201), *Muntaẓam*, 6:170; Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083), *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, 93; al-Nawawī (d. 677/1278), *Lughāt*, 1/1:78; and al-Dhahabī, *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-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362), *Wāfī*, 2:284.

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

[5] *Baghdād*, 2:166; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:40; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6:170.

3. His life

Al-Ṭabarī was born in Āmul[6] in the region of Ṭabaristān.[7] For this reason, he is known both as al-Āmulī and al-Ṭabarī, [8] although the latter is much more widely used.[9]

Al-Ṭabarī 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 family[11] used to live and he used to

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[6] Āmul was the capital of Ṭabaristān 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 Ḥarḥāz, 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-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 3:679; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 1:57; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād wa-Akhbār al-'Ibād*; *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., "Āmul", and Bartholomew, Word Travel Map, Middle East.

[7] Ṭabaristān 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 "*ṭibr*". In another narration it was stated that its citizens used to fight their enemies using *ṭibr* (axes). Thus, its name was first Ṭibristān and from this is supposed to have derived the name of the region, but then this word was Arabicized as Ṭabaristān, *ṭabar* being the Arabicization of *ṭibr*. Sa'īd b. al-'Ās conquered this region in the time of the Rāshidūn Caliph, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. See *Ansāb*, 8:204; *Buldān*, 4:13-16; *Mu'jam*, 18:48; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 3:745-746; al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, 217, 403, 406; Nadīm, 291; and Ibn Isfandiyār, *History of Ṭabaristān*, ed. E. G. Browne.

[8] There is no dispute among all the historians and biographers, who all refer to Muḥammad b. Jarīr as al-Ṭabarī. See *Ansāb*, 8:204.

[9] Some other scholars bore the nickname al-Ṭabarī, including:

1) Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (226-310/841-923), whose name was Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī al-Āmulī Abū Ja'far. He was one of the Imāmī Shi'ite scholars. He died in Baghdad. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 5:103; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist*, 158-159; al-'Āmilī, *A'yān al-Shī'a*, 44: 139-140; and Kaḥḥāla, 9:146.

2) Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī al-Ṣaghīr (d. 411/1020), whose name was Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī al-Ṣaghīr Abū Ja'far. See Kaḥḥāla, 9:147.

[10] His father was Jarīr b. Yazīd b. Kathīr b. Ghālib. See *Baghdād*, 2:162 and Yāqūt, *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-Ṭabarī remarked about his book, the *Tafsīr*: "I made up my mind to compile it while I was still a young lad." See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:61. This would not have happened unless his family had greatly valued knowledge. This esteem for knowledge is reflected in Jarīr'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 Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:49 and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 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-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī (d. AH 1089) in his book *Shadharāt*, 3:105. Ibn al-Athīr (555-630/1160-1232) (*Lubāb*, 366) and Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt*, 4:192) state that al-Ṭabarī had a nephew who attained a position of distinction in the history of Arabic literature. This was the famous poet Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-'Abbās al-Khawārizmī (d. AH 383), who was also known as al-Ṭabarī on account of his relationship with Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. See al-Ṭihrānī, *Musaffā al-Maqāl fī Musannīfī 'Ilm al-Rijāl*, ed. Aḥmad Munzawī, Tehran, 1959, 407.

send his son a yearly allowance[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."[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.[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*.

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[12] This allowance did not always arrive punctually. See L. Nicholson, *History of the Arabs*, 350, cf. 10.

[13] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:49.

[14] Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥawfī, *al-Ṭabarī*, 58.

4. His journeys to other places in search of knowledge

When al-Ṭabarī reached the age of twenty,[15] he realized that Āmul, 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, Āmul. Thus, his first stopping place was Rayy.[16] His visit to Rayy provided him with the opportunity of making contact with Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, whom al-Ṭabarī refers to in his *Tafsīr* and from whom he cites hundreds of narrations.[17] It is stated by Yāqūt that al-Ṭabarī managed to narrate more than one hundred thousand ḥadīths from Ibn Ḥumayd.[18] In Rayy al-Ṭabarī was able to learn, record, and digest thousands of ḥadīths, reports, and narrations. In one of Rayy's villages, he used to visit and learn from Aḥmad b. Ḥammād al-Dawlabī, from whom he narrated the famous books of *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* and the *Maghāzī* of Muḥammad b. Isḥāq.[19] In Rayy al-Ṭabarī also learned from Abū Muqātil.[20]

From Rayy al-Ṭabarī 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-Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, and al-Shāfi'ī-Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal became the acknowledged leader in the field. His disciples, with whom al-Ṭabarī found himself in conflict later, exercised enormous influence in the city.[21] Al-Ṭabarī thought it necessary not to miss the chance of hearing from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who was a Ḥadīth scholar of the highest class. Unfortunately, Ibn Ḥanbal died shortly before the entrance of al-Ṭabarī into Baghdad.[22]

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[15] Ibn al-Jazarī, *Qurrā'*, 2:107. Some others, like Ibn Ḥajar (*Lisān*, 5:102), said that al-Ṭabarī began his journey in search of knowledge when he was twelve years old. See also al-Ḥawfī, *al-Ṭabarī*, 33.

[16] Rayy is a famous city, situated 160 *farsakh*s (leagues, or about 3 miles) from Nīsābur and 26 *farsakh*s from the Caspian Sea. See *Buldān*, 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-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s.

[18] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50

[19] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:49.

[20] Nadīm, 291.

[21] Cf. the section, His Death.

[22] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50.

Being disappointed by the death of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Ṭabarī was not prepared to stay in Baghdad for long. He had to look for other places where learned scholars were still alive. Passing through Wāsiṭ, where he stayed for a while, he came to Kufa, where he was fortunate enough to meet Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-'Alā', from whom al-Ṭabarī narrated frequently and extensively, as we will see later when we discuss al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*. It is stated that al-Ṭabarī narrated more than one hundred thousand ḥadīths from Abū Kurayb.[23] In Kufa al-Ṭabarī was able to meet with Hannād b. al-Sarī,[24] also one of al-Ṭabarī's most cited masters in his *Tafsīr*. He also met with a person called Ismā'īl b. Mūsā and another named Sa'īd b. Yaḥyā, from whom al-Ṭabarī obtained the book *al-Maghāzī* by Ibn Isḥāq.[25]

Al-Ṭabarī returned to Baghdad, where he studied Qur'ānic Sciences (*'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*) and jurisprudence. In Baghdad he met the disciples of Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfi'ī. We know at least of prominent Shafi'ite scholars such as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Za'farānī (d. 270/883)[26] and Abū Sa'īd al-Iṣṭarkhī, both of whom influenced al-Ṭabarī greatly.[27] While in Baghdad al-Ṭabarī managed to meet and learn from a person called Abū Muqātil, of whom Ibn al-Nadīm noted, "Al-Ṭabarī took the Iraqi law (*fiqh al-'Irāq*) from Abū Muqātil."[28]

From Baghdad al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's *isnāds*. In Baṣra al-Ṭabarī also learnt from others such as Abū al-Ash'ath,[29] Bishr b. Mu'ādh al-'Aqadī,[30] 'Imrān b. Mūsā al-Qazzāz,[31] Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-A'lā al-Ṣan'ānī, Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā,

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[23] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50; *Tadhkira*, 2:497.
[24] *Tadhkira*, 2:507; *Tahdhīb*, 11:70.
[25] *Baghdād*, 14:132; *Shadharāt*, 1:341.
[26] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 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, *Ḥuffāẓ*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, *Tahdhīb*, *Tadhkira*, and *Baghdād*.
[29] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50.
[30] *Ibid.*; Nadīm, 291.
[31] Nadīm, 291; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50; *Tadhkira*, 2:762.

and Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Harshī,[32] 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, Baṣra, Kufa, and Wāsiṭ. 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'.[33] The materials collected from al-'Abbās b. al-Walīd were utilized by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*.[34] Ibn al-Jazarī states, "Al-Ṭabarī took the Qur'ānic readings from al-'Abbās b. al-Walīd b. Mazyad."[35] Al-Ṭabarī also took the Qur'ānic readings from Sulaymān b. Khallād al-Ṭalḥī.[36] Leaving the mosque of Beirut, al-Ṭabarī crossed to Fusṭāṭ in Egypt in the year 253/867, where he stayed until 257/870.[37] The disciples of Mālik and al-Shāfi'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.[38] He must therefore have learnt about Mālikī opinion from Mālik's disciples such as Yūnus al-Ṣadafī al-Miṣrī[39] and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ḥakam al-Miṣrī.[40] 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,

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[32] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50.
[33] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:52; *Tadhkira*, 2:279; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Qurrā'*, 2:107; *Shadharāt*, 2:160.
[34] E.g. *Tafsīr*, 2:42.
[35] *Qurrā'*, 2:107.
[36] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:52.
[37] *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmiyyah*, 15:67.
[38] It will be noted in the later discussion of this chapter that Mālik was one of al-Ṭabarī's important sources from whom he narrated many times.
[39] *Tadhkira*, 2:528; *Tahdhīb*, 11:440.
[40] Nadīm, 291.

Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzaymā (223-311/838-923), and other Egyptian scholars.[41]

Al-Ṭabarī continued to hold Shafi'ite views for a considerable period of time. He passed Shafi'ite judgements (*iftā*) 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.[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.[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.[44] Being asked about the science of poetical metres (*'ilm al-'arūḍ*), 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-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, the founder of the science. He immediately borrowed one of the primary sources on *'ilm al-'arūḍ* and studied it with care and vigour.[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 Āmul, 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

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[41] Yāqūt, *Mu 'jam*, 18:55; Nadīm, 291.
[42] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:52.
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*, 18:56.
[45] *Ibid.*, 18:54.

long absence.[46] In the end he had to flee to Baghdad,[47] 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.[48]

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)[49] 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. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's] book, *Fī Adab al-Nufūs*."[50] 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."[51]

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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] ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Ṭabarī, who lived in Damascus, heard and learned from Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī his interpretation of the Qur'ān. Kaḥḥāla (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-Ṭabarī'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."[52]

Evidence of al-Ṭabarī'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."[53] 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-Ṭabarī 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.[54]

An example of this practice occurred when the Caliph al-Muktafī 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-Muktafī read it and was greatly impressed and ordered that a splendid prize be given to al-Ṭabarī, 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, *Ṭabaqāt*, 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-Mu'minīn*) to order the police (*al-shuraṭ*)[55] to prevent those who ask for favours (and beggars) from entering the *maqṣūrah* (the place where the Imām stands) [56] until the end of the Friday religious sermon (*khuṭbah*)."[57] Caliph al-Muktafī 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 'Alī Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydullāh, 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*)[58] with a bag (*budrah*)[59] inside in which there were ten thousand *dirham*s. Along with the *zinbīl*, the minister also sent him a letter (*riq'ah*)[60] 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 *dirham*s."' 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.[61]

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[55] *Al-shuraṭ* (sing. *al-shurṭī*) means those who keep law and order in the state. *Ṣāḥib al-shurṭa* is the chief superintendent (of police). *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, 2:479.

[56] *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, 2:739.

[57] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:24 and *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 31.

[58] *Zinbīl* means a basket, container, or sack. *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, 1:400.

[59] *Budrah* 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-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, 1:43.

[60] *Riq'ah* refers to a piece of paper or animal skin on which people used to write. *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, 1:365.

[61] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 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, unvitiated, from God.

We may cite yet other examples. When the minister al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ḥasan[63] asked al-Ṭabarī to compile a compendium in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), he complied *al-Khafīf* 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 ʿUbaydullāh b. Yaḥyā 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 Jaʿfar [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-Hayjāʾ b. Ḥamdān sent al-Ṭabarī three thousand *dīnārs*. When he looked at them, he was surprised and said, "I will not accept

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[62] *Ibid.*, 18:89

[63] Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī became a minister of state on 12th *Dhu al-Qaʿdah* 290/907, in the time of al-Muqtadir Billāh. See Zambaur, *Muʿjam al-Ansāb wa-al-Usrāt al-Ḥākimah fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, tr. Zakī Muḥammad Ḥasan Bik, Cairo, 1372/1952, 7.

[64] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:137.

[65] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, 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'.[66]

His neighbour, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Muḥarrar, sent him two chickens as a gift and al-Ṭabarī sent him a garment (*thawb*)[67] 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.[68]

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.[69]

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-Khāqānī 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.[70] 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

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[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, *Muntaẓam*, 6:171-172.
[70] His refusal to become a judge was mentioned by al-Farghānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 308.

> from God. You will also revive a *Sunna* that has long been forgotten.' However, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī, 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's personal and social life, both in connection with individuals and with society in general.

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[71] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 8:356; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:137.

[72] When al-Ṭabarī entered Ṭabaristān on his return from travelling, he found that public derision for Abū Bakr and 'Umar (the Rāshidūn 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-Ṭabarī. When the news reached al-Ṭabarī, he fled. The man who conveyed the news to al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī'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,[73] a district in Baghdad, as is mentioned by Yāqūt.[74] For some time he also lived in Bāq al-Ṭāq, a fortress in Ṭabaristān.[75] After that he built himself a house at Ruḥbat Ya'qūb[76] 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 *ẓuhr* (noon) prayer at home and write his books until the *'aṣr* (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 *'ishā'* (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.[77]

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.[78]

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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, *Mu'jam*, 18:60-61.

[75] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 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, *Mu'jam*, 18:40. Ruḥbat Ya'qūb took its name from Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd, who was a *mawlā* of the Banū Sulaym and the minister of al-Mahdī b. al-Manṣūr. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 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-'Aṭash in Baghdad. There he would perform his daily prayers. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said, "Abū Bakr b. Mujāhid went towards the mosque to perform the *Tarāwīḥ* prayers. He walked until he reached the end of Sūq al-'Aṭash 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."[79]

E- His View on Marriage

Al-Ṭabarī was famous for his asceticism, keeping away from the pleasures of this life,[80] maintaining piety, humbleness[81] 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."[82] 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."[83]

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 (*'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*), history, jurisprudence, language, and Ḥadīth.

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[79] *Baghdād*, 2:164; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:124.
[80] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:61.
[81] *Ibid.*, 18:60.
[82] *Lisān*, 5:102.
[83] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 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-Amṣār fī Aḥkām Sharā'i' 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-Umam wa-al-Mulūk*, 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) *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, or *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 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 ḥadīths, as is clear from the title.[92] 5) *Kitāb Tahdhīb al-Athār*,[93] also dealing with narrations. 6) *Kitāb Risālat al-Baṣīr fi 'Ulūm al-Dīn.*[94] 7) *Kitāb al-'Aqīda.*[95] 8) *Kitāb al-Qirā'āt.*[96] 9) *Kitāb Ikhtiyār min Aqāwīl al-Fuqahā'.*[97] 10) *Kitāb Adab al-Quḍāt wa-al-Muḥāḍarāt wa-al-Sijillāt.*[98] 11) *Kitāb al-Manāsik.*[99] 12) *Kitāb al-Ādar fī al-Uṣul.*[100] 13) *Kitāb al-I'tidhār.*[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-Miṣriyyah. 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-Muḥāribīn min Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā'.* See Brockelmann, 3:49.

[85] Nadīm, 292.

[86] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:159.

[87] *Wāfī*, 2:285.

[88] *Baghdād*, 12:163; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:41; *Ẓunūn*, 1:297.

[89] *Baghdād*, 2:163; Nadīm, 292; *Wāfī*, 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; *Wāfī*, 2:286; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 8:348.

[93] *Baghdād*, 2:163; Nadīm, 292; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:41; 292; *Wāfī*, 2:285.

[94] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:80.

[95] Sezgin, 3:527.

[96] Nadīm, 292; *Wāfī*, 2:285; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:45, 68, 65.

[97] *Wāfī*, 2:285.

[98] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:45.

[99] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 8:352.

[100] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:81.

[101] *Ibid.*, 18:57; *Wāfī*, 2:287.

Qawl fī Aḥkām Sharā'i' al-Islām.[103] 16) *Kitāb al-Khafīf fī Aḥkām Sharā'i' al-Islām.*[104] 17) *Kitāb Dhayl al-Madhīl.*[105] 18) *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam fī Raddih 'alā Mālik.*[106]19) *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā dhī al-Asfār.*[107]20) *Kitāb al-Zakāt.*[108] 21) *Kitāb al-Shirb.*[109] 22) *Kitāb al-Shurūṭ.*[110] 23) *Kitāb al-Shahādāt.*[111] 24) *Kitāb al-Ṣalāt.*[112] 25) *Kitāb Ṭuruq al-Ḥadīth.*[113] 26) *Kitāb al-Ṭahāra.*[114] 27) *Kitāb 'Ibārat al-Ru'ya.*[115] 28) *Kitāb al-'Adad wa-al-Tanzīl.*[116] 29) *Kitāb Firdaws al-Ḥikma.*[117] 30) *Kitāb Faḍā'il Abī Bakr wa-'Umar.*[118] 31) *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-'Abbās.*[119] 32) *Kitāb Faḍā'il 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.*[120] 33) *Kitāb al-Qiyās.*[121] 34) *Kitāb al-Libās.*[122] 35) *Kitāb Laṭīf al-Qawl fī Sharā'i' al-Islām.*[123]36) *Kitāb Mukhtaṣar al-Farā'iḍ.*[124] 37) *Kitāb al-Mustarshad.*[125] 38) *Kitāb Musnad Ibn 'Abbās.*[126] 39) *Kitāb al-Musnad al-Mujarrad.*[127] 40) *Kitāb Marātib al-'Ulamā'.*[128] 41) *Kitāb al-Mūjaz fī al-Uṣūl.*[129] 42) *Kitāb al-Waṣāyā.*[130] 43) *Kitāb al-Waqf.*[131] There are some other works of al-Ṭabarī mentioned by Yāqūt, Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Ṣafadī, and al-Khaṭīb.

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[102] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:73; *Wāfī*, 2:286.
[103] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:75; Nadīm, 291.
[104] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:74.
[105] *Ibid.*, 18:44.
[106] *Ibid.*, 18:81.
[107] *Ibid.*, 18:78.
[108] Nadīm, 291.
[109] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:73-74; *Wāfī*, 2:286.
[110] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:73.
[111] *Ibid.*, 18:83.
[112] Nadīm, 291.
[113] *Tadhkira*, 2:713.
[114] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:76; Nadīm, 291; *Wāfī*, 2:287.
[115] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:81.
[116] *Wāfī*, 2:285; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:121; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 8:348.
[117] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:92.
[118] *Wāfī*, 2:286; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:85.
[119] *Ibid.*, 18:81.
[120] *Ibid.*, 18:84-85.
[121] *Ibid.*, 18:81.
[122] *Wāfī*, 2:286; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:73.
[123] *Tafsīr*, 18: 68.
[124] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:81; *Wāfī*, 2:286.
[125] Nadīm, 292.
[126] *Wāfī*, 2:286; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:121.
[127] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:77.
[128] *Ibid.*, 18:75.
[129] *Ibid.*, 18:81; *Wāfī*, 2:286.
[130] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:61; Nadīm, 291.
[131] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:121.

We may conclude from this list that:

I- Al-Ṭabarī wrote books dealing with different topics including the following: Qur'ānic studies, history, Ḥadīth, *fiqh*, literature, grammar, *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence), *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (the Sciences of Ḥadīth), and some other subjects. However, the information about many of al-Ṭabarī'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-Bayān*, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk*, a section of the book of *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā'*, *Tahdhīb al-Āthār*, and *Dhayl al-Madhīl*.

9. His Death

The principal sources are almost unanimous with regard to the year in which al-Ṭabarī died, that is 310/922, during the reign of the 'Abbasid Caliph, al-Muqtadir Billāh.[132] However, these sources differ in respect of the day on which he died.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī[133] mentions that al-Ṭabarī 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 Ruḥbat Ya'qūb. Both Ibn Khallikān[134] and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī[135] support the former statement. The scholars who maintain that he died on Sunday are Ibn al-Jawzī,[136] al-Dhahabī,[137] and Ibn Kathīr.[138] 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."[139] Ibn al-Nadīm states that al-Ṭabarī died in *Shawwāl* 310/922, at the age of eighty-seven.[140] Ibn Miskawayh

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[132] *Baghdād*, 2:166; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:40; *Wafayāt*, 4:292; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6:172; and al-Nawawī, *Lughāt*, 1:79.
[133] *Baghdād*, 2:162.
[134] *Wafayāt*, 4:192.
[135] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:40.
[136] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6:172.
[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-Ṭabarī died in AH 310, without however specifying the day and the month in which he died.[141]

Ibn al-Jawzī indicates that al-Ṭabarī 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, Thābit b. Sinān mentions in his *Tārīkh* that al-Ṭabarī'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-Athīr says that the assertion regarding the public's being fanatically against him was not true.[143] Some followers of the Ḥanbalī School[144] were fanatically opposed to him and others followed them. The reason for this persecution was that when al-Ṭabarī compiled his book, *Ikhtilāf 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 Ḥadīth. This statement was too much for the followers of the Ḥanbalī School, who were greatly offended by it. Therefore, they became fanatically opposed to al-Ṭabarī.[145]

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[141] *Tajārib al-Umam*, 1:84.

[142] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6:172.

[143] Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 8:134.

[144] The Ḥanbalī School was named after its founder, Abū 'Abdullāh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī, who was born in Baghdad in 164/780. He learned Ḥadīth 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-Shāfi'ī took knowledge from as his student during 195-197/810-812. He was imprisoned because he did not adopt the Mu'tazilī School in the time of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, but was released in the time of Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 232/846. He died in 241/855. See *Baghdād*, 4:412-413; Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 3:11; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:199-221; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 2:39-48; al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-Jinān*, 2:132-134; *Tadhkira*, 2:18-19; and *Tahdhīb*, 1:72-76. See also W. M. Patten, *Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and the Miḥna: a Contribution to the Biography of the Imām and to the History of the Muḥammadan Inquisition, called the Miḥna 218-34 H*, Heidelberg, 1987; Brockelmann, 3:308-310.

[145] Ibn al-Athīr (*Kāmil*, 8:134-135) relates how, when al-Ṭabarī arrived in Baghdad from Ṭabaristān, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (305-370/918-981), Ja'far b. 'Arafa, and Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Bayādī were very angry with him. The followers of the Ḥanbalī School headed towards his house to ask him about Ibn Ḥanbal and how the scholars mentioned him in the science of jurisprudence (*'ilm al-fiqh*). Al-Ṭabarī maintained his opinion that Ibn Ḥanbal was not a *faqīh*. Reacting to this, the followers of the Ḥanbalī School and the scholars of Ḥadīth became furious and stoned his house, until the head of the police (*ṣāḥib al-shurṭah*), Nāzūk, intervened with some soldiers in order to prevent the public from reaching him (see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:57-58). In an act of self confidence and to proclaim the truth, al-Ṭabarī 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, ʿAlī 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-Ḥawāriyyūn*). May God grant you success."[146]

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,[147] Ibn Durayd,[148] and others.[149]

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,[150] who wrote down his biography and history in a book which bore his name.

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

[146] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 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 Baṣra. He worked for al-Ḥajjāj as the Imām of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca and died in Mecca. See Kaḥḥāla, 2:103; and *Aʿlām*, 1:199.

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

[149] For their full poems, see *Baghdād*, 2:166; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 18:40; and Nawawī, *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, *Muʿjam*, 2:16; and Kaḥḥāla, 2:52.

2) Abu al-Ḥasan 'Abd al-'Azīz 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 *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*.[153] This is in addition to *Tārīkh Baghdād*[154] by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. Yāqūt commented, "The majority of these reports on Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī came from 'Abd al-'Azīz 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 Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb al-Ṭabarī (d. 391/1001).[156] Among his books was *Kitāb al-Tārīkh al-Mawṣūl bi-Kitāb al-Tārīkh li-Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*. He included in it many reports about al-Ṭabarī and his companions.

4) Abu al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Alī b. Yaḥyā b. Abī Manṣūr al-Munajjim[157] (262-327/876-939), who complied a number of books including *Kitāb Ahkbār Ahl al-Ṭabarī wa-Nasabuhum*, *al-Madkhal ilā Madhhab al-Ṭabarī wa-Nuṣrat Madhhabih*, and *al-Ijmā' fī al-Fiqh 'alā Madhhab Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*.

5) Al-Qifṭī[158] compiled a book entitled *al-Taḥrīr fī Ahkbār 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, *Mu'jam*, 18:94. 'Abd al-'Azīz'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.

[155] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:94.

[156] He was one of al-Ṭabarī's students as well as a follower of his school. See Shākir Muṣṭafā, *al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī wa-al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 2:90; and Kaḥḥāla, 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, *Mu'jam*, 5:146-148; and *Lisān*, 1:324-325.

[158] His name is Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Yūsuf (568-646/1173-1248). He was born in the city of Qift and died in Aleppo. See *al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī wa-al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 2:259.

[159] It was published in 1390/1970 by al-Majlis al-A'lā li-al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya in Cairo.

Having spent his life in learning, teaching, and serving knowledge, al-Ṭabarī 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 (*asbāb*), events (*ḥawādith*) and occasions (*munāsabāt*), 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."[1] *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."[2] 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.[3]

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.[4] Rather, he explained the particularly problematic expressions, gave details concerning

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[1] *Sūrat al-Naḥl*, 16:44.
[2] *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 2:151.
[3] See *Itqān*, 2:1197; *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:37. Cf. R. Marston Speight, "*The Function of Ḥadīth*", in A. Rippin Andrew, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān.*
[4] There are those who believe that the Prophet did interpret the entire Qur'ān for his Companions, explaining its verses. Those scholars include Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, known as Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328). See his book, *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al- Tafsīr*, 35.

what is alluded to in the Qur'ān, and commented on the *aḥkām* of the *Sharī'a* (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-Jāmi' 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-'Asqalānī (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-Jāmi'*, and specifically in the section relating to exegesis, Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) cites 470 ḥadīths.

In the work known as *Tafsīr al-Nasā'ī*, al-Nasā'ī (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 'Abdullāh (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 Qur'ān as documented in the various traceable traditions, and with what the Companions who compiled the Qur'ān had to say, before moving on to the interpretation of the various chapters which selectively covered the entire Qur'ān 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.
[7] See *Introduction to Tafsīr al-Nasā'ī*, 1:106, ed. Ṣabrī al-Shāfi'ī and Sayyid b. 'Abbās, Cairo, Maktabat al-Sunna, 1990.
[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 ḥadīths 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 (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ones, the acceptable (*ḥasan*) ones, the weak (*ḍa'īf*) ones, those with incomplete chains of *isnād* (*mursal*), and the problematic (*mu'ḍal*) ones. I have discarded the dubious (*bāṭil*) and the fabrications (*mawḍū'āt*).[9]

It has been noted, however, that the number of ḥadīths which have been ascribed to the Prophet far exceeds those of varying quality which al-Suyūṭī collected. For example, the number of ḥadīths 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 ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet, amounting to four times what al-Suyūṭī mentioned.[10] 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.[11]

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[12] and knowledge of the *sharī'a*. They therefore felt no

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[9] *Itqān*, 2:1288.

[10] For more details, see the earlier explanation, p.

[11] R. M. Speight, *The Function of the Ḥadīth*, 65.

[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 *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān,* to find out for how many times al-Ṭabarī 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 *sura*s, *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*. However, throughout the whole text of his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī's citations of ḥadīths surpass this number. This is because the approximate total number of all al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī cites 521 Prophetic ḥadīths, this may suggest that in the entire body of his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī 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 Amīn,[15] have criticized al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's citations of ḥadīths with the amount of ḥadīths referred to by those scholars whom we have just reviewed, it becomes evident that al-Ṭabarī'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

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other nations, they were prepared to comprehend most of the Qur'ānic verses. See al-Ṣabbāgh, *Lamaḥāt*, 199.

[13] *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, 70, 71.

[14] For further infomation regarding Prophetic *ḥadīth*s in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, see Chapter III.

[15] Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā*, 2:138; and *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:48.

relating to the exegesis of the Qur'ān. Since this is the case, we can safely conclude that al-Ṭabarī did refer to Prophetic ḥadīths in his *Tafsīr* 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'ānic text, comprehending its meanings, studying and reciting it, defining its *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (what it allows and what it forbids, or prescribes and proscribes), underlining its *ḥudūd* (the limits it sets) and *farā'iḍ* (the duties it imposes), explaining what is firm (*muḥkam*), and clarifying what is ambiguous (*mutashābih*).

The Prophet urged his people to make every effort to study, reflect, and act upon the Qur'ānic revelation. Abū Hurayra reported that the Prophet said, "When people sit in a mosque to recite the Book of God and to study it carefully (*yatadārasūnahu*) together, the presence of God (*sakīna*) will descend upon them, mercy will envelop them, and the angels will surround them."[16] The Companion 'Abdullāh 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."[17] He further argued, "I swear by the One God that where and in what context each and every Qur'ānic 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." [18]

In this connection, Anas b. Mālik[19] asserted that "if a man recited by heart *Sūrat al-Baqara* or *Āl 'Imrān*, he would rise in our esteem."[20] Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān

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[16] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi'*, in the section *Abwāb al-Qirā'āt*, 3.

[17] Quoted by al-Ṭabarī in the Introduction to his *Tafsīr*, 1:80.

[18] Narrated by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9:47, in the chapter on *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, in the section on the reciters among the Companions of the Prophet. See also in the chapter on *al-Faḍā'il* on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the section on *Manāqib Ibn Mas'ūd*.

[19] He is Anas b. Mālik b. al-Naḍr (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 *Istī'āb*, 1:108; *Kamāl*, 3:353, 378; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 3:142-153.

[20] See *Itqān*, 2:1228; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:85.

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,

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[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; *Tahdhīb*, 5:183; and *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, 1:45.

[22] Quoted by al-Ṭabarī 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 fī '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; *Ḥilya*, 1:314; *Baghdād*, 1:173; *Tadhkira*, 40; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:232; Sezgin, 1:179.

[30] *Al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:83; Ibn Sa'd, 3:150; *Ẓunūn*, 1:429; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:327.

'Abdullāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (7 BH-AH 65/616-684);[31] and in Yemen, Mu'ādh b. Jabal and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī.[32]

Ibn Taymiyya commented,

> As for exegesis, the people of Mecca were the most knowledgeable because they were followers of Ibn 'Abbās,[33] such as Mujāhid, 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, 'Ikrima the *mawlā* (patron) of Ibn 'Abbās, and others including Ṭāwūs b. Abī al-Sha'thā' and Sa'īd b. Jubayr. The people of Kufa, the followers of Ibn Mas'ūd, 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'ānic verses. These may be found scattered in exegetical works.[36] Abū Shahba said, "We have received a substantial amount of interpretation from the Companions, some of which is *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), some *ḥasan* (acceptable), some *ḍa'īf* (weak), some disclaimed, and some dubious. There are also the *Isrā'īliyyāt*."[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 Ḥadīth. 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*),

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[31] *Ẓunūn*, 429; *Tahdhīb*, 5:337; *Shadharāt*, 1:73; *Iṣāba*, 4838; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 3:413.

[32] See *Isrā'īliyyāt*, 92, 93.

[33] The reason that Ibn 'Abbās 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'ān and explain its verses to others. In one of his ḥadīths, the Prophet said, "O Lord teach him [Ibn 'Abbās] the Book of God and wisdom." See *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:67. Ibn 'Umar (one of the prominent Companions) said, "Ibn 'Abbās was one of the most knowledgeable scholars among the Companions in the Qur'ānic revelation." See *Usd al-Ghāba*, 2:192-195.

[34] What distinguished them was their tendency to put forwared 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. tafsīr*.

[35] See *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al- Tafsīr*, 23, 24.

[36] For example, see the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*; also the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm musnadan ilā al-Rasūl wa-al-Ṣaḥāba wa-al-Tābi'īn*.

[37] *Isrā'īliyyāt*, 77.

differences of opinion, and wars among the Muslims, factors which led to the recording of Ḥadīth and the development of its disciplines.[38]

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.'[39] 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.'"[40] Ibn Abī Mulayka[41] 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.[42] 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."[43] Qatāda said, "In the Qur'ān there is no verse that I have not heard something about,"[44] 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-Riyaḥī (d. 93/712), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728), and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d.105/723),[45] from all of whom al-Ṭabarī benefited on a large scale, as will be seen later.[46]

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[38] See *Ẓunūn*, 1:33.
[39] *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, 4:92.
[40] Quoted by Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj in his book *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, the section *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, no.16.
[41] That is 'Abdullāh b. 'Ubaydullāh b. Abī Mulayka al-Qurashī, 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.
[42] Quoted by al-Ṭabarī in the Introduction to his *Tafsīr*, 1:90.
[43] Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in his *al-Jāmi'al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, the section *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, 8:148.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Itqān*, 2:190; *Ẓunūn*, 1:430.
[46] 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), Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812), Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (d. 197/814), Yazīd b. Hārūn (d. 206/821), 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827), al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣīṣī (d. 226/841) known as Sunayd, Ādam b. Abī Īyās (d. 220/835), Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), Isḥāq 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 *muḥaddith* (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

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[47] See Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, 2:88.
[48] *Ibid.*, 2:92.
[49] *Burhān*, 2:159; *Ẓunūn*, 1:430; *Itqān*, 2:190; and *Isrā'īliyyāt*, 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 *ra'y*) and rational argumentation. They did not refrain from explaining the Qur'ān 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-Wāḥidī[54] (d. 468/1076), and Abu Ḥayyān[55](d. 745/1344), who concerned themselves with philological incongruities (*al-khilāfāt al-naḥwiyyah, al-lughawiyyah*), and parsing (*i'rāb*), who parsed the words of the Qur'ān so as to assist in its exegesis, and who were preoccupied with grammatical problems such as God's words: "*In hādhāni*

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[51] Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā*, 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 Qur'ān 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 Qur'ānic *sūra*s begin, such as *alif lām mīm*, *hā mīm*, and *kāf hā yā 'ayn ṣād*, and the abrogating (*al-nāsikh*) the abrogated (*al-mansūkh*) texts. By contrast, interpretation (*ta'wīl*) 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-Mufassirūn*, 1:13; *Itqān*, 2:1204.

[54] Al-Wāḥidī is 'Alī b. Aḥmad (d. 468/1076), an exegete and literary scholar. He produced a large exegetical work entitled *al-Basīṭ* dealing mostly with inflection, textual quotations, and language. He produced two further works, one called *al-Wasīṭ*, a selection from *al-Basīṭ*, 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-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*, 1:523.

[55] Abū Ḥayyān, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Naḥwī, a grammarian, philologist, exegete, and litterateur. Among his famous works is *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, concerning the exegesis of the Qur'ān, concentrating on grammatical problems. See *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, 5:70; *Ḥusn*, 1:534; al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, 23; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 10:111; and al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:286.

lasāḥirānī", instead of *lasāḥiraynī* (These two are sorcerers),[56] "*Hādhāni khaṣmāni ikhtaṣamu fī rabbihim*", instead of *ikhtaṣamā* (These two are contenders, they contend about their Lord),[57] and "*In tatubā ilā Allāh faqad ṣaghat qulūbukumā*", instead of *ṣaghā qalbākumā* (If you two turn to God in repentance [for your hearts have sinned]).[58] There were philologists like Abū 'Ubayd[59] and Quṭrub,[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: "*Falā ansāba baynahum yawma'idhin wa-lā yatasā'alūna*" (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-aqbala ba'ḍuhum 'alā ba'ḍin yatasā'alūna*" (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-Muthannā[63] (d. 209/824), were concerned with the metaphors (*majāz*) in the Qur'ān, for example God's words: "*Fabashshirhum bi-'adhābin alīm*" (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

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[56] *Sūrat Ṭāhā*, 20:63.

[57] *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*. 22:19.

[58] *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm*. 66:4.

[59] Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (157-224/774-838) was a man knowledgeable in Ḥadīth, jurisprudence, exegesis, linguistics, and literature. Among his books are *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, *al-Nāsikh wa-al-Mansūkh*, and *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*. See al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:32; al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, 1:141; Ibn Sa'd, 7:53; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:153; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 6:509; and *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn wa-al-Lughawiyyīn*, p.191.

[60] Quṭrub, i.e. Muḥammad 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-Mulḥidīn fī Mutashābah al-Qur'ān*. See *Bughyat al-Wu'āt*, 1:242; *Inbāh*, 3:219; *'Ibar*, 1:35; *Miftāḥ*, 1:160; *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 156; *Wafayāt*, 3:490.

[61] *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn*, 23:101.

[62] *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt*, 37:27 and 50.

[63] Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (110-209/728-824) was a philologist, poet, and genealogist. Al-Jāḥiẓ remarked, "There was not a Kharijite 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 *Baghdād*, 13:252; al-Nawawī, *Lughāt*, 2:260; *Wafayāt*, 5:235; *Mizān*, 4:155.

the school of Mālik (d. 93/795),[64] *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Shāfi'ī, according to the school of al-Shāfi'ī[65] (150-204/767-820), *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by Dāwūd b. 'Alī al-Ẓāhirī,[66] and *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī[67] (d. 671/1273).

The scholastic theologians (*mutakallimūn*), for example al-Zamakhsharī,[68] interpreted some of the verses of the Qur'ān in order to support their particular school of thought. Even though very few of their books are extant, there have nevertheless survived *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā'[69] and the books of Quṭrub Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr including *al-Radd 'alā al-Mulḥidīn fī Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*. In a similar manner, those concerned with the rational sciences employed some Qur'ānic 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 jurisprudent, one of the four scholars of the Sunnites and the founder of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. His books of exegesis include *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. See *Tadhkira*, 207; *Tahdhīb*, 10:5; Sezgin, 2:120; *Ḥilya*, 6:316; *Muṣṭatrafa*, 13; Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *Mālik b. Anas*.

[65] He is Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, the famous jurisprudent, one of the four scholars of the Sunnites and the founder of the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence. His books of exegesis include *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. al-'Aṭṭār, 2 vols. (Cairo:1951-1952). See *Baghdād*, 2:56; *Ḥilya*, 9:63; al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, 49; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 17:281; *Wafayāt*, 4:163; *Wāfī*, 2:171; *Tadhkira*, 361; *Ghāyat al-Nihāya fī Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā'*, 2:95; and Muḥammad Abū Zahra, *al-Shāfi'ī*.

[66] Dāwūd b. 'Alī al-Ẓāhirī (202-270/712-795), a jurisprudent and traditionist, rejected analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) in the formulation of Islamic law and maintained the validity of the literal meaning of the texts. He was the founder of the Ẓāhiri school of jurisprudence. See *Wafayāt*, 1:219-220; al-Nawawī, *Lughāt*, 1:182-184.

[67] See the biography of al-Qurṭubī in *Ẓunūn*, 534; *Wāfī*, 2:122; al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 28; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:65; *Shadharāt*, 5:335.

[68] Al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/1075-1144), that is, Muḥammad b. 'Umar Jārallāh, was a linguist, rhetorician, grammarian and exegete. He was also a Mu'tazilite. His most famous work is *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl*, on the exegesis of the Qur'ān. See al-Suyuṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 41; al-Dāwudī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:314; *Inbāh*, 3:265; *Tāj al-Tarājim*, 71; *Mir'āt al-Jinān*, 3:264; *Bidāya*, 12:219.

[69] Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' (80-131/700-748), i.e. al-Ghazzāl Abū Ḥudhayfa, the founder of the thought of the Mu'tazilite sect, whose followers were called al-Wāṣiliyya after him. One of his works is *Ma'anī al-Qur'ān*. See al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:356; *Mīzān*, 4:329; *Wafayāt*, 6:7; Kaḥḥāla, 13:159; and *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:718.

[70] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19:147; and Aḥmad Amīn, *Duḥā*, 92-146.

The sufis, like Ibn 'Arabī al-Andalusī,[71] 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 Qur'ān, 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,[72]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, Muḥammd b. 'Alī, known as Muḥyī al-Dīn b. 'Arabī, a sufī and jurisprudent, was known for his school propounding a form of existentialism (*wiḥdat al-wujūd*). His books include an exegetical commentary on the Qur'ān entitled *al-Jāmi' wa-al-Tafṣīl fī Asrār Ma'āni al-Tanzīl*. See al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 38; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:202; *Wāfī*, 4:173; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 6:339.

[72] His followers were known as the Jarīriyya. Al-Ṭabarī's school adhered the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence before it separated and became an independent school. See al-Ṣabbāgh, *Lamaḥāt*, 269.

Chapter III

Al-Ṭabarī'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 *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, by briefly discussing the following topics: the book's title, the value of this *Tafsīr* in the view of well-known scholars, the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, the story behind the compilation of this book, the discovery of this commentary, whether al-Ṭabarī himself wrote down his *Tafsīr* or asked his students to copy it down as he dictated it to them, the summarized versions of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, the translations of the *Tafsīr* into other languages, and its printed editions.

Al-Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān is referred to in a variety of ways, including the following: *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (The Book of the Interpretation),[1] *Kitāb Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (The Book of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān), *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an al-Qur'ān* (The Comprehensive Explanation of the Qur'ān),[2] *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (The Comprehensive Explanation of the Exposition of the Verses of the Qur'ān),[3] or simply *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*.[4]

Al-Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān 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-Nadīm said, "No book has ever been compiled better than this."[5] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392-463/1002-1072) said, "Al-Ṭabarī has a book on the interpretation of the Qur'ān, similar to which no one has ever compiled another book."[6] He added, "It was related to me that Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir al-

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[1] *Baghdād*, 2:163; Nadīm, 292; *Wāfī*, 2:285; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 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 Qur'ān was compiled from a number of interpretations and that it intends to be an exhaustive treatment.

[4] *Baghdād*, 2:163.

[5] Nadīm, 292.

[6] *Baghdād*, 2:163. See also 2:163; *Ansāb*, 367; *Sīyar*, 14:272.

Faqīh al-Isfarā'īnī (344-406/955-1016) said that if a man travels to China in order to learn [lit. to get] al-Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān, his journey will not be wasted."[7] Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328) said,

> The most correct (sound) interpretation of the Qur'ān in circulation is al-Ṭabarī's commentary. This is because it mentions the statements of the predecessors (*salaf*) along with their established transmitted chains, contains no innovation (*bid'a*), and does not transmit any narrations from suspected, questionable narrators.[8]

Ibn Ḥajar (773-852/1372-1449) mentioned that Ibn Khuzayma borrowed al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 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-Ṭabarī."[9] Ibn 'Aṭiyya (d. AH 518) said,

> Muḥammad b. Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] - may Allāh have mercy upon his soul - has compiled for the people the interpretations of the Qur'ān 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-Suyūṭī said about al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, "It is the most precious, valuable commentary. No one has compiled one similar to it, as was mentioned by al-Nawawī in his *Tahdhīb*. This is because in this book al-Ṭabarī has combined both *al-riwāya* (transmitted chains) and *al-dirāya* (*ijtihād*, or *ra'y*). No one, whether before or after him, has done anything similar."[11] Also, when questioned on which commentary he recommended, al-Suyuṭī replied, "The *Tafsīr* of Imām Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī."[12] Al-Dāwūdī (d. AH 945) narrated from Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad al-Farghānī, that he, wrote in his history saying,

> Among Muḥammad b. Jarīr's writings, he completed the commentary of the Qur'ān. He perfected that book, explaining the legal consequences of the

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 13: 285, 388; *Muqaddima fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. 'Adnān Zarzūr, 95.

[9] *Lisān*, 5:102. See also *Baghdād*, 2:164; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18: 42-43.

[10] *Muqaddimat Tafsīr Ibn 'Aṭiyya*, 1: 19. See also *Burhān*, 2:159.

[11] Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 96.

[12] *Itqān*, 4:213.

> Qur'ān (*aḥkām*), the abrogated verses (*al-āyāt al-mansūkha*), and the verses abrogating them (*al-āyāt al-nāsikha*), the difficult statements (*mushkil*), the obscure constructions (*al-tarākīb al-gharība*), 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."[13]

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][14] did not share with him. These things included the readings of the Qur'ān (*qirā'āt*), grammatical points (*i'rāb*), emphasis on meanings in the majority of verses, expressing his own comment (*ra'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.[15]

Al-Ṭabarī prefaced his work with an introductory section which touches upon a number of hermeneutical considerations.[16] In addition to traditions, linguistic and lexical concerns, such as the commonly accepted 'readings' (*qirā'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.[17] All these things and others will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.[18]

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[13] Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 11.

[14] Every one of these scholars wrote a *Tafsīr*. See their biographies in *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 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, "*Ṭabori'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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*

Al-Ṭabarī'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.[19] 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-Ṭabarī's commentary as being solely dependent on transmitted narrations are only taking into account its external composition which contains many *isnāds* and transmitted traditions. They do not contemplate al-Ṭabarī's method and his manifest objective behind mentioning these classified, arranged, and thoroughly-examined transmitted chains.[20]

In fact, al-Ṭabarī's commentary, in addition to being rich in transmitted narrations and ḥadīths, also evaluates foregoing scholars' opinions and gives preponderance to some of them over others. He also mentions desinential inflection and the discovered (deducted) meanings,[21] 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* for its being methodical and precise in transmitting *isnāds*. On the other hand, because of the tremendous number of exegetical traditions which it combines, this *Tafsīr* is usually judged to be solely a particular source of *tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr*. As we have noted, this huge compendium of transmissions was said to have been put together randomly, as al-Ṭabarī did not apply any specific method in classifying his *isnāds*.[22] Yet *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān* is far more than simply a compilation of the extant exegetical material. It is a carefully structured work demonstrating

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[19] Al-Ṣabbāgh, *Lamaḥāt*, 270.

[20] Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Tafsīr wa-Rijāluh*, 36.

[21] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1: 207.

[22] This is alleged to have been said by the sociologist scholar Ibn Khaldūn. Ibn Khaldūn stated, "The Qur'ānic commentaries of al-Ṭabarī were filled with materials of such a nature [unaccepted narrations] transmitted on the authority of such people [suspected]" (*Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 2:444). J. Cooper says, "Often al-Ṭabarī 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'ān*, p. xiii).

considerable insight and judgement. That al-Ṭabarī 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-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*.[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-Ṭabarī) 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-Ṭabarī 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.
[26] Iftikhār Zamān, *The Evolution of a Ḥadīth Transmission: Growth and the Science of Rijāl in a Ḥadīth of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1991; Sulaymān Muḥammad al-Jārallāh, *The Origins of Ḥadīth*; Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'uf, "Ḥadīth Literature, the Development of the Science of Ḥadīth", periodical, Cambridge; F. Sezgin, *Buhari'nin Kaynaklari Hakkinda Aarastirmarlar* (Istanbul, 1956); N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, II: *Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition*, the University of Chicago Press, Illinois.

> enough energy and effort to write the history of the world from Ādam to this age of ours?[27] They said: How big should it be? He gave an answer similar to the one he gave regarding the commentary on the Qur'ān, and they gave a similar reply, to which he said: We are God's and to Him we shall return. Ambition is dead.[28]

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

For three years before starting his project, al-Ṭabarī made the *istikhārā* prayer[29] to seek God's guidance and he spent thirty years in compiling his *Tafsīr*.[30]

Al-Ṭabarī was considered the principal person to collect wide-ranging material of traditional exegesis in a move to standardize the works of Qur'ānic explanation.[31] On account of his momentous work, al-Ṭabarī obtained the title "the master of *tafsīr*".[32] 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.[33]

4. The Discovery of this Commentary

Until recently, al-Ṭabarī'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 Ḥumūd b. Amīr Abū al-Rashīd, an emir of Ḥā'il in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia. Hence, we have

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[27] Al-Ṭabarī is equally famous as a *mufassir* and as a historian, since he was the author of a vast collection of annals under the title *Tārīkh 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-Dhahabī in his *Sīyar*, 14:374. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6: 171.

[29] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:439.

[30] Al-Dhahabī, *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 Qur'ān 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, Ḥadīths, 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 Qur'ān. Then he came out and read to us the commentary up to the end of the Qur'ān. 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. 'Īsā 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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[34] Al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1: 207, 208, quoting from *al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyya fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 86.

[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.

[37] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18: 62.

[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 *isnāds* and writings. I also possesses other photocopies of the commentary, obtained from Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo; from Maktabat al-Madrasa al-Qādiriyya al-'Āmma, 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's[40] 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-Baghdādī[42] 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

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[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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, many copies must have been made, for it quickly gained widespread acceptance as a major text.[44]

6. The Summarized Versions of al-Ṭabarī's Commentary

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

1- Abū Bakr b. al-Ikhshīdh's summary. Ibn al-Nadīm said, "A group of scholars summarized al-Ṭabarī's commentary on the Qur'ān, such as Abū Bakr b. al-Ikhshīdh and others."[45]

2- A summary compiled by Abū Yaḥyā Muḥammad b. Ṣumādih al-Tujībī (d. AH 419).[46] This summary was published[47] in two volumes in Beirut, under the title *Mukhtaṣar min Tafsīr al-Imām al-Ṭabarī* (A Summarized Version from Imām al-Ṭabarī's Commentary), edited by Muḥammad Ḥasan Abū al-'Aẓm al-Zafītī.

7. Translations of the *Tafsīr* into other language

Persian

Al-Ṭabarī's commentary was translated into the Persian language by order of Abū Ṣāliḥ Manṣūr b. Nūḥ al-Sammānī (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-Ṭabarī's commentary by an unknown author was also translated into Persian, of which there is

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[44] See *Taysīr*, 156-165; cf. Cooper, x.
[45] Nadīm, 292.
[46] Sezgin, 526.
[47] See Fu'ād Sayyid, in *Majallat al-Makhṭuṭāt al-'Arabiyya* (Journal of Arabic Manuscripts), vol. 1, p. 201 (1375-1955)
[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 Āyā Sofia (no. 87).[49]

Turkish

There is a translation into Turkish, copies of which can be found in Dresden (no. 22) and Āyā Sofia (no. 87).[50]

English

An English translation exists in one volume, which is in fact an abridged translation of a part of al-Ṭabarī's commentary, the translator having omitted all of al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* and, in addition, many narrations which he deemed to have been repeated. He also amended al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī; an abridged translation of Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān,* with an introduction and notes by J. Cooper.[51]

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

Al-Ṭabarī'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[52] edited and published selected parts of al-Ṭabarī'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 ḥadīths cited in the text. After the eighth volume, M. M. Shākir continued the edition of al-Ṭabarī's commentary on his own.[53]

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[49] Sezgin, 526.

[50] Brockelmann, III, 143.

[51] Oxford University Press 1989, 1990.

[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-Ṭabarī'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 ḥadīths which are traceable in ascending order to the Prophet Muḥammad. I edited what I could of these ḥadīths ... Then my brother helped me in editing the ḥadīths. 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 Qur'ān, which is in fact the words of God. The ultimate purpose of al-Ṭabarī's comparison is to conclude that the *bayān* of the Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān is attained. We will see from the examples cited below that when all external evidence was lacking as to the correct meaning of the Qur'ānic 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 Qur'ān 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 *aḥruf* (sing. *ḥarf*), i.e. the dialects in which the Qur'ān is said to have been revealed.

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

2. His Method in General

Al-Ṭabarī explained his methodology in a long Introduction at the beginning of his *Tafsīr*, 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 pursuant 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'ān, al-Ṭabarī 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 *tafsīr*. In all of this we shall state whatever consensus (*ijmā'*) 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'ān. 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-Ṭabarī stated concisely the principles on which his *Tafsīr* was based. Thus, in most places, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī began his Introduction by discussing the principle of 'expressing meaning by clarity of discourse (*bayān*) and interpreting texts (*nuṣuṣ*).' He regarded speech (*kalām* or *bayān*) 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] *Tafsīr*, 1: 6.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1: 7.

people and one of the most precious gifts which He has accorded His creatures is His bestowal of clarity of discourse (*bayān*)."[5] 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."[6] 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.[7]

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.[8]

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."[9]

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[5] *Tafsīr*, 1: 8.
[6] *Tafsīr*, 1: 8.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Tafsīr*, 1: 9.
[9] *Tafsīr*, 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 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd, 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 Sa'īd 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 Sa'īd 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.[13] 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.[14] 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."[15] 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.[16] 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.*

> (*mutashābihāt*). 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*),

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[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.[25]

Consequently, al-Ṭabarī 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 (*mutawātir*) tradition attributed to him, or through an *āḥād* (single) *isnād*, but by trustworthy narrators reaching back to the Prophet, otherwise through a *ḥasan* (fair, or reliable) *isnād* by an accurate (*ṣadūq*) narrator.[26] According to al-Ṭabarī, this explanation may take two forms. It may involve either a phrase from him (*bi-naṣṣ minhu*), constituting a direct commentary from the Prophet, or a convincing demonstration (*bi-dalāla*) such as an indirect ḥadīth formulated to show what led the commentator to his interpretation.[27]

The second kind of clear (*muḥkam*) verses, according to al-Ṭabarī, are those of which everyone who possesses knowledge of the language in which the Qur'ān was sent down knows their interpretation. In this regard, al-Ṭabarī stated that everyone who knows the language in which the Qur'ān was sent down knows how to interpret some verses of this kind.[28]

There are, wrote al-Ṭabarī, three particulars of this linguistic communality. They include first of all a comprehension of the language's desinential inflection (*iqāmat i'rābih*). Secondly, there must be a recognition of the inherent signification of the nouns which are not homonyms (*al-musammayāt bi-asmā'ihā al-lāzima ghayr al-mushtarika fīhā*). The last thing required is an understanding of the things qualified by essential descriptive and specific attributes (*al-mawṣūfāt bi-ṣifātihā al-khāṣṣa dūna mā siwāhā*).[29]

The Qur'ānic example which al-Ṭabarī cited to illustrate his classification covers only one of these three particulars. This example is as follows. If someone

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[25] *Tafsīr*, 1: 74.
[26] *Ibid.*, 1: 92-93.
[27] *Ibid.*, 1: 74.
[28] *Ibid.*, 1: 24.
[29] *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,"[30] 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" (*iṣlāḥ*) is connected with doing those things which are good (*manfa'a*).[31] 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 *iṣlāḥ* 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.[32]

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.[33]

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-ashrāṭihā*) and its appointed time by God's signs (*bi-adillatih*), without defining its precise time according to day, month, or year.[34] 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.[35]

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[30] *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 2: 11-12.
[31] *Tafsīr*, 1: 75.
[32] *Ibid.*, 1:74.
[33] *Sūrat al-A'rāf*, 187.
[34] *Tafsīr*, 1: 74.
[35] *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*).[36] 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."[37]

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.[38]

Al-Ṭabarī concluded the analysis of two types of the Qur'ānic verses with regard to their intrepretation- 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."[39] The second report, a ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet, states,

> The Qur'ān was sent down according to four types (*aḥruf*) [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.[40]

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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*.

[37] For the narration of this ḥadīth, see al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 7: 347, 248, 349, 350, 351; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, 13: 84; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2: 376.

[38] *Tafsīr*, 1: 74-75.

[39] *Ibid.*, 1: 77.

[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'ib al-Khalī (d. 146/763), 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; *Tahdhīb*, 9:178.

We may notice that these two supporting reports do not precisely match al-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī quoted a group of traditions, of which I have chosen the following as examples:

'Ā'isha, 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-abbā*),"[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]

Sa'īd 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-Ṭabarī 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.*
[43] *Sūrat 'Abasa*, 31.
[44] *Tafsīr*, 1:78.
[45] *Ibid.*, 1: 85.
[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 (*ṣaḥīḥ*) 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 *Tābi'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-Fatḥ al-Azdī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī. See *Jarḥ*, 1: 1: 487, 488; *Lisān*, 2: 124; *Kabīr*, 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

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[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 ḥadīth 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-Rabī' 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]

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[52] *Tafsīr*, 1: 454-468.
[53] *Ibid.*, 1: 469.

Finally, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Rabī' 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-laqad 'alimtumu al-ladhīna i'tadaw min-kum fī al-sabti fa-qulnā lahum kūnū qiradatan khāsi'īna* (And you know there were those

[54] *Ibid.*, 1: 471.

among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them: 'Be you apes, miserably stinking!'),"[55] 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.[56] To support his view, al-Ṭabarī appealed to a number of Qur'ānic verses[57] 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'ida*, 60), just as He stated that they said to their Prophet, "Show us God openly, but [God] struck them with thunder"[58] 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,"[59] 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

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[55] *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 65.
[56] For further information on this point, see *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, 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.
[58] *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, 153.
[59] *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*, 24.

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."[60]

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 *(ittifāq)* where there was an agreement among the commentators.[61] 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.[62] So, for example, commenting on the verse "*Wa yas'alūnaka mādhā yunfiqūna qul al-'afw* (And they ask you what they ought to spend. Say: That which is beyond your needs),"[63] al-Ṭabarī stated that the commentators differed concerning the meaning of *'afw*. Thus, some, such as Ibn 'Abbās, Qatāda, 'Aṭā', 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-gādir, *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 *'afw* indicated surplus, so that one should give in charity the remainder of one's money ofter 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."[64]

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 *'afw* must indicate 'surplus', which indeed accords with the common speech of the Arabs, in which the word *'afw* caries the sense of superfluity. That is why God said, "*ḥattā 'afw* (until they increased in number),"[65] 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 *'afw* 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, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1: 274; Ibn Kathīr, 1: 503; al-Suyūṭī, *Durr*, 2: 254; *Tafsīr*, 4: 341.

[65] *Sūrat al-A'rāf*, 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,"[66] 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."[67] 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."[68] Al-Ṭabarī observed that killing was one such lesser sin than polytheism.[69]

We see therefore that al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī 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-arḍi khalīfatan* (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-Ṭabarī 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; *Tahdhīb*, 10:246; *Miftāḥ*, 1:150; *Tadhkira*, 371; *Shadharāt*, 2:24.
[72] *Tafsīr*, 1:439.

Al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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...").[73] Al-Ṭabarī 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?"[74] 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-Ṭabarī, 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-Ṭabarī 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 fī 'lī bi-ābā'ikum Ādam idh qultu li-al-malā'ikati innī ja'ilun fī al-arḍi khalīfa*)."[75]

Bringing linguistic support to his argument, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī

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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-qalīlan mā yu'minūna* (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-ladhī marra 'alā qaryatin 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 Baṣran 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,

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[76] *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 88.
[77] *Tafsīr*, 2: 330-331.
[78] *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 259.
[79] *Tafsīr*, 5: 438.
[80] *Sūrat Yūsuf*, 2.
[81] *Sūrat al-Shu'arā'*, 192-193-194-195.

> 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.[82]

Al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī dealt with this matter in a section of his *Tafsīr* 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*, *dīnār*, *dawāt* (inkpot), *qalam* (pen), and *qirṭās* (paper)- where Persian and Arabic agree in word and meaning,[83] so that it is quite possible there are similar cases in other languages which we do not speak. Al-Ṭabarī sought to demonstrate his argument by supposing a case in which someone

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[82] *Tafsīr*, 1: 11-12.

[83] All the words which al-Ṭabarī quotes, except one, are to found in the Qur'ān, *dirham* (only in its plural form *darāhima*) in *Sūrat Yūsuf*, 22, *dīnār* in *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, 75, *qalam* in *Sūrat al-Qalam*, 1 and in *Sūrat al-'Alaq*, 4, and *qirtās* in *Sūrat al-An'ām*, 7. Al-Suyūṭī said in his *Itqān* (1:427-444) that most exegetical commentators were, like al-Ṭabarī, against the opinion of the existence of foreign words in the Qur'ān, either reasoning along the same lines as al-Ṭabarī, or believing, contrary to al-Ṭabarī, 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-Ṭabarī 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-Suyūṭī preferred the opinion, included by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* 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 Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān] is not in Arabic or its dialects.[85]

9. The Arabic Dialects (*ḥarf*s) in which the Qur'ān was sent down

Among the things discussed by al-Ṭabarī in his Introduction were the Arabic dialects in which the Qur'ān was sent down. He wrote, "If we have managed to prove that the language of the Qur'ān is all in Arabic, then in which of the Arabic dialects (*ḥarf*s) was the Qur'ān sent down? In all of them, or in one of them?"[86]

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[84] *Tafsīr*, 1:12.
[85] *Tafsīr*, 1:21.
[86] *Ibid.*

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.[88] 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 *ḥarf*s. Whichever you recite of these *ḥarf*s, you would be correct."[89]

Eventually, al-Ṭabarī gave his opinion concerning these *ḥarf*s, saying that the seven *ḥarf*s 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*, *qasdī*, *nahwī*, *qurbī* (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

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[87] See *Surat al-Naḥl*, 103.

[88] *Tafsīr*, 1: 21..

[89] This report was transmitted by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in his *Musnad* (6: 433, 462, 463, Ḥalabī edition) and by Sufyān b. 'Uyayna with the same *isnād*. It was also mentioned by Ibn Kathīr in *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 64, where Ibn Kathīr commented, "This *isnād* is correct." It was also narrated by al-Haythamī (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 *ḥarf*s 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 *ḥarf*s 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 Qur'ān, and individuals were allowed to choose to recite and preserve it in whichever of these seven *ḥarf*s 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.[90] 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 Qur'ān and its recitation, and individuals were permitted to recite it in any of the seven *ḥarf*s 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 *ḥarf*s, although they did not ban the reciters from reciting the Qur'ān according to one or all of its permitted *ḥarf*s.[91]

This was the general methodology, concerning different issues in Qur'ānic studies (*'Ulūm 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.

Ṭabarī in writing his *Tafsīr*. Thus, we may gain further knowledge of his methodology in the *Tafsīr*.

10. His Ways of Interpreting the Qur'ānic verses

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

1- One characteristic of al-Ṭabarī's style when he intended to interpret a verse of the Qur'ān was his use of the term *ta'wīl*. Thus, for example, he would begin by saying, "*Al-qawl fī ta'wīl 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-Ṭabarī quoted were the traditions reported by scholars of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*,[92] which are cited with full *isnāds*. The transmitted reports of the exegetes and interpreters he quoted were firstly those classified as ḥadīths 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-Ṭabarī 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'wīl*, came to denote a more allegorical style of interpretation than the former, al-Ṭabarī apparently used both terms synonymously, as the very title of his commentary indicates. See *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, 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 (*ṭā'ifa*) 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] *ṭā'ifa*,[95] and *nikāḥ*[96] (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

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[93] See Chapter VII, on the sources to which al-Ṭabarī referred in compiling his *Tafsīr*.
[94] *Sūrat 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."[98]

8- Al-Ṭabarī would sometimes interpret a verse by referring to its variant readings (*Qirā'āt*), 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-qirā'āt*,[99] he had recourse to this method only occasionally. He generally seems to have considered the subjects of *tafsīr* and *qirā'āt* as quite far apart.

9- Al-Ṭabarī sometimes interpreted an expression or word by referring to its philological meaning.[100]

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*.[101] Similarly, for the interpretation of *khuṭuwāt 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 Qur'ānic 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 Qur'ānic readings is more correct than the others, or to support an opinion he prefers, or finally, to explain a word phonetically.[102]

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*.[103]

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[98] *Tafsīr*, 18:78.
[99] See Chapter I, in the section on his works.
[100] See, for examples, what he mentioned concerning *khaṭī'a* (*Tafsīr*, 2:110), *qaswa* (2:234), and the word *ṣafā* (3:224).
[101] See vol. 1 pp. 104, 105.
[102] See, for examples, *Tafsīr*, 1:168-171, 443; 2:110; 3:224.
[103] See, for example, *Tafsīr*, 1:331.

13- Another of al-Ṭabarī's methods is seen in his keenness to interpret the verses on jurisprudence (*aḥkām*) in detail, and to examine and discuss the different opinions of jurisprudents.[104] He might, occasionally, express his own original opinion on some legal topic.[105]

14- Al-Ṭabarī also showed himself concerned about *i'rāb* (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-Ṭabarī had learned and benefited from the opinions of both schools of grammar and also met with many Baghdadi grammarians.[106] His general tendency was to favour the opinions of the Baghdadi school.

As an example al-Ṭabarī's consideration of arguments concerning *i'rāb* in his *Tafsīr*, we may note his comments concerning the verse "*Ṣirāṭa al-ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim ghayri al-maghḍūbi '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)."[107] Discussing the word *ghayr*, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī asserted, in agreement on the reading *ghayri*, as opposed to *ghayra*. Al-Ṭabarī 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

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[104] Examples concerning this point may be found as follows: *Tafsīr*, 3:240-245; 5:125-133; 10:295.

[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: *Tafsīr*, 1:52; 2:472-473, 535; 3:384-396; 4:544-547; 8:302-309.

[106] We have previously noted, while studying al-Ṭabarī's biography (Chapter I), that he travelled to different places such as Kufa and Basran in order to seek knowledge from scholars living there.

[107] *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, 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 shādhdha*), 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 Bsran 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 inflections[108] because therein lie different

[108] Here al-Ṭabarī indicated the importance which he attached to *naḥw* (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*)."[112]

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 (*maṣdar*), 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 *ISNĀD*S)

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-Fātiḥa* 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 ʿAbd 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s, 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 Isḥāq, 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 *isnād*s 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

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[1] Edited and revised by Imtiyāz ʿAlī ʿArshī, Maktabat Riḍā, Rampur, India.
[2] See the Introduction, f.n. no. 1.

Ḥadīth (*'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*), i.e. the transmitting of narrations.[3] Al-Ṭabarī's method of referring to *isnād*s and using them extensively is clearly evidenced in his *Tafsīr*.[4]

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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s, 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 *isnād*s, and what was quoted from non-permitted sources, i.e. books he had found without perfect *isnād*s. 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,[5] that al-Ṭabarī uses the terms *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me) or *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us) in connection with *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s are more often preceded by *ḥaddathanā* or *ḥaddathanī*.

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 *isnād*s together with their chains. These must then be divided into repeated and non-repeated series of *isnād*s, 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 *isnāds*, after which we compare these *isnāds* with works which have been attributed to some of the early scholars, such as the *Tafsīrs* of the Companion Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), Mujāhid (d. 104/722), Qatāda (d. 118/736), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), or '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 must not stop at this point, but go further by reviewing these repeated series of *isnāds* (strands) with a view to categorizing the disciplines quoted from them such as Exegesis, History, Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Causes of Revelation (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*), *Sīra*, Supernatural Stories (*Ghaybiyyāt*), Doctrine, Qur'ānic Quotations, Abrogation (*al-Nāsikh wa-al-Mansūkh*), Lexicography, and Qur'ānic Readings (*Qirā'āt*). This will be done in order to confirm that al-Ṭabarī used what was written and available in various disciplines at the time he wrote and employed it to interpret the Qur'ān.

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 dialects[3] 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 *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā*

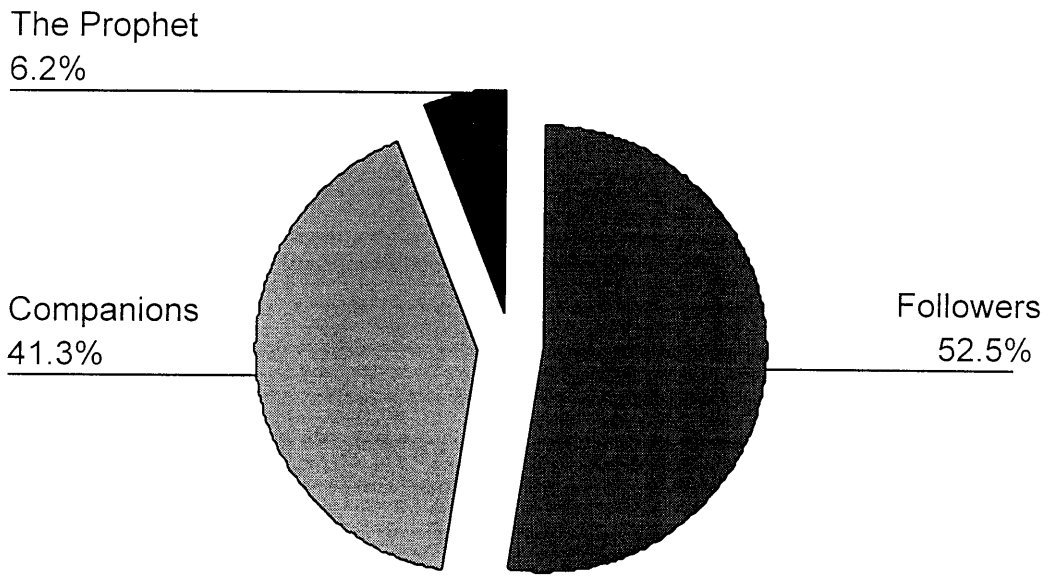
In al-Ṭabarī's effort to study the background of the scholars,[5] especially those who were eminent in *tafsīr*, he quotes precisely from 208 of his masters,[6] from whom he transmits the 8,424 *isnāds* which are traced back through eminent scholars to the three generations of the Prophet, the Companions,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

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[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-Ṭabarī's citations categorized according to ultimate source

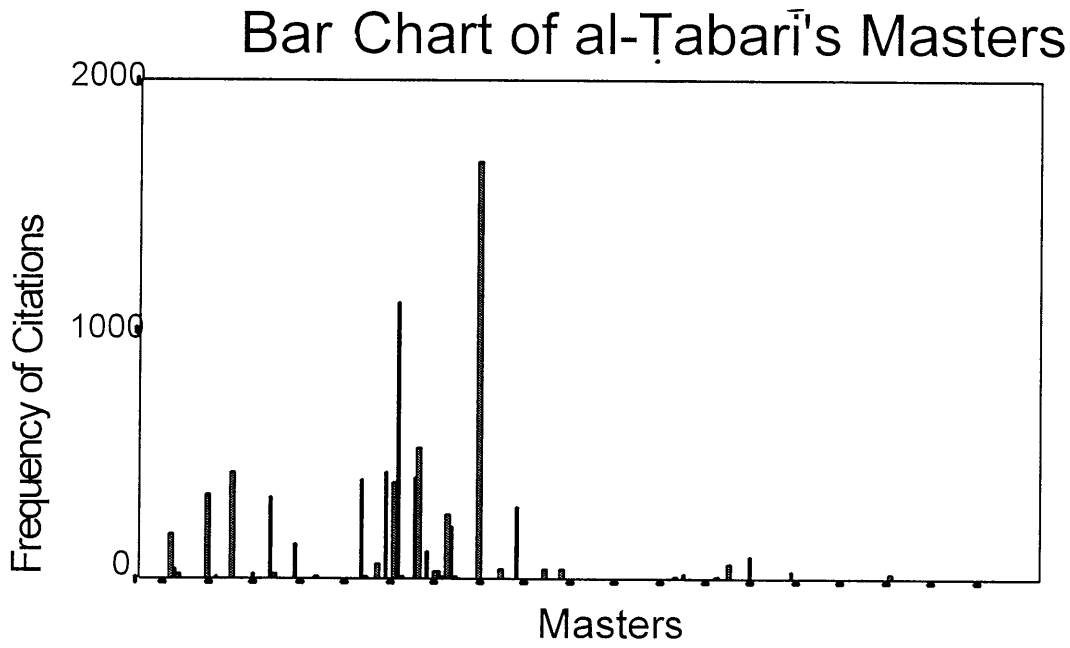
Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
The Prophet	521	6.2	6.2
Companions	3,480	41.3	47.5
Followers	4,423	52.5	100.0
Total	8,424	100.0	



This reinforces the scholars' claim that al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 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-Ṭabarī narrates his *isnāds*, and shows that the numbers of *isnāds* from those masters are by no means equivalent. In fact, al-Ṭabarī cites from some 19 of them more than from the others. Regarding this we will allocate a separate study in the following chapter.

[7] See Chapter II, on the origins and early development of *tafsīr*."



In his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī follows a specific method and applies precise technical terms in transmitting *isnāds* from his masters. These are well recognized in the Sciences of Ḥadīth (*'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth)*. In fact, al-Ṭabarī uses very few terms in narrating. But before proceeding to discuss these terms used by al-Ṭabarī, 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-muṣṭalaḥ* (the science of technical terms of transmission), these terms vary in their usage. Some Ḥadīth scholars, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. AH 643),[8] al-'Irāqī (d. AH 806),[9] Ibn Kathīr (AH 701-774),[10]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (AH 908-971),[11] and al-Suyūṭī,[12] count eight different manners of transmission. These manners can be summarized under the following headings:

1- *Samā'* (listening), hearing directly from the master; or *ṭarīq al-samā' taḥdīthan* (narrating by direct listening from the master).[13] This is where the master

[8] See *'Ulūm*, 130-180.
[9] See *Taqyyīd*, 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 *samā'* (direct listening). See al-Qāsimī, *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 *ṣaḥīfa* (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 *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us).[15]

2- *Qirā'ah* (reading). This is where the student recites a written document in the presence of a master. This method is known to Ḥadīth scholars as "reading to the master" or "revision hearing", whereby the student reads ḥadīths from a *ṣaḥīfa* (written document) which was particularly reported by his master and not any ḥadīths he himself wished to read. The objective in this was for the master to be able to hear his student and correct the ḥadīths 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 Ḥadīth in the early days, numerous terms were used by the *muḥaddithūn* (scholars of Ḥadīth). Many *isnāds* contain various names. The terms *ḥaddathanā*, *ḥaddathanī*, *akhbaranā*, and *akhbaranī* were frequently employed to refer to the relevant sources. Scholars of Ḥadīth 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-Ṭabarī, this method is found to be predominant in the old volumes of the Egyptian edition); *akhbaranā* is usually written as *anā* only and rarely as *arānā*. See *Tadrīb*, 2:28; *Qafw*, 109; *Taqyyīd*, 140; *'Ulūm*, 132; *Bā'ith*, 108.

[16] See *Taysīr*, p. 159.

[17] See *Qafw*, 111.

akhbaranī (he informed me), or *ajāzanī* (he permitted me), or *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me).[18]

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 *nāwalanī* (he handed to me), or *akhbaranī*, or *ḥaddathanī*.[19]

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).[20]

6- *Waṣiyyah* (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.[21] Reference to transmission in this manner is preceded by terms such as *awṣā ilayy* (he bequeathed to me), or *ḥaddathanī*, or *akhbaranī*.

7- *'Aṭiyyah* (giving), or *i'lām* (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).[22]

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

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[18] See *'Ulūm*, 151; *Tadrīb*, 2:29.
[19] See *'Ulūm*, 165; *Tadrīb*, 2:44-48; *Qafw*, 110.
[20] *Tadrīb*, 2:55; *Qafw*, 110.
[21] See *Qafw*, 111.
[22] See *Taqyyīd*, 166; *Qafw*, 111-112.

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).[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 ḥadīths, 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.[24] It is of two kinds:

1) When the disciple, alone privately, or person-to-person, heard from his master, he would say *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me).[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 *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me).[26]

Reviewing the situation statistically, al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanī* 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.

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[23] See *Qafw*, 112; *'Ulūm*, 180; *Tadrīb*, 2:63.

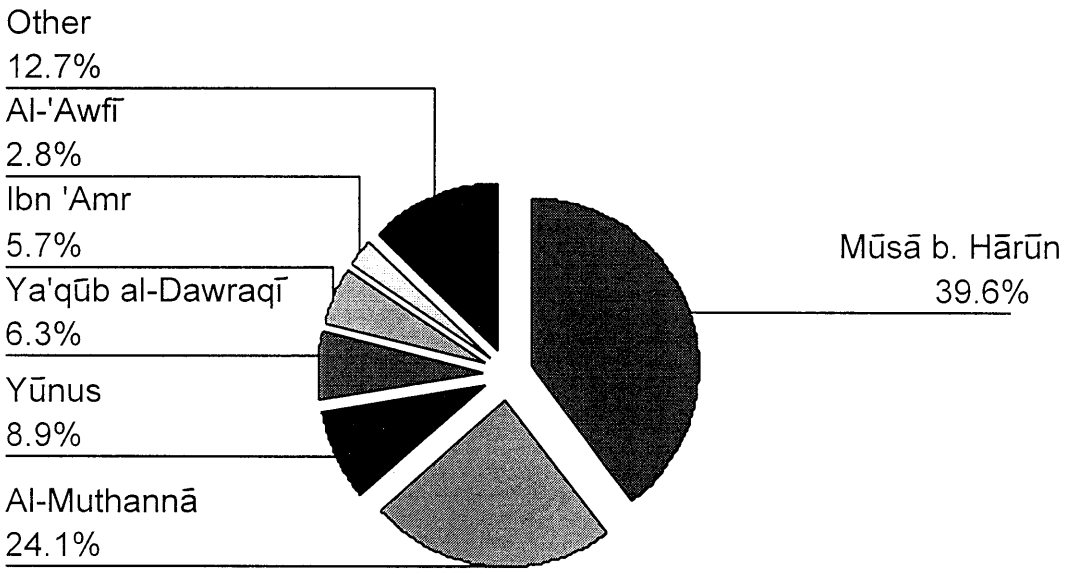
[24] See *al-Ilmā' ilā Ma'rifat Uṣūl al-Riwāyah wa-Taqyyīd al-Samā'*, p. 69; *Taqyyīd*, 166; and *Taysīr*, 159.

[25] Various examples of this can be found in any part of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

[26] See *'Ulūm*, 151; *Tadrīb*, 2:29.

Al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanī* 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.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Mūsā b. Ḥārūn	1,677	39.6	39.6
Al-Muthannā	1,018	24.1	63.7
Yūnus	376	8.9	73.6
Ya'qūb al-Dawraqī	266	6.3	78.9
Ibn 'Amr	239	5.7	84.5
Al-'Awfī	117	2.8	87.3
Others (133)	537	12.7	100.0
Total	4230	100.0	



The incidences adduced in this Table and the associated Pie Chart testify to the fact that these persons are al-Ṭabarī's masters from whom he heard alone, or person-to-person, and that when transmitting from them he uses the term *ḥaddathanī* to introduce 87.3% of the total 4,230 *isnāds*.

Occasionally, al-Ṭabarī diverges from this normal use of *ḥaddathanī* 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, "*Ḥaddathanī bi-dhālika ba'ḍu aṣḥābinā* (This was narrated to me by some of our masters)."[27] Nevertheless, *ba'ḍu*, as it is here, could possibly refer to just one person.

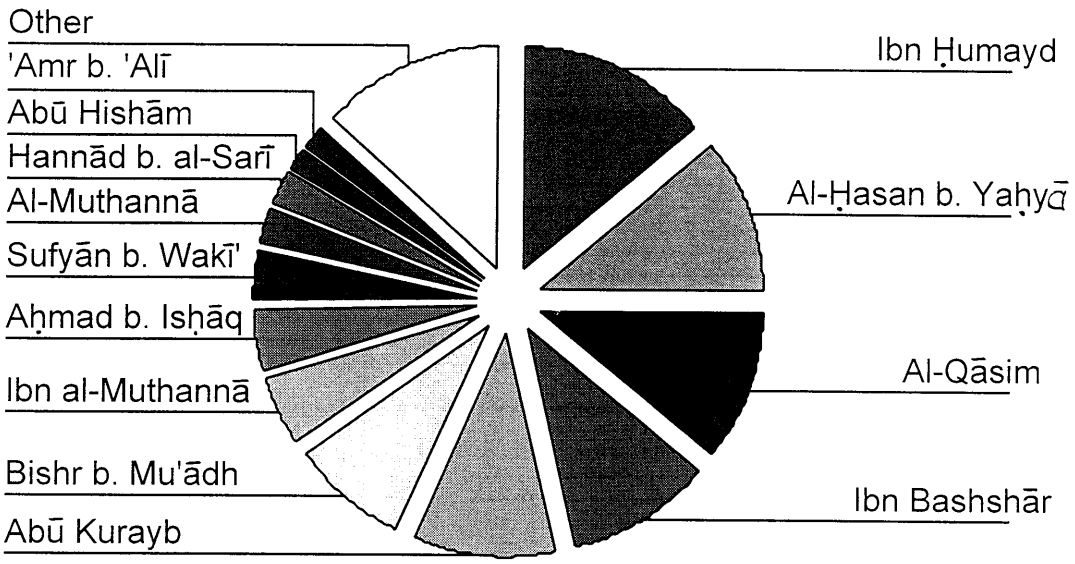
2) When the student heard with others, i.e. among a group of people, from the master, he would say *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us). The implied difference between this usage and the previous one is that here he was one among a group of students sitting in audience on a master. Al-Ṭabarī uses this term quite frequently, but nevertheless less than the previous one.[28] Statistically expressed, al-Ṭabarī uses this term to introduce an *isnād* 45.5% of the time, i.e. for 3,834 of the total 8,424 *isnād*s which he quotes in the course of interpreting the *sūra*s *al-Fātiḥa* 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.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Ḥumayd	533	13.9	13.9
Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā	423	11.0	24.9
Al-Qāsim	421	11.0	35.9
Ibn Bashshār	406	10.6	46.5
Abū Kurayb	388	10.1	56.6
Bishr b. Mu'ādh	336	8.8	65.4
Ibn al-Muthannā	191	5.0	70.4
Aḥmad b. Isḥāq	165	4.3	74.7
Sufyān b. Wakī'	140	3.7	78.3
al-Muthannā	100	2.6	80.9
Hannād b. al-Sarī	91	2.4	83.3

[27] I have found just two such examples, which occur in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* on *Surat al-Nur*.

[28] Examples may be found in any part of his *Tafsīr*.

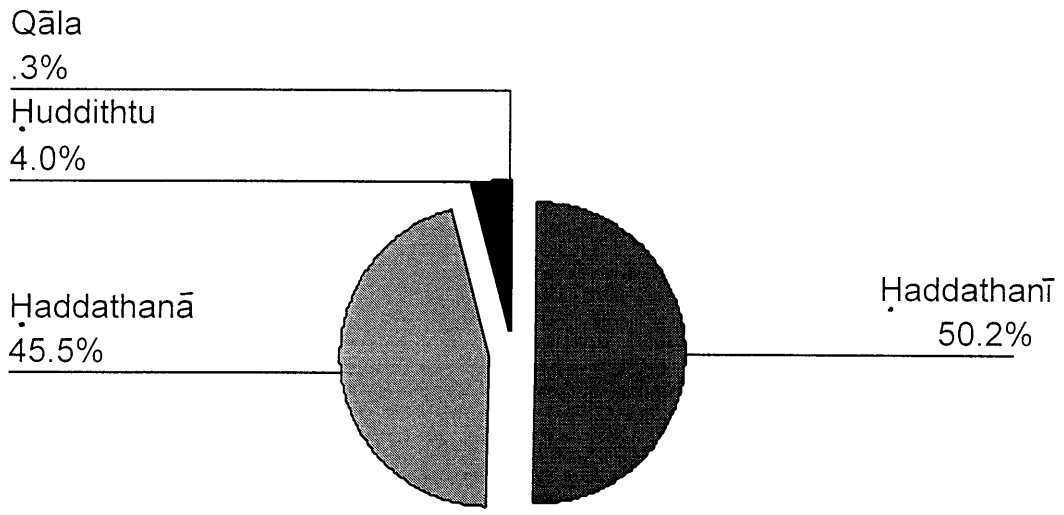
Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Abu Hishām	66	1.7	85.0
'Amr b. 'Alī	63	1.6	86.7
Others(129)	511	13.3	100.0
Total	3834	100.0	



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

The following Table and Pie Chart express the frequency of al-Ṭabarī's use of the two terms *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā* as well as the lesser used terms *ḥuddithtu* and *qāla*.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
ḥaddathanī	4,230	50.2	50.2
ḥaddathanā	3,834	45.5	95.7
Ḥuddithtu	335	4.0	99.7
Qāla	25	0.3	100.0
Total	8,424	100.0	



If a report was narrated to him indirectly, then he would use either of the terms *ḥuddithtu* or *qāla* to indicate this different mode of transmission.[29] According to recognized usage in the Sciences of Ḥadīth, these two terms normally indicate narration using a book or a written document (*ṣaḥīfa*) 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), *ḥuddithtu* (it was narrated to me), or *qāla* (he said).[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*.[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; *Tadrīb*, 2:60.

[31] For further discussion regarding his transmission from the Prophet without using *isnāds*, see Chapter VII.

just three terms: *ḥaddathanī*, *ḥaddathanā*, 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 *ṣaḥīfa* (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 *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā*. 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 *ḥaddathanī* and *akhbaranī*, or *ḥaddathanā* and *akhbaranā*.

Consequently, we may ask, do the words *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā* 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 *ḥaddathanā* and *ḥaddathanī* 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 *ḥaddathanī*. If the master read to his students from a document or from memory, *ḥaddathanā* 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 *ḥaddathanā* whenever they transmitted

that particular tradition, but if the students read to their master, then he would use the term *akhbaranā*.[32]

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, "*Ḥaddathanā* 'Amr b. 'Abbās said *ḥaddathanā* Muḥammad b. Ja'far said *ḥaddathanā* Shu'ba ... 'Amr said: In the book of Muḥammad b. Ja'far there was a space."[33] 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 *ḥaddathanā* is used throughout the *isnād* without any reference to the book.

- Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, "*Ḥaddathanā* 'Abd al-Raḥmān ... *ḥaddathanā* Ibn Mahdī... *ḥaddathanā* Sufyān al-Thawrī, who transmitted to us the ḥadīths of Isrā'īl, *'an* (from) 'Abd al-A'lā, *'an* (from) Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah." Then Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, "It was from a book."[34]

- Ibn Ḥazm stated, "*Ḥaddathanā* 'Abdullāh, who said, *ḥaddathanā* Muḥammad b. Mu'āwiyah, who said, *ḥaddathanā* Muḥammad b. Abī 'Adī from his book ..."[35] 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)[36] appear within the *isnād*, e.g. "*Kataba ilayya* Sālim b. Aḥmad, as from Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Sijistānī..,"[37] or "*Kataba ilayya* 'Abdullāh b. Sa'īd, *'an* (from) Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir...,"[38] or "*Akhbaranā* 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī *fī kitābihi ilaynā*."[39] 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; *Tahdhīb*, 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-Mu'tamir 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 Ḥadīth scholars, the use of the term *ḥaddathanī* 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 *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me), he replied, "Yes." Therefore, narrating from a book was a practice known to scholars of Ḥadīth at that time, i.e. in the second and third centuries AH.[40]

Ibn Isḥāq'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 Isḥāq 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 Isḥāq.[42]

Ibn Ḥajar says, "As for terms such as *ḥaddathanī*, *akhbaranī*, *anba'anī*..., 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 *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in the section concerning *tafsīr*, stating that the narration of Nāfi' "*akhbaranā*", or the narration of al-Ismā'īlī "*anba'anā*", the narration of Mālik "*ḥaddathanā*", 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

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[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 Isḥāq*, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 30.

opinion which was held by Ḥadīth scholars such as al-Zuhrī, Mālik, Ibn 'Uyayna, 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-Shāfi'ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal]."[43]

Therefore, if any *isnād* is prefixed by the common terms *ḥaddathanī* 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 *ḥuddithtu*, which al-Ṭabarī uses 335 times (introducing 4% of the total 8,424 *isnād*s) to transmit some of his *isnād*s, 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 *ḥuddithtu* 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s), the two terms *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā* were used widely, as we have seen earlier.

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[43] Ibn Ḥajar, *Hadi al-Sārī 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 *isnād*s. See al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, *passim*.

The implication that can be drawn here by way of conclusion is that al-Ṭabarī's traditions, incorporated in his *Tafsīr*, 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 *isnāds*, which we will discuss in detail in the following section. It will be seen there that most of these *isnāds*, which form parts of strands of clusters of *isnāds*, refer in most cases to written sources produced by well-known scholars. Sezgin believed that, in producing his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī borrowed from collected materials containing traditions related to the Qur'ān.[45]

However, if he quotes an *isnād* 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 *ḥuddithtu* in introducing information from such a source. It is clear therefore that al-Ṭabarī 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 *ḥuddithtu* in 335 places (in 4% of all the 8,424 investigated *isnāds*), e.g. as in the following *isnād*:

Al-Ṭabarī says, "*Ḥuddithtu* (I was told) via 'Ammār, who said, I heard 'Abdullāh b. Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī, who said, my father transmitted to me that he heard al-Rabī' b. Anas saying ..."[46] This confession of doubt, implied by use of the word *ḥuddithtu*, 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-Ṭabarī was honest, methodical, clear in transmitting *isnāds*, and an accurate narrator of all that he cited.

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

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[45] Sezgin, 1:159.

[46] *Tafsīr*, 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 ḥadīth 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 *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik, there are some 61 ḥadīths without an *isnād*.[47] Also, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* 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 ḥadīth 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*!

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[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-Fātiḥa* 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*.

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[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

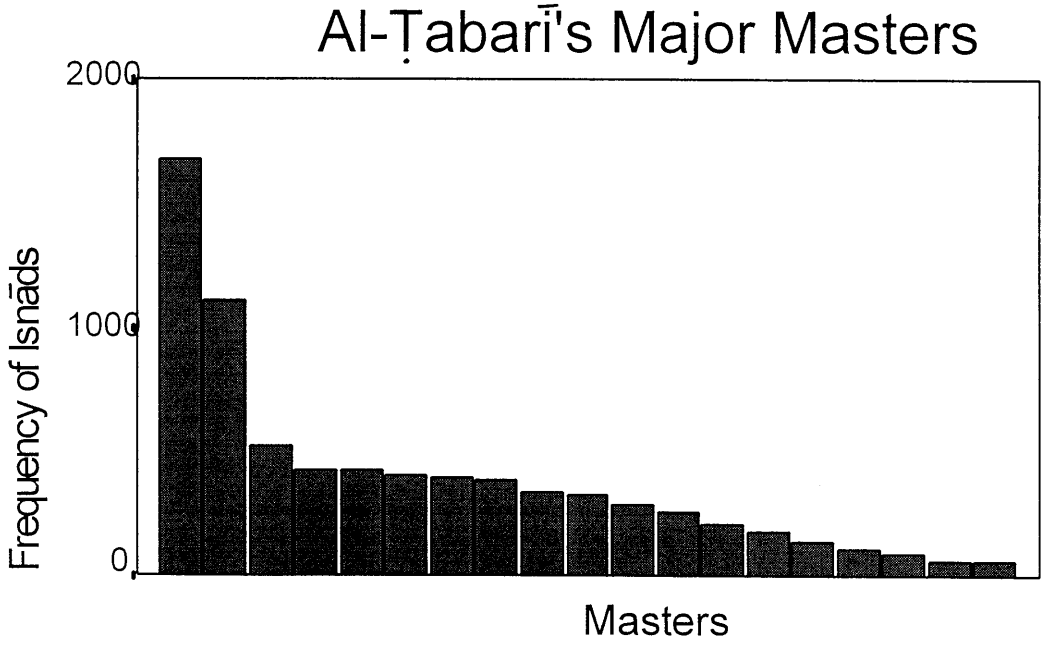
Al-Ṭabarī's masters	Frequency of Narration	Percentage
19 masters	From 66 to 1,677 times	89%
20 masters	From 10 to 45 times	5.8%
169 masters	From once to less than 10 times	5.2%
208	8,424 times	100%

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

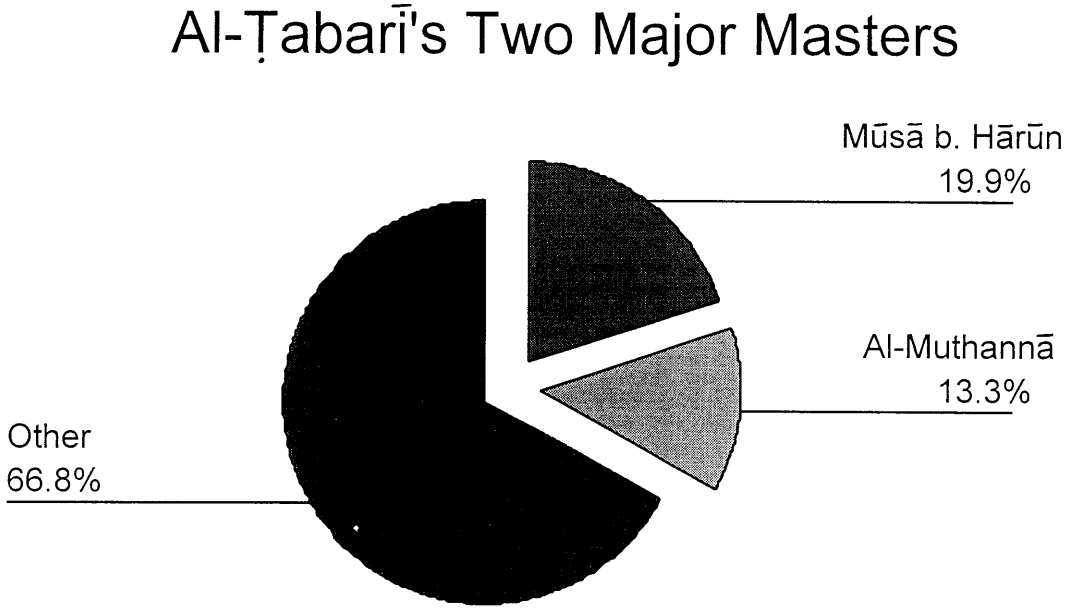
Serial no.	Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
1	Mūsā b. Hārūn	1,677	19.9	19.9
2	Al-Muthannā	1,118	13.3	33.2
3	Ibn Ḥumayd	533	6.3	39.5
4	Al-Qāsim	431	5.1	44.6

Serial no.	Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
5	Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā	429	5.1	49.7
6	Ibn Bashshār	412	4.9	54.6
7	Yūnus	396	4.7	59.3
8	Abū Kurayb	387	4.6	63.9
9	Bishr b. Ma'ādh	346	4.1	68.0
10	A missing master	335	4.0	72.0
11	Ya'qūb al-Dawraqī	295	3.5	75.5
12	Ibn 'Amr	260	3.1	78.6
13	Ibn al-Muthannā	210	2.5	81.1
14	Aḥmad b. Isḥāq	181	2.1	83.2
15	Sufyān b. Wakī'	145	1.7	84.9
16	Muḥammad b. Sa'd	117	1.4	86.3
17	Hannād b. al-Sarī	91	1.1	87.4
18	Abū Hishām	68	0.8	88.2
19	'Amr b. 'Alī	66	0.8	**89.0**
Others	(189) masters	927	11.0	100.0
TOTAL		**8,424**	**100.0**	



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. Hārūn al-Baghdādī. 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-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-Āmulī 1,118 times, or 13.3% of the total 8,424 *isnāds*. These two masters, Mūsā b. Hārūn and al-Muthannā 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-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara* were narrated from these two masters alone, as is illustrated in the following Pie Chart



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).

The six Major Masters of al-Ṭabarī

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

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 these19 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-Fātiḥa* 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 *Muqaddima* (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."[2]

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-Bāhilī, and Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā. Narrations from yet another three amounted to more than 100 each. These were Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī, Sufyān b. Wakī', 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-Fātiḥa* 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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[2] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (Introduction), 1:438-439. See also the Introduction.
[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)?[4]

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 *isnād*s 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-Tabari'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-Muthannā 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. Yaḥyā, 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]

[5] See Table no. 1, containing classification of al-Ṭabarī's masters.

SECTION ONE

Al-Ṭabarī's two most quoted masters, from whom he narrated more than 1,000 times, i.e. Mūsā b. Hārūn and al-Muthannā al-Āmulī

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

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

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Amr b. Ḥammād	1,677	100.0	100.0
Total	1,677	100.0	

The frequency of Mūsā'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-Ṭabarī's narration from his master Mūsā 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.

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Asbāṭ b.Naṣr	1,677	100.0	100.0
Total	1,677	100.0	

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

[6] See Table no 1.

Mu'tamir (at a rate of 0.1%.) Nevertheless, the *isnād* remaines in one form passing from Mūsā b. Hārūn to al-Suddī, who was the fourth narrator in the *isnād* (see the next Table).

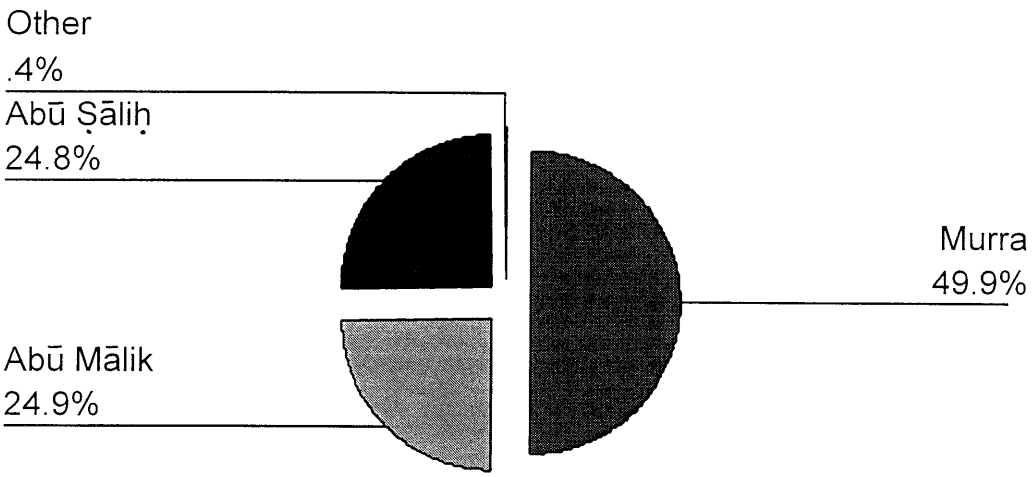
Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Al-Suddī	1,676	99.9	99.9
Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir	1	0.1	100.0
Total	1,677	100.0	

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

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Murra	836	49.9	49.9
Abū Mālik	417	24.9	74.8
Abū Ṣāliḥ	416	24.8	99.6
Others(6)	7	0.4	100.0
Total	1,676	100.0	

Al-Suddī's Three Most Quoted Masters



As is indicated in this Table and the associated Pie Chart, al-Suddī narrates extensively (1,669 *isnād*s, or 99.6% of the total 1,676 *isnād*s) 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 Ṣāliḥ, 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-Suddī 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-Suddī 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 'Abdullāh 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-Suddī. He introduces them merely by saying, "From some Companions."[7] From these persons Murra narrates 417 times (49.9%) (see the following Table).

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Mas'ūd	419	50.1	50.1
Some Companions	417	49.9	100.0
Total	836	100.0	

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: 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, 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

[7] This is how the words appear in al-Ṭabarī'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'ud (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 ḥadīths (traditions) narrated from the Prophet. See the following Table.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
The Prophet	5	100.0	100.0
Total	5	100.0	

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 *tafsīr*s 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-Hāshimī is one of the famous Companions each known as *ḥabr al-umma* (learned of the people) and *turjumān 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 ḥadīths 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 *Iṣāba*, 2:330; *Istī'āb*, 3:33; and *Usd al-Ghāba*, 3:390.

[9] 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd al-Hudhalī, a very well-known Companion, was the servant of the Prophet and narrated many ḥadīths. He was an authority in the field of *tafsīr* and Qur'ānic recitation. He lived and died in Medina. See *Iṣāba*, 2:368; *Istī'āb*, 3:187; and *Usd al-Ghābā*, 3:384.

isnād Mūsā ~ 'Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī. This *isnād* is the one appearing most frequently among al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s. 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 *isnād*s 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 *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me) each time he narrates the *isnād* Mūsā ~ al-Suddī (see the next Table).

Frequency of the term *ḥaddathanī* used by al-Ṭabarī when narrating from his master Mūsā b. Hārūn

Technical term	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	1677	100.0	100.0
Total	1677	100.0	

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 Sufyān al-Thawrī, the *Tafsīr* of Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Tamīmī, and the *Tafsīr* of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī.

even without permission.[11] So al-Suddī's *Tafsīr* may have reached al-Ṭabarī via both oral and written transmission.

We may now return to note some biographical details relating to the persons contained in the *isnād* Mūsā ~ 'Amr ~ Asbāṭ ~ al-Suddī, because the scholars of Ḥadīth had something to say on this matter.

1. Al-Ṭabarī's master, Mūsā b. Hārūn is Mūsā b. Hārūn b. 'Abdullāh b. Marwān Al-Baghdādī (d. AH 294), a *muḥaddīth* (narrator) and *ḥāfiẓ* (one who could memorize narrations by heart) from Iraq. He penned original works and compilations. Historians afirm that Mūsā wrote down his knowledge in these books. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn said of him, "He is the narrator of Iraq." Several scholars narrated from him including al-Ṭabarānī.[12] Al-Ṭabarī also narrated from Mūsā b. Hārūn in more than fifty places in the first and second volumes of his *Tārīkh*. Mūsā was in fact one of al-Ṭabarī's most important masters from whom he benefited in Qur'ānic interpretation and historiography. Among his writings there was a document dealing with Qur'ānic interpretation and another one on history. He was possibly a major writer who combined both these disciplines and to whom al-Ṭabarī referred in compiling his own books in Qur'ānic interpretation and history.

2. 'Amr b. Ṭalḥa al-Qannād (d. AH 222), Mūsā's master, is 'Amr b. Ḥammād b. Ṭalḥa al-Qannād, who is sometimes simply referred to as 'Amr b. Ṭalḥa. In his turn, 'Amr narrated from his own master, Asbāṭ b. Naṣr.[13] Scholars have decided that 'Amr's narration from Asbāṭ came from a book.[14] Ibn Ḥajar said,"Muslim and al-Bukhārī [scholars of Ḥadīth] narrated from 'Amr. Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī also narrated from him and so did Ibn Mājah in his interpretation."[15] Ibn Sa'd [16] said about him, "He was also accepted by Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn, Abū Ḥātim,[17] and Ibn Ḥajar."[18]

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[11] See Chapter V on the explanation of the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarī in narrating *isnāds* from his masters.

[12] *Shadharāt*, 3:399; *Sīyar*, 8: 172 - 173; *Tadhkira*, 2:217; Kaḥḥāla, 13:49.

[13] *Tahdhīb*, 8:22-23.

[14] See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:156, and the biography of Asbāṭ b. Naṣr, f.n. no. 20.

[15] *Tahdhīb*, 8:22.

[16] Ibn Sa'd, 6:285.

[17] *Jarḥ*, 3/1:228.

[18] *Taqrīb*, 1:331.

3. Asbāṭ b. Naṣr[19] (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-'Imād [20] said, "Asbāṭ 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 Asbāṭ b. Naṣr and al-Suddī's *Tafsīr* is the best interpretation."[21]

4. Al-Suddī (d. 127 / 744) is Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 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. 'Alī, Abū Hurayrah, and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī.[23] Al-Suddī used to interpret the Qur'ān and his interpretation was admired by Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, the famous *Tābi'ī* scholar.[24] He was also trusted and accepted by Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn Mahdī, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn 'Adī. Al-'Ijlī said that his scholarship in Qur'ānic interpretation was beyond any doubt[25] and Kaḥḥāla stated that he wrote a *tafsīr*.[26] 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*."[27] 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 *sīra* (biography of the Prophet). He was a knowledgeable scholar who knew the events and the days of people,"[28] meaning that he had mastered the discipline of history. Al-Suyūṭī said, "Ismā'īl al-Suddī refers his interpretation by various *isnād*s to Ibn

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[19] See his biographical details in *Kabīr*, 1/2:53; *Jarḥ*, 1/1:332; Ibn Sa'd, 6:376; *'Ibar*, 1:259; *Shadharāt*, 1:279; *Tahdhīb*, 1:221; *Wāfī*, 8:383; Sezgin, 1:192.

[20] *Shadharāt*, 2:327.

[21] *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] Kaḥḥāla, 2:276.

[27] Sezgin, 1:191.

[28] *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 1:308; *Lubāb*, 1:537; *A'lām*, 1:313.

'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd.[29] We have already noted al-Suyūṭī's praise for the *Tafsīr* of al-Suddī in our biographical notes on Asbāṭ.

Having reviewed the biographies of the narrators in the *isnād* Mūsā ~ '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."[30] Ibn Ḥajar was correct in that Ibn Abī Ḥātim was narrating from this interpretation since I have in fact seen this interpretation [31] 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-Suyūṭī said, "The interpretation by Ismā'īl al-Suddī is referred by various *isnād*s to Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās. 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-Suyūṭī 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]

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[29] *Itqān*, 2:534.

[30] *Tahdhīb*, 1:315.

[31] There is a manuscript copy of this *Tafsīr* in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Egypt, under the no. 15 *Tafsīr*.

[32] See Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr*, entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm Musnadan 'an al-Rasul wa-al-Ṣaḥāba wa-al-Tābi'īn* (The Interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ān by Ascriptions [*isnād*s] from the Prophet, the Companions, and the Followers).

[33] *Itqān*, 2:534.

[34] See *al-Mustadrak*, 2: 258, 260, 273, 321.

This historical research shows us that al-Suddī's interpretation was one of the first documents written in the field of *tafsīr*. It is from an early generation, because al-Suddī 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-Suddī *isnād* goes back to an interpretation written by al-Suddī 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-Suddī, 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.

Narration containing the Mūsā ~ al-Suddī *isnād*

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Companions	1,670	99.5	99.5
The Prophet	5	0.4	99.9
Followers	2	0.1	100.0
Total	1,677	100.0	

2. Second major master: al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī

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 *isnād*s (13.3%[1] of the total number of 8,424 *isnād*s), in his exegesis of *al-Fātiḥa* 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-Āmulī, 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-Āmulī, and then he went to Rayy where he met with Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī."[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 *isnād*s from only 11 masters, i.e. just over 95% of the 1,118 *isnād*s. The remaining 55 *isnād*s (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, *Baghdād*; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*; *Mīzān*; *Siyar*; Ibn Sa'd; al-Bukhārī, *Kabīr*; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*; and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*.

[5] Cf. Chapter I, al-Ṭabarī's biography.

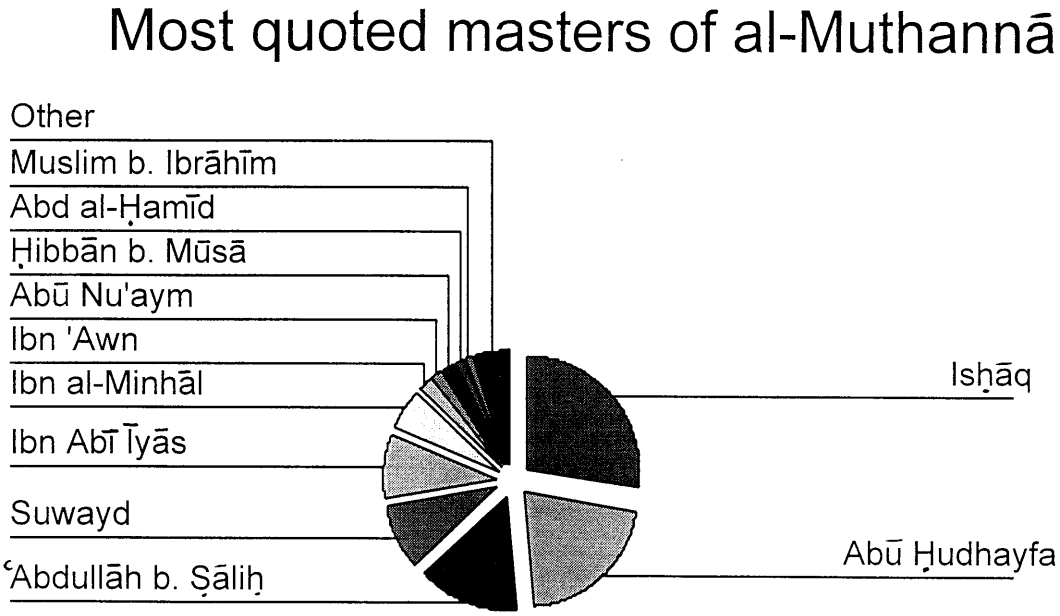
[6] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:49.

[7] Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī 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:

Most quoted masters of al-Muthannā

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Isḥāq	308	27.5	27.5
Abū Ḥudhayfa	235	21.0	48.5
ʿAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ	163	14.6	63.1
Suwayd	103	9.2	72.3
Ibn Abī Iyās	100	8.9	81.2
Ibn al-Minhāl	66	5.9	87.1
Ibn ʿAwn	22	2.0	89.1
Abū Nuʿaym	21	1.9	91.0
Ḥibbān b. Mūsā	18	1.6	92.6
ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd	16	1.4	94.0
Muslim b. Ibrāhīm	12	1.1	95.1
Others (30)	55	4.9	100.0
Total	1,118	100.0	



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 *ḥaddathanī* (he narrated to me) when transmitting *isnāds* from al-Muthannā. As we have seen above, *ḥaddathanī* is a term used by scholars of Ḥadīth 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 *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā* as used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate from his master al-Muthannā

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	1,018	91.1	91.1
Ḥaddathanā	100	8.9	100.0
Total	1,118	100.0	

In our discussion of the terms used by al-Ṭabarī in narrating *isnāds*, we noted that his use of the term *ḥaddathanī*[9] 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 *ḥaddathanī*, while for only 100 *isnāds* (8.9%) he employs the term *ḥaddathanā*. This may suggest that in the majority of cases, when using the term *ḥaddathanī*, al-Ṭabarī is quoting from al-Muthannā teaching from a document, while in the minority of cases, when using the term *ḥaddathanā*, he is referring to different scattered

[8] See Chapter V, al-Ṭabarī's technical terms of transmission.
[9] *Ibid.*

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

Description and Analysis of *Isnāds* (Strands) flowing from the Major Masters of al-Muthannā

2.1. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī (lived between AH 170 and 240)[11]

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

Most quoted masters of Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Abī Ja'far	156	50.6	50.6
Ibn Mighrā'	58	18.8	67.4
'Abd al-Razzāq	25	8.1	77.5
Ibn 'Abd al-Karīm	11	3.6	81.1
'Abd al-Raḥmān	6	1.9	83.0
Others (30)	52	17.0	100.0
Total	308	100.0	

The frequency of al-Muthannā's narrations from Isḥāq may be illuminated by the statement made by Ibn Abī Ḥātim that he heard Abū Zur'a saying that 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dashtakī had documented 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Tafsīr* as it was narrated from Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī.[12] This assertion suggests that Isḥāq compiled a book on *tafsīr* from materials he reported from earlier masters such as the five most quoted masters just referred to, in particular 'Abdullāh b. Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, both of whom were famous scholars in *tafsīr*.

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Jarḥ*, 2: 217.
[12] *Ibid.*, 2:217.

It should be emphasized here that, when quoting from his master al-Muthannā via Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥūnī's 5 most quoted masters (mentioned in the above Table), al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one term, i.e. *ḥaddathanī*. 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s, from 5 of his main masters. These *isnād*s are as follows:

2.1.1. Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abdullāh b. Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī [13]

This *isnād* is repeated 156 times (i.e. 50.6% of 308 *isnād*s). 'Abdullāh b. Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī narrates from 3 masters only, including his father Abū Ja'far al-Rāzī (AH 90 - 160),[14] from whom he narrates 154 times, i.e. 98.7%. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Abu Ja'far was a reliable master of *tafsīr*.[15] Moreover, al-Dhahabī stated, "Abū Ja'far has heard from al-Rabī' b. Anas when they met during their residence in a village called Burz. Later, Abū Ja'far left the village for Rayy where he died."[16] Abu Ja'far on his own has narrates 154 *isnād*s (100%) from 6 masters, but the majority of them, 147 *isnād*s or 95.5%, from al-Rabī' b. Anas al-Baṣrī (139/756).[17] 140 *isnād*s end at al-Rabī' b. Anas, 6 *isnād*s al-Rabī' narrates from his master Abū al-'Ālīya (d. AH 93),[18]and the remaining 1 *isnād* al-Rabī' narrates from his other master, al-Ḥasan

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[13] *Tahdhīb*, 3: 117; *Kāshif*, 2: 78. He narrated from his father Abū Ja'far al-Rāzī.

[14] It is claimed that his real name is 'Īsā b. Abī 'Īsā Māhān, but he was well known by his agnomen. He narrated from al-Rabī' b. Anas and his son 'Abdullāh b. Ja'far narrated from him. See *Sīyar*, 7: 346; Ibn Sa'd, 7: 380; *Tahdhīb*, 6: 324-325; *Kabīr*, 3: 271; *Kāshif*, 1: 303.

[15] *Tahdhīb*, 6: 325.

[16] *Sīyar*, 7: 346.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Tahdhīb*, 2:168.

al-Baṣrī.[19] This shows that al-Ṭabarī heard the *Tafsīr* of al-Rabī' b. Anas from his master al-Muthannā in the following way, which he repeated 147 times:

Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ Abū Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī'

The significance of this *isnād* lies in the fact that it reaches back to an early written source on *tafsīr* entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*,[20] which contained opinions on *tafsīr* expressed by al-Rabī' b. Anas al-Baṣrī, the famous commentator who lived in an early generation at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century AH.

2.1.2. Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Abū Zuhayr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mighrā' al-Kūfī[21]

This *isnād* occurs 58 times (i.e. in 18.8% of the 308 *isnād*s). Abū Zuhayr studied under 3 masters but received most of his narrations (56 *isnād*s or 96.5%) from only one person, Juwaybir b. Sa'īd al-Azdī al-Kūfī (d. between AH 140 and 150).[22] Juwaybir attributes all 56 *isnād*s to al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d. 105/723),[23] a *Tābi'ī* (Follower) and a famous commentator on the Qur'ān, who left a written *Tafsīr*.[24] This *isnād* ends 54 times at al-Ḍaḥḥāk as al-Ṭabarī went on narrating this scholar's own opinions on *tafsīr*. The remaining two *isnād*s extended from al-Ḍaḥḥāk to another prominent *Tābi'ī*, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.115/723). Hence, the *isnād* of al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Abū Zuhayr ~ Juwaybir ~ al-Ḍaḥḥāk, repeated most frequently in the commentary on *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*, may well indicate that al-Ṭabarī intended specifically to cite al-Ḍaḥḥāk's commentary on the Qur'ān, especially since al-Ḍaḥḥāk's prominence in *tafsīr* scholarship was testified to by others such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Ḥanbal, and Ibn 'Adī.[25] This statistical and historical research shows that al-Ḍaḥḥāk's *Tafsīr* was one of the first documents written in the discipline of *tafsīr*. It is from an early generation, because al-Ḍaḥḥāk died in 105/723.

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[19] *Ibid.*, 1:481; *Shadharāt*, 2:48.

[20] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:189.

[21] *Tahdhīb*, 6: 274; *Kāshif*, 2: 186; *Kabīr*, 5: 355; *Sīyar*, 9: 300.

[22] He is known as a commentator, his *Tafsīr* being well-respected among experts on *tafsīr* and ḥadīth scholars. He narrated from al-Ḍaḥḥāk, the well-known commentator. See *Kāshif*, 1:190; *Tahdhīb*, 1:397.

[23] *Mīzān*, 3:39; *Kāshif*, 2:36; Ibn Sa'd, 6:300; *Tahdhīb*, 2:572.

[24] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:237.

[25] *Tahdhīb*, 2: 572.

2.1.3. Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ '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-Ṭabarī used it to benefit from 'Abd al-Razzāq's wide knowledge as he was famed for works on *tafsīr* as well as Ḥadīth. Al-Ṭabarī 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-Baṣrī and later al-Yamanī (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-Baṣrī [29] (60-117/ 680-736) stopping at Qatāda 5 times (35.7%) and once reaching beyond Qatāda to Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (21-104/ 642-722), the famous commentator.[30]

It is quite conceivable that the source which al-Ṭabarī intended to benefit from was the compilation of the famous scholar of *tafsīr* and Ḥadīth, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī al-Yamanī, 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-Ṭabarī narrates from 'Abd al-Razzāq by various masters other than al-Muthannā, especially

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[26] He is 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī 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-Muṣannaf* on Prophetic Tradition, ed. by Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-'Aẓamī and printed by *al-Majlis al-'Ilmī* 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.

[27] Ma'mar b. Rāshid al-Baṣrī (later al-Yamani) reported from Qatāda. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī narrated from him. See *Tadhkira*, 1:190; *Tahdhīb*, 5:500.

[28] *Tahdhīb*, 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-'Ārifīn*, 1: 834.

[30] *Tadhkira*, 92; *Tahdhīb*, 10:42; Ibn Sa'd, 4:466; Sezgin, 1:185; Nadīm, 33; *Ẓunūn*, 458; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:462.

[31] *Ẓunūn*, 452; Sezgin, 1:277; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 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.

2.1.4. Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Ma'qil al-Ṣan'ānī al-Yamanī[32] (d. AH 210)

This *isnād* is repeated 11 times (3.6% of 308 *isnād*s). 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 *isnād*s to his uncle 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma'qil al-Yamanī (d. AH 183).[33] 'Abd al-Ṣamad, in turn, attributed this same number of *isnād*s to his uncle Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī[34] (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 *qaṣṣāṣ* (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 *Taṣnīf fī 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 *isnād*s from various routes, including that of his master al-Muthannā and others, may indicate his desire to cite

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[32] It is said that he obtained a document which he narrated from. *Tahdhīb*, 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 Yaḥyā and Yūnus, as well as by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī. He had a long life. See *Tahdhīb*, 3: 455.

[34] *Tahdhīb*, 6: 107.

[35] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2: 721.

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 ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abdullāh b. Sa'd al-Dashtakī al-Rāzī[36]

This *isnād* recurs 6 times, representing 1.9% of the 308 *isnāds*. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 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 ~ Isḥāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ Abū Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī'; and

2. Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ al-Dashtakī al-Rāzī ~ Abū Ja'far ~ al-Rabī'.

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 ~ Isḥāq, an *isnād* strand which reappears 256 times, or in 83% of 308 *isnāds*, in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* of *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*. Also to be noted is the fact that Isḥāq 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-Raḥmān b. 'Abdullāh b. Sa'd al-Rāzī from Rayy; and Abū al-Zuhayr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mighrā' from Kufa.

2.2. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa Mūsā b. Mas'ūd al-Baṣrī[37](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 Shibl b.

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[36] *Jarḥ*, 4: 254; *Kabīr*, 3/1:315.

[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-'Ārifīn*, 2: 477; Kaḥḥāla, 13: 48; *Tahdhīb*, 5: 510-579.

'Abbād al-Makkī[39] (70-148/689-764). He narrates each of the remaining 4 *isnād*s from 3 different masters. See the following Table:

Abū Ḥudhayfa's most cited master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Shibl	231	98.7	98.7
Others(3)	3	1.3	100.0
Total	234	100.0	

Although, in turn, Shibl narrates the 231 *isnād*s from 4 persons, he attributes most of them, some 226 *isnād*s (97.8%), to one person, 'Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ[40] (d. AH 131). Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates from 6 masters, but mainly from only two of them: Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī[41] (21-104/642-722) and 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī.[42] From Mujāhid, Ibn Abī Najīḥ took 213 *isnād*s (94.2%), in 210 of which the *isnād* stops at Mujāhid to narrate his *Tafsīr*. In the remaining three *isnād*s, he reached further back to narrate from Mujāhid's master, the Companion 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās.[43] From 'Aṭā' Ibn Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates 6 times, 4 times stopping at 'Aṭā' 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-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ Mujāhid b.Jabr al-Makkī. This *isnād* strand recurs 213 times (i.e. in 94.2% of the 226 *isnād*s 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-Qārī'* owing to his admired recitation of the Qur'ān. 'Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ narrated from him. See *Tahdhīb*, 2: 477; *Shadharāt*, 2: 221.

[40] A commentator from Mecca who had fellowship with Mujāhid. Wakī' said that Sufyān used to edit Ibn Abī Najīḥ's *Tafsīr*. See *Shadharāt*, 2: 136; *Tahdhīb*, 3: 284.

[41] Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī 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, *Tārīkh*, 16:125,131; *Tahdhīb*, 5:373.

[42] He was a credible scholar, well informed in jurisprudence and Ḥadīth. See *Tahdhīb*, 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, *Tārīkh*, 9:238,244; *Wāfī*, 15: 47; *Tahdhīb*, 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-Makkī.[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-Miṣrī[45](137-223/754-838)

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

'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Mu'āwiya	124	76.1	76.1
Al-Layth	34	20.9	97.0
Others(3)	5	3.0	100.0
Total	163	100.0%	

These 2 most quoted narrators are Mu'āwiya b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥimṣī[46] (d. AH 172), from whom 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ narrates 124 times (76.1%), and al-Layth b. Sa'd al-Miṣrī[47] (AH 94-175), from whom 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ narrates 34 times (20.9%). The total number of *isnād*s narrated by 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ from these 2 masters is 158 (97% of 163 *isnād*s). The remaining 5 *isnād*s 'Abdullāh narrates from a further 3 masters. In turn, Mu'āwiya b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥimṣī narrates 122 times (98.3% of 124 *isnād*s) from his master, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa al-Ḥimṣī[48] (d. AH 143) and the other 2 *isnād*s he narrates

[44] See f.n. no. 90.

[45] He served as secretary to al-Layth b. Sa'd (d. AH 175) and became well known for doing so. Ibn Sa'd, 7: 518; *Tadhkira*, 1:388; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 172; *Tahdhīb*, 3: 121.

[46] *Tahdhīb*, 5: 480; *Tadhkira*, 1:170; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 84; *'Ibar*, 1: 241.

[47] He was recognized for his extensive knowledge of jurisprudence, Qur'ānic exegesis, *ḥāfiẓ* (memorization of ḥadīths), and capacity for grammar and poetry. See *Ḥuffāẓ*, 151; *Baghdād*, 13:3; *Tadhkira*, 1:224; *Mīzān*, 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 Ḥimṣ. He narrated from Ibn 'Abbās but did not hear directly from him except through Mujāhid b. Jabr or Sa'īd b. Jubayr. See *Tahdhīb*, 4: 213.

from 2 other persons. ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa himself narrates these 122 times (100.0%) from one master, Ibn ʻAbbās. Consequently, this *isnād* reaches Ibn ʻAbbās 122 times and it is apparently from his *Tafsīr* that al-Ṭabarī intended to cite information from this source. Therefore, the most frequently emerging strand (122 times) here is al-Muthannā ~ ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Muʻāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ ~ ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa ~ Ibn ʻAbbās. This *isnād* is one of the most common of all the *isnāds* in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, as it recurs many times. Al-Suyūṭī proclaimed it "the best *isnād* to Ibn ʻAbbās ...and by this *isnād*, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim (240-327/854-938), and Ibn al-Mundhir narrated frequently through intermediaries between themselves and Ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ."[49] It was said that ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear directly from Ibn ʻAbbās because ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa and Ibn ʻAbbās lived in different eras and could not have met.[50] Al-Bukhārī, nevertheless, included his narration in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the section on *tafsīr*, because the intermediaries between ʻAlī and Ibn ʻAbbās are identified as either Mujāhid b. Jabr or Saʻīd b. Jubayr. Al-Suyūṭī said, "'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa heard Ibn ʻAbbās's *Tafsīr* from Mujāhid and Saʻīd 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."[51] To endorse Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa's *isnāds* and boost his credibility, Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) commented that there was a document on *tafsīr* in Egypt narrated by ʻAlī b. Abī 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.[52] On the same subject, Ibn Ḥajar said that this document of *Tafsīr* was with Abū Ṣāliḥ ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ (the secretary of al-Layth b. Saʻd). Its contents were narrated by Muʻāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ on the authority of ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, who ascribed it to Ibn ʻAbbās. A copy was kept by al-Bukhārī, who relied on it and used it extensively as a source of reference in compiling his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[53] Moreover, al-Suyūṭī said that this reference tool was frequently consulted

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[49] *Itqān*, 2:1231.
[50] *Tahdhīb*, 3: 214.
[51] *Itqān*, 2: 533.
[52] *Ibid.*, 2: 532-533.
[53] *Tahdhīb*, 4: 214; cf. *Itqān*, 2: 533.

by al-Ṭabarī, by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and by Ibn al-Mundhir, who all quoted ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ through various intermediaries because they did not meet him.[54] In the case of al-Ṭabarī, the mediator was al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī.

The other major master of ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ is al-Layth b. Saʻd al-Miṣrī. Al-Layth narrates 34 *isnād*s from 6 masters, but mainly from 2: Yūnus b.Yazīd al-Aylī[55] (d. AH 159) and ʻAqīl b. Khālid al-Aylī[56] (d. AH 141).[57] He narrates from Yūnus b.Yazīd 17 times (50%) and from ʻAqīl b. Khālid 13 times (38.2%). In turn, each of these men narrates from one master, Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī[58] (d. AH 124), the famous scholar acknowledged by al-Layth b. Saʻd for his far-reaching efforts in collecting traditions of the Prophet and his competence in the study of Ḥadīth.[59]

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 Yūnus al-Aylī and ʻAqīl al-Aylī. 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. Saʻd 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 ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ. They are represented as follows:

1. Al-Muthannā ~ ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī ~ Muʻāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ ~ ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa ~ Ibn ʻAbbās.

2. Al-Muthannā ~ ʻAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ ~ al-Layth b. Saʻd al-Miṣrī ~,

~ Yūnus al-Aylī ~ al-Zuhrī.

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[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 Yūnus b. Yazīd whenever he visited "Ayla". They were also travelling companions during journeys to Medina. See *Tadhkira*, 1:162; *Jarḥ*, 4/2:247; *Tahdhīb*, 11:450; Ibn Saʻd, 7/2:206; *Kabīr*, 4/2:406; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 78.

[56] He narrated from al-Zuhrī and was quoted by al-Layth b. Saʻd. See *Ḥuffāẓ*, 77; *Tadhkira*, 1:161; *ʻIbar*, 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.

[58] *Tadhkira*, 1: 108; *Tahdhīb*, 9: 445; *Shadharāt*, 1: 162; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 1: 294; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 49.

[59] *Tahdhīb*, 9:445.

~ ʿAqīl al-Aylī ~ al-Zuhrī.

Our examination of the two strands of al-Muthannā shows that ʿAbdullāh 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, Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ and al-Layth b. Saʿd. 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 ʿAbdullāh 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 ʿAbdullāh 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. Saʿd.

2.4. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Suwayd b. Naṣr al-Marwazī[60](d. AH 240)

This *isnād* recurs 103 times, representing 9.2% of 1,118 *isnād*s. Suwayd narrates almost all of his *isnād*s (102, or 99%) from ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwazī[61] (118-181/736-797), narrating only once from another person (see the next Table).

Suwayd b. Naṣr al-Marwazī's most cited master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn al-Mubārak	102	99.0	99.0
Other master	1	1.0	100.0
Total	103	100.0	

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 *isnād*s start to

[60] He was considered as the narrator of Ibn al-Mubārak. *Kabīr*, 2/2: 149; *Tahdhīb*, 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; *Ḥilya*, 8: 162; *Tadhkira*, 1: 253-257; *Ẓunūn*, 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s 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-Makkī[64] (d. AH 150). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 14 times (13.7% of 102 *isnād*s). Ibn Jurayj narrates half of these, or 7 *isnād*s, from his master 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, while he attributes the rest to 5 other masters.

- Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kūfī[65] (97-161/716-778). Ibn al-Mubārak narrates from him 12 times (11.8% of 102 *isnād*s). 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 *Jan* 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-Bārudī (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-Makkī. Ibn Ḥanbal said that he was the first to compile books of traditions. See *Ḥuffāẓ*, 81; *Bagdād*, 15: 400; *Tadhkira*, 1: 169; *Tahdhīb*, 6: 402; *Lisān*, 6: 62.

[65] His name is Sufyān b. Sa'īd b. Masrūq al-Thawrī al-Kūfī. *Baghdād*, 9: 151; *Tadhkira*, 1: 203; *Tahdhīb*, 4: 111; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 186.

[66] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 95.

- Ma'mar b. Rāshid al-Baṣrī (AH 96-154).[67] 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).[68] 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-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim and no one else. We noticed earlier that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was a famous commentator and composed a work on *tafsīr*.[69] The following Table summarizes this information:

'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwazī's main masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Jurayj	14	13.7	13.7
Sufyān	12	11.8	25.5
Ma'mar	11	10.8	36.3
Juwaybir	10	9.8	46.1
Others(35)	55	53.9	100.0
Total	102	100.0	

2.5. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Ādam b. Abī Īyās al-Khurasānī[70] (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).

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[67] Ibn Sa'd, 5:546; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 288; *Kabīr*, 7:378-379; *Jarḥ*, 8:255-257; *Kamāl*, 1354-1355; *Sīyar*, 7:5.

[68] Biographical sources assert that Ibn al-Mubārak narrated from Juwaybir. See *Tahdhīb*, 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-Suyuṭī 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 *Ḥuffāẓ*, 172; *Tadhkira*, 1: 409; *Tahdhīb*, 1: 126-127.

Ādam b. Abī Īyās's most quoted master

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Abu Ja'far	89	89.0	89.0
Others(5)	11	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Hence, Abū 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-Rabī' b. Anas al-Bakrī. Abū Ja'far narrates from him 79 times, or in 88.7% of 89 *isnāds*. Al-Rabī' himself narrates the same number from his master Abu al-'Ālīya Rufay' b. Mihrān al-Riyāḥī al-Baṣrī[71] (d. 93/712). The *isnād* goes no further, so that what al-Ṭabarī employed was Abū al-'Ālīya's Qur'ānic interpretations. Abū al-'Ālīya 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-'Ālīya at the top. He said that there was no well-informed expert after the generation of Shu'ba like Abū al-'Ālīya, after whom came Sa'īd b. Jubayr, then al-Suddī, and then Sufyān al-Thawrī.[73]

- Qatāda b. Da'āma al-Baṣrī. 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 ~ Ādam *isnād*, it becomes clear that Ādam b. Abī Īyās 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*. Ḥajjī Khalīfa described this *Tafsīr* as a comprehensive work containing narrations of the Companions and Followers. This *isnād* (i.e. al-Muthannā ~ Ādam)

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[71] *Tadhkira*, 1: 61; Ibn Sa'd, 1: 112; *Kabīr*, 5: 355; *Tahdhīb*, 2: 168; *Sīyar*, 4: 207-213; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 29; *Shadharāt*, 1: 367.

[72] *Kabīr*, 1/2:326; *Tadhkira*, 61.

[73] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 29.

ended at two branches, leading to two well-informed persons in *tafsīr*: Abū al-'Ālīya and Qatāda. Each is known to have written on *tafsīr*.

Al-Ṭabarī used two *isnād*s 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-'Ālīya, but used another *isnād* (al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ibn Abī Ja'far ~ Abu 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 *isnād*s, 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-'Ālīya, the master of al-Rabī', which was narrated by Ādam, who attributed it to Abū Ja'far via al-Rabī' and via Abū al-'Ālīya. The above observations show that al-Ṭabarī's method in applying a great number of *isnād*s is not haphazard or redundant because different portions of the *isnād*s lead to the presentation of the *tafsīr* of different scholars.

2.6. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī[74] (d. AH 227)

This *isnād* is repeated 66 times or close to 5.9% of 1,118 *isnād*s. Al-Ḥajjāj, from Basra, narrates them from 14 masters. He narrates 44 *isnād*s (66.7%) from 1 major source, Ḥammād b. Salama al-Baṣrī[75] (d. AH 167), also from Basra, while he attributes the remaining 22 *isnād*s (33.3%) to 13 masters with nearly equal frequencies (see the following Table).

Al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl's most quoted master

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥammād	44	66.7	66.7
Others(13)	22	33.3	100.0
Total	66	100.0	

[74] *Tahdhīb*, 1: 447; *Kabīr*, 1: 2: 380; *Sīyar*, 10: 352.
[75] *Tadhkira*, 1: 202; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 94; *Tahdhīb*, 2: 10; *Mīzān*, 1: 590; *'Ibar*, 1: 248; *Sīyar*, 7: 444.

In turn, Ḥammād b. Salama al-Baṣrī narrates the 44 *isnād*s 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. 'Āṣim said that he wrote down well over 100,000 ḥadīths from Ḥammād b. Salama.[76] Moreover, al-Dhahabī said that Ḥammād was extensively involved in writing books about Tradition. Likewise, Ibn Ḥajar affirmed that Ḥammād used to write down whatever he heard from his masters.[77] 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 conection 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-Wāsiṭī[78] (d. AH 225)

This *isnād* recurs 22 times, representing 1.9% of 1,118 *isnād*s. 'Amr b. 'Awn studied under 3 masters but narrated 19, i.e. most, of the *isnād*s from Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī (469)[79] (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 *tafsīr* and Tradition like *al-Sunan fī al-Fiqh*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, *al-Maghāzī*, and *al-Qirā'āt*. He was well known for his competence in *tafsīr*, *qirā'āt* (Qur'ānic readings), *fiqh* (jurisprudence),

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[76] *Sīyar*, 6: 288.
[77] *Tahdhīb*, 2: 12.
[78] *Kabīr*, 3/2: 36; *Sīyar*, 10: 450; *Jarḥ*, 6: 252; *Tahdhīb*, 4: 371.
[79] *Sīyar*, 8: 287; *Kabīr*, 8: 242; *Tahdhīb*, 6: 41.

and Ḥadīth.[80] Ya'qūb al-Dawraqī said that Hushaym mastered 20,000 ḥadīths.[81] Regarding his *Tafsīr*, Sezgin stated that it was one of al-Ṭabarī's sources.[82]

2.8. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Abū Nu'aym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn al-Kūfī[83] (130-219/748-834)

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

Abū Nu'aym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's most quoted master

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Sufyān al-Thawrī	17	81.0	81.0
Others(3)	4	19.0	100.0
Total	21	100.0	

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 *isnād*s, especially since Sufyān produced several books including *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, *Kitāb al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr*, *Kitāb al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, and *al-Farā'iḍ*. Later on, I will show that, in his *Tafsīr*, 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 Nu'aym 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 *isnād*s. Ḥibbān, from Marw, narrates all of these *isnād*s from 1 master, 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak, a scholar also from Marw (see the following Table).

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[80] Nadīm, 1: 228.
[81] *Tahdhīb*, 6: 41.
[82] Sezgin, 1: 202.
[83] *Tahdhīb*, 4: 488; *Wāfī*, 13: 94-96; *Mīzān*, 2: 229; *A'lām*, 5: 353; Kaḥḥāla, 8: 67.
[84] *Tahdhīb*, 1: 428; *Shadharāt*, 3: 153.

Ḥibbān b. Mūsā al-Marwazī's master

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn al-Mubārak	18	100.0	100.0
Total	18	100.0	

Ibn al-'Imād stated that Ḥibbān narrated extensively from Ibn al-Mubārak.[85] 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[86] 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-Marwazī ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī, which has been shown to recur 102 times, and the second is the present one.

2.10. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥimmānī al-Kūfī[87] (d. AH 202)

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

'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥimmānī's most cited master

Master	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Sharīk	15	93.8	93.8
Other master	1	6.2	100.0
Total	16	100.0	

He narrates almost all of them, 15 times (93.8%), from another Kufan, Sharīk b. 'Abdullāh al-Nakha'ī al-Kūfī[88] (AH 95-177). Sharīk is the common link in these *isnād*s because they only begin to split after him, into 9 branches, each pertaining to a

[85] *Shadharāt*, 3: 153.
[86] See Strand no. 4.
[87] *Tahdhīb*, 3: 326-327; Ibn Sa'd, 6: 399; *Shadharāt*, 3: 9.
[88] *Wafayāt*, 2: 464; al-Khawānasārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 4: 102; Ibn Sa'd, 6: 378; *Tadhkira*, 1: 214.

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 *fatwā*s in jurisprudence as well as other disciplines.[89] He was a bright person with a sharp intellect,[90] as is attested by the many controversial debates and discussions against Abu Ḥanīfa, the famous scholar in *fiqh*, in which he engaged.[91]

2.11. The Strand of al-Muthannā ~ Muslim b. Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī[92] (AH 130-222)

This *isnād* is repeated 12 times, or in approximately 1% of 1,118 *isnād*s. The source of this *isnād* is Muslim b. Ibrāhīm because the *isnād* diverges immediately after him. Unlike the previous *isnād*s, Muslim narrates from 8 masters without relying disproportionately on any one of them. Al-Muthannā learned them from Muslim and al-Ṭabarī took them up into his *Tafsīr*. Muslim b. Ibrāhīm narrated from many famous Ḥadīth scholars including al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn, and al-Dārimī.[93] He said concerning himself that he had learned from 800 masters, although Abū Dāwūd thought that he had learned from around 1,000.[94]

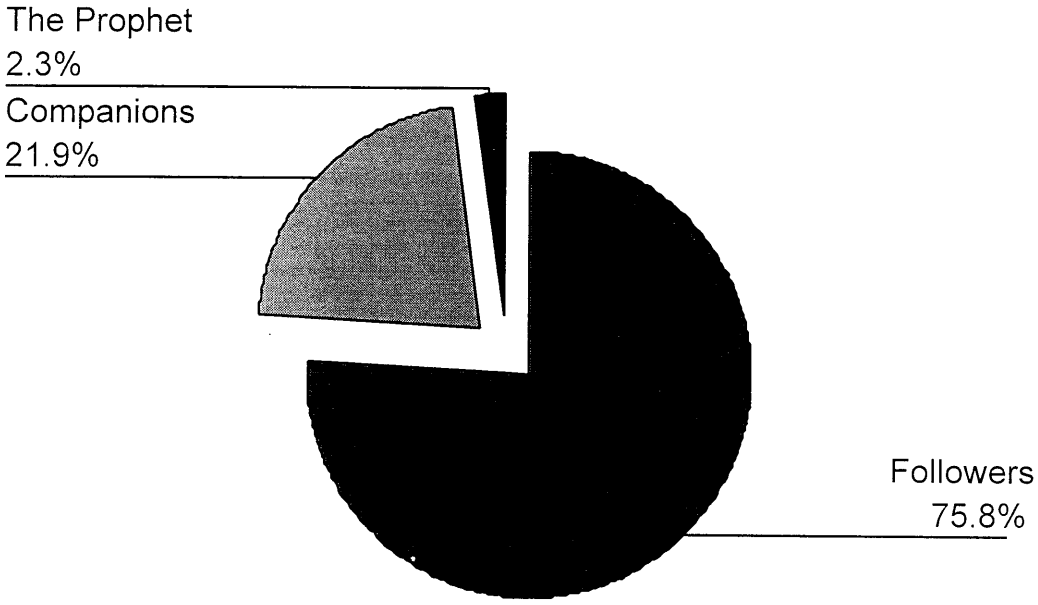
It may be observed here that most of these *isnād*s (the 11 most quoted strands) which flow from al-Muthannā reach back to the generation of the *Tābi'ūn*, i.e. mainly to such men as al-Rabī' b. Anas al-Baṣrī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī, Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī, Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa al-Miṣrī, and Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī. 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 *isnād*s are attributed to Followers, 21.9% are attributed to the Companions, and only 2.3% are ascribed to the Prophet (i.e. Ḥadīth). This

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[89] *Sīyar*, 8: 202.
[90] *Tadhkira*, 1: 214; *A'lām*, 3: 163.
[91] *Baghdād*, 13: 374-397; *Sīyar*, 8: 202.
[92] *Kabīr*, 7: 254; Ibn Sa'd, 7: 304; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1944; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 476; *Jarḥ*, 8: 181; *Tahdhīb*, 5: 423; *Tadhkira*, 1: 394; *Kāshif*, 3: 139; *Sīyar*, 10: 314; *Shadharāt*, 3: 102.
[93] *Sīyar*, 10: 314-315.
[94] *Tahdhīb*, 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	847	75.8	75.8
Companions	245	21.9	97.7
The Prophet	26	2.3	100.0
Total	1,118	100.0	



Conclusion

Al-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī is considered the second principal reference for al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s. To be exact, al-Ṭabarī narrated 1,118 of his *isnād*s (13.3% of 8,424 *isnād*s) 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 *isnād*s. 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 *tafsīr*, like Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī's, ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Ṣāliḥ's, Ibn ʿAbbās's, Mujāhid's, al-Rabīʿ's, Abū al-ʿĀlīya's, ʿAbd 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-Āmulī 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-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*. These highlighted *isnāds* are summarized below.

Strand	Chains of *isnād*	Frequency
2.2	Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa al-Baṣrī~ Shibl al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ Mujāhid al-Makkī	213 times
2.1.1	Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ibn Abī Jaʿfar al-Rāzī ~ Abu Jaʿfar al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabīʿ b. Anas al-Baṣrī	147 times
2.3	Al-Muthannā ~ ʿAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī ~ Muʿāwiya	122 times

Strand	Chains of *isnād*	Frequency
	al-Ḥimṣī ~ Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa al-Ḥimṣī	
2.4	Al-Muthannā ~ Suwayd al-Marwazī ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī	102 times
2.5	Al-Muthannā ~ Ādam ~ Abū Ja'far ~ al-Rabī' b. Anas ~ Abū al-'Ālīya	79 times
2.1.2	Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Abū Zuhayr ~ Juwaybir ~ al-Ḍaḥḥāk	56 times
2.6	Al-Muthannā ~ al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī	44 times
2.3	Al-Muthannā ~ 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī ~ al-Layth b. Sa'd al-Miṣrī ~ ... al-Zuhrī	30 times
2.1.3	Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq	25 times
2.7	Al-Muthannā ~ 'Amr al-Wāsiṭī ~ Hushaym al-Wāsiṭī	19 times
2.9	Al-Muthannā ~ Ḥibbān al-Marwazī ~ Ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī	18 times
2.10	Al-Muthannā ~ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kūfī ~ Sharīk al-Kūfī	15 times
2.11	Al-Muthannā ~ Muslim b. Ibrāhīm	12 times
2.1.4	Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ Ismā'īl al-Yamanī ~ 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Yamanī ~ Wahb al-Yamanī	11 times
2.8	Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Nu'aym al-Kūfī	11 times
2.5	Al-Muthannā ~ Ādam ~ Abū Ja'far ~ Qatāda	7 times
2.2	Al-Muthannā ~ Abū Ḥudhayfa al-Baṣrī ~ Shibl al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ 'Aṭā' al-Makkī	6 times
2.1.5	Al-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāzī ~ Abu Ja'far al-Rāzī ~ al-Rabī'	5 times

SECTION TWO

Masters from whom al-Ṭabarī 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-Rāzī[1] (d.248/862)

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

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 *isnād* will go down in rank and lose some of its value because he has not heard from the master himself. The shorter the *isnād* 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. 'Īsā 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, *Sīra*, and *Maghāzī*. He took his knowledge from scholars like Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī. See *Shadharāt*, 3:223; *Tahdhīb*, 5:84; *Baghdād*, 2:162; *Mīzān*, 3:49; *Tadhkira*, 2:490; Nadīm, 291.

[2] *Shadharāt*, 3:223.

[3] *Tahdhīb*, 5:84.

[4] See on the issue of "high" (*'ālī*) and "low" (*nāzil*) *isnāds*, *Taqyyīd*, 215; *Tadrīb*, 159; *'Ulūm*, 255; *Bā'ith*, 159.

[5] *Jarḥ*, 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-Mughīrah."[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 *isnād*s from his master Ibn Ḥumayd. The following statistical Table shows that al-Ṭabarī always uses the term *ḥaddathanā* (he narrated to us) when transmitting from Ibn Ḥumayd. *Ḥaddathanā* is a term used by the Hadith scholars to indicate that the information they narrate comes by *samā'* (hearing directly from the master);[11] it also indicates that written documents were used while transmitting. al-Ṭabarī's exclusive use of *ḥaddathanā* 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] *Tahdhīb*, 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

Term	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	533	100.0	100.0
Total	533	100.0	

This significant result shows that al-Ṭabarī followed a certain methodology in applying terms to transmit *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s 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-Rāzī[12] (d. AH 191), from whom Ibn Ḥumayd narrates 260 times (49%); 2. Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī [13] (AH 110-188), from whom he narrates 112 times (21%); 3. Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ al-Marwazī[14] (d. after AH 190), from whom he narrates 45 times (8.5%); 4. Ḥakkām b. Salamah al-Rāzī[15] (d. AH 190), from whom he narrates 45 times (8.5%); 5. Mihrān b. Abī 'Umar al-Rāzī[16] (d. after AH 180), from whom he narrates 21 times (4%); and 6. Hārūn b. al-Mughīrah al-Rāzī[17] (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.

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[12] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 226; Ibn Sa'd, 7:38; *Kabīr*, 4:84; *Jarḥ*, 4:168; *Mīzān*, 3:192; *Shadharāt*, 2:420; *Sīyar*, 9:49,50.

[13] He was an authoritative source whose books, according to Ibn 'Ammār, were sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), authentic, and acceptable. Al-Dhahabī quoted several narrations confirming that he was the author of some books. See Ibn Sa'd, 7:381; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1300 and 3167; *Kabīr*, 2:214; *Jarḥ*, 2:505; *Baghdād*, 7:253; *Kamāl*, 192; *Mīzān*, 1:394; *Tadhkira*, 1:271; *Sīyar*, 9:9; *Kāshif*, 1:182.

[14] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 666; Ibn Sa'd, 7:375; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 3141; *Kabīr*, 8:309; *Jarḥ*, 9:194; *Kāshif*, 3:270; *Sīyar*, 9:210.

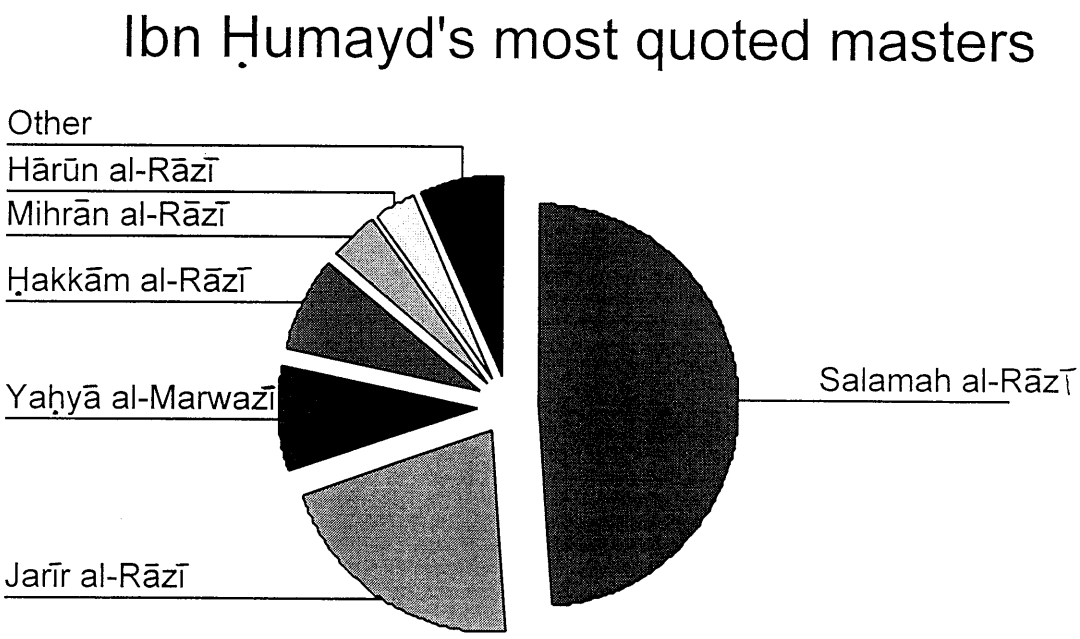
[15] Ibn Sa'd, 7:38; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 3168; *Kamāl*, 310; *'Ibar*, 1:303; *Kāshif*, 1:244; *Shadharāt*, 1:325.

[16] *Tahdhīb*, 5:553; *Jarḥ*, 8:310.

[17] *Tahdhīb*, 6:12; *Kabīr*, 4:2:225.

Ibn Ḥumayd's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Salamah al-Rāzī	260	49	49
Jarīr al-Rāzī	112	21	70
Yaḥyā al-Marwazī	45	8.5	78.5
Ḥakkām al-Rāzī	42	8	86.5
Mihrān al-Rāzī	21	4	90.5
Hārūn al-Rāzī	18	3.3	93.8
Others (14)	35	6.2	100
19 Masters	533	100	



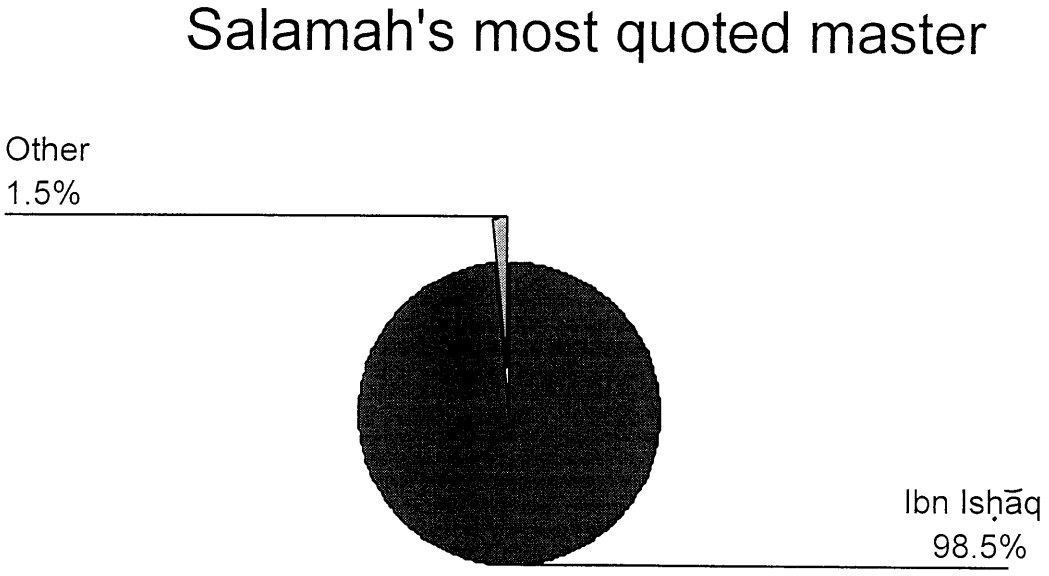
The total number of Ibn Ḥumayd's narrations from these six most quoted masters is 498 *isnād*s (93.8% of the total of his 533 *isnād*s narrated by al-Ṭabarī). The remaining 35 *isnād*s (6.2%) are dispersed among 14 other masters. When we look at the second generation in al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s through his 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 *isnād*s 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-Faḍl 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-Faḍl al-Rāzī narrates from 4 masters 260 times (49%). He narrates extensively from 1 master, named Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Madanī[18] (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.

Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī's most quoted master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Isḥāq	256	98.5	98.5
Others(3)	4	1.5	100.0
Total	260	100.0	



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

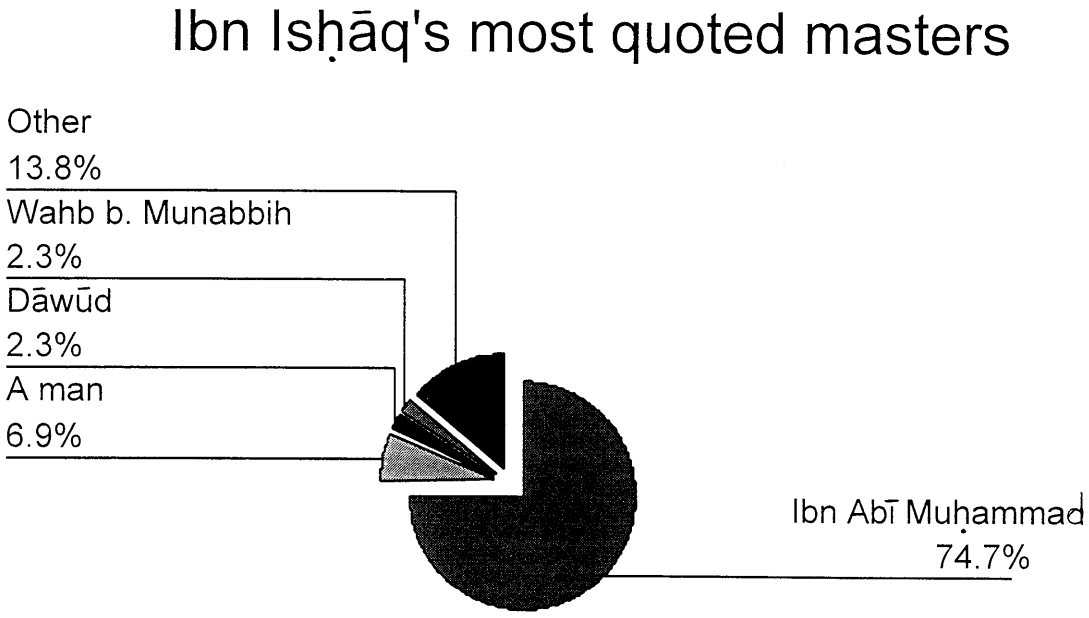
[18] He was one of the most knowledgeable scholars in *Sīra* and *Maghazī*, and was among the first to write a book on the *Sīra* (The Prophet's Biography). He composed a book entitled *al-Khulafā'* (on the four well-known *Rāshidūn* caliphs after the Prophet) and other books. See *Kabīr*, 1:40; *Jarḥ*, 7:191-194; *Baghdād*, 1:214-234; *Wafayāt*, 4:276,277; *Tadhkira*, 1:172,174; *Mīzān*, 3:468-475; *Tahdhīb*, 9:38 - 46; *Shadharāt*, 1:230; *Sīyar*, 7:36,37.

We may conclude that Ibn Isḥāq is a major source to whom al-Ṭabarī refers frequently. When we look at the generation of Ibn Isḥāq's masters, we see that al-Ṭabarī narrates Ibn Isḥāq's own opinions 39 times (15.2% of 256 *isnāds*) and links Ibn Isḥāq's narrations to earlier masters 217 times (84.8%). Al-Ṭabarī narrates from the 24 masters appealed to by Ibn Isḥāq, narrating extensively from 4 of them. See the following Table and Pie Chart which illustrate this situation.

Ibn Isḥāq's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Abī Muḥammad	162	74.7	74.7
A man	15	6.9	81.6
Dāwūd	5	2.3	83.9
Wahb b. Munabbih	5	2.3	86.2
Missing	39	15.2	100.0
Total	256	100.0	

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



The 4 most quoted masters of Ibn Isḥāq, via Ibn Ḥumayd ~ Salamah, are as follows:

3.1.1. Ibn Isḥāq ~ Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad *Mawlā* (patron of) Zayd b. Thābit al-Madanī[19] (d. *ca.* AH 110)

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 162 times (74.5% of the total 256 *isnād*s) 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-Kūfī[20] (45- 95/665-714), from whom Muḥammad narrates 80 times (49.3%); and 'Ikrimah *Mawlā* b. 'Abbās al-Madanī[21] (25-105/645-723), from whom he also narrates 80 times (49.3%). Moreover, Muḥammad Ibn Abī Muḥammad narrates the remaining 2 *isnād*s from his final master, Zayd b. Thābit al-Madanī[22] (d. AH 55). See the following Table and Pie Chart.

Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad's masters

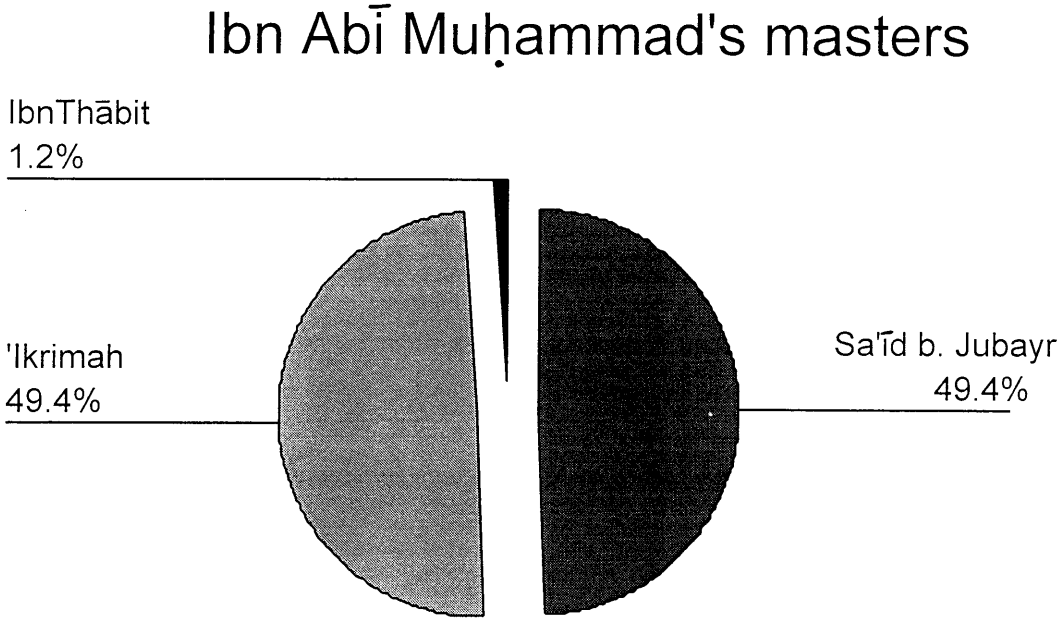
Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Sa'īd b. Jubayr	80	49.4	49.4
'Ikrimah	80	49.4	98.8
Ibn Thābit	2	1.2	100.0
Total	162	100.0	

[19] *Tahdhīb*, 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; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 2534; *Kabīr*, 3:4612; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1:712; *Jarḥ*, 2:1-9; *Wafayāt*, 2:371; al-Dāwūdī, *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; *Mīzān*, 3:93; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:380; *Sīyar*, 5:12; Sezgin, 1:177; *Ẓunūn*, 430; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1:661.

[22] *Tahdhīb*, 2:233; *Usd al-Ghāba*, 2:278-279.



The two most quoted narrators, Sa'īd b. Jubayr and 'Ikrimah, each narrate from one master, the Companion 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, 160 times (98.7%). The *isnād* becomes as follows:

Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī ~ Ibn Isḥāq al-Madanī ⟶

Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad al-Madanī ⟶ Sa'īd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī ⟶ Ibn 'Abbās

'Ikrimah *Mawlā* Ibn 'Abbās ↗

This strand is repeated 160 times (98.7%) by al-Ṭabarī in order to quote the *Tafsīr* narrated by Ibn 'Abbās. Biographical details relating to Sa'īd b. Jubayr and 'Ikrimah indicate that they were both very devoted students of Ibn 'Abbās 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 Isḥāq and Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad.

3.1.2. Ibn Isḥāq ~ *rajul* (a man)

This is how this *isnād* appears in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Al-Ṭabarī says, " ... Ibn Isḥāq from a man (*rajul*)," 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.[23] The *isnād* stops at Wahb b. Munabbih and al-Ṭabarī narrates his sayings on *tafsīr*. The strand is as follows:

Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ⟶ Salamah al-Rāzī ⟶ Ibn Isḥāq al-Madanī ⟶ a man ⟶ ⟶ 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 *isnād*s.

3.1.3. Ibn Isḥāq al-Madanī ~ Dāwūd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Madanī[24]

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

Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī → Salamah al-Rāzī ⟶ Ibn Isḥāq al-Madanī ⟶ 'Ikrimah al-Madanī → Ibn 'Abbās.

We notice in this *isnād* that all four men, starting with Ibn Isḥāq 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. Isḥāq al-Madanī.

3.1.4. Ibn Isḥāq ~ 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 Isḥāq

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[23] His biographical details have been mentioned previously.

[24] *Sīyar*, 6:166; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 259; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 411; *Kabīr*, 3:231; *Jarḥ*, 3:408, 409; *Mīzān*, 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 Isḥāq died in AH 151 and Ibn Wahb died in AH110, these two men could in fact have met each other. This enables us to conclude that it was possible that Ibn Isḥāq narrated from Ibn Wahb both directly and indirectly. Ibn Ḥajar[25] states that Ibn Isḥāq narrated "high" (*'ālī*) and "low" (*nāzil*) *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 Isḥāq al-Madanī, we witnessed how all these *isnāds*, even though having Ibn Isḥāq al-Madanī 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 Isḥāq al-Madanī, by the following *isnād*: Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī ~ Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Madanī. Therefore, the source from which al-Ṭabarī benefited through his master Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī was the narrations by Salamah b. al-Faḍl from his master Ibn Isḥāq, 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 Isḥāq from these most cited narrators, we find that almost all of these narrations are based on *Sīra*, *Maghāzī*, and stories uttered by either Ibn 'Abbās or the story-teller Wahb b. Munabbih, or sometimes by Ibn Isḥāq himself, the main source here and the author of books on *Sīra* and *Maghāzī*. 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 Isḥāq's books.

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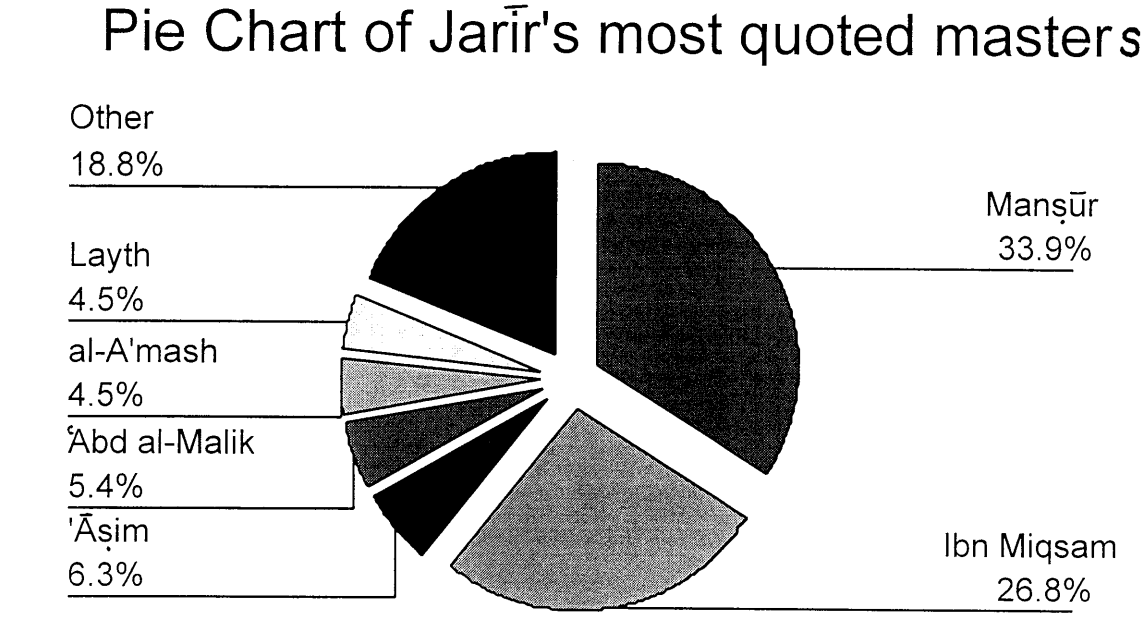
[25] *Tahdhīb*, 5:31-32.

3.2. The strand of Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Jarīr b. 'Abd 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

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Manṣūr	38	33.9	33.9
Ibn Miqsam	30	26.8	60.7
'Āṣim	7	6.3	67.0
'Abd al-Malik	6	5.4	72.3
Al-A'mash	5	4.5	76.8
Layth	5	4.5	81.3
Others(15)	21	18.8	100.0
Total	112	100.0	



These 6 principal masters of Jarīr al-Rāzī are as follows:

3.2.1. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir al-Kūfī[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[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-Makkī, from whom Manṣūr narrates 10 times (27%); and 3- al-Ḥakam b. Abān al-'Adanī al-Yamanī[28] (AH 80-154), from whom he narrates 5 times (13%). Therefore, the total number of *isnād*s narrated by Manṣūr from these 3 is 27 (72.9%). The remaining 11 *isnād*s (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-Mu'tamir relied in reporting most of his narrations.

3.2.2. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ Mughīrah b. Miqsam al-Kūfī[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.[30] We find that Mughīrah narrated 29 times from 8 masters. One *isnād* stops at Mughīrah, where al-Ṭabarī narrates an interpretation attributed to Mughīrah himself. Mughīrah narrates extensively from 2 masters: Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'i al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 10 times (33.3%), and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī al-Kufī[31] (19-103/640-721), from whom he narrates 9 times (30%). Thus, Mughīrah narrates nearly two thirds of his narrations, 19 *isnād*s (63.3%), from Ibrāhīm and al-Sha'bī (both of whom were Kufans). The remaining 11 *isnād*s (36.6%) are narrated by Mughīrah from his other 6 masters.

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[26] Ibn Sa'd, 6:337; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 164; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 404; *Kabīr*, 7:346; *Jarḥ*, 8:177; *Shadharāt*, 1:189; *Sīyar*, 5:402.

[27] Ibn Sa'd, 6:270; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1140; *Kabīr*, 1:333; *Wafayāt*, 1:25; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 2:10; *Jarḥ*, 1/1:144; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 29; *Sīyar*, 6:250.

[28] *Tahdhīb*, 1:572.

[29] *Tahdhīb*, 1:572; *Kabīr*, 4:322; *Jarḥ*, 8:228, 229; *Tadhkira*, 1:143; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 165; *Sīyar*, 6:10; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, 945; *Shadharāt*, 1:191.

[30] *Sīyar*, 6:12.

[31] 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'bī al-Kūfī, the author of *al-Kifāya fī al-'Ibāda wa-al-Ṭā'a*. See *Tahdhīb*, 3:46; *Shadharāt*, 2:22; Kaḥḥāla, 5:54; *A'lām*, 4:18, 19.

3.2.3. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ ʻĀṣim al-Aḥwal al-Baṣrī[32]

Jarīr narrates 7 times (6.25%) from ʻĀṣim. We noted earlier that al-Ṭabarī narrates from ʻĀṣim via his master al-Muthannā al-Āmulī. So, this is another *isnād* employed by al-Ṭabarī tracing a narration back to ʻĀṣim al-Baṣrī.

3.2.4. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ ʻAbd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān al-Kūfī[33]

Jarīr narrates from ʻAbd al-Malik 6 times (5.3%). In turn, these 6 narrations were reported by ʻAbd al-Malik from his master ʻAṭāʼ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī (27-114/647-732). The *isnād* stopped at ʻAṭāʼ where al-Ṭabarī cites ʻAṭāʼs own sayings on *tafsīr*. It is noticed that ʻAṭāʼ was a well-known commentator. Historians attributed to him a book on the discipline of *tafsīr* entitled *Tafsīr al-Qurʼān* and another one entitled *Gharīb al-Qurʼān*.[34]

3.2.5. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ al-Aʻmash b. Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Kūfī[35] (d. AH 147)

Jarīr narrates from al-Aʻmash 5 times (4.4%). Al-Aʻmash was a famous scholar who obtained the knowledge available from masters in his native Kufa[36]

3.2.6. Jarīr al-Rāzī ~ Layth b. Abī Sālim al-Kūfī[37] (d. AH 138)

Jarīr narrates 5 times (4.4%) from Layth, who in turn narrates these reports from the well-known commentator Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī.

Thus, the total number of narrations taken by Jarīr from the above 6 masters was 91 *isnād*s (81.3%). The other 21 *isnād*s (18.7%) were narrated from 15 other masters. Hence, it can be concluded that these 6 narrators were the sources of Jarīr b. ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī, to whom he referred more than others. We may note that Jarīr has been described as a "receptacle of knowledge", who compiled narrations from earlier scholars.[38] So it is possible to conclude that Jarīr is a common link and main source for a cluster of some 112 *isnād*s gained by him. It may be noticed that all

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[32] Biographical details concerning whom have been given earlier.

[33] He has been introduced previously.

[34] A manuscript copy of *Gharīb al-Qurʼān* is said to be kept in ʻĀṭif Library, Turkey. See Sezgin, 1:188; *Ẓunūn*, 453; *Hadiyyat al-ʻĀrifīn*, 1:554.

[35] Ibn Saʻd, 6:342; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 232,424; *Jarḥ*, 4:146; *Baghdād*, 9:3; *Wafayāt*, 2:400 - 403; *Tadhkira*, 1:154; *Sīyar*, 6:226.

[36] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 67.

[37] Ibn Saʻd, 6:243; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 420; *Kabīr*, 7:246; *Jarḥ*, 7:177; *Tahdhīb*, 8:465, 468; *Shadharāt*, 1:207-212; *Sīyar*, 6:179.

[38] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 116.

narrators of this strand Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah al-Rāzī ~ Jarīr al-Rāzī 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-Rāzī ~ Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ al-Marwazī

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.

Yaḥyā al-Marwazī's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Al-Ḥusayn	22	48.9	48.9
'Ubaydullāh	6	13.3	62.2
Others(11)	17	37.8	100.0
Total	45	100.0	

These two narrators most quoted by Yaḥyā al-Marwazī are as follows:

3.3.1. Yaḥyā al-Marwazī ~ al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid al-Marwazī[40] (d. AH 157)

Yaḥyā al-Marwazī 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-Naḥwī al-Marwazī[41] (d. AH 131). Al-Ḥusayn narrates 18 *isnāds* (81.8%) from Yazīd al-Marwazī, who in turn, narrates from just 2 prominent followers: 'Ikrimah al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 11 times (61%), and al-Ḥasan al-Basrī, from whom he narrates 7 times (39%).

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[39] *Ibid.*

[40] Ibn Sa'd, 7:371; *Kabīr*, 2:389; *Jarḥ*, 3:66; *Kamāl*, 300; *Tahdhīb*, 1:543; *Ṭabaqāt al-Mafassirīn*, 1:160; *Siyar*, 7:104; *Shadharāt*, 2:256.

[41] *Tahdhīb*, 6:209.

3.3.2. Yaḥyā al-Marwazī ~ 'Ubaydullāh b. 'Abdullāh al-'Atakī al-Marwazī[42] (d. after AH 160)

Yaḥyā 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 Yaḥyā al-Marwazī narrates extensively from 2 masters (28 times = 62.2%) who were from his home town Marw. Thus, both al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqid 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 Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Ḥakkām b. Salamah al-Rāzī

This strand is repeated 42 times (7.8% of the total 533 *isnād*s). Ḥakkām narrates these 42 times from 8 masters, but mostly from 2 of them. See the following Table which illustrate this result.

Ḥakkām's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Anbasah b. Sa'īd	23	54.8	54.8
'Amr b. 'Awn	11	26.2	81.0
Others(6)	8	19	100.0
Total	42	100.0	

These 2 most quoted masters are as follows: 1- 'Anbasah b. Sa'īd al-Rāzī [43] (d. *ca.* AH 180), from whom Ḥakkām 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-Wāsiṭī[44] (d. AH 223), from whom Ḥakkām narrates 11 times (26.1%). In turn, Ibn 'Awn narrates from 4 masters, but mostly from Manṣūr 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 Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Ḥakkām al-Rāzī ~ 'Anbasah al-Rāzī.

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[42] *Tahdhīb*, 4:20.
[43] *Tahdhīb*, 4:415; *Kabīr*, 4:1:35; Ibn Sa'd, 6:407; *Jarḥ*, 6:399.
[44] *Tahdhīb*, 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.

Mihrān's most quoted master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Sufyān al-Thawrī	20	95.2	95.2
Another narrator	1	4.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	

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.

Hārūn's most quoted master

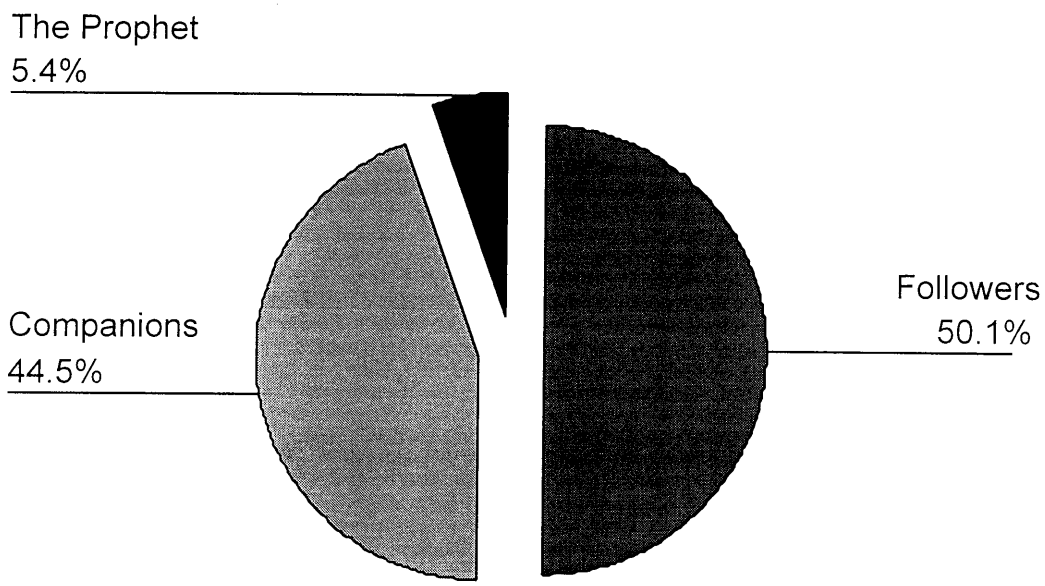
Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Anbasah b. Sa'īd	14	77.8	77.8
Others(2)	4	22.2	100.0
Total	18	100.0	

Hārūn's most quoted master is 'Anbasah b. Sa'īd al-Rāzī, from whom Hārun 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-Makkī, 'Ikrimah al-Madanī, Manṣūr 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 *isnād*s 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:

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	267	50.1	50.1
Companions	237	44.5	94.6
The Prophet	29	5.4	100.0
Total	533	100.0	


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'igh.[1]

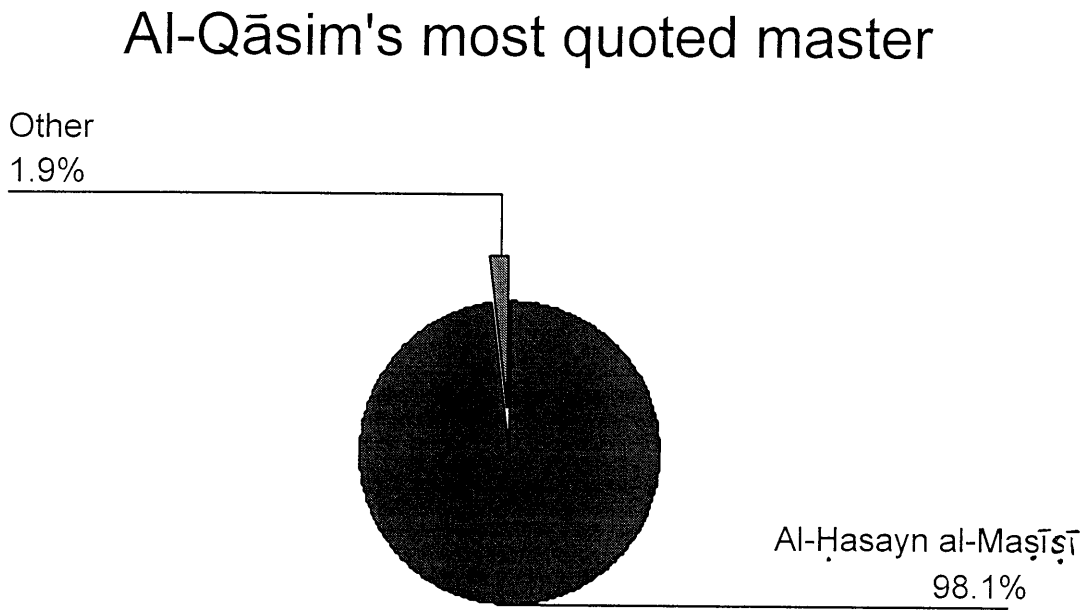
An examination of al-Qāsim's masters reveals that he narrates from 7 masters. He narrates very extensively (423 *isnāds*, or 98.1%) from only 1 master, al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣīṣī[2] (226/841), and narrates the remaining 8 *isnāds* (1.9%) from 6 other masters (see the following Table and Pie Chart which highlight this result).

Al-Qāsim's most quoted master

Masters	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī	**423**	**98.1**	**98.1**
Others(6)	8	1.9	100.0
Total	431	100.0	

[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; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 204; *Tahdhīb*, 4:244.



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.

[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

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	421	97.7	97.7
Ḥaddathanī	10	2.3	100.0
Total	431	100.0	

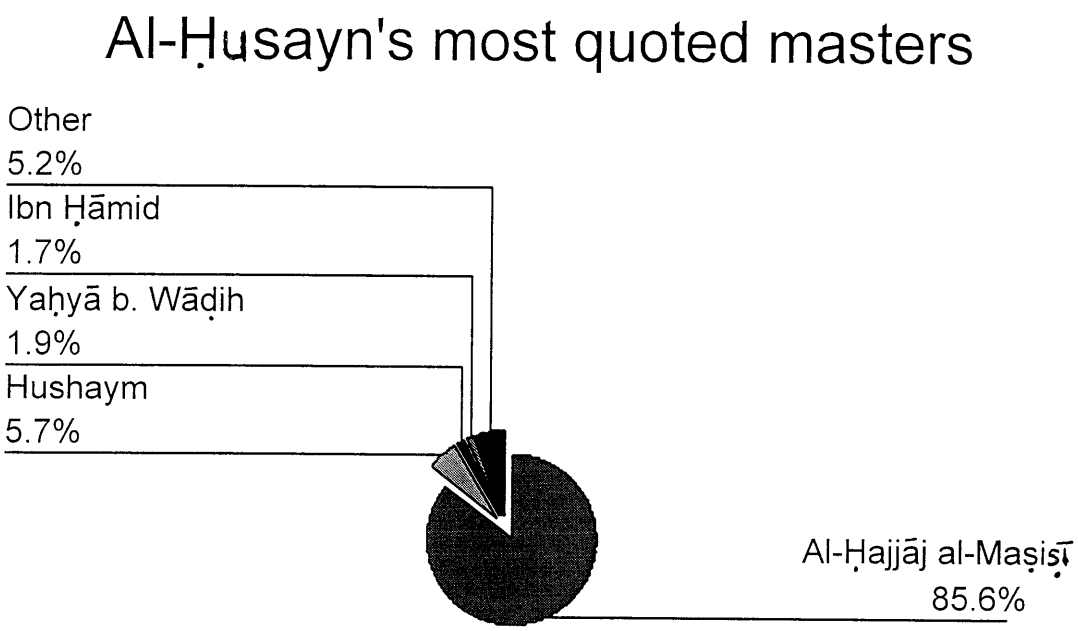
The above Table shows that 421 times (with 97.7% out of 431 *isnāds*) al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanā*, while with only 10 *isnāds* (2.3%) he employs the term *ḥaddathanī*. This underlines my suggestion that in most cases, when using the term *ḥaddathanā*, he is citing al-Ḥusayn's *Tafsīr* via his 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-Maṣīṣī, 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-Maṣīṣī 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

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Al-Ḥajjāj	362	85.6	85.6
Hushaym	24	5.7	91.3
Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ	8	1.9	93.1

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Ḥāmid	7	1.7	94.8
Others(16)	22	5.2	100.0
Total	423	100.0	



The above Table and Pie Chart show that al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī narrates in the main from 4 masters, who were as follows: 1- al-Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad al-Maṣīṣī (d. AH 206),[4] from whom al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī narrates 362 times (85.6%); 2- Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī (d. AH 183), from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 24 times (5.7%); 3- Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ al-Marwazī, from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 8 times (1.9%); and 4- Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid al-Yashkurī Abu Sufyān al-Baṣrī[5] (d. AH 182), from whom al-Ḥusayn narrates 7 times (1.7%). These most quoted masters are discussed under the following strands.

[4] See Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 102; Ibn Sa'd, 7:333; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 3056; *Kabīr*, 2:380; *Jarḥ*, 3:166; Nadīm, 37; *Baghdād*, 8:236; *Tadhkira*, 1:345; *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1:127; *Sīyar*, 9:447; *Shadharāt*, 2:15.

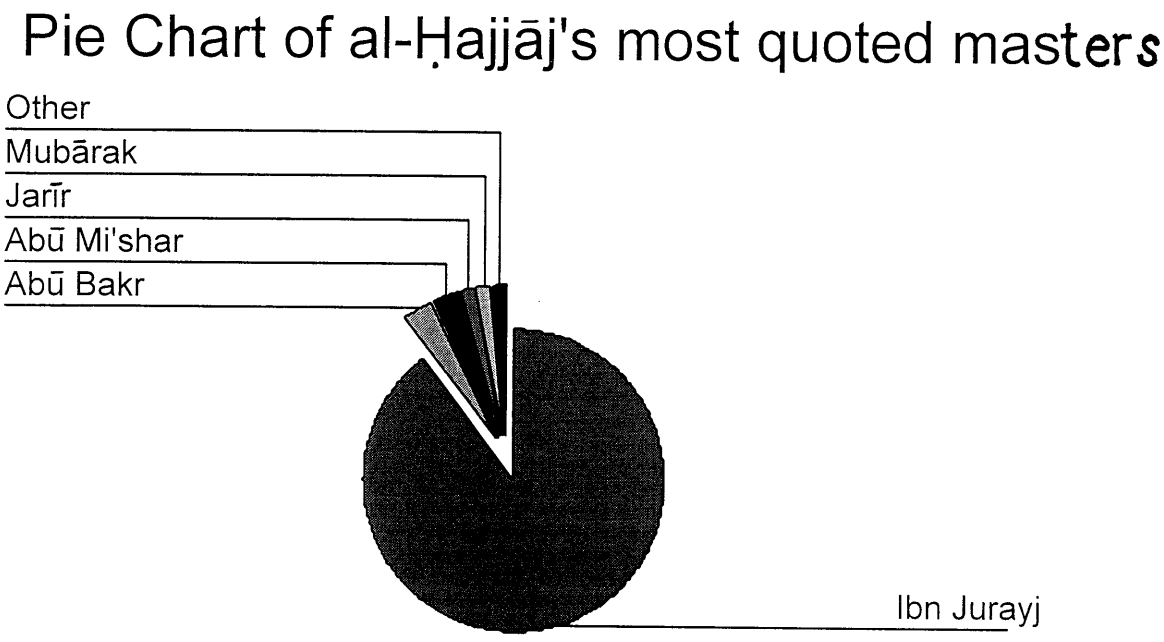
[5] Ibn Ma'in, *Tārīkh*, 512; *Kabīr*, 1:69; *Jarḥ*, 7:231; *Baghdād*, 2:257; *Kamāl*, 1190; *Sīyar*, 9:39; *Mīzān*, 3:529; *Kāshif*, 2:36.

4.1. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī ~ al-Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad al-Maṣīṣī

We have already noted that al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī narrates from al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī 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.

al-Ḥajjāj's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Jurayj	324	89.5	89.8
Abū Bakr	11	3.0	92.8
Abū Mi'shar	10	2.8	95.6
Jarīr	5	1.4	97.0
Mubārak	5	1.4	98.3
Others(7)	7	1.7	100.0
Total	362	100.0	



These masters most quoted by al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī are as follows.

4.1.1. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī ~ 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 *isnād*s 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-Maṣīṣī, 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.

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[6] The first person to document knowledge in Mecca, 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad, said, "I asked my father, 'Who was the first person to write books?' He replied, 'Ibn Jurayj.'" Ibn Uyayna said, "I heard Ibn Jurayj saying, 'No one has documented knowledge like I did.'" Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd 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; *Wafayāt*, 3:163; *Kamāl*, 857; *Tadhkira*, 1:169; *Mīzān*, 2:659; *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1:352; *Sīyar*, 6:325; Kaḥḥāla, 6:183.

[7] Nadīm, 37.

'Abbās, from whom he narrates 48 times (18.8%); 4- 'Ikrima al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 13 times (5.1%); 5- 'Abdullāh b. Kathīr al-Makkī[8] (AH 48-122) from whom he narrates 11 times (4.3%); and 6- 'Aṭā' b. Abī Muslim al-Khurasānī[9] (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.

Ibn Jurayj's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Mujāhid	89	34.9	34.9
'Aṭā'	54	21.2	56.1
Ibn 'Abbās	48	18.8	74.9
'Ikrima	13	5.1	80.0
'Abdullāh	11	4.3	84.3
al-Khurasānī	9	3.5	87.8
Others(20)	31	12.2	100.0
Missing	69	Missing	
Total	324	100.0	

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 *isnād*s of his narrations). The remaining 31 *isnād*s (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, 'Aṭā' 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; *Kamāl*, 762; *Ṭabaqāt al-Qurrā' al-Kibār*, 1:433-444; *Sīyar*, 5:318.

[9] Ibn Sa'd, 7:379; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 410; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 313; *Kabīr*, 6:474; *Jarḥ*, 6:334; *Kamāl*, 941; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 60; *Shadharāt*, 1:192, 193; *Sīyar*, 6:140.

4.1.2. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī ~ Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī al-Baṣrī [10] (d. AH 167)

Al-Ḥajjāj narrates 11 times (3%) from Abū Bakr. In turn, Abu Bakr al-Baṣrī narrates from 3 people, but mostly from the 2 following: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, from whom Abū Bakr narrates 5 times; and Qatāda al-Baṣrī, 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-Maṣīṣī ~ Abū Mi'shar al-Madanī[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-Madanī[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-Maṣīṣī ~ 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-Baṣrī.

4.1.5. Al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī ~ Mubārak b. Faḍāla al-Baṣrī[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-Baṣrī. 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-Baṣrī. 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-Maṣīṣī ~ Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī (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-

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[10] *Tahdhīb*, 6:315.
[11] His name is Najīḥ b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sindī al-Madanī. *Tahdhīb*, 5:610.
[12] *Tahdhīb*, 5:264.
[13] *Tahdhīb*, 5:365.

Dawraqī[14] said, "Hushaym had twenty thousand ḥadīths."[15] This may explain the extent to which al-Ṭabarī refers to Hushaym via his master al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī, not only here but al-Ṭabarī also via other masters. We have previously noted how he referred to him via his master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī. In this *isnād* Hushaym narrates extensively (8 times = 33.3%) from the 1 source, al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭāt al-Kufī[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-Makkī, from whom he narrates 5 times (62.5%).

4.3. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī ~ Yaḥyā b. Wāḍiḥ al-Marwazī

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-Bāhilī al-Kūfī,[17] from whom he narrates 6 times (75%). 'Ubayd b. Sulaymān narrates the same number of times from his master al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī[18] (d. 105/723). It seems that al-Ṭabarī meant to narrate from the *Tafsīr* of the famous commentator al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim via this strand of reporters. Biographical sources relating to al-Ḍaḥḥāk assert that he wrote a *tafsīr*.

4.4. The strand of al-Qāsim ~ al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī ~ Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid al-Yashkurī Abū Sufyān al-Baṣrī[19] (d. AH 182)

Al-Ḥusayn narrates from Muḥammad al-Yashkurī 7 times (1.6%). Al-Yashkurī narrates the same number of times from his master Ma'mar b. Rāshid al-

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[14] One of al-Ṭabarī's famous masters who will be discussed later, together with his *isnāds*.
[15] *Shadharāt*, 2:375.
[16] Ibn Sa'd, 6:359; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 369,414,421; *Kabīr*, 2:378; *Jarḥ*, 3:152-156; *Wafayāt*, 2:54-56; *Tadhkira*, 1:186 - 187; *Sīyar*, 7:68.
[17] *Kabīr*, 3/1:499.
[18] The author of a *Tafsīr*. His biographical details have been mentioned previously. See also *Sīyar*, 4: 598; *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:216; *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1:237.
[19] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 512; *Kabīr*, 1:69; *Jarḥ*, 7:231; *Baghdād*, 2:257; *Kamāl*, 1190; *Sīyar*, 9:39; *Mīzān*, 3:529; *Kāshif*, 2:36.

Baṣrī[20] (d. AH 153). Ma'mar b. Rāshid himself narrates from 3 masters, but especially from Qatāda al-Baṣrī, the famous *Tābi'ī*. It may be noticed regarding this *isnād* that, after al-Ḥusayn al-Maṣīṣī, 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-Maṣīṣī. 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-Maṣīṣī from these 4 sources is 401 *isnād*s (95%). The narrations of the other 22 *isnād*s amount to 5% of the total number of 431 *isnād*s, 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).

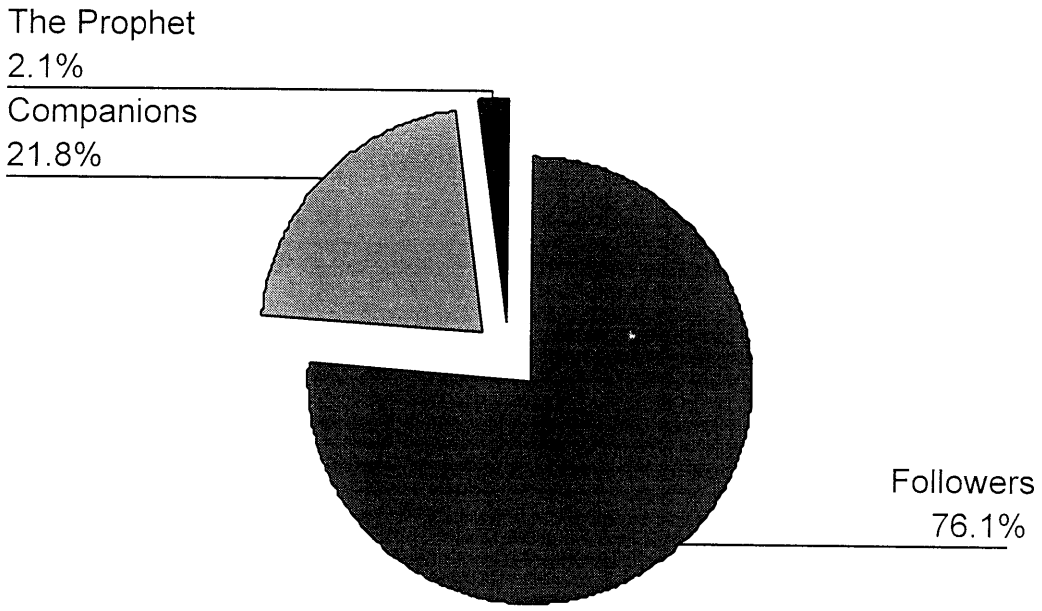
I would like to emphasize here that these *isnād*s (the most quoted strands), which stem from al-Qāsim, usually reach back to the generation of the Followers, mainly to Mujāhid al-Makkī, Qatāda al-Baṣrī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim and 'Ikrima al-Makkī. These scholars are well known for their 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 *tafsīr*s that belonged to the generation of the Followers.

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[20] Ibn Ḥibbān said, "He was a master scholar a *ḥāfiẓ* (memorizer), and a pious man. See Ibn Sa'd, 5:397; *Khulāṣa*, 328; *Tadhkira*, 1:190; *Ibar*, 1:220; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 88; *Shadharāt*, 1:235.

[21] Most of his biographers affirm that he wrote a *Tafsīr*. See above, p. , f.n. no. 2.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	328	76.1	76.1
Companions	94	21.8	97.9
The Prophet	9	2.1	100.0
Total	431	100.0	



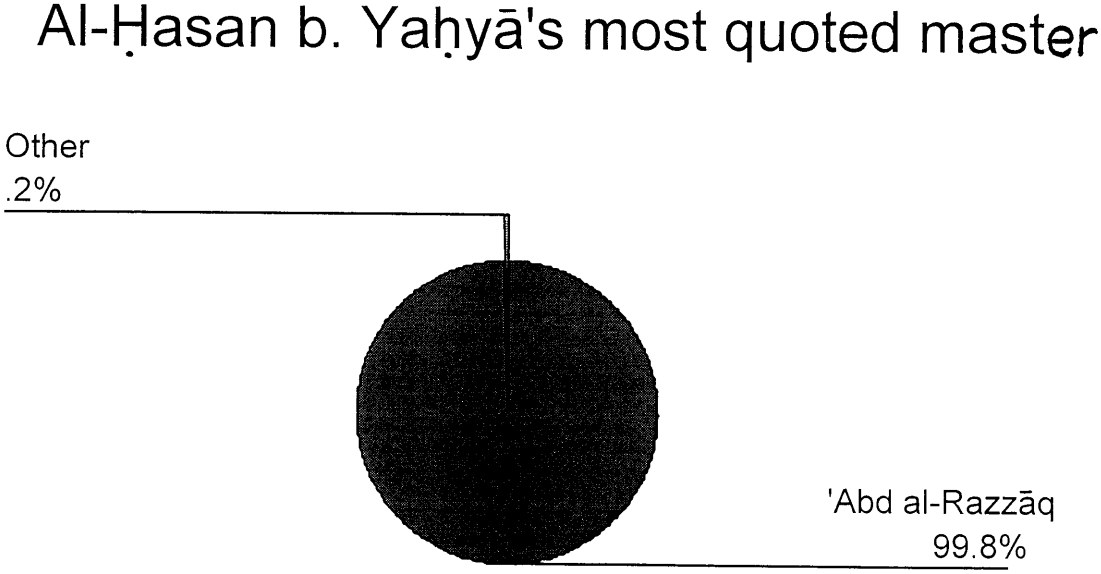
It may be significant that the same result, depicted in the above Table and Pie Chart, was also arrived at concerning al-Ṭabarī's second major master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, since we discovered that 75.8% of his narrations were cited from the generation of the Followers, 21.9% were cited from the generation 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 *Tafsīr*s of the generation of the Followers.

5. Fifth major master: al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Jurjānī al-Baghdādī[1] (180-263/798-881)

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-Yamanī[2] (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.

Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā's most quoted master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Abd al-Razzāq	427	99.8	99.8
Another (1)	1	0.2	100.0
Total	429	100.0	



[1] His name also appears as al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Rabī' 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 *Tahdhīb*, 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*.[3] 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 *isnād*s 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 ~ Isḥāq ~ '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,[5] 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 Isḥāq, 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 Isḥāq, 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 ~ Isḥāq ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq. This shows that in citing his *isnād*s, al-Ṭabarī attempted to search out and narrate from "high", i.e. valuable *isnād*s, even if the quest compelled him to travel from Āmul, his native town, to Baghdad[7] 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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[3] These two books were mentioned earlier, when we discussed the life of 'Abd al-Razzāq.

[4] I.e. the first strand.

[5] On "high" (*'ālī*) and "low" (*nāzil*) *isnād*s, 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 (*ḥāfiẓ*es) than those of the high *isnād*. Concerning both *'ālī* and *nāzil isnād*s, there are full explanatory sections in the books on *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*. See e.g. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *'Ulūm*, 255; al-'Irāqī, *Taqyyīd*, 215; Ibn Kathīr, *Bā'ith*, 159; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Qafw*, 197; *Taysīr*, 180.

[6] *Tahdhīb*, 1:515.

[7] Al-Ṭabarī moved about to many places searching for knowledge and also in order to meet with famous scholars and learn from them the Ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥajar (*Lisān*, 5:102) states that al-Ṭabarī started

When we consider the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate *isnāds* from his master al-Ḥasan, as from ʿAbd al-Razzāq, we notice that he most frequently used *ḥaddathanā* each time he narrates through this *isnād*, i.e.al-Ḥasan ~ ʿAbd al-Razzāq. Only in a very few cases did use the term *ḥaddathanī*. See the following Table which illustrate this finding.

Frequency of the terms *Ḥaddathanā* and *Ḥaddathanī* as used by al-Ṭabarī while narrating from his master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	423	98.6	98.6
Ḥaddathanī	6	1.4	100.0
Total	429	100.0	

In our consideration of the terms used in narrating and conveying *isnāds*, we noted that the term *ḥaddathanā* meant that al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī possibly heard the narration of ʿAbd al-Razzāq'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 ʿAbd al-Razzāq (99.5% of all occasions), the original source of this *isnād*, we discover that there is almost equivalence between them. This seems to confirm the fact that al-Ṭabarī 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.

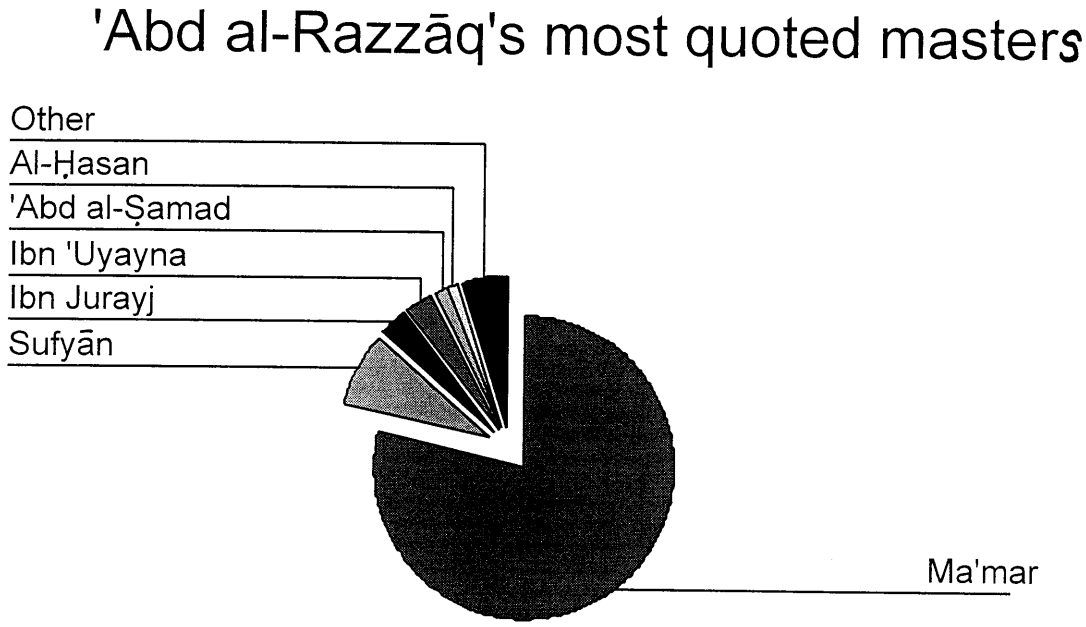
In considering the generation of the masters of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, we find that ʿAbd al-Razzāq narrates these 427 *isnāds* from 20 masters, from 6 of whom he narrates extensively, as illustrated in the following Table and Pie Chart.

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to travel for the sake of learning and obtaining *isnāds*, when he was twelve years old. Yāqūt (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 18:50) says that al-Ṭabarī entered Baghdad before the year 241/855. Cf. al-Ṭabarī's biography.

'Abd al-Razzāq's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ma'mar	**337**	**78.7**	**78.7**
Sufyān	33	7.7	86.4
Ibn Jurayj	13	3.0	89.5
Ibn 'Uyayna	13	3.0	92.5
'Abd al-Ṣamad	6	1.4	93.9
Al-Ḥasan	5	1.2	95.1
Others (16)	21	4.9	100.0
Total	428	100.0	



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.

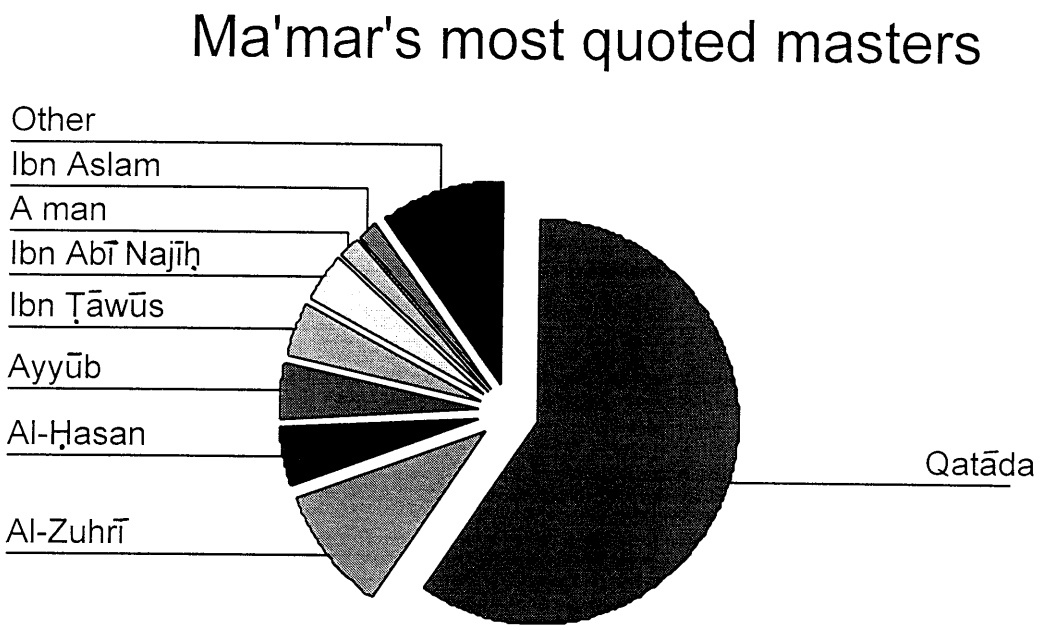
5.1. Strand of ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʻānī ~ Maʻmar b. Rāshid al-Yamanī[8] (95-153/713-770)

ʻAbd al-Razzāq narrates 337 times, or 78.9% of all his narrations, from his master Maʻmar b. Rāshid. In turn, Maʻmar narrates this same percentage from 32 masters, but mostly from the 8 named in the following Table and Pie Chart.

Maʻmar's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Qatāda	200	59.3	59.3
Al-Zuhrī	34	10.1	69.4
Al-Ḥasan	16	4.7	74.2
Ayyūb	15	4.55	78.6
Ibn Ṭāwūs	14	4.2	82.8
Ibn Abī Najīḥ	13	3.9	86.6
A man	6	1.8	88.4
Ibn Aslam	5	1.55	89.9
Others (24)	34	10.1	100.0
Total	337	100.0	

[8] Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier. It was reported that he wrote a number of books. See *Aʻlām*, 8:190; Kaḥḥāla,12:309



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 *isnād*s.

5.1.1. Ma'mar ~ Qatāda al-Baṣrī (60-117/680-735)

Ma'mar narrates the majority of his *isnād*s (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-Ṣan'ānī al-Yamanī.[9] 'Abd al-Razzāq benefited from Qatāda al-Baṣrī 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] *Tahdhīb*, 5:500.
[10] Al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1:834.
[11] Cf. the dates of Qatāda's life time.

5.1.2. Ma'mar ~ Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī al-Madanī (58-124/678-742)

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 *isnād*s, 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 *maghāzī* (conquests) of the Prophet.[12]

5.1.3. Ma'mar ~ Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī[13] al-Baṣrī[14] (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 *isnād*s 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] *Ẓunūn*, 1460; *Wāfī*, 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; *Tahdhīb*, 1:397; *Shadharāt*, 1:181; *Khulāṣa*, 42; *Sīyar*, 6:15.

[15] *Tahdhīb*, 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 Ṭāwus b. Kaysān al-Yamanī[17] (33-106/653-724). The *isnād* stops at Ṭāwūs, where al-Ṭabarī narrates the sayings of Ṭāwus 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-Makkī[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-Makkī, 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 'Ikrima al-Makkī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī.

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[16] *Kabīr*, 5:123; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:29; *Jarḥ*, 5:88-89; *Kamāl*, 697-698; *Tahdhīb*, 5:267-268; *Khulāṣa*, 202; *Sīyar*, 6:103.

[17] Ibn Ṭāwus was a Persian who was ordered by the King, *Kisrā*, to occupy Yemen. Ibn Sa'd, 5:537; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 287; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 236; *Kabīr*, 4:365; *Saghīr*, 1:252; *Wafayāt*, 2:509; *Kamāl*, 623; *Tadhkira*, 1:90; *Qurrā'*, 1:341; *Tahdhīb*, 5:8; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 34; *Sīyar*, 5:38.

[18] Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier.

[19] This is how the man is referred to in all 6 rocurrences 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-Madanī[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'ān, which his son 'Abd al-Raḥmān 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 *isnād*s branching from Ma'mar b. Rāshid al-Baṣrī al-Yamanī.

The total number of Ma'mar's narrations from these *isnād*s is 303, or 90% of all his narrations. The other 34 *isnād*s (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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[20] He was the patron of 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Al-Dhahabī said that Zayd had a *Tafsīr* from which his son 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd narrated. See *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 263; *Kabīr*, 3:287; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:32; *Jarḥ*, 3:554; *Kamāl*, 451; *Tadhkira*, 2:132-133; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 53; *Khulāṣa*, 126; *Shadharāt*, 1:194; Ibn Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 5:442-446; *Sīyar*, 5:316.

[21] *Ẓunūn*, 448; Kaḥḥāla, 4:189.

[22] Biographical details concerning him have been given earlier.

5.3. Strand of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī ~ 'Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj al-Makkī[24]

'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-Makkī, 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.

Ibn Jurayj's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Aṭā'	7	53.8	53.8
Others(5)	6	46.2	100.0
Total	13	100.0	

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-Ṣan'ānī ~ Sufyān b. 'Uyayna al-Kūfī[26] (107-196/725-812)

'Abd al-Razzāq narrates 12 times (2.8% of all his narrations) from Ibn 'Uyayna, 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 'Uyayna's *Tafsīr*, referred to by bibliographers as Ibn 'Uyayna's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.[27]

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[23] See *Wāfī*, 13:94 - 96; Nadīm, 1:225; *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, 316; *Tahdhīb*, 6:353.
[24] Biographical details have been given earlier.
[25] *Ẓunūn*, 437 - 1008; *Wafayāt*, 1:359; *Tadhkira*, 1:160 - 162; *Baghdād*, 10:400-407.
[26] 'Abdullāh b. Wahb said, "I do not know anyone who knows the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān better than Ibn 'Uyayna." See Ibn Sa'd, 5:497; *Kabīr*, 4:94; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:383; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1:185-187; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:10-12; *Jarḥ*, 1:132, 54, 4:225; *Baghdād*, 9:174; *Wafayāt*, 2:391-393; Nadīm, 1:226; *Tadhkira*, 1:262, *Mīzān*, 2:170; *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1:190; *Sīyar*, 8:454 - 480.
[27] Nadīm, 1:226; *Ẓunūn*, 439.

5.5. Strand of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī ~ 'Abd al-Ṣamad b. Ma'qil al-Yamanī[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-Yamanī[29] (24-114/645-732). Historians relate that Wahb b. Munbbih composed such works as *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and *Qiṣaṣ 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.

5.6. Strand of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī ~ al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Khurasānī[31]

'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-Ṭabarī 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]

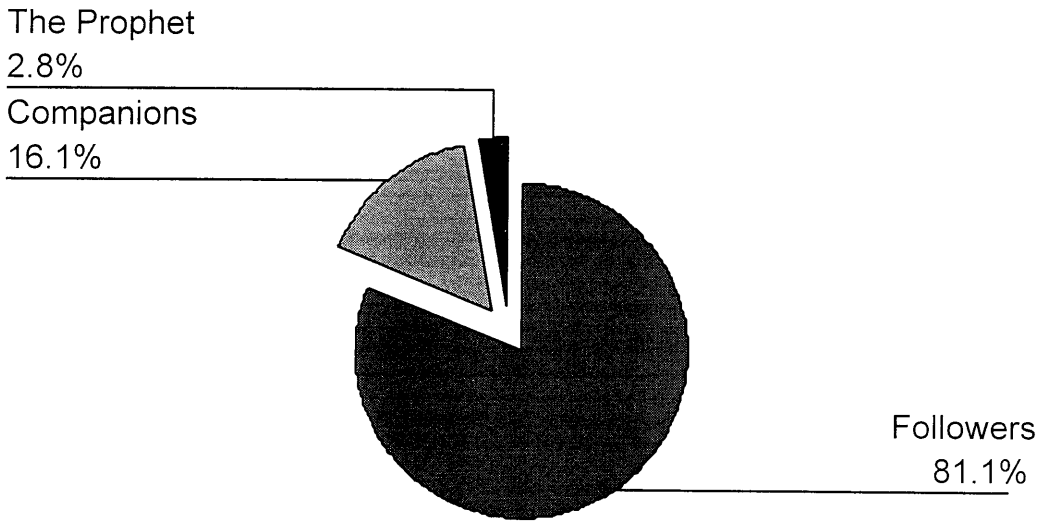
I would like to draw attention to the fact that these *isnād*s, branching from al-Ṭabarī's master, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī, reach back to the generation of the Followers, i.e. mainly to Qatāda al-Baṣrī, al-Zuhrī, Ayyub al-Sikhtiyānī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ṭāwūs al-Yamanī, Mujāhid al-Makkī, Zayd b. Aslam al-Madanī, 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī, 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.
[30] *Ẓunūn*, 1240,1328; Yaqūt, *Mu'jam*, 19:259-260; *Wafayāt*, 2:238.
[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; Kaḥḥāla, 5:27.

al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā's *isnād*s 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-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī made a speciality of quoting *Tafsīr*s produced by the generation of the Followers.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	348	81.1	81.1
Companions	69	16.1	97.2
The Prophet	12	2.8	100.0
Total	429	100.0	



We have completed the description and analysis of the *isnād*s branching from al-Ṭabarī's master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā. It has become clear that one strand of *isnād* branched out and was repeated most. This was al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq, which was repeated 427 times, or in 99.5% of all the total *isnād*s of al-Ṭabarī's master al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā. This leads us to conclude that the source from which al-Ṭabarī benefited the most was the narrations and *isnād*s 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 ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʻānī. These 6 clusters account for a total of 406 *isnāds*, or 95% of all 427 *isnāds* of ʻAbd 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 ʻAbd al-Razzāq from his master Maʻmar b. Rāshid al-Baṣrī, then al-Yamanī, from whom ʻAbd al-Razzāq narrates 337 times, or 83% of the total 6 strands of *isnāds* branching from ʻAbd al-Razzāq and accounting for 406 *isnāds*. The remaining 69 *isnāds* (17%) are divided among the other 5 strands.

It was found that Maʻmar was a main source for ʻAbd al-Razzāq. It was also found that Maʻmar 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. ʻUyayna, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, and Wahb b. Munabbih, the last of whom was famous for his knowledge in history and *Qiṣaṣ* (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.

6. Sixth major master: Muḥammad b. Bashshār al Baṣrī[1] (167-252/783-868)

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, *ḥaddathanī*, as illustrated in the following Table.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	406	98.8	98.8
Ḥaddathanī	5	1.2	100.0
Total	411	100.0	

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

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[1] *Tadhkira*, 2: 511; *Khulāṣa*, 280; *'Ibar*, 2:3; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 226; *Sīyar*, 12:144; *Baghdād*, 2:101; *Kabīr*, 1/1:49.

[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. *Tahdhīb*, 2:5.

[3] *Tadhkira*, 2:511.

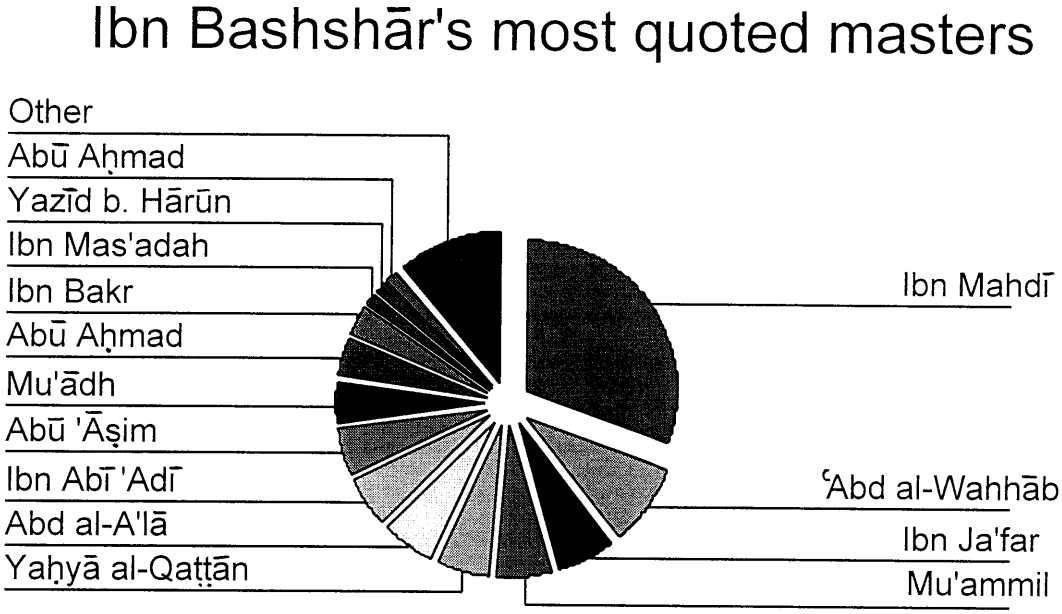
directly from his master while among a group of people. It also indicates that al-Ṭabarī may have heard from his master via a documented work read to him, among others, by the master himself, while the students listened and wrote down what they heard. Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that al-Ṭabarī narrated these *isnād*s from a compilation written by Ibn Bashshār, who permitted its narration to his students, among whom was al-Ṭabarī. We may conclude that written and oral transmissions were in circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarī and before. As for the 5 occurrences of the term *ḥaddathanī*, they indicate that al-Ṭabarī alone heard from Ibn Bashshār these 5 *isnād*s via another source. Or it may perhaps be assumed that they are the result of a transcriptional error, the scribe having written *ḥaddathanī* 5 times in error for *ḥaddathanā*. If this is so, then al-Ṭabarī is consistent in using only one term, i.e. *ḥaddathanā*, in introducing the *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s come from just 14 of them.

Muḥammad b. Bashshār's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Mahdī	126	30.6	30.6
'Abd al-Wahhāb	36	8.7	39.3
Ibn Ja'far	25	6.1	45.4
Mu'ammil	24	5.8	51.2
Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān	23	5.6	56.8
'Abd al-A'lā	23	5.6	62.4
Ibn Abī 'Adī	22	5.3	67.7
Abū 'Āṣim	20	4.9	72.6
Mu'ādh	18	4.4	76.9
Abū Aḥmad	17	4.1	81.1
Ibn Bakr	13	3.2	84.2
Ibn Mas'adah	6	1.5	85.7

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yazīd b. Hārūn	6	1.5	87.1
Abū Dāwūd	5	1.2	88.3
Others(31)	48	11.7	100.0
Total	412	100.0	



These most quoted masters are discussed in the following strands:

6.1. The strand of Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī al Baṣrī[4] (AH 135-198)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 126 of his *isnād*s (30.3% of the total of 412 *isnād*s) 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."[5] 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 *isnād*s from 14 masters, but he narrates the majority (105 *isnād*s, or 84%) from only 2. The following Table illustrates this result.

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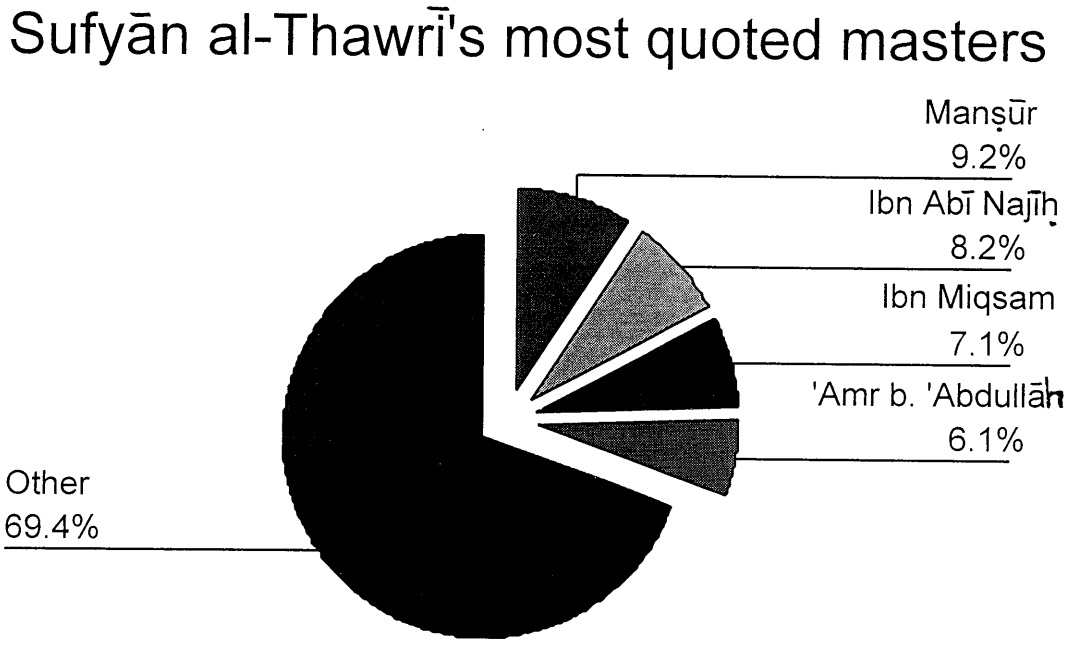
[4] Ibn Maʿīn, *Tārīkh*, 359; Ibn Saʿd, 7: 297; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 68; *Jarḥ*, 1/ 251,262; *Baghdād*, 10:24; *Ḥilya*, 9: 3,63; *Kamāl*, 820; *Kāshif*, 2: 187; *Tahdhīb*, 6: 279; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 139; *Sīyar*, 6: 279.
[5] *Jarḥ*, 1: 262.

Ibn Mahdī's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Sufyān	99	79.2	79.2
Shu'bah	6	4.8	84.0
Others(12)	21	16	100.0
Total	126	100.0	

These two most quoted masters are as follows:

6.1.1. Sufyān al-Thawrī, from whom Ibn Mahdī narrates 99 *isnāds* (79.2% of the total 126 *isnāds*). This demonstrates how Sufyān was a major source for Ibn Mahdī, since the bulk of Ibn Mahdī's *isnāds*, in fact more then 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.



These 4 masters most quoted by Sufyān are as follows:

6.1.1.1. Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir al-Kūfī, from whom Sufyān narrates 9 *isnāds* (9.2% of the total 99 *isnāds*). In turn, Manṣūr narrates from 2 masters, but without extensive narration from either of them.

6.1.1.2. ʻAbdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī, from whom Sufyān narrates 8 times (8.2%). Ibn Abī Najīḥ narrates these 8 *isnāds* from just one master, Mujāhid al-Makkī, 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-Nakhaʻī 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. ʻAmr b. ʻAbdullāh Abū Isḥāq al-Subayʻī al-Kūfī[6] (AH 29-127), from whom Sufyān narrates 6 times (6.1%). Abū Isḥāq, 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. Shuʻbah b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī[7] (82-160/701-777), from whom Ibn Mahdī narrates 6 *isnāds* (4.8% of the total 126 *isnāds*). In turn, Shuʻbah narrates from 5 masters, but with no extensive narration from any one of them. There is no doubt that Shuʻbah was a main source for Ibn Mahdī. Historians state that Shuʻbah wrote a *Tafsīr* and another book on Ḥadīth entitled *al-Gharā'ib fī al-Ḥadīth*.

Consequently, both Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shuʻbah 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 Shuʻbah 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] *Tahdhīb*, 4: 356,359.

[7] A *muḥaddith*, commentator. *Wāfī*, 14: 39,40; *Shadharāt*, 1:247; *Tahdhīb*, 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.

6.2. The strand of Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al Thaqafī al-Baṣrī[9] (AH 108-194)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 36 *isnāds* (8.7% of 412 *isnāds*) from ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. ʿAbd 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 ʿAbd 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-Baṣrī[11] (AH 68-133), from whom ʿAbd 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."[12] 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. Saʿīd b. Qays al-Anṣārī[13] (d. AH 143), from whom ʿAbd 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.[14] In turn, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd 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 Maʿīn, *Tārīkh*, 378; Ibn Saʿd,7:289; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 466; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1905; *Kabīr*, 6: 97; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:272; *Jarḥ*, 9:71; *Baghdād*, 11:18; *Kamāl*, 872; *Tadhkira*, 1: 321; *Mīzān*, 2: 680; *Kāshif*, 2: 221; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 133.

[10] Ibn Maʿīn, *Tārīkh*, 378; *Sīyar*, 9: 238.

[11] Ibn Saʿd, 7:246,251; *Ḥilya*, 3: 2,14; *Kamāl*, 134; *Tadhkira*, 1: 130,132; *Khulāṣa*, 42; *Sīyar*, 6:15.

[12] *Shadharāt*, 2: 135.

[13] *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 270; *Kabīr*, 8: 275,276; *Jarḥ*, 9:147; *Kamāl*, 1499; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 57; *Shadharāt*, 2:200; *Sīyar*, 5:468.

[14] *Shadharāt*, 2:200.

6.2.3. 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla 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 *isnād*s narrated by 'Abd al-Wahhāb from these 3 masters comes to a total of 35, or 97.2% out of the total of 36 *isnād*s. 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 Yaḥyā 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 *isnād*s (6% of 412 *isnād*s) 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 *isnād*s (72% of the total 25 *isnād*s).

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 *isnād*s. It may be

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[15] *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 226; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 219; *Kabīr*, 7:58; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:85; *Jarḥ*, 7:15; *Kamāl*, 1066; *Tadhkira*, 1:137; *Sīyar*, 6:383; *Mīzān*, 3:305.

[16] *Tahdhīb*, 4: 422,423.

[17] *Tadhkira*, 1: 300; *Tahdhīb*, 9: 96; *Khulāṣa*, 282; *Shadharāt*, 1:333; Ibn Sa'd, 7/ 2: 49; *'Ibar*, 1:311; *Mīzān*, 3:502; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 131.

[18] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 131.

noticed that all the narrators of this *isnād* (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Baṣrī ~ Shu'bah al-Baṣrī) are Basrans.

When investigating the generation of Shu'bah's masters, we find that he narrates from 3 narrators, but mostly from the 2 following:

6.3.1. Abū Bishr Ja'far b. Abī Wahshiyya al-Baṣrī[19] (d. AH 125), from whom Shu'bah narrates 10 *isnād*s (55.5% of 18 *isnād*s). Abū Bishr himself narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from Sa'īd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 6 times. In turn, Sa'īd b. Jubayr narrates from 4 masters fairly evenly. It may be noticed that all the narrators of this *isnād* (Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Baṣrī ~ Abū Bishr al-Baṣrī) come from Basra, except Sa'īd b. Jubayr, who comes from Kufa.

6.3.2. Qatāda b. Da'āma al-Baṣrī, from whom Shu'bah narrates 5 times (27,7% of Shu'bah's 18 *isnād*s). 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. Ja'far al-Baṣrī ~ Shu'bah al-Baṣrī ~ Qatāda al-Baṣrī) come from Basra.

The number of *isnād*s narrated by Shu'bah from these two most quoted masters totals 15, or 83.3% of 18. Three other *isnād*s (16.7%) Shu'bah narrates from another person. It may be concluded that Abū Bishr al-Baṣrī and Qatāda al-Baṣrī are Shu'bah'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 ~ Mu'ammil b. Ismā'īl al-Baṣrī[20] (d. AH 205)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 24 (5.8%) of his *isnād*s from Mu'ammil. Ibn Ḥajar stated that "Mu'ammil used to write down his narrations in books."[21] We find that Mu'ammil narrates from only 1 master, Sufyān al-Thawrī al-Kufī, from whom he narrates all his 24 *isnād*s. In turn, Sufyān narrates from 10 masters, but mostly from 'Abdullāh 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

[19] *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 325; *Kabīr*, 2:186; *Ṣaghīr*, 1:320; *Jarḥ*, 2:473; *Kamāl*, 207; *Sīyar*, 5: 465.
[20] *Kabīr*, 4:2:49; *Tahdhīb*, 5:586.
[21] *Tahdhīb*, 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. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān al-Baṣrī[22] (AH 120-198)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 23 *isnāds* (5.5% of 412 *isnāds*) from Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān. Yaḥyā said about himself that he used to write down reports and traditions handed down from the Prophet and the Companions."[23] Al-Dhahabī 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,[25] as was often the case with most of the strands investigated earlier.

6.6. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ 'Abd al-A'lā b. 'Abd al-A'lā al-Baṣrī[26] (AH 119-189)

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

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[22] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 645; Ibn Sa'd, 7:293; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 468; *Kabīr*, 8:276; *Jarḥ*, 9:150; *Kamāl*, 1497; *Tadhkira*, 1: 298; *Kāshif*, 3:256; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 125; *Sīyar*, 9:175.
[23] *Jarḥ*, 248.
[24] *Sīyar*, 9:184,185.
[25] Compare with the previous *isnād*.
[26] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 339; Ibn Sa'd, 7:290; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 458; *Kabīr*, 6:73; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1:180; *Jarḥ*, 6:28; *Kamāl*, 760; *Tadhkira*, 1:296; *Mīzān*, 2:531; *Kāshif*, 6:146; *Sīyar*, 9:242.
[27] *Tahdhīb*, 3:311.

master, Jarīr b. Ḥāzim al-Baṣrī,[28] from whom he narrates all his 23 *isnāds*. This means that all of 'Abd al-A'lā's *isnāds* came from 1 narrator, Jarīr. In turn, Jarīr narrates from 2 masters, mostly from Qatāda al-Baṣrī alone, from whom he narrates 22 times (95,6% of all his narrations). Qatāda narrates from 8 masters, but most of his narrations come from 1 master, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, from whom Qatāda narrates 8 times (36.3% of 22 *isnāds*). The source to be considered here is Qatāda al-Baṣrī. He was known to be one of the first to compile written documents and he composed a book on *tafsīr* al-Ṭabarī refers to hundreds of times in his *Tafsīr* 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 Bashshār al-Baṣrī ~ 'Abd al-A'lā al-Baṣrī ~ Jarīr al-Baṣrī ~ Qatāda al-Baṣrī ~ al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī) come from the city of Basra.

6.7. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Muḥammad b. Abī 'Adī al-Baṣrī[29] (AH 120-194)

Ibn Bashshār 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. Jarīr al-Baṣrī, from whom Ibn Abī 'Adī narrates 7 times (31.8% of all his narrations). In turn, Jarīr narrates all 7 *isnāds* from 1 master, Qatāda al-Baṣrī.

6.7.2. 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla al-Baṣrī, 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:

Ibn Bashshār, Ibn Abī 'Adī al-Baṣrī ⟶ Jarīr al-Baṣrī ⟶ Qatāda al-Baṣrī.
↘
'Awf al-Baṣrī.

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[28] *Tahdhīb*, 1: 365,366; *Shadharāt*, 2:312.

[29] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh* 503; Ibn Sa'd, 7:292; *Kabīr*, 1:23; *Jarḥ*, 7: 186; *Kamāl*, 1157; *Kāshif*, 3:16; *Tadhkira*, 1:324; *Mīzān*, 3:647; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 136; *Khulāṣa*, 324; *Sīyar*, 9: 220.

It should be noted with regard to these two most quoted narrators, i.e. Jarīr and 'Awf, that Ibn Bashshār narrates from them via other strands mentioned earlier.[30]

6.8. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Abū 'Āṣim al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad al-Baṣrī[31] (122-214/740-828)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 20 (4.8%) of his *isnād*s 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-Makkī, from whom he narrates 11 times in relating 20 *isnād*s, i.e. in 55% of his narrations.

Ibn Jurayj himself narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī, from whom he narrates 8 times (72.7% of all his narrations). The *isnād* stops at 'Aṭā' 7 times, while in 1 more *isnād* 'Aṭā' 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 *isnād*s.

The total number of *isnād*s narrated by Abū 'Āṣim al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad from Ibn Jurayj and Sufyān is 20.

6.9. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Mu'ādh b. Hishām al-Baṣrī[33] (d. AH 200)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 18 (4.3% of his *isnād*s) 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'ī[35] al-Baṣrī[36] (d. AH 153), from whom he narrates 17

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[30] Cf. strands 2 and 6.

[31] Ibn Sa'd, 7:295; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 474; *Kabīr*, 4:336; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:324; *Jarḥ*, 4:463; *Kamāl*, 617; *Kāshif*, 2:36; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 156; *Mīzān*, 2:325; *Tadhkira*, 1:366; *Sīyar*, 9:480.

[32] *Wāfī*, 14:84; Kaḥḥāla, 5:27.

[33] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 572; *Kabīr*, 7:366; *Ṣaghīr*, 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-Kufī Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh)[37] (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-Bursānī[41] 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] *Tahdhīb*, 6: 31-32; *Shadharāt*, 2: 245.
[37] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 523; Ibn Sa'd, 6:402; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1334; *Kabīr*, 1:133; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:298; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1:517; *Jarḥ*, 7:297; *Kamāl*, 1218; *Mīzān*, 3:595,596; *Tadhkira*, 1:357; *Kāshif*, 3:60; *Wāfī* 3:303; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 152; *Sīyar*, 9:529.
[38] *Sīyar*, 9:530.
[39] *Kamāl*, 1218.
[40] Refer to *isnāds* numbers 1, 3, 4, and 8.
[41] *Lubāb*, 1:117.
[42] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 506; Ibn Sa'd, 7:297; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 471; *Kabīr*, 1:48; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:299; *Jarḥ*, 7:212; *Kamāl*, 1177; *Mīzān*, 3:492; *Tahdhīb*, 9:77; *Sīyar*, 9:421.

narrates from 6 masters almost equally. We have noted earlier[43] that Ibn Jurayj was one of the first scholars to compile written documents in the Ḥijāz area.[44]

6.12. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Ḥammād b. Mas'ada al-Baṣrī[45] (AH 202)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 6 (1.4%) of all his *isnād*s from Ḥammād. Ḥammād himself narrates all these *isnād*s 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.[46]

6.13. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Yazīd b. Hārūn al-Wāsiṭī[47] (118-206/736-821)

Ibn Bashshār narrates 6 (1.4%) of his *isnād*s from Yazīd. Yazīd said about himself, "I learnt by heart twenty-four thousand ḥadīths with their *isnād*s, and as for the scholars of al-Shām,[48] I retain twenty thousand ḥadīths."[49] One of the books written by Yazīd was his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.[50] Yazīd, in turn, narrates from 3 masters almost equally.

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[43] See p.
[44] *Shadharāt*, 2: 226,227.
[45] Ibn Sa'd, 7:294; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 471; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1930; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:296; *Jarḥ*, 3:148; *Kamāl*, 333; *'Ibar*, 1:336; *Kāshif*, 1:252; *Sīyar*, 9:356.
[46] Cf. strands 2 and 6.
[47] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 677; Ibn Sa'd, 7:314; *Tārīkh Khalīfa* 472; *Kabīr*, 8:368; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:307; *Baghdād*, 4:337; *Kamāl*, 1543; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 132; *Kāshif*, 3:287; *Shadharāt*, 2:16; *Sīyar*, 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] *Baghdād*, 14:339.
[50] Nadīm, 1: 228; *Ẓunūn*, 461.

6.14. The strand of Ibn Bashshār ~ Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī al-Baṣrī[51] (133-204/751-819)

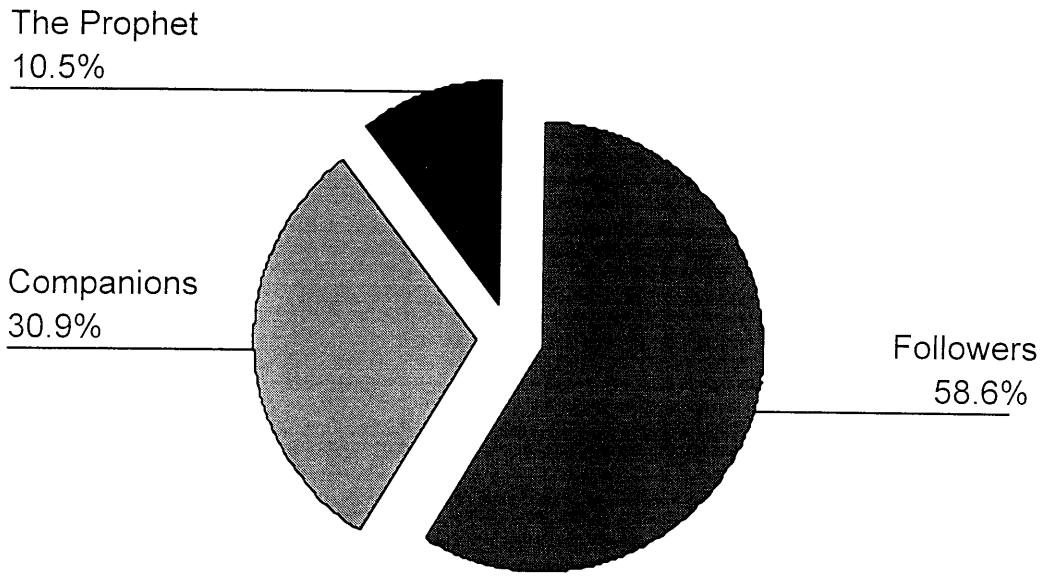
Ibn Bashshār narrates 5 (1.2%) of his *isnāds* from Abū Dāwūd, the author of the famous *Musnad*.[52] Abū Dāwūd himself narrates from 3 masters almost equally, thus making Abū Dāwūd the major link for a cluster of *isnāds* branching from this strand.

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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	242	58.6	58.6
Companions	127	30.9	89.5
The Prophet	43	10.5	100.0
Total	412	100.0	

[51] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 229; Ibn Sa'd, 7: 298; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 24: 472; *Kabīr*, 4: 10; *Ṣaghīr*, 2: 299; *Baghdād*, 9: 24; *Kamāl*, 537; *Tadhkira*, 1: 351; *Kāshif*, 2: 392; *Khulāṣa*, 151; *Sīyar*, 9: 378; *Mīzān*, 2: 203.

[52] *Tadhkira*, 1: 351; Kaḥḥāla, 4: 262. His book *al-Musnad* still exists and is in circulation as a source of Ḥaddīth 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 Wāsiṭ- 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*.[53]

[53] Printed and circulated with verification. See the ed. by Imtiyāz 'Alī 'Arshī, published in Beirut, Lebanon, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983.

SECTION THREE

Masters from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates more than 300 times. These are: Yūnus al-Miṣrī, Abū Kurayb, and a missing master.

7. Seventh major master: Yūnus b. 'Abd al-A'lā al-Miṣrī (170-264 AH)

Yūnus al-Ṣadafī al-Miṣrī must be ranked the seventh major master in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* on account of the frequency with which al-Ṭabarī reports from him. Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Yūnus 396 *isnāds* (4.7% of the total 8,424 *isnāds*).[1] In some places of his *Tafsīr* al-Ṭabarī gives the name of this person as Yūnus b. 'Abd al- A'lā al-Ṣadafī, 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, 'Abdullāh b. Wahb al-Miṣrī (125-197/743-813),[3] from whom he narrates 374 times (94.5% of the total 396 *isnāds*). The remaining 22 *isnāds* (5.5%), are dispersed among another 12 masters.

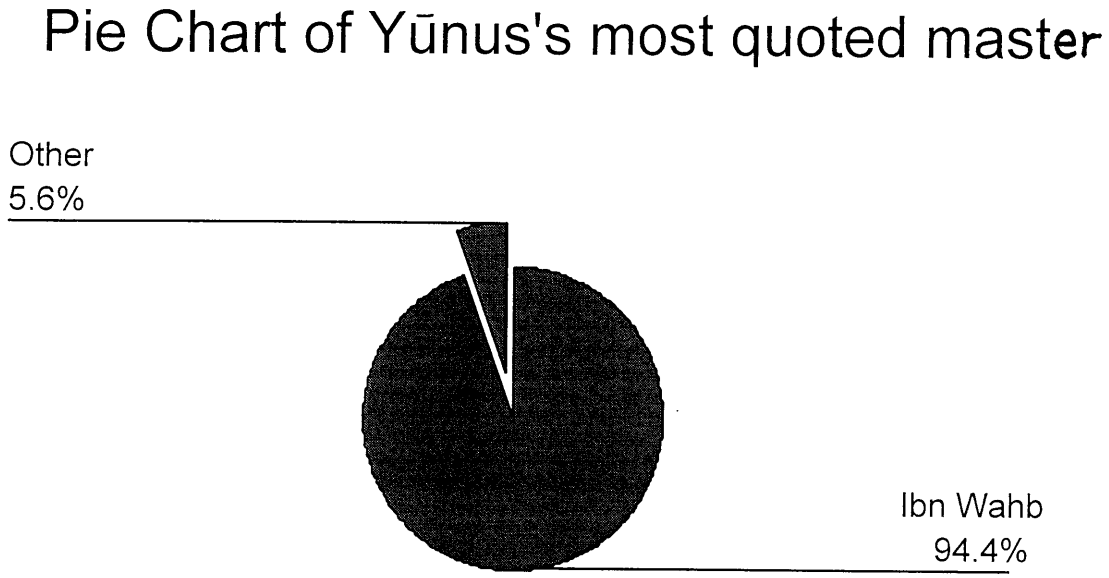
Yūnus's most quoted master

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Wahb	**374**	**94.4**	**94.4**
Others(12)	22	5.6	100.0
Total	396	100.0	

[1] See Table no. 1.

[2] He was trusted and acknowledged by Abū Ḥātim, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, Ibn Mājah, al-Nasā'ī, Abū Zur'a, and others. He was the master of 'Abdullāh b. Wahb al-Miṣrī. See *Jarḥ*, 9:243; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 230; *Tadhkira*, 2:527; *Lughāt*, 2:168; *Tahdhīb*, 11:440; *Shadharāt*, 2:149; *Wafayāt*, 2:417; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:406.

[3] See *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:328; *Tadhkira*, 1:304; *Ẓunūn*, 440; *Shadharāt*, 1:347; *Wafayāt*, 3:36.



Hence, Ibn Wahb is the most significant master among the 13. It is noticeable that both Yunus 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."[4] 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*.[5]

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 *ḥaddathanī* when transmitting *isnāds* from Yūnus. *Ḥaddathanī* is a term used by scholars of Ḥadīth to indicate that the information they narrate comes from a written source.[6] Al-Ṭabarī employs this

[4] *Tadhkira*, 1:304; *Tahdhīb*, 6:71; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:328.
[5] *Ẓunūn*, 440; *Wafayāt*, 3:36; Sezgin, 2:134; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:329.
[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.

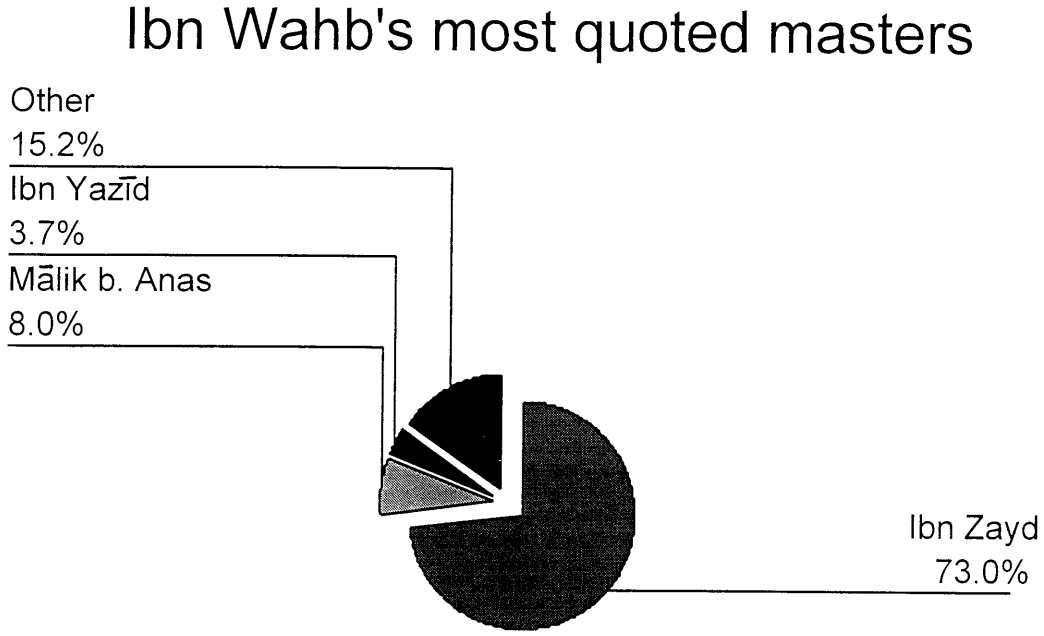
Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	376	94.9	94.9
Ḥaddathanā	20	5.1	100.0
Total	396	100.0	

In our discussion of terms used by al-Ṭabarī in transmitting *isnāds*, we noted that the term *ḥaddathanī* 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 *ḥaddathanī* 376 times (in 94.9% of the 396 *isnāds*) while he employs the term *ḥaddathanā* only 20 times (5.1%). This may suggest that in most cases, when using the term *ḥaddathanī*, al-Ṭabarī is quoting from Yūnus via a written work, which may be the *Tafsīr* written by Ibn Wahb (previously mentioned), whereas in a few cases when he uses the term *ḥaddathanā*, he is referring to different sources. In addition, we may note the fact that the proportional use of the term *ḥaddathanī* and the appearance of the scholar Ibn Wahb show an equal percentage!

Although Ibn Wahb narrates these 374 *isnāds* from 36 masters, he reports the bulk of his narrations, i.e. 317 *isnāds* (85%), from only 3 of them, *viz*:

Ibn Wahb's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Zayd	273	73.0	73.0
Mālik b. Anas	30	8.0	81.0
Ibn Yazīd	14	3.7	85.0
Others(33)	57	15.2	100.0
Total	374	100.0	



These most quoted masters are as follows:

1- ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam al-Madanī (d. 182/798), from whom Ibn Wahb narrates extensively i.e. 273 times (73%). The *isnād* stops at ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd 264 times (96.7% of 273 times), where al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn Zayd's own sayings on *tafsīr*. The remainig 9 *isnād*s, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd narrates from 5 others masters, but mainly from his father, Zayd b. Aslam (d.136/753),[7] from whom he narrates 4 times. Biographers state that ʿAbd 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*.[8] Regarding ʿAbd 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*: Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb ~ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd.[9] What can be safely concluded here is that this *isnād*, Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb ~ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd, goes back to an ancient written source on *tafsīr* which

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[7] *Kabīr*, 2/1:385; *Lughāt*, 1:200; *Tahdhīb*, 3:395; *Tadhkira*, 1:132; *Shadharāt*, 1:194; *Ẓunūn*, 448; *Jarḥ*, 1:551; *Muʿjam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:197; Kaḥḥāla, 4:189; Sezgin, 2:24.

[8] *Muʿjam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:265.

[9] Sezgin, 1:201.

originated during the second half of the second century AH, because 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd, the author of this *Tafsīr*, died in 182/798.

Regarding the technical term used by al-Ṭabarī to quote from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd's *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī consistently employs only the one term *ḥaddathanī* whenever he refers to this *Tafsīr*, via the following *isnād*: Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb ~ Ibn Zayd. The following Table illustrates this situation.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	273	100.0	100.0
Total	273	100.0	

This crucial statistical result supports the hypothesis that when he uses the term *ḥaddathanī*, via the *isnād* Yūnus ~ Ibn Wahb, al-Ṭabarī is in fact quoting from the written source which is 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd's *Tafsīr*.

2- Mālik b. Anas al-Madanī (93-179/712-795),[10] the well-known *faqīh* (jurisprudent), from whom Ibn Wahb narrates 30 times (8%). The *isnād* 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 *isnād*s and a main source of Ibn Wahb, since the *isnād* starts to diverge into several branches after Mālik. Ibn Wahb was considered to be a follower of the Mālikī school of *fiqh*.[11] He learnt from Mālik and accompanied him for twenty years. Mālik produced works, among them *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* and, of course, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*.[12]

3 - Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Aylī,[13] from whom Ibn Wahb narrates 14 times (3.7%).

It should be noted that most of the *isnād*s flowing from al-Ṭabarī's master Yūnus reach back to the generation of the Followers, mainly, as we have seen earlier, to 'Abd al-Raḥmān 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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[10] See Abu Zahra, *Mālik b. Anas*; *Tadhkira*, 207; *Tahdhīb*, 10:5; *Kabīr*, 3/1:310; *Mashāhīr*, 140; *Ansāb*, 435; *Qurrā*, 2:35; *Ḥilya*, 435; al-Dawudī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:293; Sezgin, 2:120; *Miftāḥ al-Sa'āda*, 2:84.

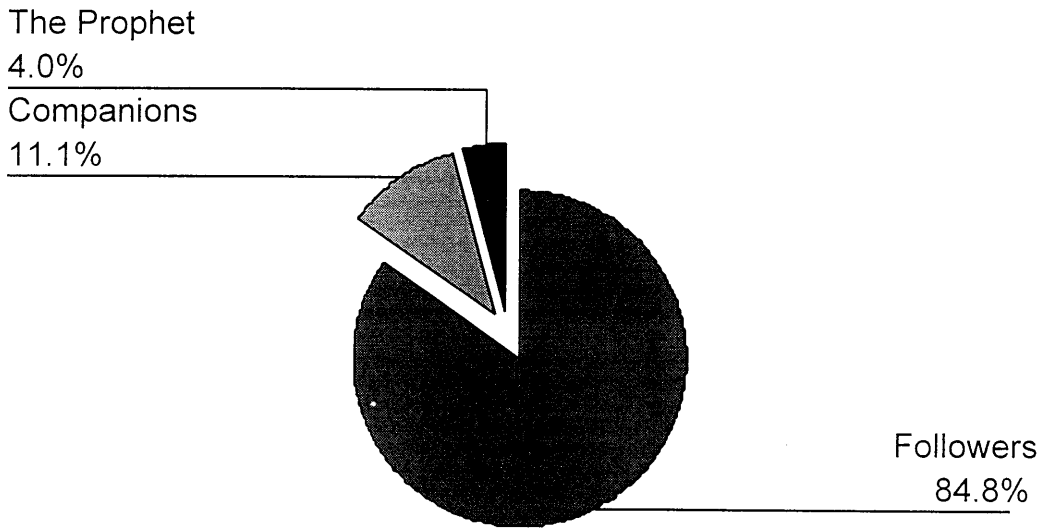
[11] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:328.

[12] Kaḥḥāla, 8:168.

[13] *Jarḥ*, 9:247.

Chart illustrate the fact that 84.8% of Yūnus's *isnād*s 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 *tafsīr*s belonging to the generation of the Followers and, in particular, the *Tafsīr* produced by the commentator 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	336	84.8	84.8
Companions	44	11.1	96.
The Prophet	16	4.1	100.0
Total	396	100.0	



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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s). The significance of this strand is that it goes back to a written source on *tafsīr* produced by the later narrator,

i.e. ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd. We noted that this *Tafsīr* must have been written during the second half of the second century AH. Our statistical examination supports Sezgin's statement that al-Ṭabarī refers to ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam's *Tafsīr* hundreds of times. In fact, he makes 273 citations in interpreting only the two *Sūra*s *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*.

8. Eighth major master: Abū Kurayb, Muḥammad b. al-'Alā' al-Kūfī (d. AH 248)[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. 'Uqda 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.[15] Many Ḥadīth scholars ranked Abū Kurayb as the principal master above all other scholars in Kufa during his lifetime.[16] He was described as "a receptacle of narration."[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.[18] Abū Kurayb left many written works.[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 Bashshār) that Ibn

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[14] *Tadhkira*, 2:497; *Khulāṣa*, 303; *Shadharāt*, 2:119; Ibn Sa'd, 6:289; *'Ibar*, 1:453.
[15] See *Ḥuffāẓ*, 217.
[16] *Tadhkira*, 2:497; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50-51.
[17] *Tadhkira*, 2:497.
[18] *Tadhkira*, 2:497; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:50-51.
[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,[20] 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 *ḥaddathanā* when transmitting *isnāds* from Abū Kurayb. According to the Science of Ḥadīth, *ḥaddathanā* 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 narratations. 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.

Term	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	388	100.0	100.0
Total	388	100.0	

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),[21] from whom Abū Kurayb narrates 74 times (19.1% of the total 388 *isnāds*); 2- Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī (129-197/746-812),[22] from whom he narrates 49 times (12.6%); 3- 'Abdullāh b. Idrīs al-Kūfī (AH 115-192),[23] from whom he narrates 39 times (10%); 4-

[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; Nadīm, 226; Ibn Sa'd, 6:394; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:357; *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),[24] from whom he narrates 39 times (10%); 5- Yaḥyā b. Zakarīyyā b. Abī Zā'ida al-Kūfī (123-183/741-799),[25] from whom he narrates 18 times (4.6%); 6- Hushaym b. Basīr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 183/799), from whom he narrates 16 times (4.1%); 7- Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh al-Kūfī (AH 95-193),[26] from whom he narrates 15 times (3.8%); 8- Yaḥyā b. Yamān al-Kūfī (d. 189/805),[27] from whom he narrates 12 times (3.1%); 9- Al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī al-Kūfī,[28] from whom he narrates 8 times (2.1%); 10- Yaḥyā b. Ādam al-Kūfī (d. 203/818),[29] from whom he narrates 8 times (2.1%); and 11- Jābir b. Nūḥ al-Ḥimmānī al-Kūfī,[30] 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

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Uthmān	74	19.1	19.1
Wakī'	49	12.6	31.7
Ibn Idrīs	39	10.1	41.8
Ibn Bukayr	39	10.1	51.8
Ibn Abī Zā'ida	18	4.6	56.4
Hushaym	16	4.1	60.6
Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh	15	3.9	64.4
Ibn Yamān	12	3.1	67.5
Ibn 'Aṭiyya	8	2.1	69.6
Yaḥyā b. Ādam	8	2.1	71.6

[24] *Tadhkira*, 1:326; *Tahdhīb*, 11;434; *Khulāṣa*, 379; *Shadharāt*, 1:357; *'Ibar*, 1:331; *Mīzān*, 4:477; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 2:165; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 137.

[25] *Baghdād*, 14:114-119; Nadīm, 1:226; *Tadhkira*, 1:246; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, 11:208-210; *Mīzān*, 3:287; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:513; Kaḥḥāla, 13:198.

[26] *Tadhkira*, 1:265; *Khulāṣa*, 383; *Shadharāt*, 1:334; Ibn Sa'd, 6:269; Ibn al-Jazarī, 1:325; *Qurrā*, 1:110; *'Ibar*, 1:311; *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 2:144.

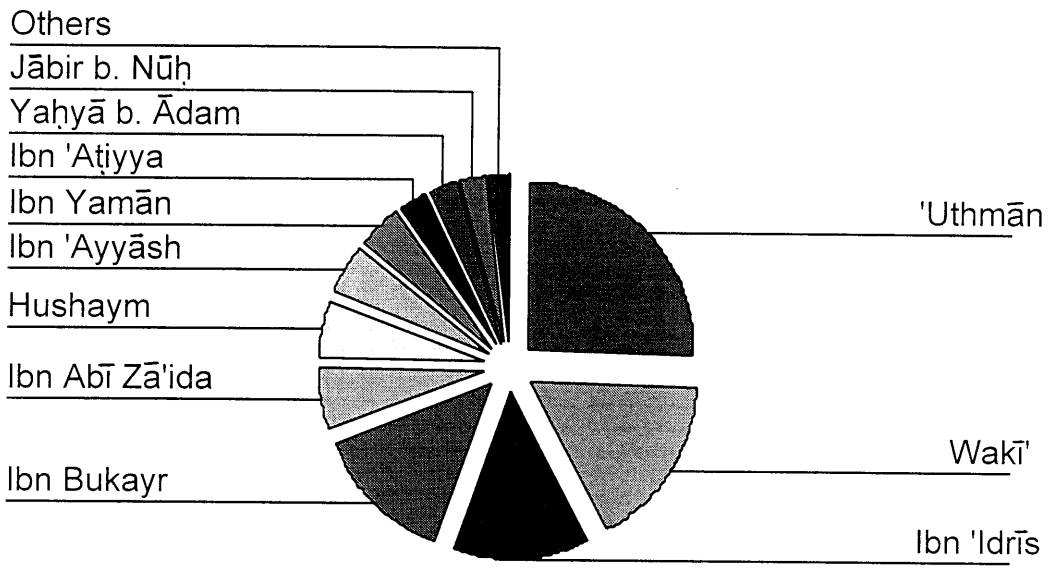
[27] *Tahdhīb*, 11:306; *Kabīr*, 6/2:133; *'Ibar*, 1:304; *Shadharāt*, 1:325; *Qurrā*, 2:381; *Tadhkira*, 186; Sezgin, 1:202; *Alām*, 8:177.

[28] *Jarḥ*, 2/1:26.

[29] *Qurrā*, 2:364; *Khulāṣa*, 361; Nadīm, 227; *Tadhkira*, 359; *Shadharāt*, 2:8; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:360; *Mir'āt al-Jinān*, 2:10; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:725.

[30] *Jarḥ*, 1/1:500; *Lubb al-Lubāb*, 1:256.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Jābir b. Nūḥ	7	1.8	73.6
Others(55)	103	26.4	100.0
Total	388	100.0	



The total number of Abū Kurayb's narrations from these 11 most cited masters is 285 *isnād*s (73.6% of 388 *isnād*s). The remaining 103 *isnād*s (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 Wāsiṭ. 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 *isnād*s via his master Abū Kurayb, without reporting on a large scale from other strands. These 11 most cited strands are as follows.

8.1. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Kūfī

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-Ḥasan al-Kūfī (d. after105/723).[32] In turn, Abū Rawq narrates from 2 masters, but mostly from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d. 105/723), from whom he reports 69 times (98.6%). Al-Ḍaḥḥāk narrates this amount from 1 master, Ibn 'Abbās, the famous Companion. The source of this strand was quite probably al-Ḍaḥḥāk 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 ~ Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 49 times (12.6%). Wakī' narrates from 27 masters, i.e. the strand branches out after Wakī' into 27 directions. So the source of this strand is Wakī' 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 Wakī' 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'ān*.[34]

8.3. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ 'Abdullāh b. Idrīs al-Kūfī

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]

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[31] *Jarḥ*, 2:362; *Kabīr*, 1/2:81.

[32] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:347; *Kabīr*, 4/1:12; *Khulāṣa*, 126; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:380; Ibn Sa'd, 6:369; *Tahdhīb*, 7:227.

[33] Sezgin, 1:186; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:237.

[34] Sezgin, 1:273; Nadīm, 226; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:720.

[35] *Sīyar*, 9:42-48. See also Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 2:295; Ibn Sa'd, 6:389; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1303; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 460; *Kabīr*, 5:47; *Baghdād*, 9:415; *Tadhkira*, 1:283; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 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 *isnād*s (87.2%), from 1 person, Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, the well-known scholar and author of the Prophet's biography (*Sīra*). In turn, Ibn Isḥāq 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 *isnād*s). 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 Isḥāq (d. 151/768), whom we know as a scholar and author, was a major source upon whom al-Ṭabarī relied to cite hundreds of *isnād*s. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find adequate information about Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad, the source upon whom Ibn Isḥāq 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 Zā'ida 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 Zā'ida was famed for being a competent scholar in different disciplines including *fiqh* and Ḥadīth. He left written works including *al-Sunan fī al-Ḥadīth* and *al-Shurūṭ wa-al-Sijillāt*.[38]

8.6. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī

This strand recurs 16 times (4.1%). Hushaym is the source of this strand because it starts to split into12 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 b. '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]

8.8. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yaḥyā b. Yamān al-Kūfī

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

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[38] Nadīm, 1:226; *Baghdād*, 14:114-119; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:513.
[39] *Sīyar*, 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*.

8.9. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī al-Kūfī

This strand recurs 8 times (2.1%). Ibn 'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī 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 *isnād*s from one master, Khuṣayf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazarī and then al-Kūfī (d. AH 136).[40] 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.[41]

8.10. Strand of Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yaḥyā b. Ādam 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*.[42]

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.[43]

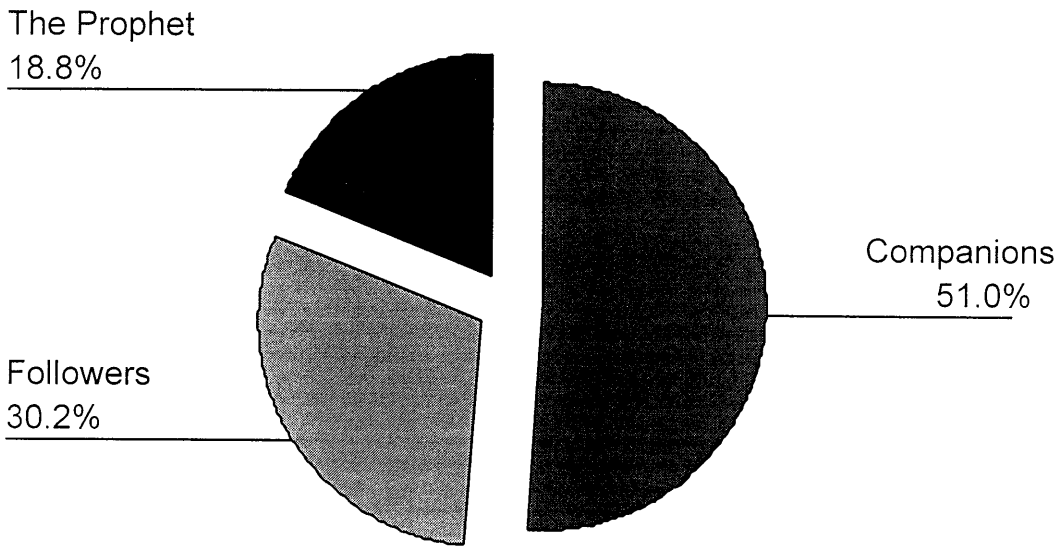
It should be noted that al-Ṭabarī's eighth most quoted master, Abū Kurayb, reported narrations mostly from the Companions, mainly from Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī b.

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[40] Ibn Sa'd, 7:180; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 319; *Kabīr*, 3:228; *Ṣaghīr*, 2:46; *Kamāl*, 373; *Mīzān*, 1:653-654; *Shadharāt*, 1:206; *Sīyar*, 6:145.
[41] *Jarḥ*, 1/2:403.
[42] Nadīm, 227; *Qurrā*, 2:364; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:514; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 2:725.
[43] *Jarḥ*, 2:500.

Abī Ṭālib, who were both competent in the field of *tafsīr*. In addition, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was known for his extensive knowledge in the discipline of *fiqh*. Abū Kurayb also narrated from Followers, such as Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī, Sa'īd b. Jubayr 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 ḥadīths going back to the Prophet as their source. This underlines the possibility that Abū Kurayb specialized in citing *tafsīr*s that belonged to the generation of the Companions, the Followers, and, most notably, to some extant that of the Prophet. See the following Table and Pie Chart which illustrate this finding.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Companions	198	51.0	51.0
Followers	117	30.2	81.2
The Prophet	73	18.8	100.0
Total	388	100.0	



We now came to the end of our discussion regarding these 11 most quoted strands ramifying from Abū Kurayb.

The total number of *isnād*s narrated by Abū Kurayb from these 11 clusters is 285, or 73.6% of all his 388 *isnād*s. The remaining 103 *isnād*s (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 Abu 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 Wāsiṭ. 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. Isḥāq 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 Isḥāq via two strands: one from Kufa, as here via Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī ~ Yaḥyā b. Bukayr al-Kūfī, and the other from Rayy, via Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī ~ Salamah 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.

9. Ninth major master: Bishr b. Ma'ādh al-'Aqadī al-Baṣrī (d. AH 250)

Bishr must be ranked the ninth major master to whom al-Ṭabarī mostly refers in his *Tafsīr*. 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 *Tafsīr*, 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."[44]

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 *ḥaddathanā*. The following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarī almost always employs this term when transmitting *isnāds* from Bishr. *Ḥaddathanā* 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.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	336	97.1	97.1
Ḥaddathanī	10	2.9	100.0
Total	346	100.0	

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 Yaḥyā 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] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 110.

Yazīd narrates these 340 *isnād*s 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-Tafsīr*[48] 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 *isnād*s 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-Khaṭīb 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 *isnād*s 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.

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[47] *Wāfī*, 13:88; Nadīm, 1:227; *Tahdhīb*, 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-Mufassirīn*, 1:211.

[50] *Tahdhīb*, 4:63; Ibn Sa'd, 6:403; *Shadharāt*, 2:35; Sezgin, 1:26; *Kabīr*, 4/1:177; *Jarḥ*, 3/2:126; *Ẓunūn*, 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	338	97.6	97.6
The Prophet	8	2.4	100.0
Total	346	100.0	

10. Al-Ṭabarī's tenth major master: A missing master

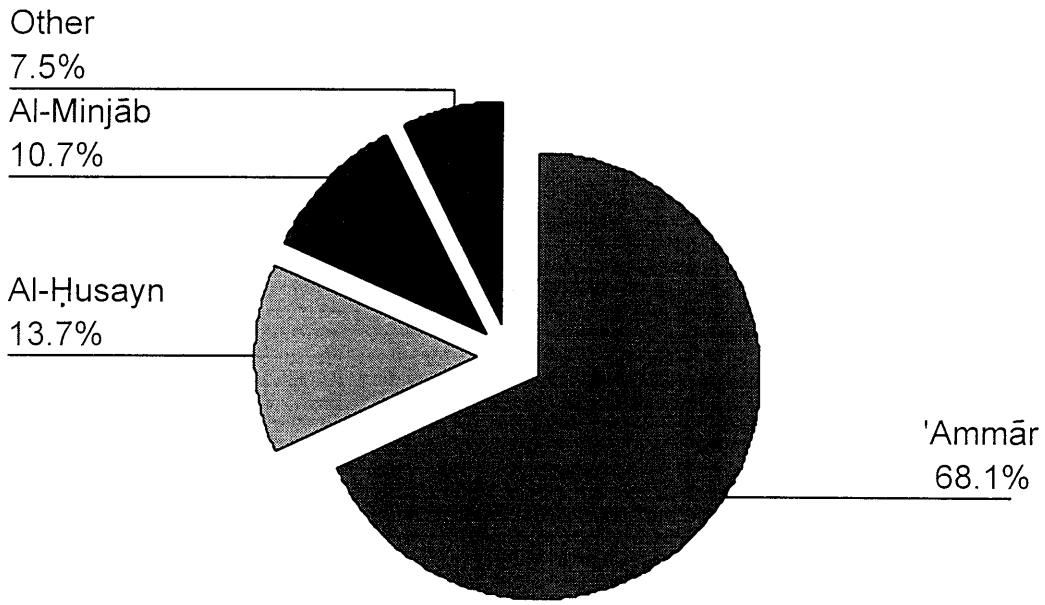
In reviewing the *isnāds* flowing from this master, we are faced with a situation different to the previous one because on 335 occasions (3.9% of the total 8,424 *isnāds*), al-Ṭabarī consistently transmits *isnāds* using a technical term different to those used previously since here he uses *ḥuddithtu* (it has been narrated to me). According to the Science of Ḥadīth, 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-Baghdādī,[53] from whom he narrates 46 times (13.7%); and 3- al-Minjāb b. Al-Ḥārith al-Tamīmī,[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] *Jarḥ*, 3:62.
[54] *Ibid.*, 8:443.

Al-Ṭabarī's masters from whom he narrates indirectly

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Ammār	228	68.1	68.1
Al-Ḥusayn	46	13.7	81.8
Al-Minjāb	36	10.7	92.5
Others(22)	25	7.5	100.0
Total	335	100.0	



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.[55] 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-

[55] Such as *Tahdhīb*, *Jarḥ*, Ibn Sa'd, and *Ḥuffāẓ*.

known commentator on the Qur'ān and the author of a *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān.*[56] 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-Rabī''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 Jāmi' al-Bayān.* Thus, the number of references to al-Rabī''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-Rabī's *Tafsīr* is one of the earliest sources on *tafsīr* since al-Rabī' 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 Ma'ādh al-Faḍl b. Khālid al-Naḥwī al-Marwazī[58](d. 211/826). Abū Ma'ādh similarly narrates from 1 master, 'Ubayd b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī,[59] who in turn narrates from 1 master, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī (d. 105/723), the well-known scholar of *tafsīr.* The *isnād* stops at al-Ḍaḥḥāk, where al-Ṭabarī cites al-Ḍaḥḥāk'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-Ḍaḥḥāk[60] written during the second half of the first century

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[56] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:189.

[57] See *Jarḥ*, 3:62; *Baghdād*, 8:84; *Lisān*, 2:307.

[58] *Jarḥ*, 7:61; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:28; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 6:214; *Qurrā*, 2:9; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1:818; *Ẓunūn*, 1449; Kaḥḥāla, 8:67.

[59] *Jarḥ*, 5:408.

[60] His book on *tafsīr* is entitled *Kitāb al-Tafsīr.* See Sezgin, 1:186; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:237; Kaḥḥāla, 5:27.

AH. This is not the first time al-Ṭabarī refers to al-Ḍaḥḥāk'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-Khath'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-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Khurasānī. The *isnād* stops twice at al-Ḍaḥḥāk, from whom al-Ṭabarī quotes 2 sayings on *tafsīr*, and the remaining 32 times al-Ḍaḥḥāk continues to narrate from his master 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās. Although, like the previous strand, this goes back to al-Ḍaḥḥāk, the aim here is to consult Ibn 'Abbās's *Tafsīr*, whereas the purpose of the previous strand was to refer to al-Ḍaḥḥāk's own sayings on *tafsīr*. It is clear that the source (common link) in both strands is al-Ḍaḥḥāk. Many historians affirm that al-Ḍaḥḥāk wrote a book on *tafsīr*, which may have reached al-Ṭabarī but in sections via different *isnād*s. Some parts contain the *tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk himself, while some others contain what al-Ḍaḥḥāk narrated from his master Ibn 'Abbās.

Summary

We have seen in our discussion that 335 times al-Ṭabarī cites *isnād*s indirectly, as is evident from his use of the term *ḥuddithtu*, which indicates that he is quoting imperfect *isnād*s. This in fact reflects al-Ṭabarī's honestly in the manner of citing his *isnād*s. 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 *isnād*s), al-Ṭabarī quotes from three main strands, which go back to three portions of *Tafsīr*s written by two famous *Tābi'ūn* scholars of *tafsīr*, al-Rabī' b. Anas al-Baṣrī and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Khurasānī. It is noticeable that elsewhere via other strands in

[61] *Jarḥ*, 2:362.

his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī refers to these scholars hundreds of times by perfect and permitted *isnād*s. What implication can be drawn is that these sources of *tafsīr* reached al-Ṭabarī in sections, some of which he obtained by permitted *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s, al-Ṭabarī is not just gathering haphazard *isnād*s 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: Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī (166-252/782-866)[1]

Ya'qūb 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*).

Ya'qūb, 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 scholars[2] narrated from him. Al-Dāwūdī affirmed that among the books compiled by Ya'qūb was one on *Tafsīr*.[3]

Thus we may safely conclude that the reason for al-Ṭabarī's frequent reference to his master, Ya'qūb, was that Ya'qūb was in fact an important source in *tafsīr* since he compiled numerous narrations from earlier scholars. Al-Ṭabarī greatly benefited from in compiling his *Jāmi' al-Bayān*.

When considering the technical terms used by al-Ṭabarī to narrate *isnāds* from his master Ya'qūb, we find that in more than 90% of instances al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanī*, whereas in less than 10% of instances he uses the term *ḥaddathanā* (see the following Table illustrating this finding).

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[1] *Tahdhīb*, 11:381; *Hadīyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:537; *Tadhkira*, 2: 505; *Khulāṣa*, 372; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 377; *A'lām*, 9: 253; and *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 2: 740.

[2] Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah.

[3] Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:377.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	266	90.2	90.2
Ḥaddathanā	29	9.8	100.0
Total	295	100.0	

According to Ḥadīth scholars, this term *ḥaddathanī* 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 Ya'qūb.

In considering the masters from whom Ya'qub himself narrated, we find that he narrates from 12 masters, but mostly from the two following:

11.1. Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm b. Miqsam al-Baṣrī[4] and then al-Baghdādī (110-193/728-809)

Ismā'īl is known as Ibn 'Ulayya. Ya'qūb narrates from him 155 *isnād*s (52.5% of 295 *isnād*s). This means that Ya'qūb narrates nearly more than half of his total *isnād*s from his master, Ibn 'Ulayya. Ibn 'Ulayya, who was known as a commentator on the Qur'ān, was originally from Basra, was brought up in Kufa, and then moved to Baghdad where Ya'qūb met him. Many historians affirm that Ibn 'Ulayya compiled a book of *tafsīr*, simply entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.[5] Therefore, Ibn 'Ulayya was an important source for Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm, al-Ṭabarī's master.

11.2. Hushaym b. Bashīr al-Wāsiṭī and then al-Baghdādī (104-183/722-799)

From whom Ya'qūb narrates 122 *isnād*s (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. Ya'qūb 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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[4] *Wāfī*, 9: 7; *Baghdād*, 6: 229; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 104; *Tadhkira*, 322; *Mīzān*, 1: 216; *Tahdhīb*, 1: 275.

[5] *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn*, 1: 87.

Qur'ān."[6] Hushaym was also another important source for Ya'qūb, taking into account that he was a famous scholar who compiled a number of books.

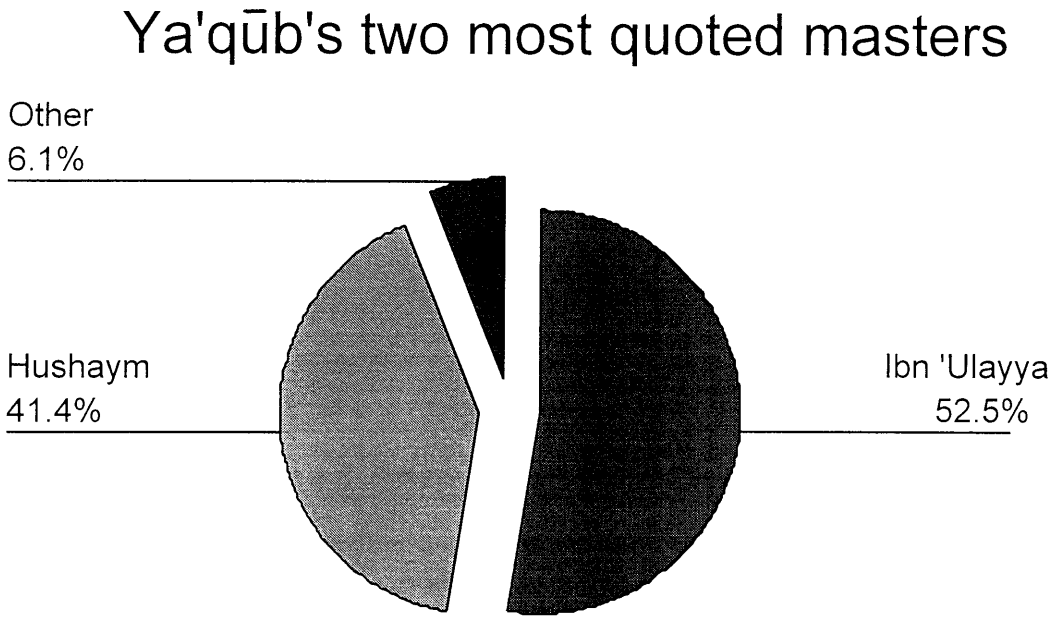
Al-Ṭabarī did not restrict himself to citing Hushaym through his master, Ya'qūb, but also cited him many times via other masters. So, for example, he refers to him 19 times via his second major master, al-Muthannā.[7] He also refers to him 24 times via his fourth major master, al-Qāsim.[8]

It is noticeable that whenever Hushaym is mentioned in the *isnād*, he is in most cases the common link for clusters of *isnād*s. Thus it seems that Hushaym was an essential source upon whom al-Ṭabarī depended in transmitting many *isnād*s. It is to be noted that both Ya'qūb al-Dawraqī 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.

Ya'qūb's two most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn 'Ulayya	**155**	**52.5**	**52.5**
Hushaym	**122**	**41.4**	**93.9**
Others(10)	18	6.1	100.0
Total	295	100.0	

[6] *Ibid*, 2: 712.
[7] See strand no. 7.
[8] See strand no .2.



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 (*ḥaddathanī*) 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 *Tafsīr*s previously mentioned. This is in addition to the fact that using the term *ḥaddathanī* 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.

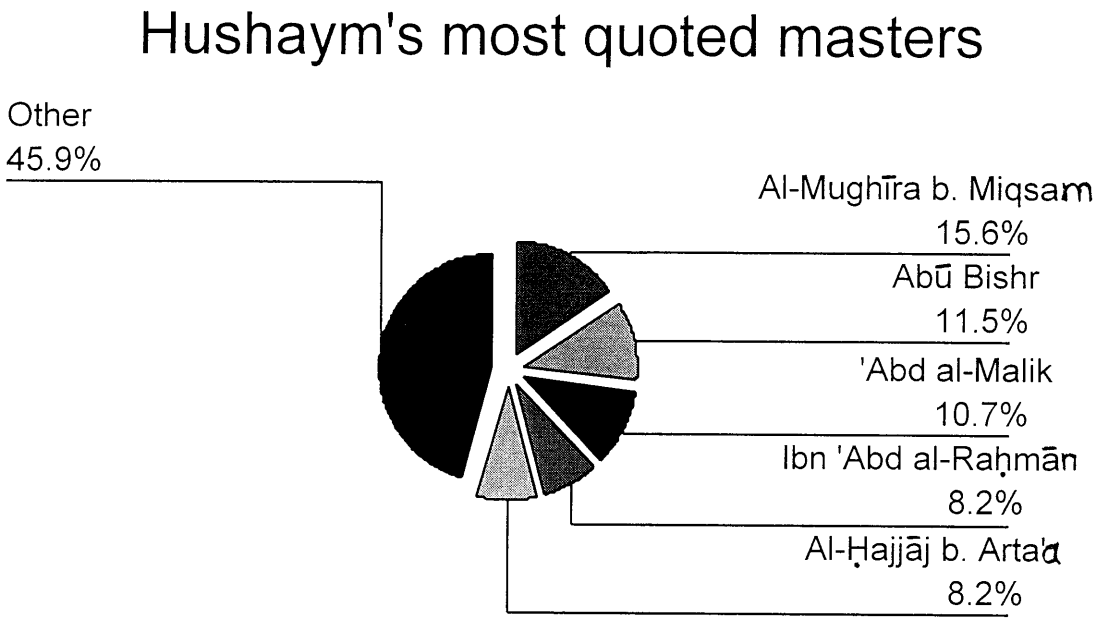
When we look at the generations of these 6 masters most quoted by Ibn ʿUlayya, we find that the *isnāds* after them are scattered through many branches on a large scale. However, we do find one *isnād* which recurs many times, to such an extent that it does not fail to attract our attention; that is the *isnād* of Saʿīd b. Abī ʿAruba, 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 Yaʿqūb 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),[14] from whom he narrates 19 times (15.6%); 2- Abū Bishr Jaʿfar b. Īyās al-Wāsiṭī,[15] from whom he narrates 13 times (11.5%); 3- ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān al-Kūfī,[16] from whom he narrates 14 times (10.7%); 4- Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kūfī (d. 136 AH),[17] from whom he narrates 10 times (8.2%); and 5- al-Ḥajjāj b. Arṭa'a al-Kūfī,[18] 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] *Wāfī*, 26: 43; Nadīm, 1: 226; *Khulāṣa*, 12: 313. One of al-Mughīra's books is his *Kitāb al-Farā'iḍ*.
[15] *Jarḥ*, 2: 473.

[16] *Jarḥ* 212, 366.
[17] *Tadhkira*, 1: 143; *Tahdhīb*, 2: 381; *Khulāṣa*, 73; *Shadharāt*, 1: 193, Ibn Sa'd, 6: 236; *'Ibar*, 1: 183; *Mīzān*, 1: 155; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 61.
[18] *Jarḥ*, 3: 154.

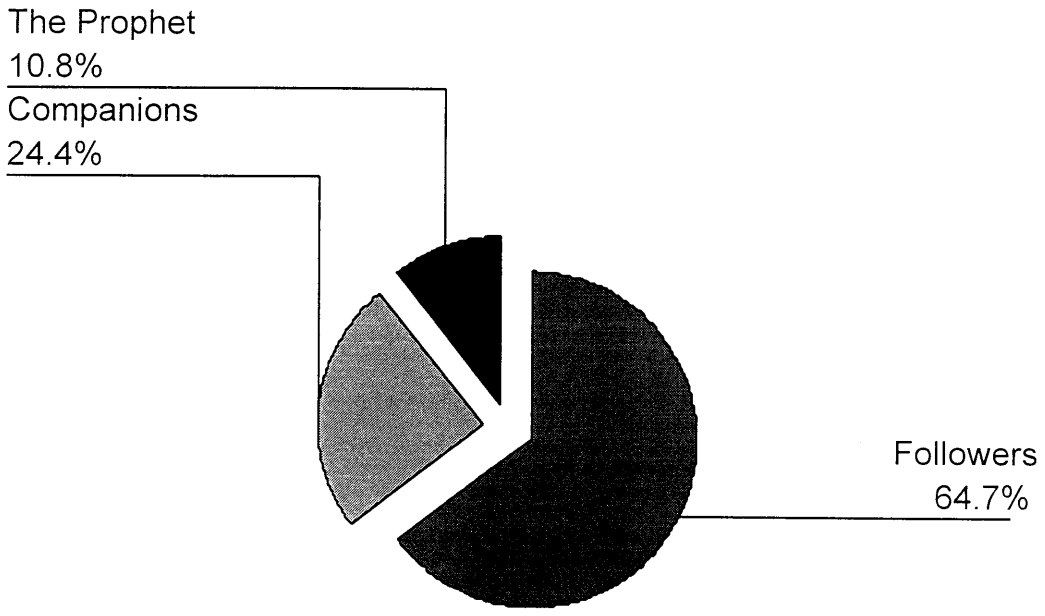


This clearly indicates that more than half of his *isnāds*, Hushaym narrates from only 5 out of 37 masters. It is noticeable that 4 of these 5 masters were from Kufa and only 1 came from Wāsiṭ. This may suggests that Hushaym traveled to Kufa to seek knowledge from scholars there.

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 Ya'qūb (al-Ṭabarī's master), who benefited from what his two masters, Ibn 'Ulayya 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, Ya'qūb, and Ya'qūb's transmission from his two masters, Ibn 'Ulayya 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-Makkī and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	191	64.7	64.7
Companions	72	24.4	89.2
The Prophet	32	10.8	100.0
Total	295	100.0	



12. Twelfth major master: Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. Al-'Abbās al-Bāhilī al-Baghdādī (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 *ḥaddathanī* when transmitting *isnāds* from Muḥammad b. 'Amr. *Ḥaddathanī* is a term used by Ḥadīth 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-Bāhilī.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	239	91.9	91.9
Ḥaddathanā	21	8.1	100.0
Total	260	100.0	

Muḥammad himself narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from 1 alone, i.e. al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad al-Makkī (122-212/740-828).[21] See the following Table and Pie Chart.

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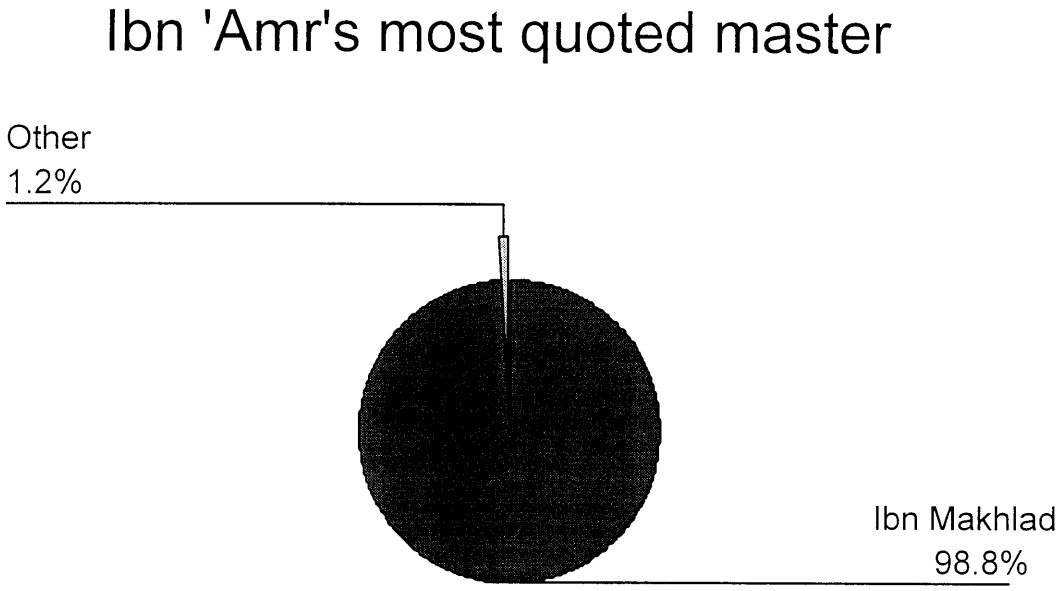
[19] *Baghdād*, 9:112.

[20] See Chapter V on al-Ṭabarī's Style of transmission in narrating *isnāds* from his masters.

[21] Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 8: 225-229; *Wāfī*, 14: 84; *Tahdhīb*, 4: 450; *A'lām*, 3: 310.

Muḥammad b. 'Amr's most quoted master

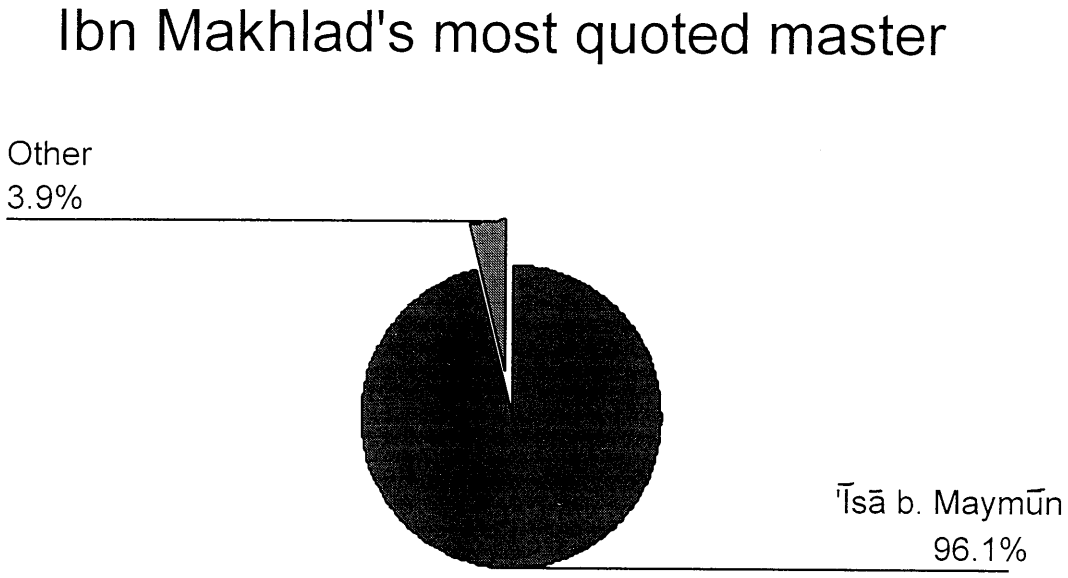
Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Makhlad	**256**	**98.8**	**98.8**
Others(4)	4	1.2	100.0
Total	260	100.0	



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 *isnād*s he narrates are dispersed among another 6 masters.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
'Īsā b. Maymūn	**247**	**96.1**	**96.1**
Others(6)	9	3.9	100.0
Total	256	100.0	

[22] *Hadīyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1: 850; *Tahdhīb*, 8: 235; Ibn Mākulā, *Ikmāl*, 2: 236, *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1: 409. Among the books compiled by 'Īsā b. Maymūn one entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Al-Baghdādī commented that it is a mini-*Tafsīr* (see *Hadīyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 1: 850).



When we look at the masters of ʿĪsā b. Maymūn, we find that he narrates from 4 masters but mostly from just 1, ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī (d. AH 131), from whom he narrates 242 *isnād*s (98.3%), while the remaining 4 *isnād*s he narrates from another 3 masters. The *isnād* stops 8 times at Ibn Abī Najīḥ, when al-Ṭabarī narrates Ibn Abī Najīḥ's own opinions on *tafsīr*. Ibn Abī Najīḥ, for his part, narrates 234 *isnād*s from 6 *Tābiʿūn* masters, but mostly from Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (21-104/642-722), from whom he narrates 224 *isnād*s, while the remaining 10 *isnād*s he narrates from another 5 masters.

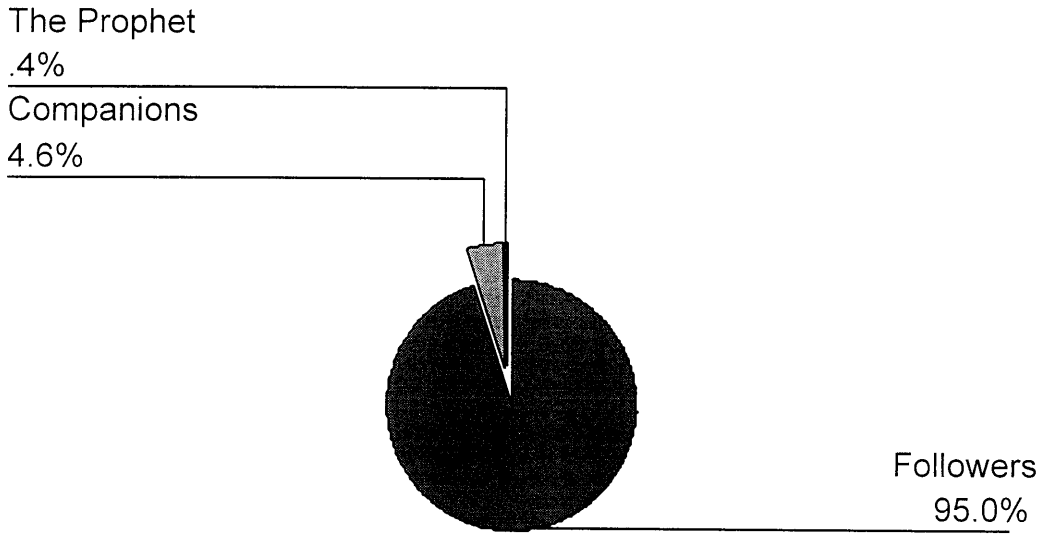
The *isnād* stops at Mujāhid 224 times, when al-Ṭabarī narrates the *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid itself. Many historians assert that Ibn Abī Najīḥ was one of the most distinguished students of Mujāhid and that from him he heard the *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān.[23] Thus, we may safely conclude that what al-Ṭabarī intended by narrating from his master, Muḥammad b. ʿAmr, was primarily to cite Mujāhid's *Tafsīr* through the *isnād* of Muḥammad b. ʿAmr ~ al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad al-Makkī ~ ʿĪsā b. Maymūn al-Makkī ~ Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī ~ Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī.

*Isnād*s stemming from al-Ṭabarī's master Muḥammad b. ʿAmr frequently reach the generation of the Followers, mainly, as we have seen above, via the most

[23] *Sīyar*, 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).

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	**247**	**95.0**	**95.0**
Companions	12	4.6	99.6
The Prophet	1	0.4	100.0
Total	260	100.0	



Mujāhid's *Tafsīr* is considered to be one of the most important and ancient *Tafsīr*s, 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-Ṭabarī narrates Mujāhid's *Tafsīr* 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).

13. Thirteenth major master: Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī (167-252/783-866)[24]

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā must be considered the thirteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī principally narrates *isnāds* in his *Tafsīr*. 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."[25] Kaḥḥāla[26] stated that he compiled a book, but he does not mention in which discipline. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī,[27] Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī,[28] and al-Dhahabī[29] 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 *ḥaddathanā* when transmitting *isnāds* from his master Ibn al-Muthannā. *Ḥaddathanā* 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.[30]

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	191	91.0	91.0
Ḥaddathanī	19	9.0	100.0
Total	210	100.0	

[24] *Baghdād*, 2: 162; *Tadhkira*, 2: 512; *Shadharāt*, 2: 162, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā'*, 1: 78; *A'lām*, 7: 240.

[25] *Baghdād*, 2: 162.

[26] Kaḥḥāla, 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. Ja'far al-Baṣrī (d. AH 193),[31] from whom he narrates 82 times (39%); 2- 'Abd al-Wahhāb 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-A'lā b. 'Abd al-A'lā 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-Ṭayālisī, 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

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Ja'far	82	39.0	39.0
'Abd al-Wahhāb	22	10.5	49.5
Ibn Abī 'Adī	20	9.5	59.0
'Abd al-A'lā	15	7.1	66.2
Wahb b. Jarīr	10	4.8	71.0
Abu Dāwud	9	4.3	75.2

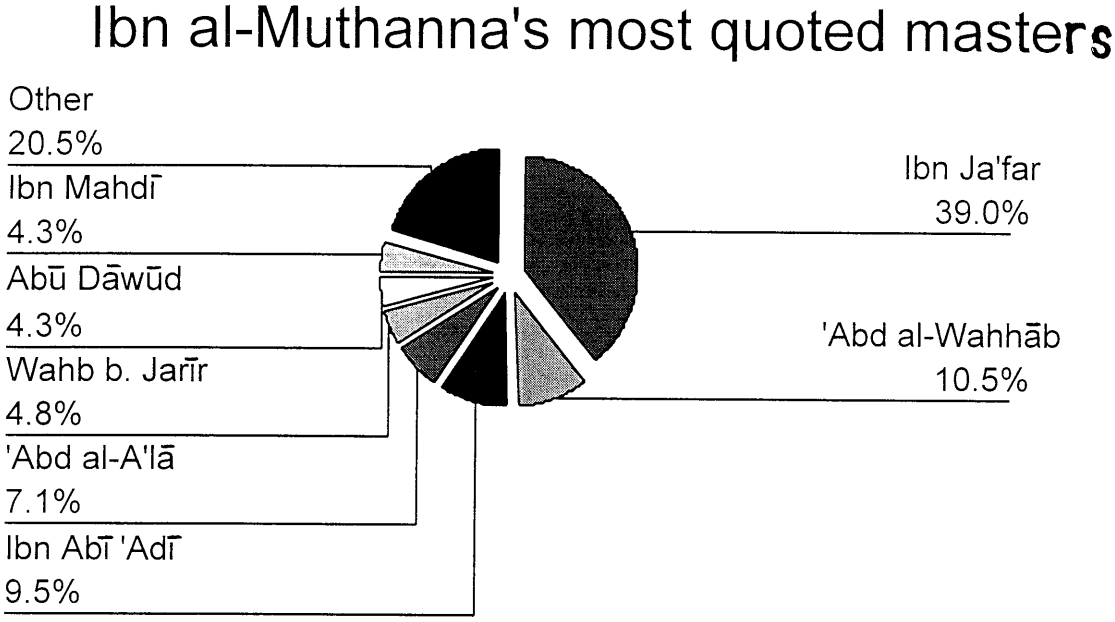
[31] *Tadhkira*, 1: 305; *Tahdhīb*, 9: 96; *Khulāṣa*, 181; *Shadharāt*, 1: 333; Ibn Sa'd, 7/2: 49; *'Ibar*, 1: 311; *Mīzān*, 3: 502.

[32] *Tadhkira*, 1: 321; *Khulāṣa*, 210; *Shadharāt*, 1: 340; *'Ibar*, 1: 314; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 133.

[33] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 503, Ibn Sa'd, 7: 292; *Kabīr*, 1: 23; *Jarḥ*, 7: 186; *Tadhkira*, 1: 324; *Mīzān*, 3: 647; *Kāshif*, 3: 16; *Sīyar*, 9: 220.

[34] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 339; Ibn Sa'd, 7: 290; *Tārīkh Khalīfa*, 458; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1906; *Kabīr*, 6; 37; *al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1: 180, *Tadhkira*, 1: 296; *Tahdhīb*, 6: 96; *Khulāṣa*, 220, *Shadharāt*, 1: 324.

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ibn Mahdī	9	4.3	79.5
Others(25)	43	20.5	100.0
Total	210	100.0	



It is to be noted that Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā 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-Muthannā 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:

13.1. The strand of Ibn al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī ~ Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Baṣrī

This *isnād* recurs 82 times (39%). According to his biographical details, it appears that Muḥammad b. Ja'far compiled a number of books in which he gathered many narrations, especially those he took from his master, Shu'ba al-Baṣrī. Ibn Mahdī said, "We used to benefit from what Muḥammad b. Ja'far 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-Ṭabarī 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-

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[35] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 126.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1: 227.

[38] *Baghdād*, 11: 19.

[39] *Al-Ma'rifa wa-al-Tārīkh*, 1: 650.

Baṣrī (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-Qur'ān*.[40]

The same remark we made about the previous *isnād* applies here as well, i.e. all the masters mentioned here are from Basra.

13.3. The strand of Ibn al-Muthannā ~ Muḥammad b. Abī 'Adī al-Baṣrī

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*.

14.4. The strand of Ibn al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī ~ 'Abd al-A'lā al-Baṣrī

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.

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[40] Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 169.

13.5. The strand of al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī ~ Wahb b. Jarīr al-Baṣrī

This *isnād* recurs 15 times (7.1%). This same amount of *isnād*s, 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-Ṭayālisī 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.

13.7. The strand of al-Muthannā ~ 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī

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.

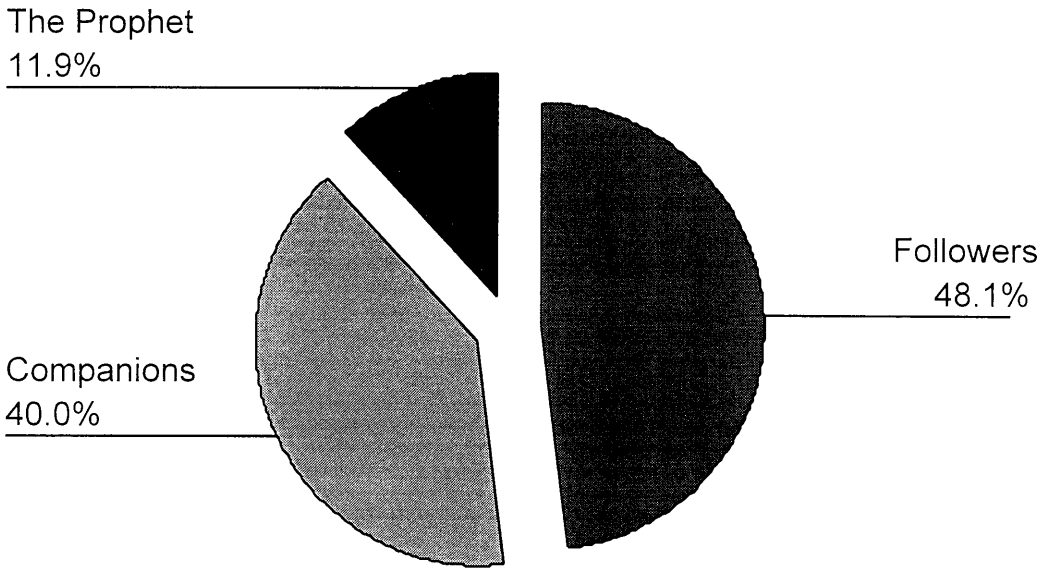
From our study of the 7 strands originating from al-Ṭabarī's master, Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā, we find that these strands lead only to the two famous scholars, Shu'ba al-Baṣrī and Dāwūd b. Abī Hind al-Baṣrī. Shu'ba reappears in strands 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 at the rate of 100 times, and Dāwūd reappears in strands 2, 3, and 4 at the rate of 26 times. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s 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-Muthannā generally pass through two generations of the Followers, i.e. mainly via al-Ḥakam b. Abān al-Baṣrī, Shurayḥ al-Qāḍī, and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī. The following Table illustrates the fact that more than 48% of Ibn al-Muthannā'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).

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	101	48.1	48.1
Companions	84	40.0	88.1
The Prophet	25	11.9	100.0
Total	210	100.0	



14. Fourteenth major master: Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī (d. AH 250)[41]

Aḥmad b. Isḥāq 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 *ḥaddathanā*. *Ḥaddathanā* is a transmission term used to indicate that the narrations cited come by *samā'* (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*.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	165	91.2	91.2
Ḥaddathanī	16	8.8	100.0
Total	181	100.0	

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),[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."[43] Ibn Numayr said, "Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī is a trustworthy scholar with a sound book."[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

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[41] *Tahdhīb*, 1:14.

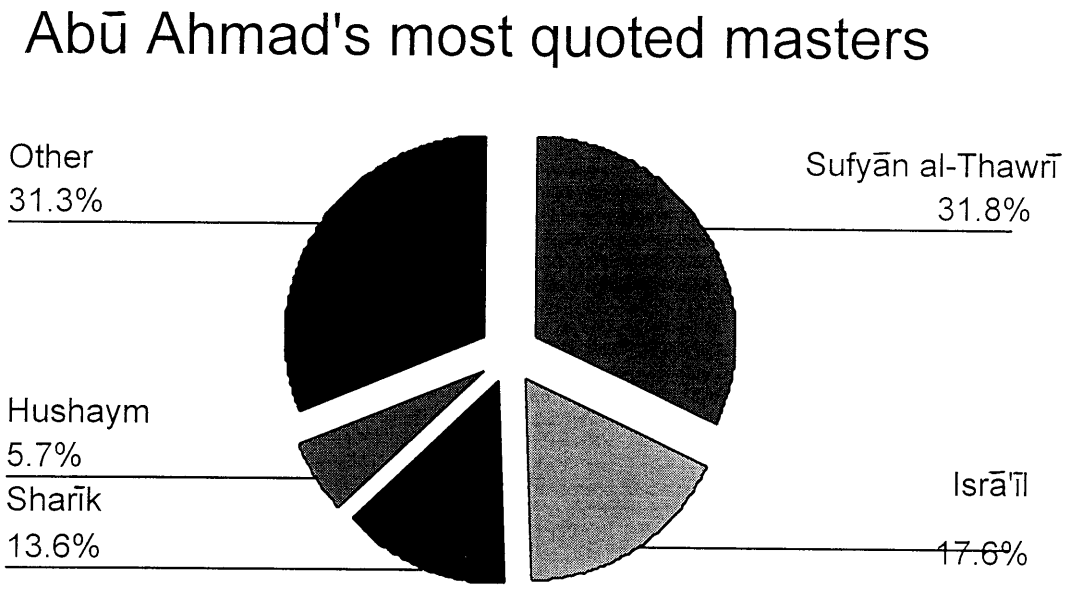
[42] Ibn Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 253; Ibn Sa'd, 6: 402; *Ṭabaqāt Khalīfa*, 1334; *Kabīr*, 1: 133; *Ṣaghīr*, 2: 298; *Jarḥ*, 7: 297; *Mīzān*, 3: 595; *Tadhkira*, 1: 357; *Kāshif*, 3: 60; *Wāfī*, 3: 303; *Tahdhīb*, 9: 254.

[43] *Sīyar*, 9: 530.

[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 Aḥmad 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),[45] 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 Aḥmad 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.



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 Aḥmad 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

[45] *Tadhkira*, 1: 214; *Tahdhīb*, 1: 261; Ibn Sa'd, 6: 260; *Lubāb*, 1: 531; *Mīzān*, 1: 208; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 90.

each of them compiled a book from which he taught his students. As for Isrā'īl b. Yūnus, he also used to teach his students from a book and they wrote down what he taught them, as was reported by Ibn Ma'īn.[46] Thus, we can state that these 4 masters were the sources upon whom Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī 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 Sufyān al-Thawrī himself.

It seems quite possible that the source upon which al-Ṭabarī depended most in narrating the *isnāds* via his master Aḥmad b. Isḥāq, may well have been the narrations gathered and compiled by Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī from his 4 most quoted masters mentioned above.

It is quite possible that al-Ṭabarī benefited from the document of Sufyān, which was in existence up to the time of his master's master, Abū Aḥmad, or at least that he benefited from what Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī had compiled and copied from his master Sufyān.

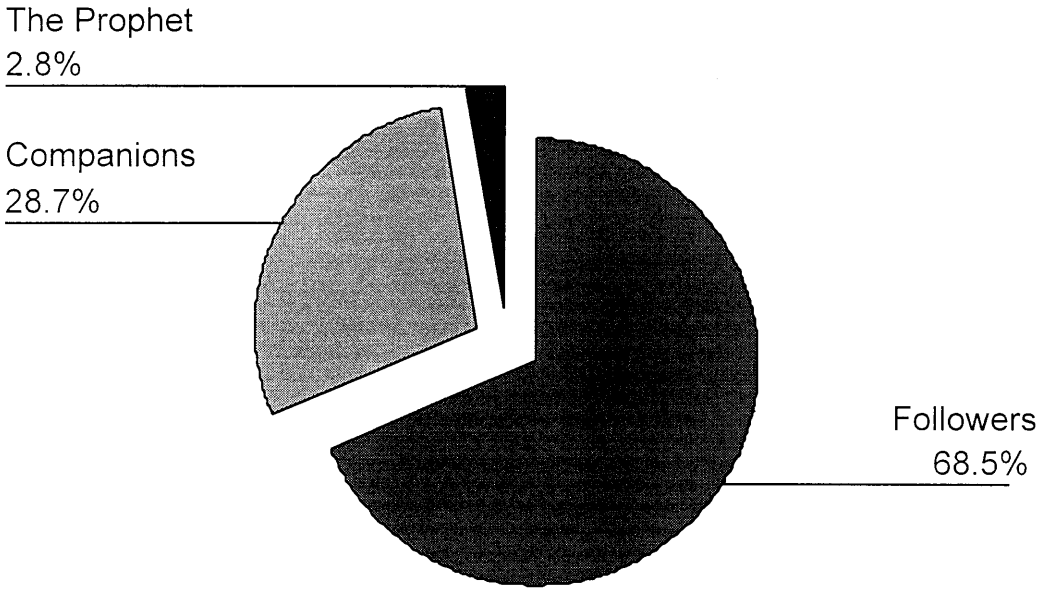
It becomes clear that Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī and three of his masters, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Isrā'īl, and Sharīk, were all from one town, i.e. Kufa, except for Hushaym, who was from Wāsiṭ, notwithstanding also in Iraq.

Finally, we should note that the *isnāds* stemming from al-Ṭabarī's major master, Aḥmad b. Isḥāq, generally reach to the generation of the Followers, mainly to Sa'īd b. Jubayr al-Makkī and Mujāhid al-Makkī. The following Table illustrates the fact that 68.5% of Aḥmad b. Isḥāq's *isnāds* go back to Followers; 28.7% are attributed to the generation of the Companions, mainly 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and only 2.8% are ascribed to the Prophet. This points to the likelihood of Ibn Isḥāq's preference for quoting the narrations of the Followers.

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[46] *Sīyar*, 7: 357.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	124	68.5	68.5
Companions	52	28.7	97.2
The Prophet	5	2.8	100.0
Total	181	100.0	



15. Fifteenth major master: Sufyān b. Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī[47]

Sufyān is, in order of reference, the fifteenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 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 *ḥaddathanā* (96.6%) whenever he transmit *isnāds* from his master Sufyān. *Ḥaddathanā* 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*.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	140	96.6	96.6
Ḥaddathanī	5	3.4	100.0
Total	145	100.0	

Sufyān was known to have narrated from his father, Wakī‘, the famous *Tābi‘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, Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī (129-197/746-812),[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, Wakī‘ 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 Wakī‘s *isnāds* came via these 2 masters, whereas the remaining 55 *isnāds* came via another 35 masters.

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[47] *Jarḥ*, 4: 231.

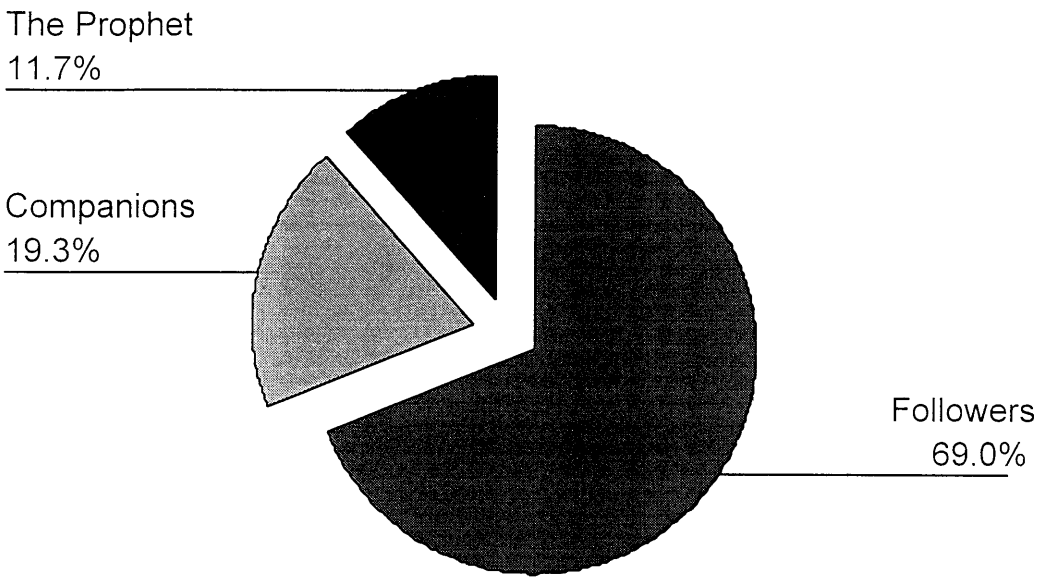
[48] *Tadhkira*, 1: 306; Sezgin, 1: 273; *Baghdād*, 13: 466; *Ḥilya*, 8: 368; *'Ibar*, 1: 324; *Mīzān*, 4: 335; *Kabīr*, 4/2: 179; Nadīm, 226; Ibn Sa‘d, 6: 394; *Mashāhīr*, 173; *Ẓunūn*, 461; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 357.

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 Wakī', from whom al-Ṭabarī chooses to narrate. However, the main source of the *isnāds* which came via al-Ṭabarī's master, Sufyān b. Wakī', was Wakī'. This is because Sufyān narrates more than 70% of his *isnāds* from his father, Wakī'. Wakī' was known to be a scholar of *tafsīr*, a jurisprudent, and an author who complied 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 'Àmir 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	100	69.0	69.0
Companions	28	19.3	88.3
The Prophet	17	11.7	100.0
Total	145	100.0	

[49] He is Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. *Wāfī*, 7:307; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:65; *Shadharāt*, 3:23; *Wafayāt*, 1:79; *Tadhkira*, 1090; *Ẓunūn*, 1496.
[50] Sezgin, 1: 273.


The Prophet
11.7%
Companions
19.3%
Followers
69.0%

16. Sixteenth major master: Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī (d. 276/889)[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. Sa'd narrates the same number of *isnāds* (i.e. 117) from his father, Sa'd b. al-Ḥasan al-'Awfī, who, in turn, narrates the same number from his uncle al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭīya al-'Awfī. Al-Ḥusayn himself narrates the same number of *isnāds* from his father al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭīya al-'Awfī, who, in turn, narrates the same number from his father 'Aṭīya al-'Awfī. Finally, 'Aṭīya narrates the same number from the Companion 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās. This is where the *isnād* stops and al-Ṭabarī narrates the *Tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās 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 'Abbās) through members of one family with the surname al-'Awfī, in the following pattern:
Muḥammad al-'Awfī ~ Sa'd al-'Awfī ~ al-Ḥusayn al-'Awfī ~ al-Ḥasan al-'Awfī ~ 'Aṭīya al-'Awfī ~ Ibn 'Abbās.

It is clear that the intention underlying this *isnād* is to cite the reports on *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās. This is because Ibn 'Abbās'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),[52] the author of *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, also employed this *isnād* in his *Tafsīr*. Al-Suyuṭī said, "Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported largely through al-'Awfī from Ibn 'Abbās."[53]

It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one technical term whenever he transmits this *isnād* via his master Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī. The

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[51] *Lisān*, 5:174; *Ẓunūn*, 454; *Hadīyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:19; *Baghdād*, 5:322; *Wāfī*, 3:89.
[52] *Tadhkira*, 829; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 17; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:279; *Mīzān*, 2:587; *Ẓunūn*, 436; Sezgin, 1:446.
[53] *Itqān*, 2:1233.

following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarī always uses the term *ḥaddathanī* when transmitting this *isnād* (i.e. the 'Awfī family *isnād*).

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanī	117	100.0	100.0
Total	117	100.0	

As previously noted,[54] *ḥaddathanī* (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 *isnād*, where al-Ṭabarī consistently committed himself to using the one technical term *ḥaddathanī* whenever he intended to cite this *isnād*, thereby indicating that he is in fact quoting from a written document on *Tafsīr* which includes sayings on *tafsīr* attributed to Ibn 'Abbās. This document was inherited by the 'Awfī family till it, or a copy of it, reached al-Ṭabarī, who benefited from it, as also did his colleague, Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

We know that Ibn 'Abbās was one of the most famous commentators among the Companions. More than one historian states that Ibn 'Abbās left a compilation dealing with *tafsīr*.[55] Some other books are attributed to him.[56] Ibn 'Abbās' *Tafsīr* is considered the first attempt to interpret the Qur'ān linguistically. It is also considered the first attempt to produce a written interpretation of the Qur'ān before the end of the first century AH. This *Tafsīr*, almost in its entirety, remained in the possession of al-Ṭabarī, who quoted it via a number of *isnāds* discussed earlier. In fact, al-Ṭabarī benefited from the reports of Ibn 'Abbās in his *Tafsīr* thousands of times, which will be statistically analysed in Chapter VII, entitled "Discussion".

We will add some historical information concerning the members of the 'Awfī family mentioned in the above *isnād* because scholars of *tafsīr* and Ḥadith have some comments on this *isnād*.

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[54] See Chapter V on al-Ṭabarī's Style of transmission in narrating *isnāds* from his masters.

[55] See Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh*, 9; 238-244; *Wāfī*, 15: 47.

[56] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1: 311.

- Muḥammad b. Sa'd, al-Ṭabarī's master, is Muḥammad b. Sa'd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭīya b. Sa'd b. Junāda al-'Awfī from the clan of 'Awf b. Sa'd.[57] Since his death is occurred in *Rabī' al-Akhīr* 276/889, it is most likely that al-Ṭabarī met him and transmitted from him the *Tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās. But he is considered to have been weak in transmitting ḥadīths. However, al-Dāraquṭnī judged him to be a *ṣaduq* (reasonable narrator).

- Muḥammad's father, Sa'd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-'Awfī, was judged by Ibn Ḥanbal as weak and considered by him as unfit to narrate Ḥadith.[58]

- Sa'd's uncle, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭīya al-'Awfī (d. AH 201), was the judge of Baghdad for some time and was, according to Ḥadith scholars, not fully satisfactory or an acceptable transmitter of ḥadīths. Thus Ibn Ma'īn, Ibn Sa'd, Abū Ḥātim, and al-Nasā'ī judged him to have been weak in transmitting ḥadīths.[59]

- Al-Ḥusayn's father, al-Ḥasan b. 'Aṭīya b. Sa'd al-'Awfī, was also considered as unacceptable (in the transmission of ḥadīths) by the scholars of Ḥadith such as al-Bukhārī, Abu Ḥātim, and Ibn Ḥibbān.[60]

- As for al-Ḥasan's father, 'Aṭīya b. Sa'd b. Junāda al-'Awfī, scholars of Ḥadith differed with regard to his narrations. Some, like Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Ma'īn, said that he was trustworthy in transmitting traditions, while others, such as Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Ḥātim, and al-Nasā'ī, 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 'Awf b. Sa'd, which is a branch of the larger clan of Banu Wā'il b. 'Iyādh b. Yashkur b. Bakr b. Wā'il.[62] 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

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[57] *Baghdād*, 5: 322-323; *Lisān*, 5: 174.

[58] *Baghdād*, 9: 126-127; *Lisān*, 3: 18-19.

[59] Ibn Sa'd, 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; *Tahdhīb*, 2:294.
[61] *Majrūḥīn*, 178; Ibn Sa'd, 6: 212-213; *Kabīr*, 4/1: 908; *Jarḥ*, 3/1: 382-383.

[62] *Baghdād*, 5: 322-323.

ʿAbbās, the famous Companion commentator on the Qurʾān. The fact that the people in this *isnād* (i.e. the ʿAwfī family) were considered weak transmitters of Ḥadith is not a matter of importance in the present context since they are not responsible for narrating ḥadīths belonging to the Prophet, but are rather narrating a *Tafsīr* compiled by Ibn ʿAbbās.

17. Seventeenth major master: Hannād b. al-Sarī al-Kūfī (152-243/769-857)[63]

He must be considered the seventeenth major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 91 times (in 1% of the total 8.424 *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."[64] Similarly, Qutayba said, "I have never seen Wakī' 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 *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 *isnāds* from his master Hannād. The following statistical Table shows how al-Ṭabarī always uses the term *ḥaddathanā* when transmitting *isnāds* from Hannād.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	91	100.0	100.0
Total	91	100.0	

Ḥaddathanā is a term used by Ḥadith scholars to indicate that the narrations they transmit come by *samā'* (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 *ḥaddathanā* can be explained by the fact that he may have heard among others the *Tafsīr* of Hannād and been permitted by Hannād a copy of his book, to which al-Ṭabarī refers.

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[63] *Tadhkira*, 2: 507-508; *Tahdhīb*, 11: 70; *Qurrā'*, 2: 107; *A'lām*, 9: 101; Sezgin, 1: 165-166; Nadīm, 291; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18: 5; *Wāfī*, 2: 285, *Lubāb*, 2: 102, Brockelmann, 3: 158.

[64] *Tahdhīb*, 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:

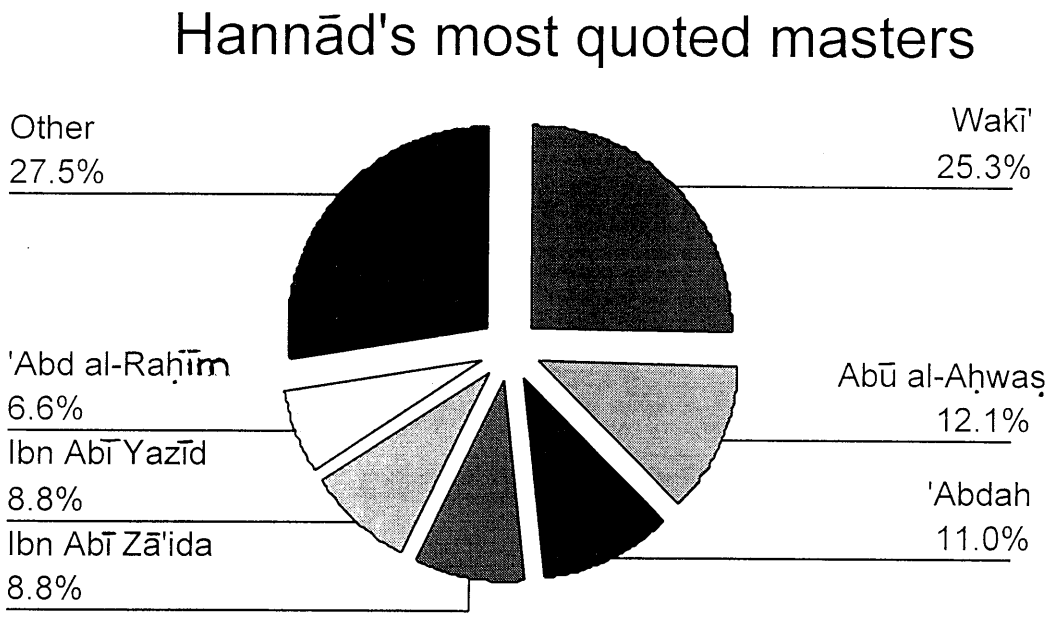
1- Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, from whom Hannād narrates 23 times (25%); 2- Abū al-Aḥwaṣ Sallām b. Sālim al-Kūfī (d. AH 179),[65] from whom he narrates 11 times (12.1%); 3- 'Abdah b. Sulaymān al-Kūfī (d. AH 180),[66] from whom he narrates 10 times (11.0%); 4- Yaḥyā b. Abī Zā'ida, from whom he narrates 8 times (8.8%); 5- 'Abdullāh b. Abī Yazīd, from whom he narrates 8 times (8.8%); and 6- 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Sulaymān al-Rāzī, from whom he narrates 6 times (6.6%).

Hannād's most quoted masters

Masters	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Wakī'	23	25.3	25.3
Abū al-Aḥwaṣ	11	12.1	37.4
'Abdah	10	11.0	48.4
Ibn Abī Zā'ida	8	8.8	57.2
Ibn Abī Yazīd	8	8.8	66.0
'Abd al-Raḥīm	6	6.6	72.6
Others(18)	25	27.5	100.0
Total	91	100.0	

[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-Zāhira*, 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*.

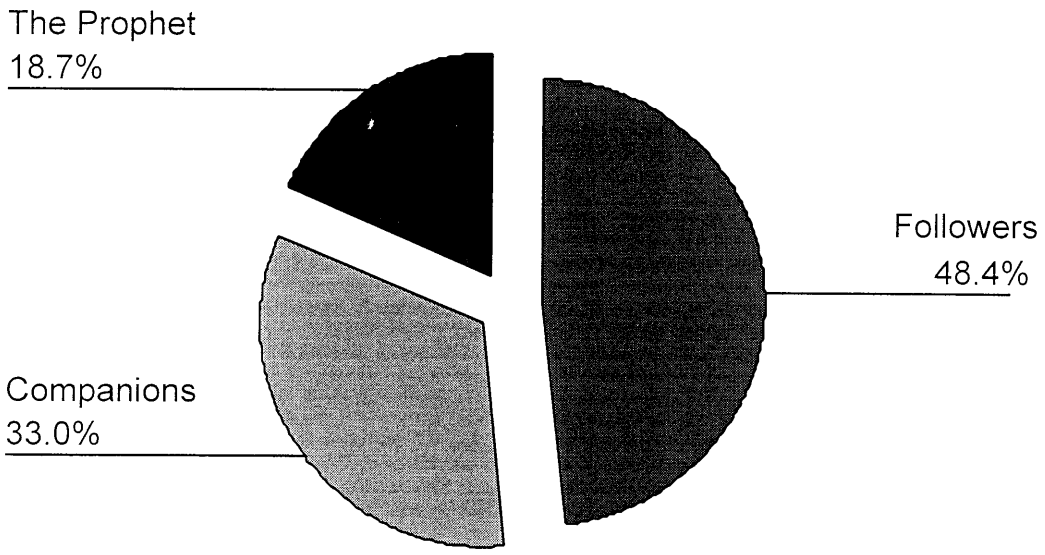
We noted on a previous occasion that both Wakī' and his master, Sufyān al-Thawrī, compiled written documents on *tafsīr*. Hannād benefited from his 6 masters, who were primarily his main sources, and perhaps he recorded all that he took from them in his large book on *tafsīr* previously mentioned. Then 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 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; and 18.7% are ascribed as Prophetic ḥadīths.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	44	48.4	48.4
Companions	30	33.0	81.3
The Prophet	17	18.7	100.0
Total	91	100.0	



18. Eighteenth major master: Abū Hishām al-Rifā'ī, Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Kūfī (d. 248/862)[67]

Abu Hisham 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 *isnāds*). He was known to be a scholar of *tafsīr*, a scholar of *qirā'āt* (Qur'ānic readings) as well as a master of Ḥadith. 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 *isnāds* from his master Abu Hishām al-Rifā'ī. The following statistical Table shows that on more than 97% of occasions al-Ṭabarī uses the term *ḥaddathanā* when transmitting *isnāds* from Abū Hishām. We have frequently noted that this term *ḥaddathanā* indicates that the narrator is referring directly to *isnāds* 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*.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	66	97.1	97.1
Ḥaddathanī	2	2.9	100.0
Total	68	100.0	

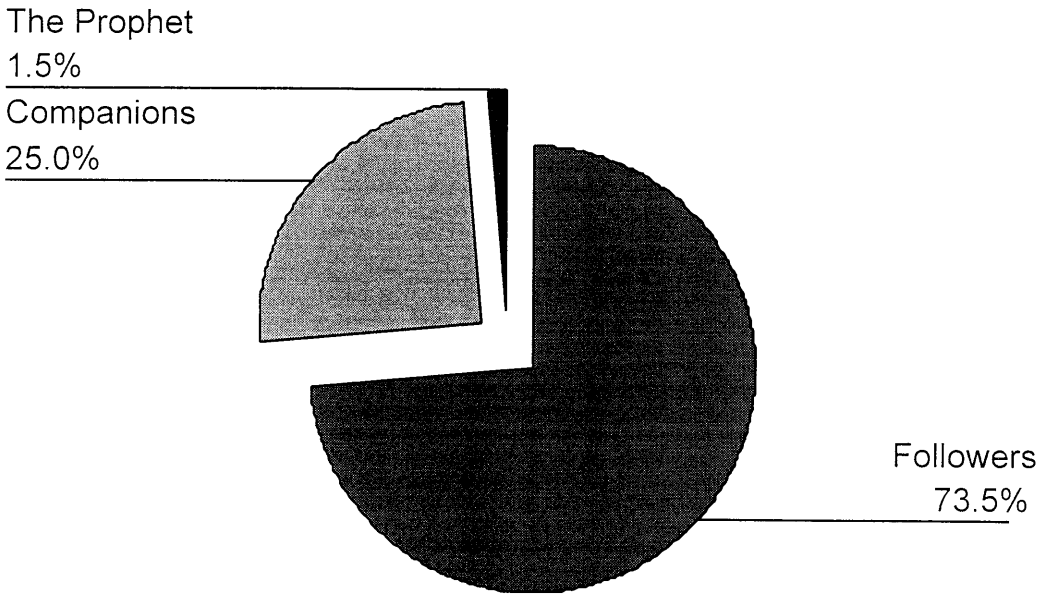
In turn, Abū Hishām narrates from 21 masters, from one of whom he narrates more than any other. This was Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, from whom he narrates 14 times (20%). Wakī' himself narrates from 9 masters without extensive narration from any one of them. It is noticeable that the narrators in this *isnād*, from the beginning up to Wakī', were from Kufa. It may be suggested that the source upon which al-Ṭabarī depended was what he had gathered from his master Abu Hishām al-Rifā'ī al-Kufī. 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*.

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[67] *Siyar*, 11: 180; *Hadīyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2: 15.

Finally, we may note that these *isnāds*, flowing from al-Ṭabarī's master Abū Hishām, correlate with the generation of the Followers, mainly Sa'īd 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	50	73.5	73.5
Companions	17	25.0	98.5
The Prophet	1	1.5	100.0
Total	68	100.0	



19. Nineteenth major master: 'Amr b. 'Alī al-Ṣayrafī al-Baṣrī (d. 249/ 864)[68]

He is the nineteenth and final major master from whom al-Ṭabarī mostly narrates. His name recurs in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 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 *tafsīr* and Ḥadith who took up residence in Baghdad. He compiled a number of books, among which were *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, *al-Musnad*, *al-'Ilal*, and *al-Tārīkh*.

It is possible that al-Ṭabarī consulted directly with his master 'Amr through the books which the latter left, particularly his *Tafsīr*.

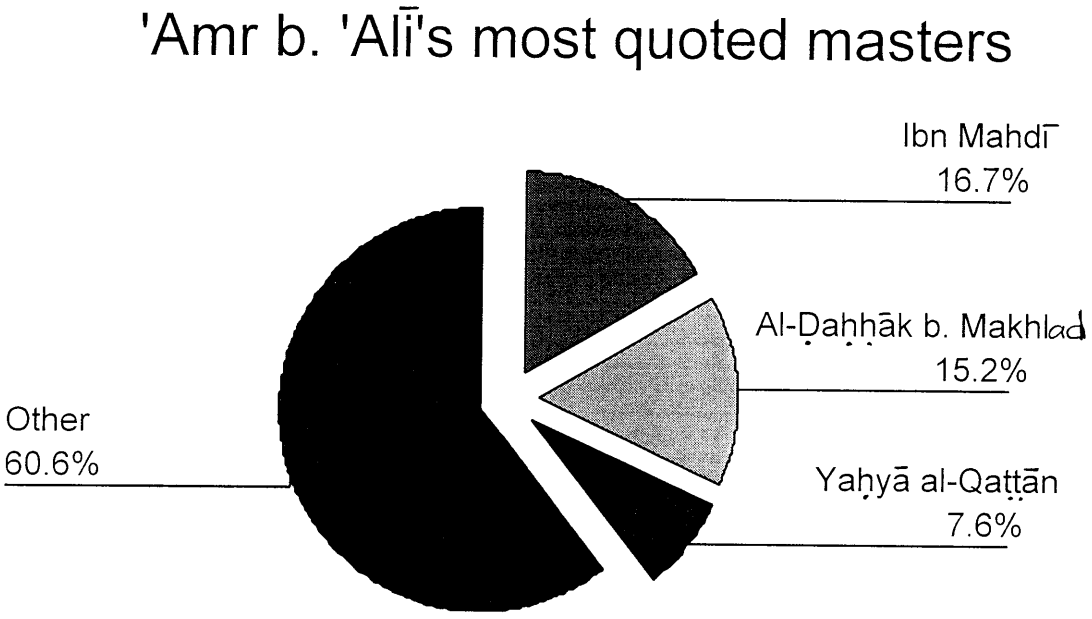
Al-Ṭabarī almost always uses just one technical term in transmitting *isnāds* from his master 'Amr b. 'Alī. The following Table reflects the fact that he transmitted 95.5% of 'Amr's *isnāds* introducing them by the term *ḥaddathanā*, whereas he transmitted only 3 *isnāds* introducing them by the term *ḥaddathanī*.

Terms	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Ḥaddathanā	63	95.5	95.5
Ḥaddathanī	3	4.5	100.0
Total	66	100.0	

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 Basrans more than others taken individually: 1- 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 11 times (16.7%); 2- al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 10 times (15.2%); and 3- Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān al-Baṣrī, from whom he narrates 5 times (7.6%). See the following Pie Chart.

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[68] *Tabṣīr al-Muntabih*, 3: 1188; *Tadhkira*, 2: 487; *Tahdhīb*, 8: 80; *Shadharāt*, 2: 120; al-Dāwudī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2: 17; *'Ibar*, 1: 454; Kaḥḥāla, 8: 11; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 211.

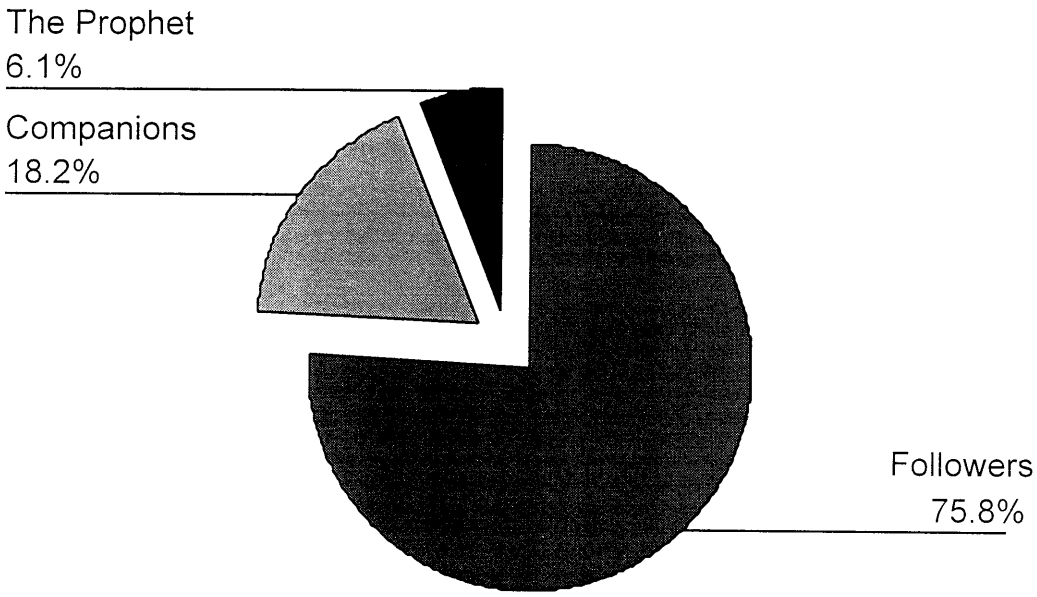


Thus, almost 40% of 'Amr b. 'Alī's narrations came via these 3 masters. All of them - Ibn Mahdī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhlad, and Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān - were known to have been authors who compiled collections of ḥadīths. Therefore, it is possible to consider them as main sources for 'Amr. Al-Ṭabarī benefited from 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 Mahdī, Ibn Mahklad, 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. 'Alī al-Baṣrī.

Al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* stemming from his master 'Amr b. 'Alī most frequently correlate with the generation of the Followers, mainly al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī. 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.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Followers	50	75.8	75.8
Companions	12	18.2	93.9
The Prophet	4	6.1	100.0
Total	66	100.0	



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:

20. Abū al-Sā'ib al-Suwā'ī, Salm b. Junāda al-Kūfī (AH 170-250)[2]

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 45 *isnāds* (i.e. 0.5% of the total 8,424 *isnāds*) from Abū al-Sā'ib. In turn, Abū al-Sā'ib narrates from 5 masters, but mostly from 2, 'Abdullāh b. Idrīs al-Awdī (d. AH 192)[3] and Abū Mu'āwiya Muḥammad b. Khāzim al-Ḍarīr (AH 113-194),[4] from each of whom Abū al-Sā'ib 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'āwiya (the other narrator most quoted by Abū al-Sā'ib) narrates from 3 masters, but mainly

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[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; *Kabīr*, 1:74; *Mīzān*, 4:575; *Tadhkira*, 1:294; *Tahdhīb*, 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),[5] 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 Nu'aym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn al-Kūfī (130-219/748-834),[7] from whom he narrates 37 times (88.1% of the total 42 *isnāds*). After Abū Nu'aym, the *isnād* diverges into 20 branches. It can be safely concluded that the source whom al-Ṭabarī intends to consult is Abū Nu'aym 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-Dāwūdī asserts that one of Abū Nu'aym's compilations was a book on *tafsīr*.[8]

22. Yaḥyā b. Abī Ṭālib b. 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. Sa'īd al-Azdī. Similarly, Juwaybir narrates from 1 master, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim. It has been noted on several previous occasions, in reference to different strands, that al-Ḍaḥḥāk 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 Ṭālib, is the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

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[5] *Tahdhīb*, 1:177; *Tadhkira*, 73; *Wafayāt*, 1:6; Ibn Sa'd, 6:188; *Ẓunūn*, 1:430.

[6] See *Tadhkira*, 2:594; *'Ibar*, 2:55.

[7] See al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:29; *Tadhkira*, 1:372; *Kabīr*, 4:118; *Baghdād*, 12:346; Nadīm, 283; *Mīzān*, 3:35; *Shadharāt*, 2:46.

[8] Al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:29.

[9] See *Jarḥ*, 9:134.

23. 'Alī 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 *isnād*s, 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 *isnād*s. 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 *muḥaddith* (traditionist) who wrote a book on *tafsīr* entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.[12]

24. Muḥammad 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-Taymī, 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.

[12] An edition of this *Tafsīr* has been published by Imtiyāz 'Alī 'Arshī, al-'Ilmīyya Library, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983. See Sezgin, 2:223; al-Dāwudī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:186; Nadīm, 225; *Wafayāt*, 2:386; *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:221.

[13] *Tahdhīb*, ; *Kabīr*, 1/1:174; *Jarḥ*, 8:16.

25. Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. AH 273),[14]

26. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Bayān al-Qannād (d. AH 270),[15]

27. Ḥamīd b. Mas'ada al-Sāmī al-Baṣrī (d. AH 265),[16] **and**

28. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Barqī (d. AH 270)[17]

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 Ḥajar 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

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[14] See *Wāfī*, 3:224; *Sīyar*, 8:262.
[15] See *Jarḥ*, 6:8.
[16] See *Jarḥ*, 3:229.
[17] See *Tadhkira*, 2:135.
[18] See R. Speight, *The Function of ḥadīth*, 73-74.
[19] *Tahdhīb*, 7:450.

suras, *al-Fātiḥa* 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. 'Alī b. Dāwud al-Tamīmī (d. AH 272)[20]

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 22 times (0.3%) from 'Alī b. Dāwud. In turn, 'Alī narrates from 1 master, 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī. Similarly, Ibn Ṣāliḥ himself narrates the same amount of times from 1 master, Mu'āwiya b. Ṣāliḥ, who, in turn, narrates from 1 master, 'Alī 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 *Ṣaḥīfa* (Document) compiled by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa. Al-Ṭabarī does quote this *isnād* ('Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Mu'āwiya ~ 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa ~ Ibn 'Abbās), but via his second major master, al-Muthannā al-Āmulī.[21] So this *isnād*, via al-Ṭabarī's master 'Alī b. Dāwud, is another confirmation supporting the previous one. See the following diagram which illustrates these two chains.

Al-Muthannā ⟶ Ibn Ṣāliḥ ~ Mu'āwiya ~ 'Alī ~ Ibn 'Abbās.
'Alī b. Dāwūd ↗

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* (*Ṣaḥīfa*). 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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[20] See *Baghdād*, 11:424; *Tahdhīb*, 7:317; *Jarḥ*, 6:185.
[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-Habbārī[27]

Al-Ṭabarī narrates 15 times from 'Ubayd. Similarly 'Ubayd narrates from 1 master, 'Abdullāh b. Numayr al-Kūfī (d. AH 199).[28] In turn, Ibn Numayr narrates the same amount of times from Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-A'mash (d. AH 148). Al-A'mash himself narrates from 1 master, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī al-Kūfī (46-96/666-715). So the main source is al-Nakha'ī.[29]

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 *isnād*s 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 *Tahdhīb*, 10:44; *Kabīr*, 4/1:413; *Baghdād*, 13:265.

[25] See *Tadhkira*, 317; *Baghdād*, 14:337; Nadīm, 228; *Ẓunūn*, 461; *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:141. Sezgin, 1:205.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] See *Jarḥ*, 5:402.

[28] See *Tadhkira*, 1:327; *Khulāṣa*, 184; *Shadharāt*, 1:357; Ibn Sa'd, 6:275; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 137.

[29] Cf. al-Ṭabarī's twentieth master.

[30] See *Tahdhīb*, 1:514; *Jarḥ*, 2:444.

(d. AH 260),[31] Muḥammad b. ʿImāra al-Asadī (d. AH 255), Sawwār b. ʿAbdullāh al-ʿAnbārī,[32] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Abī al-Shawārib (d. AH 258),[33] and finally Muḥammad b. Maʿmar b. Ribʿī al-Baṣrī (d. after AH 250).[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.

Frequency of citations of al-Ṭabarī's 169 masters

Number of masters	Frequency of citations (*isnāds*)	Percentage	Cumulative %
75	1	0.9	0.9
34	2	0.8	1.7
18	3	0.6	2.3
14	3	0.5	2.8
11	4	0.5	3.3
5	6	0.3	3.6
4	7	0.3	3.9
3	8	0.3	4.1
5	9	0.5	5.0
Total (169)	435	5.0	

[31] See *Baghdād*, 11:374.
[32] See *Jarḥ*, 4:270.
[33] *Ḥuffāẓ*, 247.
[34] See *Tadhkira*, 2:563; *Khulāṣa*, 307; *Ḥuffāẓ*, 219.

PART THREE

IMPLICATIONS

Chapter VII

DISCUSSION

The Sources of al-Ṭabarī'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 *isnāds*, al-Ṭabarī was accustomed to referring to a select group of *isnāds* 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 *isnāds* 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 *isnāds*. Moreover, it becomes clear that these selected and most frequently quoted *isnāds* were deemed important because they go back to the principal ancient sources. It was from these that al-Ṭabarī 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 *muṣannafāt* (compilations), which were composed by well-known scholars over the generations of the pre-Ṭabarī period. Their authors were in a few cases Companions but, in most cases, Followers, or those who followed them (*tābi' al-tābi'ūn*). From this it would seem that al-Ṭabarī intended to consult the oldest possible authorities in compiling his *Tafsīr*. While this hypothesis is suggested by our statistical study of al-Ṭabarī'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 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.

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-tābi'īn*).

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 Qur'ān, 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 Qur'ān, 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 Qur'ān.

1. Al-Ṭabarī's references to the Qur'ān as a source for interpreting the Qur'ān 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 Qur'ān by the Qur'ān itself,

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[1] See the Introduction.
[2] See *Itqān*, 2:1197.

in the belief that the Qur'ān does interpret itself. Thus, what the Qur'ān refers to briefly in one place is given in detail in another place.[3] Interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān is a method derived from the Prophet Muḥammad, who, for example, intrepreted 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."[4] 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*),'"[5] Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others narrate that the Companion 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd 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)."[6]

Whoever examines al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* will find frequent evidence of his using the Qur'ān as an important source for clarifying the meaning of the verses of the Qur'ān. 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,"[7] 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:[8] "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?"[9]

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[3] *Itqān*, 2:1197; al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:37. Cf. R. M. Speight, *The Function of Ḥadīth*, 63-64.
[4] *Al- An'ām*, VI:82.
[5] *Luqmān*, XXXI:13.
[6] See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, No. 32; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, No. 124.
[7] *Al-Baqara*, II, 7.
[8] *Tafsīr*, 1:262.
[9] *Al-Jāthiya*, XLV, 23.

II) Al-Ṭabarī differentiates between *aqsaṭ* (equitable) and *qasaṭa* (to deviate) when interpreting the verse, "... that is more equitable (*aqsaṭ*) in God's sight, more upright for testimony,"[10] deducing that *qasaṭa* means *jāra* (to act iniquitously) as in the verse, "But as for those who have deviated (*qāsiṭūn*), they will be fuel for the Fire." Thus, *qāsiṭūn* means *jā'irūn* (those who commit iniquities).[11]

III) In interpreting the verse, "... and let a party (*ṭā'ifa*) of the believers witness their chastisment,"[12] al-Ṭabarī interprets the word *ṭā'ifa* (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 Qur'ān: "If two parties (*ṭā'ifatān*) among the believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them."[13] 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.[14]

IV) In interpreting the verse, "You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love,"[15] al-Ṭabarī 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.'"[16]

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?'"[17] al-Ṭabarī 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

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[10] *Al-Baqara*, II, 282.
[11] *Tafsīr*, 6:77.
[12] *Al-Nūr*, XXIV, 2.
[13] *Al-Ḥujurāt*, XIX, 9.
[14] *Tafsīr*, 18:67.
[15] *Āl 'Imrān*, III, 92.
[16] *Al-Ḥashr*, 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-Ṭabarī deduces from the Qur'ān that the most likely meaning of the verse, "[The Prophet said,] 'O my Lord, behold, my people have taken this Qur'ān as a thing to be shunned,'"[20] is that they do not wish to hear the Qur'ān. 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'ān and talk idly about it,' and that is their shunning of it."[21] He is referring to a verse from *Sūrat Fuṣṣilat* which says, "The unbelievers say, 'Do not listen to this Qur'ān and talk idly about it; happly you will overcome.'"[22]

Examples of his interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān are plentiful and can be found in scattered places by any reader of his *Tafsīr*. It may thus be concluded that one of al-Ṭabarī's important sources in compiling his *Tafsīr* was the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, in interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's way, which is more limited in this matter. Al-Ṭabarī was content to mention only one or two verses as evidence for the meaning proposed. This is an acceptable and indeed praiseworthy approach,

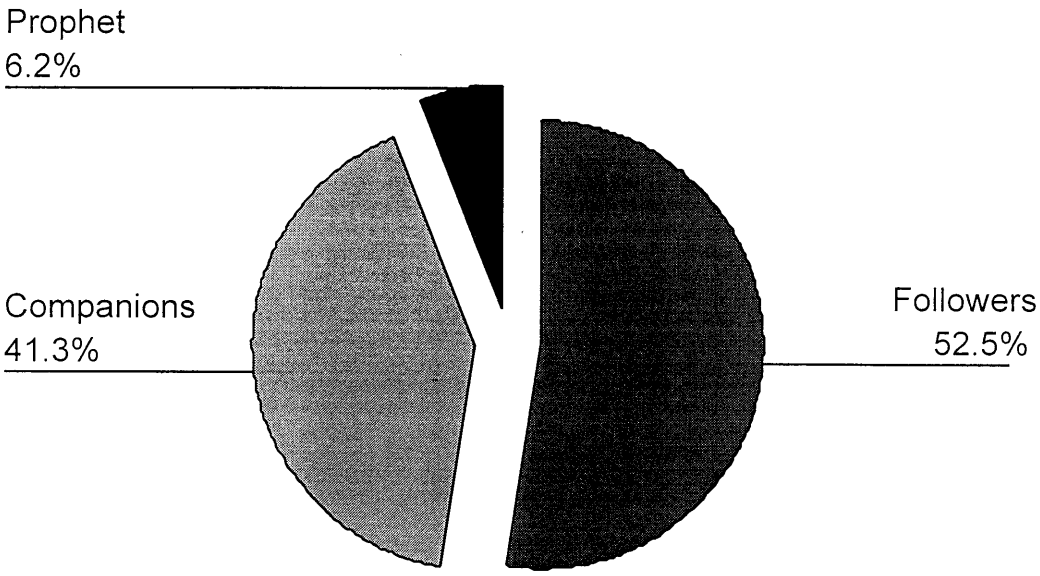
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[18] *Al-Isrā'*, XVII, 90.
[19] *Al-Isrā'*, XVII, 92.
[20] *Al-Furqān*, XXV, 30.
[21] *Tafsīr*, 19:7.
[22] *Fuṣṣilat*, XLI, 29.
[23] *Itqān*, 2:1237.
[24] I.e. Ismā'īl b. Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā', known as Ibn Kathīr, a historian and a commentator as well as *faqīh* (d. 774/1373), the author of *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, and *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*.
[25] See Ismā'īl 'Abd al-'Alā', *Ibn Kathīr wa-Manhajuh fī al-Tafsīr* (Ibn Kathīr and his Methodology in the *Tafsīr*), 276.
[26] See, for example, what he states in interpreting verse no. 55 of *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn*, (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

[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-Ṭabarī 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 saḥīḥ* (inaccurate) and failed to satisfy al-Ṭabarī'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),[28] for instance, from the same century as al-Ṭabarī, 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 infomation without citing any source.[29] 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.[30] Accordingly, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī'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-Ṭabarī cites in his *Tafsīr* in the course of interpreting the two *sūras*, *al-Fātiḥa* 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 *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik there are 61 ḥadīths without an *isnād*. Also in the *Sunan* of al-Dārimī there are a number of ḥadīths with interrupted *isnāds*. See Ra'uf, *Ḥadīth literature*, 273, 275.

[29] See R. Speight, *The Function of Ḥadīth*, 73-74.

[30] *Tahdhīb*, 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 Ḥadīth and *tafsīr*, such as al-Bukhārī, Mālik, and al-Dārimī,[31] 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:

Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Miṣrī
↑
Ibn Wahb al-Miṣrī
↑
Mālik b. Anas al-Madanī
↑
Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī
↑
'Urwa b. al-Zubayr
↑
'Ā'isha
↑
The Prophet

However, as was noted earlier in our statistical analysis, Mālik b. Anas is in fact the main source[32] 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 ḥadīths, in a repetitive manner, via one of his main sources, i.e. Mālik b. Anas.

The Ḥadīth 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 ḥadīth, 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'ānic passages in words spoken by the Prophet are many and appear in different places, which can be found by any reader of his *Tafsīr*. However, here we may focus on the following example. It concerns al-Ṭabarī's interpretion of the verse, "Guard strictly your (five daily) prayers, especially the *wusṭā* (middle prayer)."[33] For illumination on the meaning of the word *wusṭā*, al-Ṭabarī cites 120 traditional exegeses ascribed to the Prophet, Companions, and Followers. Among them 46 are Prophetic ḥadīths 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 *wusṭā*, or whether in fact it could indicate any one of the five daily ritual prayres, since it is not known for certain which one is meant.[34] After citing all these opinions, al-Ṭabarī states his preference for the first one referred to, that is, that *wusṭā* is the *'aṣr* (afternoon) prayer. He narrates 71 out of the 120 traditions in support of his preference. These narrations include 36 Prophetic ḥadīths, 26 Companions' reports, and only 9 reports of Followers. In conclusion, al-Ṭabarī states, "The most preferable of these interpretations is that which is presented and demonstrated by the ample number of ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet, which state that the correct interpretion of *wusṭā* is that it refers to the afternoon prayer."[35]

In interpreting the verse which touches on the practice of the *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage), "...And if any of you is ill (after putting the *iḥrām*), or has an ailment in his scalp (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer a sacrifice,"[36] al-Ṭabarī cites 26 different chains of *isnād* to only one ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet, all transmitted on the authority of the one Companion, Ka'b b. 'Ujra. Three versions of this ḥadīth are similar in meaning and al-Ṭabarī uses them to explain the cause for this verse's revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*). 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 *Ḥajj*. The Prophet authorized him to shave his head, but since it is prohibited to do this while in *iḥrām* during the *Ḥajj* 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's principal sources.

3. The Companions as sources

It seems, from our investigation of the 8,424 *isnāds*, that al-Ṭabarī was influenced by and benefited from written *Tafsīrs*, transmitted to him through chains of *isnāds*, from the Companions, Followers, and those who followed the Followers (*tābi' al-tābi'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-Ṭabarī in relation to the incident of *ifk* (falsehood) mentioned in e.g. *Sūrat al-Nūr*, while interpretating 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]

Among the written *Tafsīr*s, Yāqūt mentions five *isnād*s going back to Ibn 'Abbās,[40] two going back to Sa'īd b. Jubayr, three going back to Mujāhid b. Jabr, three to Qatāda b. Da'āma al-Baṣrī, three to 'Ikrima, two to al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, and one to 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd. Yāqūt also mentions the *Tafsīr*s of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam, Ibn Jurayj,[41] and Muqātil b. Ḥayyān (d. 150/767).[42] Yāqūt goes on to say, "Al-Ṭabarī did not consider any untrustworthy interpretation. This being so, he did not include in his book anything from the book of Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī,[43] nor Muqātil b. Sulaymān,[44] nor Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī,[45] because

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[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*s 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*s of Mujāhid b. Jabr, Sa'īd b. Jubayr, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, which are also greater in number than Yāqūt indicates. *Mu'jam*, 18:64.

[41] Biographical sources indicate that both Ibn Abī Aslam and Ibn Jurayj wrote books on *tafsīr*, but unfortunately they are lost. It is known for certain that these two *Tafsīr*s contained sayings and opinions on interpretation, extracted from various exegetical works transmitted by tradition, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr*, and al-Suyūṭī's *tafsīr* entitled *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al- Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr*.

[42] He is a different person from Muqātil 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-Dāraquṭnī considered Muqātil 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 Tha'labī's sources in his *Tafsīr al-Kashf wa-al-Bayān* as well as al-Ṭabarī, who refers to this *tafsīr* in his *Jāmi' al-Bayān*. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī obtained, by *Ijāza* (permission), a copy of it" (Sezgin, 1:197). See also *Tadhkira*, 1:174; *Khulāṣa*, 330; *Mīzān*, 4:171; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:329; *Lisān*, 6:82; *Kabīr*, 4/2:13; *Tahdhīb*, 10:277; *Ẓunūn*, 459.

[43] Al-Bukhārī says that al-Qaṭṭān and Ibn Mahdī rejected Muḥammad 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-Qur'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; *Wāfī*, 3:83; *'Ibar*, 1:206; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:7; *Ẓunūn*, 457; *Wafayāt*, 4:309; Nadīm, 95; *Tahdhīb*, 9:178; *Mīzān*, 3:556; Kaḥḥāla, 10:15.

[44] Scholars held different opinions regarding Muqātil b. Sulayman b. Bashīr al-Kalbī al-Azdī (d. 150/767). Some said he was trustworthy in narration, while others said he was *kadhdhāb* (a liar). Al-Suyuṭī wrote, "Muqātil 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 *isnād*s and without him having the right to narrate them." Three books on *tafsīr* are attributed to Muqātil: *Kitāb Khams Mi'at Āya min al-Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (which is large), and *Nawādir al-Tafsīr*. See Sezgin, 1:198. See also al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:330; Ibn Sa'd, 7:373; *Baghdād*, 8:160; *Itqān*, 2:1232; Kaḥḥāla, 12:317.

[45] On Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī (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,[46] especially in cases where there is no other possible reference and narration except them."[47] 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 Muqātil b. Sulaymān, al-Kalbī, and al-Wāqidī, 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 *isnād*s to whom reference is made in interpreting the two *sūra*s, *al-Fātiḥa* 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.[48] 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 *ḥukum* (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; *Baghdād*, 3:3; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:277; *Tahdhīb*, 9:363; *'Ibar*, 1:353; *Mīzān*, 3:662; *Wafayāt*, 4:348; *Ẓunūn*, 460; Nadīm, 1:98.

[46] The narrations of Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī al-Kūfī (d. 204/819) are considered false. He was pronounced not dependable by Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Dāraquṭnī, and Ibn 'Asākir. He produced many *muṣannafāt* (literary works), exceeding 150 in number. See *Mīzān*, 4:304; *Hadiyyat al-'Ārifīn*, 2:805; Kaḥḥāla, 13:150.

[47] Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 18:65.

[48] *Tafsīr*, 1:216.

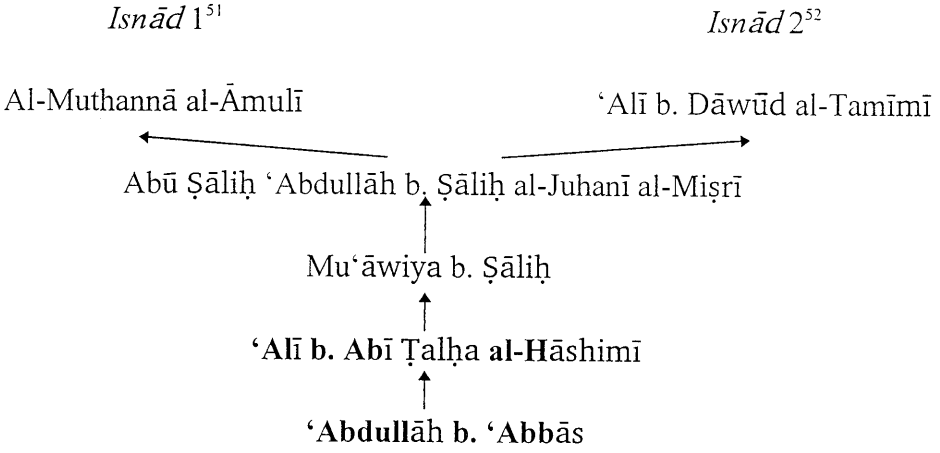
the course of considering one among ten opinions concerning the meaning of the opening letters *alif-lām-mīm*.[49]

We will start with the interpretations of the Companions as sources used by al-Ṭabarī. These people were contemporary to the revelation of the Qur'ān and they knew its meanings. Al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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 *isnād*s which lead back to 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās. The two first chains only differ in the last narrator, i.e. al-Ṭabarī's masters, as shown in the following diagram.

Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa's *Ṣaḥīfa* (Document)



[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'an* (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 *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*. See *Iṣāba*, 2:330; *Isti'āb*, 3:33; *Usd al-Ghāba*, 3:390.

[51] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.3.

[52] See on al-Ṭabarī'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 ʿAlī b. Dāwūd,[53] appears 22 times. It is to be noticed that the source of both these *isnād*s is ʿAlī b. Ṭalḥa's written document on *tafsīr*.[54] 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*, ʿAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ ~ Ibn Abī Ṭalḥa, is considered the best chain of *isnād* through Ibn ʿAbbās. However, it is said that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa did not hear directly from Ibn ʿAbbās. Al-Bukhārī, nevertheless, included his narration in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the section on *tafsīr* because the intermediary between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās is known to be either Mujāhid b. Jabr or Saʿīd b. Jubayr. Thus, Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) said, "Once the intermediary is identified, there is no harm in the narration."[55] Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) said, "In Egypt there is a document on *tafsīr*, reported by ʿAlī 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."[56] Ibn Ḥajar commented on this by saying, "This document was with Abū Ṣāliḥ (the scribe of al-Layth b. Saʿd) and was narrated through Muʿāwiya b. Ṣāliḥ through ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa through Ibn ʿAbbās, while al-Bukhārī reported it through Abū Ṣāliḥ. Al-Bukhārī relied on it in his *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, where he narrates through Ibn ʿAbbās."[57] Al-Dhahabī said, "Generally speaking, this is the most authentic chain of *isnād* from Ibn ʿAbbās. Suffice it to say that as al-Bukhārī approved of it, this is a proof of its authenticity."[58] Sezgin concludes that since ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa did not transmit directly from Ibn ʿAbbās, he must have received it written by Ibn ʿAbbās himself.[59] We have suggested that al-Ṭabarī, when transmitting through ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa via his two masters, al-Muthannā and ʿAlī b. Dāwūd, may actually have been quoting from a copy of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa's document, since al-Ṭabarī almost always, i.e. in 92% of the 122 times,

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[53] ʿAlī 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] *Itqān*, 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, *ḥaddathanī*, whenever he narrates through this *isnād* and this term would appear to indicate that al-Ṭabarī had most probably obtained a permitted written copy of this *Tafsīr*.[60]

Al-'Awfī's *Tafsīr*

Isnād 3[61]

Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī
↑
Sa'd al-'Awfī
↑
Al-Ḥusayn al-'Awfī
↑
Al-Ḥasan al-'Awfī
↑
'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī
↑
Ibn 'Abbās

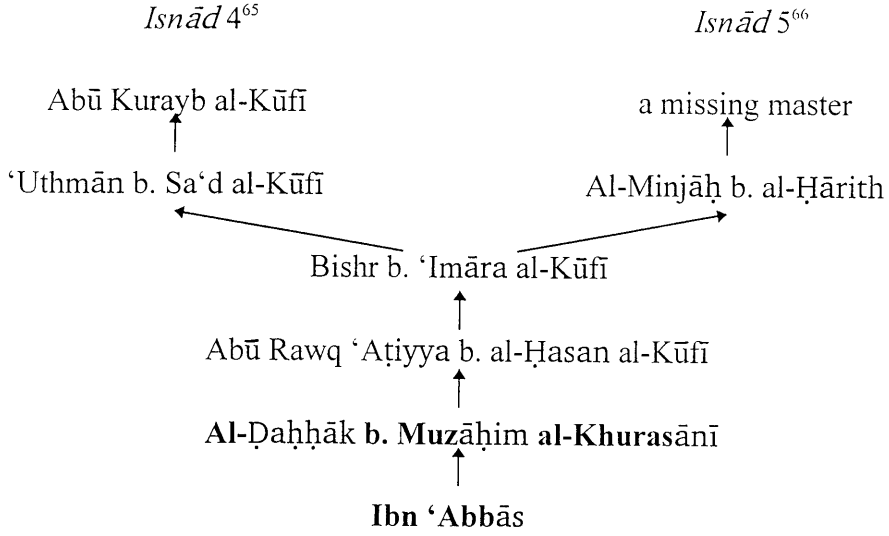
Isnād 3 recurs 117 times without variation. It is an example of a one-family *isnād* as all its narrators come from the same family, al-'Awfī. In our statistical and analytical study, we suggested that since all the narrators in this *isnād* belong to one family, they may have inherited a written document of a piece of work containing narrations on *tafsīr* from Ibn 'Abbās. This *tafsīr* may possibly have reached al-Ṭabarī via his master Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī, who permitted him a copy of it. Moreover, as was noted, al-Ṭabarī consistently uses one technical term, *ḥaddathanī*, whenever he transmits via his master Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī and this term may indicate that al-Ṭabarī had been permitted a written copy of this source.[62] Al-Suyūṭī said, "Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim (240-327/854-938) narrated largely through al-'Awfī from Ibn 'Abbās."[63] In examining Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Tafsīr*,[64] we discover that he too uses the same *isnād* reaching down to Ibn 'Abbās. So this is another indication strengthening our argument that this source was in fact a written *tafsīr* which was in

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[60] See the chapter on al-Ṭabarī's Technical Terms of Transmission.
[61] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 16.
[62] See the chapter on al-Ṭabarī's Technical Terms of Transmission.
[63] *Itqān*, 2:1233.
[64] *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm musnadan 'an al-Rasūl wa-al-Ṣaḥāba wa-al-Tābi'īn.*

circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in the third century AH, and both benefited from it.

Ibn 'Abbās's *Tafsīr* via al-Ḍaḥḥāk

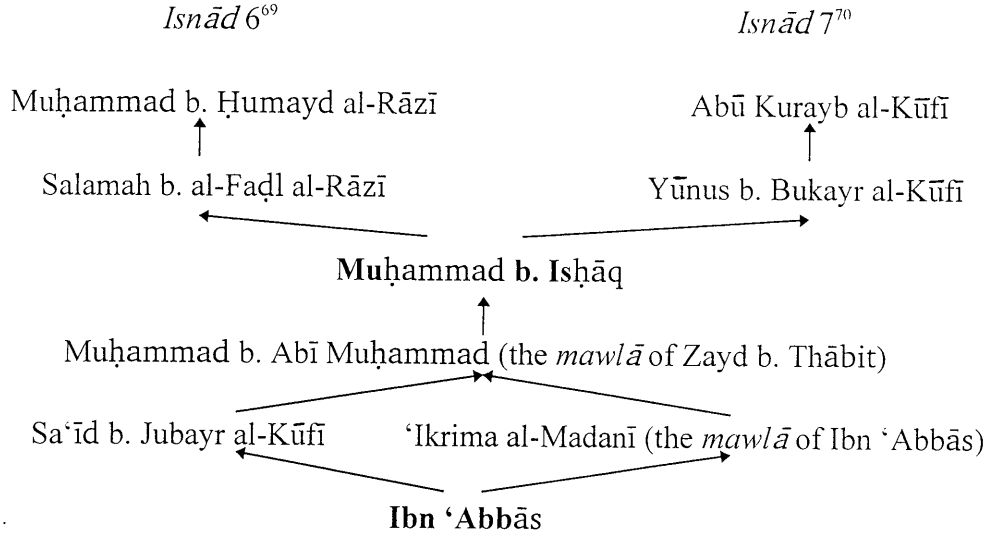


As we have seen in our analytical study, al-Ṭabarī narrates frequently via these *isnād*s. In fact, he narrates 74 times via *isnād* 4 and 36 times via *isnād* 5, so that the total number of citations via both of them is 110. It has been noted that al-Ḍaḥḥāk left a written compilation on *tafsīr* containing *tafsīrāt* (interpretations), some consisting of his own sayings[67] and others being narrations attributed to Ibn 'Abbās.[68] Al-Ṭabarī may have referred to this source of *tafsīr* via the two above-mentioned *isnād*s. However, for *isnād* 5 al-Ṭabarī consistently uses only one technical term, *ḥuddithtu*. We have previously discussed the meaning of this term and concluded that it indicates that the *isnād* is narrated indirectly and that the last narrator, i.e. al-Ṭabarī's master, has been omitted, or was unknown. This practice may be simply explained by the fact that, when transmitting this *isnād*, al-Ṭabarī 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 *isnād*s, such as *isnād*s 1, 2, 3, and 4, and what he quotes from a written document, handed down to him without permission, as in *isnād* 5. This may suggest that al-Ṭabarī obtained the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk in two portions,

[65] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 8.1.
[66] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 10.
[67] We will shortly discuss the chains of *isnād* going back to al-Ḍaḥḥāk himself.
[68] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 8.1.

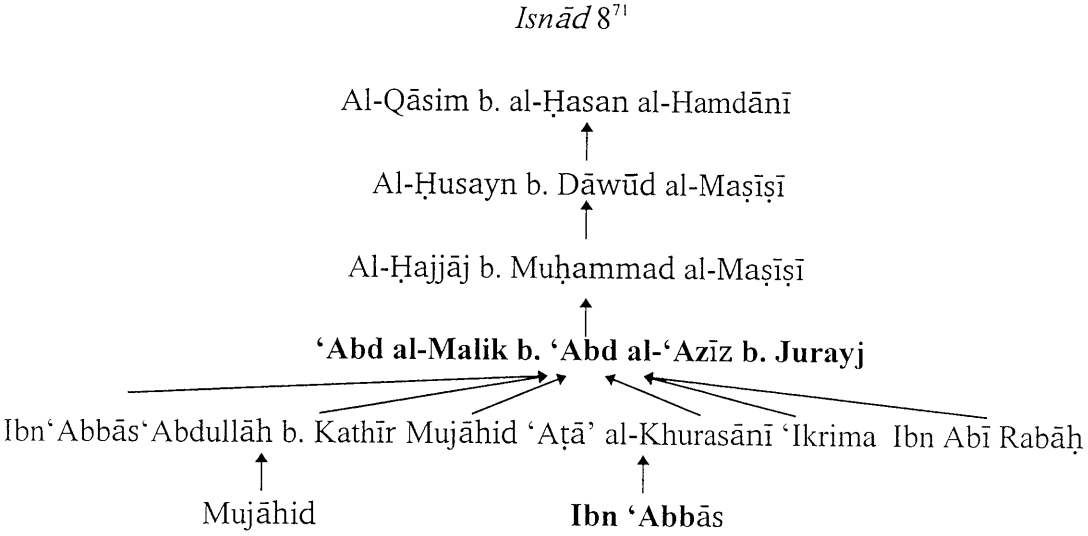
one by a permitted and fully transmitted *isnād* and the other handed down to him without complete transmission, or with an imperfect *isnād*.

Muḥammad b. Isḥāq's compilation



Isnād 6 is narrated 260 times, whereas *isnād* 7 occurs 39 times. Therefore, the total number of citations for both these *isnād*s amounts to 299. It will be noted that the common link in these *isnād*s is Ibn Isḥāq. So al-Ṭabarī may, via these two *isnād*s, have intended to consult the compilation of Ibn Isḥāq, which dealt mainly with *Sīra* (the biography of the Prophet) and *Maghāzī* (Islamic military expeditions).

'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj



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[69] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.1.1.

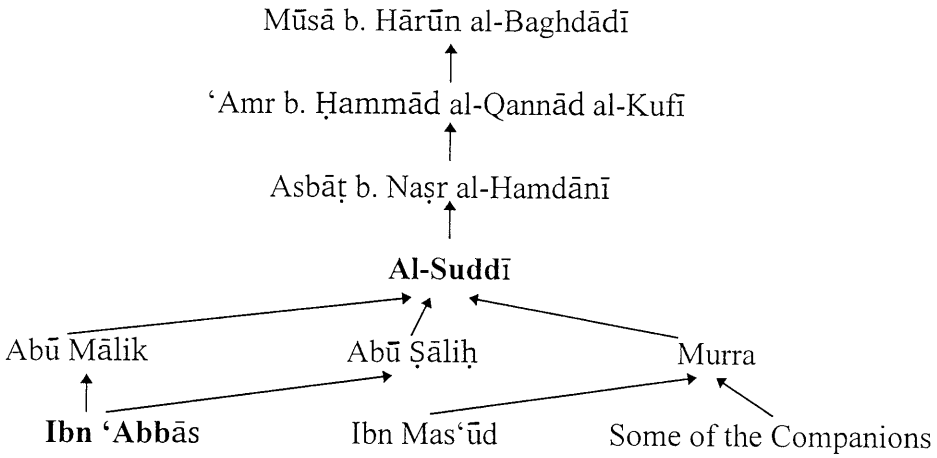
[70] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 8.4.

[71] See on al-Ṭabarī'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-Maṣīṣī.[72] 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*,[73] 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

Isnād 9[74]



[72] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 4.1.

[73] A *mursal* ḥadīth 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-Ṭabarī cites this *isnād* very frequently (it accounts for 21% of the whole 8,424 investigated *isnād*s). 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-Ṭabarī reports to a large extent from al-Suddī's *Tafsīr* via al-Suddī ~ Abū Mālik ~ Abū Ṣāliḥ ~ Ibn 'Abbās."[75]

To conclude, when considering the 9 chains of *isnād* briefly analysed here,[76] reaching up to Ibn 'Abbās, which al-Ṭabarī cites frequently and extensively, attention is attracted by the fact that almost all of them refer back to a main source, either by perfect *isnād*s, such as these of Ibn Isḥāq, al-'Awfī, al-Suddī, or sometimes by imperfect *isnād*s, 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-Ṭabarī, through the generations, by both oral and written transmissions. Finally, regarding Yāqūt's limiting al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s which we have not mentioned and which occur infrequently.

'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd[77]

Generally, al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī cites Ibn Mas'ūd's own *Tafsīr*, but in the remaining 17 *isnād*s cited by al-Ṭabarī Ibn Mas'ūd narrates ḥadīths from the Prophet. There are many *isnād*s of al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī benefits from sayings on *tafsīr* from Ibn Mas'ud himself. It should be noted that Murra al-

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[75] *Itqān*, 2:1232.

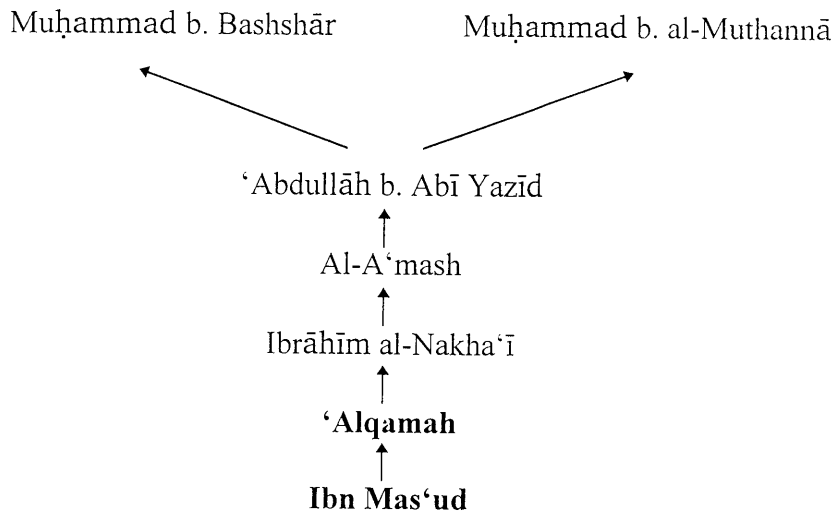
[76] Further detailed analysis can be found in Chapter VI.

[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 *Isti'āb*, 3:187; *Usd al-Ghāba*, 3:384; *Iṣāba*, 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'ud is the following:

Isnād 10[79] *Isnād* 11[80]



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] *Tahdhīb*, 10:88; *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:121.

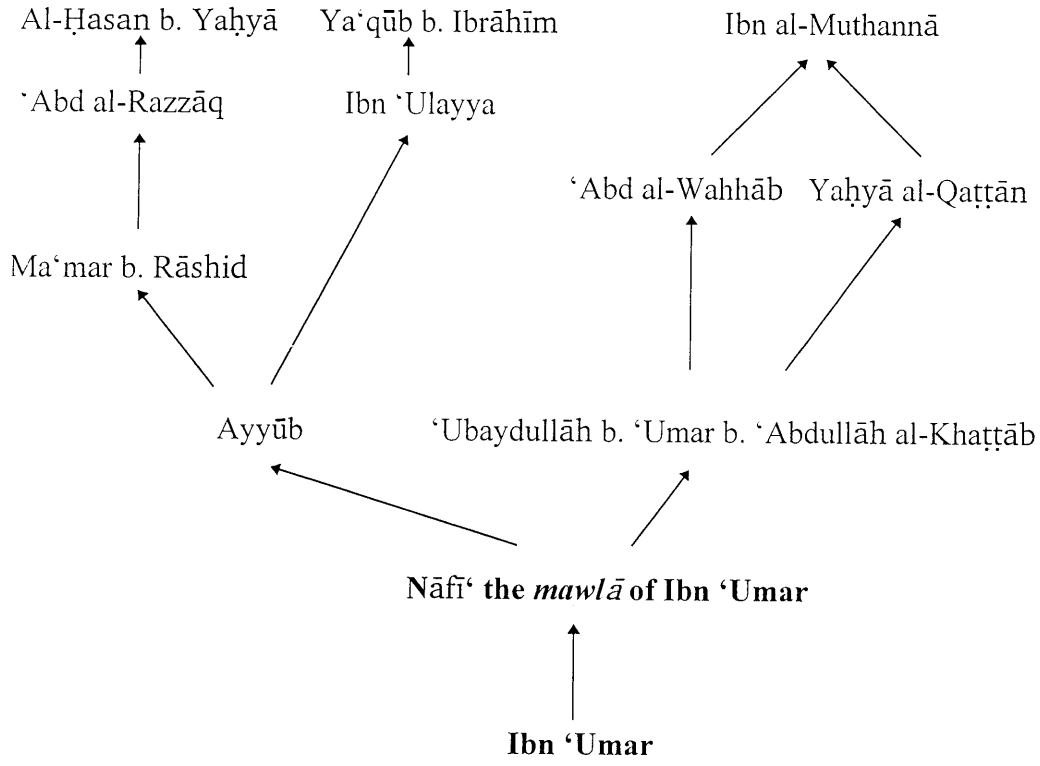
[79] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 6.

[80] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 13.

[81] *Tahdhīb*, 7:276; ; *Baghdād*, 12:296; *Shadharāt*, 1:7; *Ẓunūn*, 1:430.

[82] *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:119.

Isnād 12[83]



This *isnād,* Ibn 'Umar ~ Nāfī', 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 *isnād*s through 'Alī are diverse and there is no specific repeated pattern in the *isnād*s 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 Waqqāṣ, 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."[84]

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.[85]

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 ḥadīths through Mujāhid, mostly via the following *isnād*: Mujāhid ~ Ibn Abī Laylā ~ Ka'b b. 'Ujra ~ the Prophet.[86]

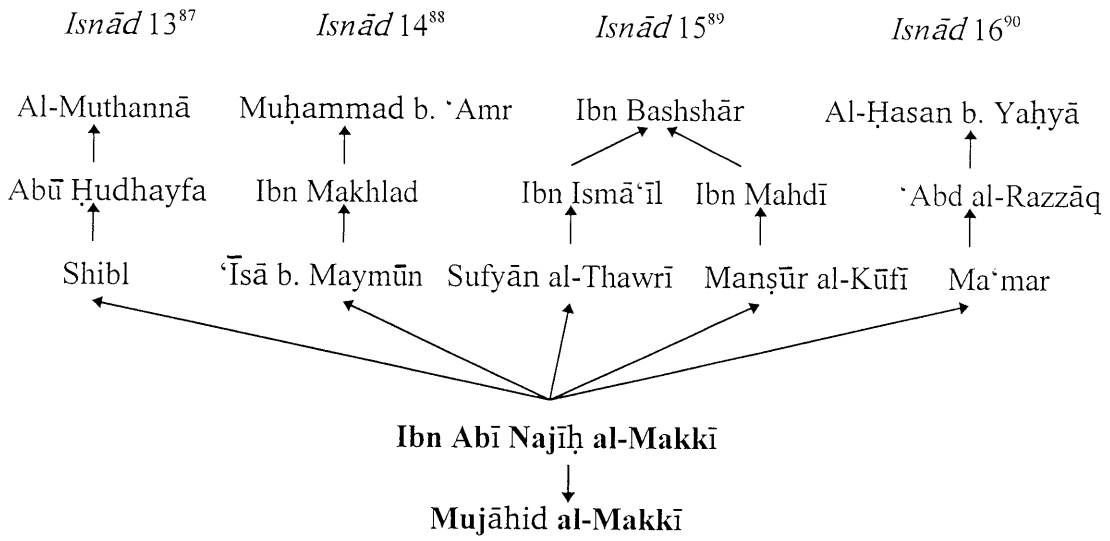
Al-Ṭabarī narrates from Mujāhid through various chains of *isnād*. One of the most frequent of these is that of Ibn Abī Najīḥ ~ Mujāhid, from which al-Ṭabarī reports to a large extent, in fact nearly 500 times, through 4 chains of *isnād*, as follows:

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[84] *Itqān*, 2:1233.

[85] I.e. the Section containing 8,424 *isnād*s which al-Ṭabarī employs to interpret the two *sura*s, *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*.

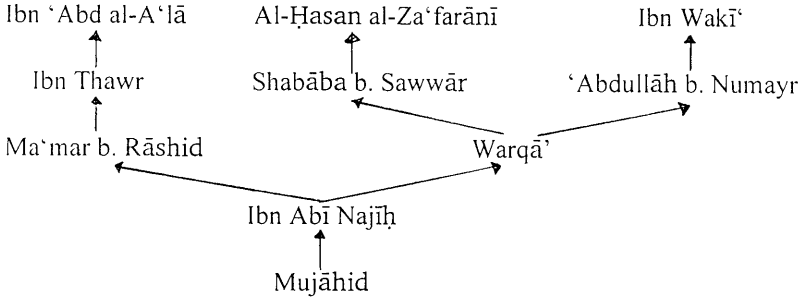
[86] See, for example, *Tafsīr*, nos. 3340, 3341, 3342, 3343, 3345, 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349, 3350, 3351, and 3358.



Isnād 13 recurs 231 times, *isnād* 14 recurs 224 times, *isnād* 15 recurs 16 times, and *isnād* 16 recurs 11 times. It is evident that,via these chains of *isnād* and many others,[91] al-Ṭabarī intended to benefit from Mujāhid's opinions on *tafsīr*. Mujāhid's *Tafsīr* is, in fact considered to be one of the most important and ancient *Tafsīr*s, 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-Shāfiʿī and al-Bukhārī depended. It is to be noticed that the main common link between these *isnād*s and Mujāhid is Ibn Abī Najīḥ. Many historians assert that Ibn Abī Najīḥ was one of the most distinguished students of Mujāhid and that from him he heard the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān.

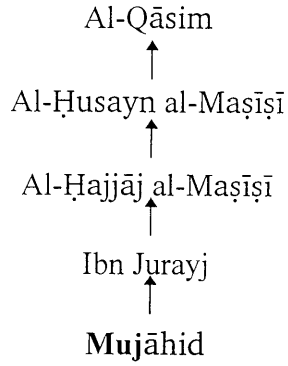
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[87] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.2.
[88] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 12.
[89] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 6. 1, 2.
[90] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 5.1.6.
[91] Such as the following:



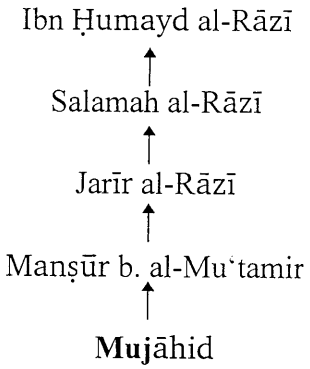
I pass over these *isnād*s because they recur less than 10 times.

Isnād 17[92]



Isnād 17, which recurs 90 times, provides another route to Mujāhid's *Tafsīr.*

Isnād 18[93]



Isnād 18 recurs 10 times.

There are, in fact, other *isnāds* from which al-Ṭabarī reports through Mujāhid, but they recur less than 10 times.[94] The same comment made earlier, regarding Yāqūt's statement that al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* via Mujāhid were three, is applicable here, since they are, in fact, more than that.[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

[92] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 4.1.1.

[93] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.2.1.

[94] See, for instance, on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.2.6.

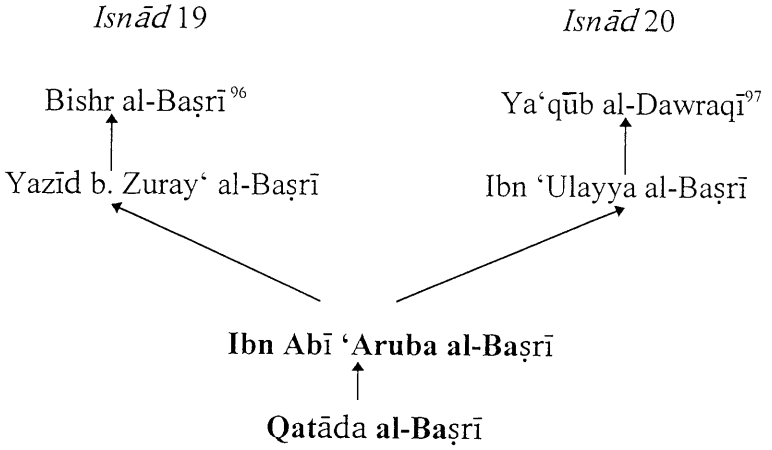
[95] Perhaps Yāqūt had in mind only those of al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* through Mujāhid starting from earlier authorities such as Ibn Abi Najīḥ ~ Mujāhid, or Ibn Jurayj ~ Mujāhid, or Manṣūr ~ Mujāhid, and so he cut off the later informants of the *isnāds* leading to al-Ṭabarī. If this is the case, then his 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. Da'āma 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 Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab al-Madanī, from whom he narrates 29 times.

There are many *isnād*s through Qatāda employed by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*. The most frequent of these are the following:

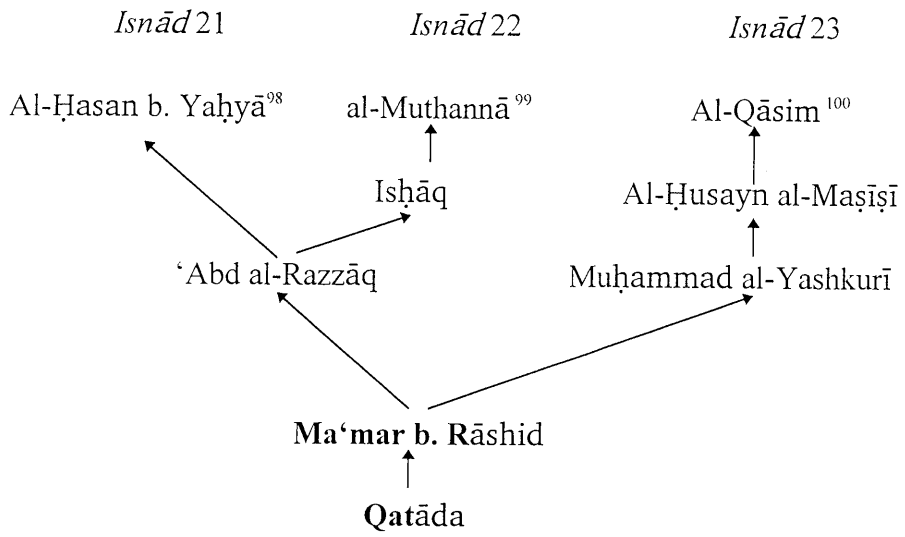


Isnād 19 recurs 338 times, whereas *isnād* 20 recurs 10 times. Biographers assert that Ibn Abī 'Aruba was a close colleague of Qatāda and that he narrated from him hundreds of times.

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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.



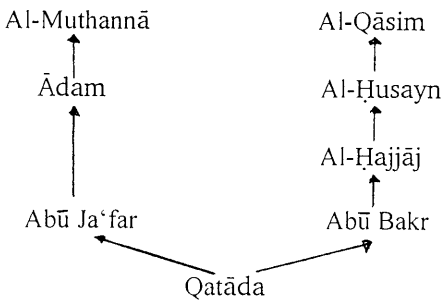
Isnād 21 recurs 200 times, *isnād* 22 recurs 9 times, and *isnād* 23 recurs 10 times. We have suggested that since al-Ṭabarī refers extensively to Qatāda via these most cited *isnād*s and through many others,[101] his intention may have been to cite material from Qatāda's *Tafsīr*. Historians state that 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-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim

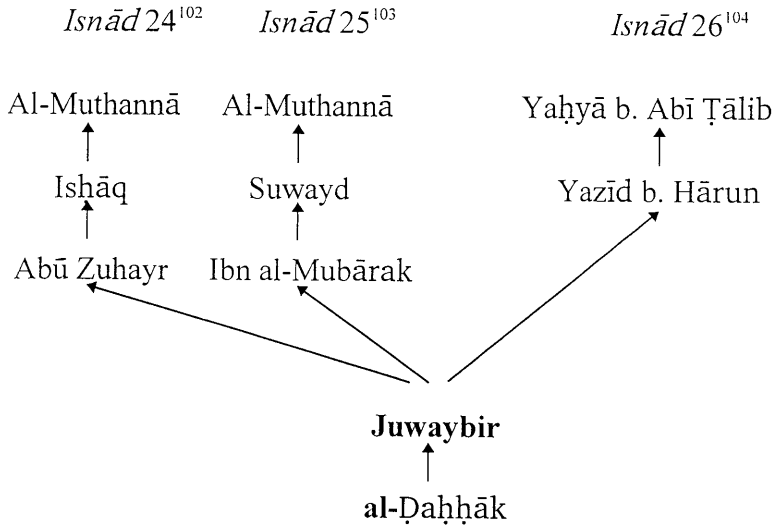
We have seen earlier, i.e. via the chains of *isnād*s 4 and 6, that one of the most frequently cited *isnād*s from Ibn ʻAbbās is the *isnād* via al-Ḍaḥḥāk. Al-Ṭabarī narrates no less than 331 times from al-Ḍaḥḥāk. On 202 occasions he cites al-

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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:



Ḍaḥḥāk's own opinions on *tafsīr*, while on the remaining 129 occasions he cites al-Ḍaḥḥāk's narrations from Ibn 'Abbās. It is evident that al-Ḍaḥḥāk must be considered one of al-Ṭabarī's main sources in his *Tafsīr*. Some of the most frequently cited *isnād*s by al-Ṭabarī through al-Ḍaḥḥāk are the following:

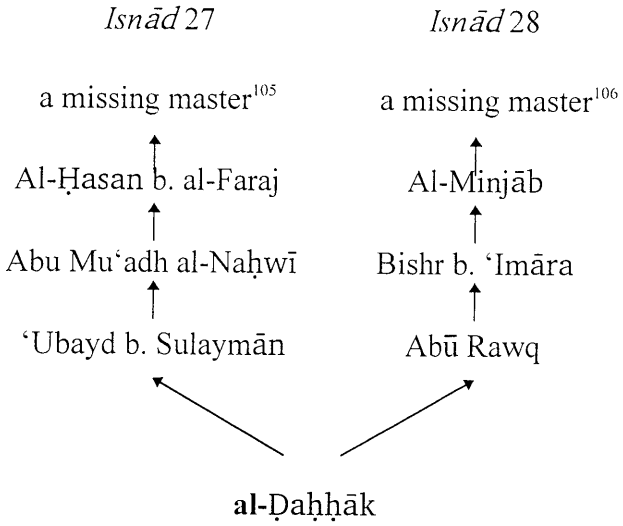


Isnād 24 recurs 56 times, *isnād* 25 recurs 10 times, and *isnād* 26 recurs 39 times. So the total number of citations through these three *isnād*s is 105, in all of which al-Ṭabarī cites al-Ḍaḥḥāk's own sayings on *tafsīr*.

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[102] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.1.2.
[103] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.4.
[104] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 22.

Among the *isnād*s in which al-Ṭabarī reports from al-Ḍaḥḥāk extensively are the following two:

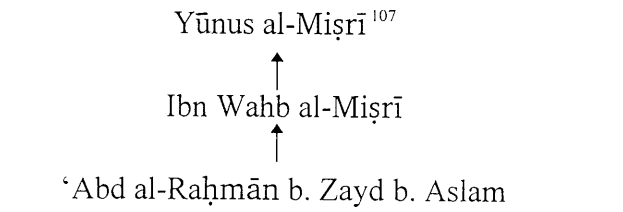


Al-Ṭabarī's citations through *isnād* 27 are 46 and through *isnād* 28 they are 35. It is noticeable that al-Ṭabarī did not mention from whom these two chains of *isnād* reached him. He regularly applies the one technical term *ḥuddiththu* whenever he transmits via them. *Ḥuddiththu* indicates that he 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*:

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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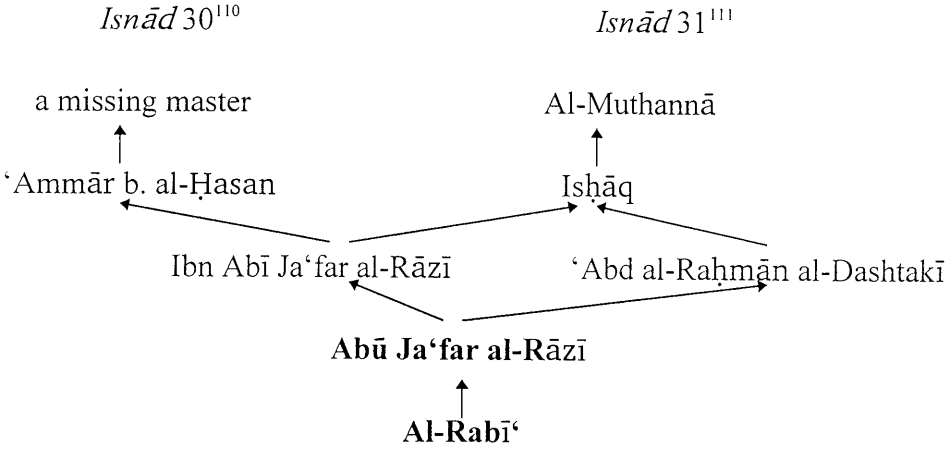
[105] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 10.1.
[106] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 10.2.
[107] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 7.

whenever he uses this *isnād*, i.e. *ḥaddathanī*, 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-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*. The implication of this may be that in his interpretion 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:



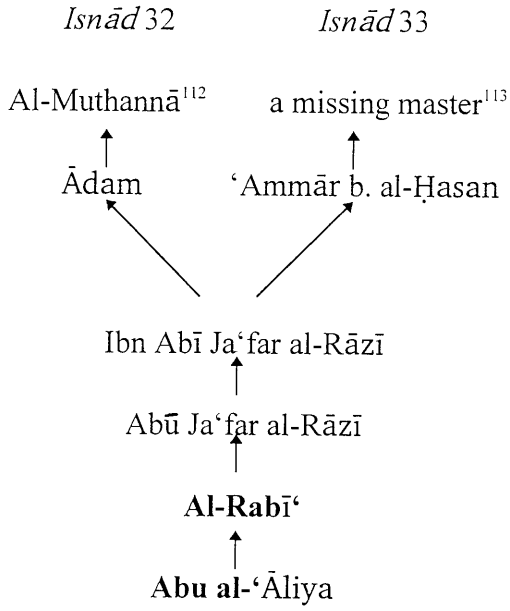
Isnād 30 recurs 197 times, while *isnād* 31, with its two branches, reappears 152 times. As we have seen in our statistical and analytical study, the significance of these

[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 *isnād*s 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'. This *Tafsīr* reached al-Ṭabarī through a perfect, complete permitted *isnād* (*isnād* 31) and through an imperfect, unpermitted *isnād* (*isnād* 30).

Abū al-'Āliya

In connection with *isnād*s 30 and 31, we have seen that al-Ṭabarī also, 112 times, benefits from al-Rabī''s narrations but via his master Abū al-'Āliya, as seen in the following two *isnād*s:



Al-Ṭabarī makes reference 79 times through *isnād* 32 and 10 times through *isnād* 33. It is evident that al-Ṭabarī intended, via these *isnād*s, to cite Abū al-'Āliya's *Tafsīr* and not al-Rabī''s. Abū al-'Āliya 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 *isnād*s, to quote from Abū al-'Āliya's *Tafsīr*.[114]

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[112] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.5. 1.

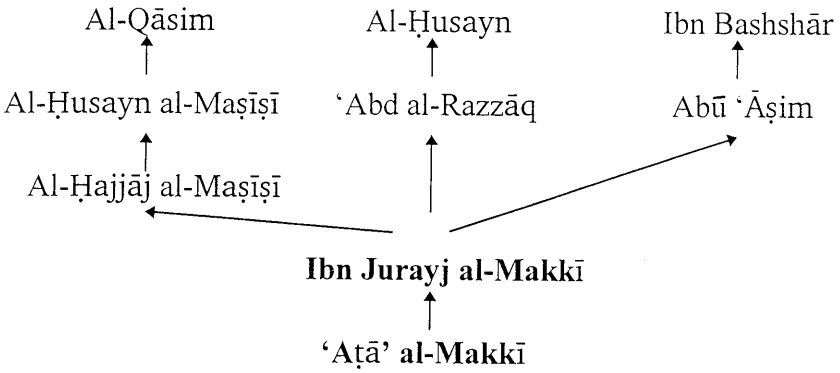
[113] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 10.1.

[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-'Āliya. 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 *isnād*s, through al-Rabi' and through Abū al-'Āliya, is the exegesis of the Companion Ubayy b. Ka'b.

ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī[115]

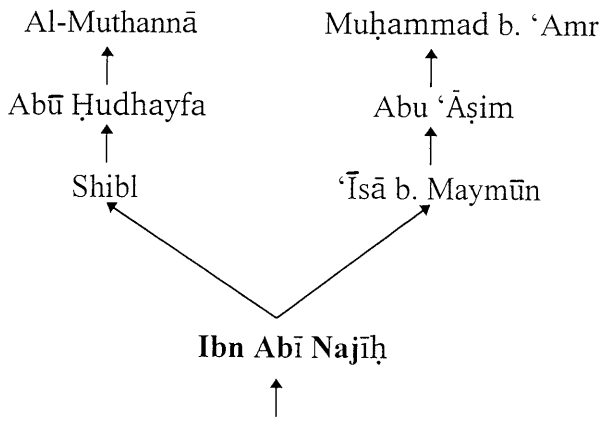
The amount of citations and narrations in which al-Ṭabarī benefits from ʿAṭāʾ totals 309. Out of these, 222 times al-Ṭabarī cites ʿAṭāʾ's own sayings on *tafsīr*, whereas on the remaining 87 occasions, al-Ṭabarī cites ʿAṭāʾ's narrations but through others, mainly Ibn ʿAbbās. Therefore, ʿAṭāʾ must be considered a main source in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. The most frequently cited *isnād*s of al-Ṭabarī through ʿAṭāʾ are:

Isnād 34[116] *Isnād* 35[117] *Isnād* 36[118]



These three *isnād*s recur 70 times in total.

Isnād 37[119] *Isnād* 38[120]



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[115] ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ (27-114/647-732) was one of the most respected Followers and was also considered to have been one of Ibn ʿAbbās's most eminent students. ʿAṭāʾ was born in Yemen, grew up in Mecca, and there he became the Muftī and a scholar of Ḥadīth narration. Among the books he wrote are *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* and *Gharīb al-Qurʾān*. A copy of the latter work is preserved in ʿĀṭif Library in Istanbul. See *Tadhkira*, 1:92; *Wafayāt*, 1:318; *Ẓunūn*, 453; Sezgin, 1:188; *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufassirūn*, 1:183.

[116] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 4.1.1.

[117] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 5.3.

[118] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 6.8.

[119] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.2.

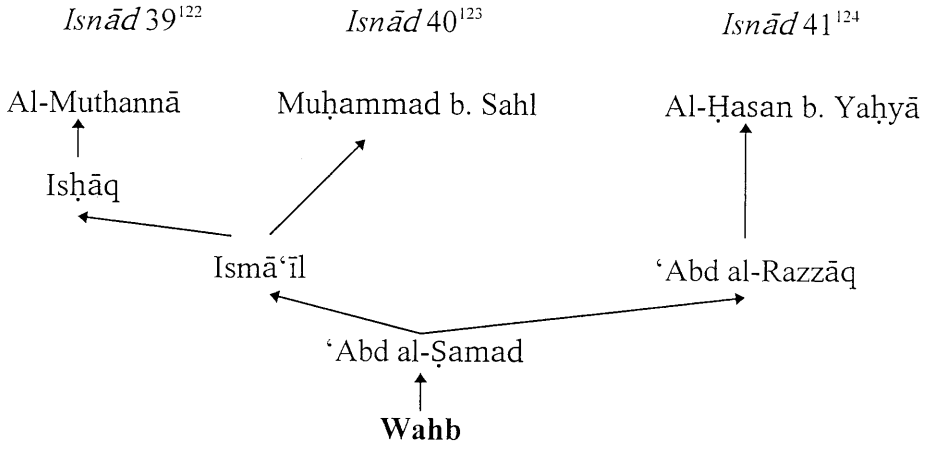
[120] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no.12.

↑
'Aṭā'

These two *isnāds* recur 26 times in total. We may conclude that since al-Ṭabarī refers to 'Aṭā''s sayings and narrations hundreds of times, 'Aṭā' must be considered a main source for al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. According to biographers, 'Aṭā' 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-anbiyā'*) such as the stories of Adam and Moses. Some also relate to reports spoken by Wahb regarding the invisible world (*ghaybiyyāt*).[121] Wahb's narrations reached al-Ṭabarī through various ways, the most frequent of which are the three following:



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, Ismā'īl al-Yamanī transmitted from his uncle 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Yamanī, who in turn transmitted from his uncle Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī.

Al-Ṭabarī also frequently cites Wahb's narrations via the following *isnād*:

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[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.

Isnād 42[125]

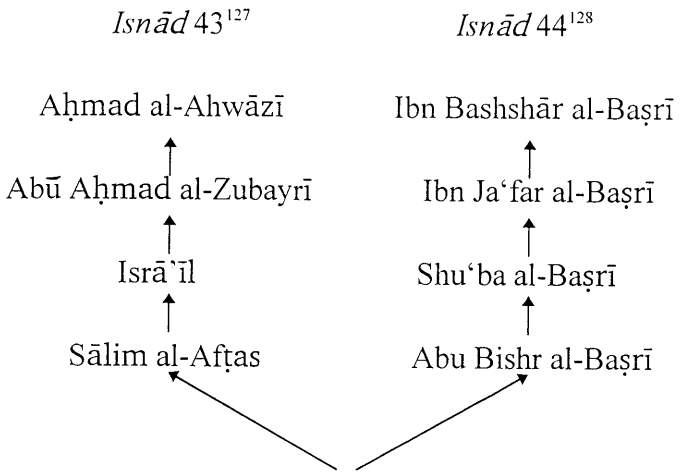
Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī
↑
Salamah al-Rāzī
↑
Ibn Isḥāq
↑
Wahb

Al-Ṭabarī cites *isnād* 42 20 times. We may safely conclude that al-Ṭabarī's frequent citations via these *isnād*s 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-Anbiyā'* and *Kitāb al-Qadar*.[126]

Sa'īd b. Jubayr

Al-Ṭabarī cites many statements emanating from Sa'īd b. Jubayr. The total number of narrations from Ibn Jubayr in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* amounts to 322. Some 123 of these end with Ibn Jubayr, in cases where al-Ṭabarī is presumably citing Ibn Jubayr's own opinions on *tafsīr*, while the remaining 199 go back to Ibn 'Abbās. So Ibn Jubayr must be considered a main source for al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. We have seen earlier that among the *isnād*s via Ibn 'Abbās most frequently cited by al-Ṭabarī is the transmission of Sa'īd as from Ibn 'Abbās. However, we will here mention two *isnād*s through Sa'īd which end with him, in cases where it is evident that al-Ṭabarī intended to consult Sa'īd b. Jubayr's own sayings on *tafsīr*.

[125] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.1.2.
[126] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 2.1.4.



Taken together, these two *isnād*s occur 15 times in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Ibn Jubayr was, in fact, known as one of the most learned scholars among the *Tābi'ūn* in Qur'ānic studies. He wrote a book on *tafsīr*, which was considered to be an important source in this discipline.[129] Al-Ṭabarī may have consulted this *tafsīr* since his citations from Ibn Jubayr's narrations and sayings are in their hundreds.

'Ikrima the *mawlā* of Ibn 'Abbās[130]

Al-Ṭabarī benefited from the opinions of 'Ikrima on quotations of *tafsīr* 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 *isnād*s of interpretation via Ibn 'Abbās are the *isnād*s narrated through 'Ikrima. Specimens of al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*s through 'Ikrima are as follows:

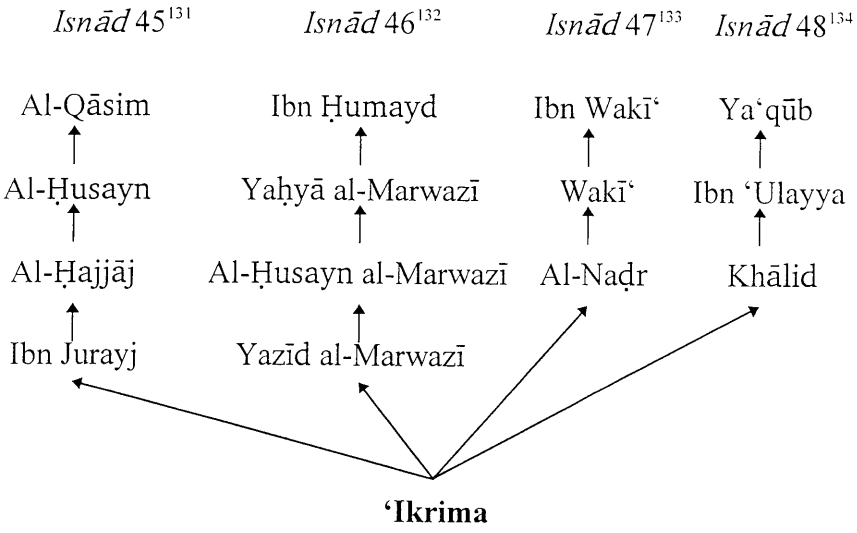
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[127] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 14.

[128] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 6.3.

[129] *Mu'jam al-Mufassirīn*, 1:208.

[130] 'Ikrima b. 'Abdullāh (25-105/645-723), of Berber descent, was a trustworthy and very learned scholar in *tafsīr* and one of Ibn 'Abbās's students. He was accused of uttering heretical doctrines of the Khawārij (a sect who rebelled against 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib), 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; *Tahdhīb*, 7:263; *Mīzān*, 3:93; *Shadharāt*, 1:130.



The total frequency of these four different *isnād*s amounts to 36 occurrences, in contexts where al-Ṭabarī cites 'Ikrima's own opinions on *tafsīr*. It may be noted that 'Ikrima was a famous commentator on the Qur'ān and that he wrote a book entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.[135] Biographers state that this *Tafsīr* contained reports and statements, some spoken by 'Ikrima himself and others transmitted by 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās. Al-Ṭabarī may well have consulted this *Tafsīr*, as he cites 'Ikrima's narrations and sayings hundreds of times.

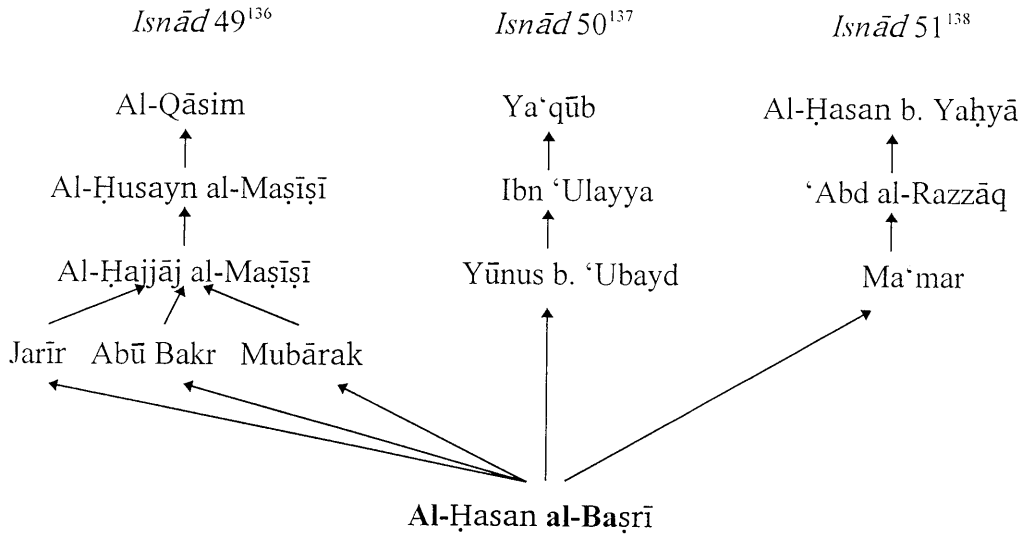
Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

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 *isnād*s al-Ṭabarī employs to narrate from al-Ḥasan are the following:

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[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.
[135] See Sezgin, 1:177; *Wafayāt*, 3:265; *Ẓunūn*, 430; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:380.



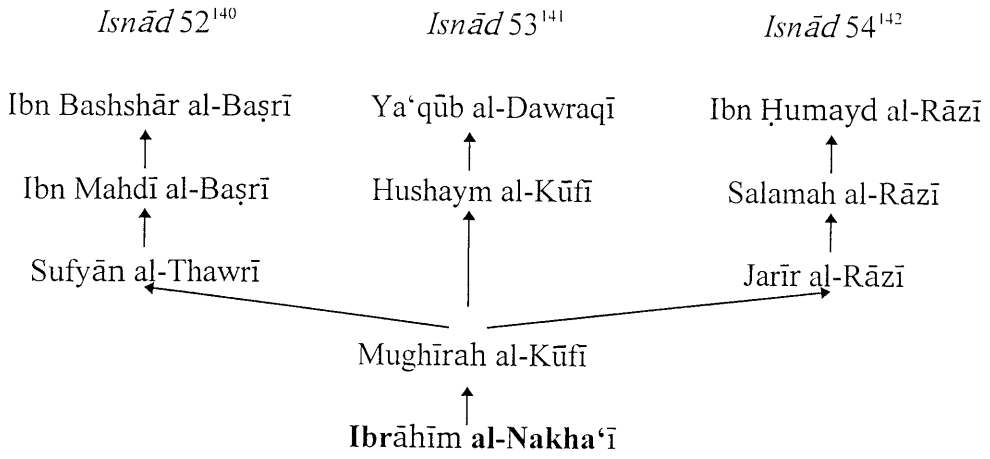
Al-Ṭabarī refers to these *isnād*s via al-Ḥasan 43 times. It should be noted that al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī wrote a book on *tafsīr* which some scholars regard as one of the most famous ancient interpretations. It is said that this *Tafsīr* was written down by al-Ḥasan's student Ibn 'Ubayd, the one mentioned 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'wīl al-Qur'ān.*[139] This statement of Sezgin may illuminate al-Ṭabarī's frequent citations from al-Ḥasan.

Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī

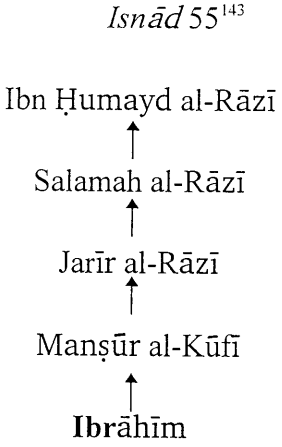
Al-Ṭabarī benefits from al-Nakha'ī's sayings and narrations 244 times. Out of these, on 165 occasions, al-Ṭabarī cites al-Nakha'ī's own sayings, whereas on the remaining 79 occasions he reports his narrations but via others, mainly his master 'Alqama al-Nakha'ī. One of the *isnād*s of al-Ṭabarī through 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.
[139] See Sezgin, 1:187, 2:351.



Al-Ṭabarī cites from Ibrāhīm via these *isnād*s 36 times. Another *isnād* al-Ṭabarī uses to cite from Ibrāhīm is the following:



Al-Ṭabarī makes reference through this *isnād* 12 times. It may be noted that Ibrāhīm is considered to be one of the well-known scholars of interpretation.[144]

5. Sources from the generation of the *Tābi' al-Tābi'īn* or *Ṣighār al-Tābi'īn* (Followers of the Followers).

There were many other scholars in *tafsīr*, apart from those already mentioned, from the generation of the *Tābi'ūn* through whom al-Ṭabarī reports and from whom

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[140] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 6.1.3.
[141] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 11.2.
[142] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.2.1.
[143] See on al-Ṭabarī's major master no. 3.2.1.
[144] See *Tahdhīb*, 1:177; *Tadhkira*, 73; *Wafayāt*, 1:6; Ibn Sa'd, 6:188; *Ẓunun*, 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-Tābi'īn*, such as al-Suddī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn al-Mubārak, 'Abd al-Razzāq, and Ibn Isḥāq. It is noticeable that almost all of these scholars left written sources, mainly in *tafsīr* but also in Ḥadīth, *Sīra* (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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s, 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*.

Tafsīr of 'Abdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ (d. 101 AH): 603 citations.

Book of Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (58-124/678-742): 159 citations.

Tafsīr of Zayd b. Aslam al-Madanī (d. 136/753): 27 citations.

Ṣaḥīfa (document) of Khuṣayf (d. 136/753): 45 citations.

Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Hind (d. 140/757): 95 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla al-A'rabi (d. 146/763): 45 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj (80-150/699-767): 475 citations.

Tafsīr of Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (82-160/701-776): 203 citations.

Tafsīr of Sufyān b. Sa'īd al-Thawrī (97-161/716-778): 524 citations.

Compilation of Ḥammād b. Salamah al-Baṣrī (d. 167/783): 121 citations.

Compilation of Sharīk al-Nakha'ī (95-177 AH): 89 citations.

Tafsīr of Mālik b. Anas (93-179/712-795): 30 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak (118-181/736-797): 157 citations.

Book of Yaḥyā b. Abī Zā'ida (d. 182 AH): 30 citations.

Tafsīr of Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799): 214 citations.

Compilation of Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī (110-188 AH): 138 citations.

Ṣaḥīfa (document) of 'Abdullāh b. Idrīs (d. 192 AH): 85 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Ismā'īl b. 'Ulayya (110-193/728-809): 167 citations.

Ṣaḥīfa (document) of Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh (d. 193/809): 21 citations.

Ṣaḥīfa (document) of 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. 'Abd al-Majīd al-Baṣrī al-Thaqafī (108-194/726-810): 66 citations.

Compilation of Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 194/810): 44 citations.

Tafsīr of Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (129-197/746-812): 208 citations.

Tafsīr of Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (107-198/725-814): 50 citations.

Compilation of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī (135-198/752-814): 164 citations.

Compilation of Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 200 AH): 319 citations.

Book of Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī (d. 203/818): 194 citations.

Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Ādam (d. 203/818): 12 citations.

Musnad of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (133-204/751-819): 22 citations.

Tafsīr of al-Ḥajjāj al-Maṣīṣī (d. 206/821): 374 citations.

Tafsīr of Yazīd b. Hārūn (118-206/736-821): 70 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī (126-211/744-827): 461 citations.

Tafsīr of Ādam b. Abī Īyās (132-220/749-835): 108 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Amr b. 'Awn (d. 225/840): 26 citations.

Tafsīr of al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Maṣīṣī (d. 226/841): 427 citations.

Tafsīr of Isḥāq b. Rahawayh (161-238/668-853): 15 citations.

Tafsīr of Hannād b. al-Sarī (152-243/769-857): 91 citations.

Book of Abū Hishām Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rifā'ī (d. 248/862): 68 citations.

Tafsīr of 'Amr b. 'Alī al-Bāhilī al-Fallās (d. 249/864): 66 citations.

Book of Muḥammad b. Ja'far (d. 272/885): 119 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 *isnād*s for the reconstruction of the early development of *tafsīr*? Extrapolating from the statistical study and analysis of the 8,424 investigated *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s investigated, our attention is caught by the fact that in the interpretation of *sūra*s *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 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib or Ibn Mas'ūd, as in the time of those scholars who came after, such as Mujāhid, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, 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

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[145] *Itqān*, 2:235.

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 *isnād*s. Most of these written sources were preserved and transmitted by perfect, complete, permitted *isnād*s, while some others were transmitted via imperfect, incomplete, unpermitted *isnād*s. It is even quite possible that already, at an early time, distinguished books such as the *Ṣaḥīfa* of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa were in circulation.[146] 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 (*isnād* 3), or by one of his students such as Mujāhid b. Jabr, or al-Ḍaḥḥāk, or 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, or Abū Mālik, or Abū Ṣāliḥ. When we move on through the generation of the *Tābi' al-Tābi'īn*, a *tafsīr* tradition becomes even more in evidence, 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), Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (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, *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 *tafsīr*s. This process had in fact started when the method of the living tradition, i.e. transmission by *isnād*, had become fixed. It was developed and provided with a sound basis in accordance with the Science of Ḥadīth by scholars like 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 184/799), 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827), and Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī (d. 220/840), was continued by scholars like Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī (d. AH 294), al-Muthannā al-Āmulī (d. after 240/862), Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī (d. 248/862), and Muḥammad b. Bashshār (d. 252/866),[147] and was crowned by the achievement of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 311/923).

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[146] See *Isnād* no. 1.

[147] For further information and the names of scholars who came before al-Ṭabarī, 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 *tafsīr*.

If we ask which works of earlier scholars were used by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*, 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-Ṭabarī through various but specific chains of *isnād*. This 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 Mujāhid, the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, 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 Isḥāq. Al-Ṭabarī 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 *isnāds*, which al-Ṭabarī transmits less than 10 times and have no specific pattern in their reappearance, in most cases these scattered *athār* (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'ān.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

The Authenticity of the *Isnāds* 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 *isnāds* 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 *isnāds*[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 *isnāds* of all the investigated 8,424 *isnāds*) reached al-Ṭabarī through only 19 masters out of 208 in total, whereas he narrated the remaining 11% (i.e. 927 of the *isnāds*) via another 189 masters. This fact demonstrates that a very high percentage of al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* 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 *isnāds*.

We further noticed that from just 6 among these 19 masters al-Ṭabarī narrated more than half of his *isnāds*; in fact, 55% of the total 8,424 *isnāds* 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. Yaḥyā, and 4.9% by Ibn

[1] I.e. of our representative sample of 8,424 chains of *isnāds*, comprising approximately one third (i.e. 28%) of the *isnāds* 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, Manṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir. So the *isnād*s remain in one line from the beginning up to al-Suddī, except for the one diversion relating to what Asbāṭ narrated from Manṣūr. 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) *isnād*s from just 3 masters, Murra (49.9%), Abū Mālik (24.9%), and Abū Ṣāliḥ (24.8%). The remaining 0.4% of *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s of al-Muthannā.[7] The amount of *isnād*s al-Ṭabarī cited via al-Muthannā was 13.3% (i.e. 1,118 of the total 8,424 *isnād*s). The most frequently quoted strands via al-Muthannā are as follows: 27.5% (of the 1,118 *isnād*s) go back to Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥūnī, 21% go back to Abū Ḥudhayfa, 14.6% to 'Abdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ, 9.2% to Suwayd, 8.9% to Ibn Abī Īyās, 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s. 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 Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī, the person most frequently cited by al-Muthannā, narrated from 35 masters and, further, Isḥāq cited 83% of his *isnād*s from just 5 masters. The remaining 17% of *isnād*s Isḥāq 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, Shibl b. ʿAbbād 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.[8] 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-Marwazī, 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. Isḥāq (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.[9] 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-Maṣīṣī, 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[10] 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, ʿAbd 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.[11] 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 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Baṣrī,

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[8] See note on al-Ṭabarī's third major master, Chapter VI.
[9] See note on al-Ṭabarī's fourth major master, Chapter VI.
[10] See note on al-Ṭabarī's fifth major master, Chapter VI.
[11] See note on al-Ṭabarī's sixth major master, Chapter VI.

6.1% to Ibn Ja'far al-Baṣrī, 5.8% to Mu'ammil al-Baṣrī, 5.6% to Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān 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'ada al-Baṣrī, 1.5% to Yazīd al-Wāsiṭī, and 1.2% to Abū Dāwūd al-Baṣrī. The remaining 11.8% of his *isnād*s are distributed among 31 other masters.

These profiles indicate that each of these strands of *isnād*s, 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s), al-Ṭabarī transmitted *isnād*s using the technical term *ḥuddithtu*. According to the Science of Ḥadīth, this terminology indicates that the narrator is transmitting *isnād*s indirectly. This means that by using this term al-Ṭabarī was, in fact, drawing the reader's attention to the fact that these *isnād*s 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-Ṭabarī gives the impression that he received exactly 24 ḥadīths directly from the Prophet himself, without mentioning their *isnād*s. That he actually did so is of course untrue. However, we have found that this practice by cutting off the *isnād* and stating only the text (*matn*) was a method known among the scholars of Ḥadīth such as al-Bukhārī and al-Dārimī, who on some occasions did the same thing. We have mentioned two reasonable explanations for this practice. Either these 24 ḥadths with apocopated *isnād*s were widely known among the people and deemed to be sound ḥadīths, so that there was no particular need to recount their *isnād*s, or al-Ṭabarī cited them from a written compilation which contained ḥadīths with no *isnād*s.

There are also some examples which indicate that indirect transmission was used by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr,* which might support the argument that his material was selected arbitrarily. In fact, however, he specifically labelled the sources from which the *isnād*s came.

Forgery seems even more unlikely because, as we have noted, on some occasions, al-Ṭabarī cites *isnād*s containing anonymous narrators. For instance, he quotes the following *isnād*s: Yūnus narrated from some of his companions (*'an ba'ḍi aṣḥābihi*),[12] Abū Hishām al-Rifā'ī narrated from a master whom he did not name (*'an shaykh lam yusammih*),[13] Jarīr narrated from a man (*rajul*) from al-Sha'bī,[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: Abū al-Azhar al-Lakhmī- from Palestine- narrated to us, and an unnamed person- from Syria- narrated to me. All these examples, and others,

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[12] *Tafsīr*, 2:423-424.
[13] *Tafsīr*, 4:370.
[14] *Tafsīr*, 3:386.
[15] *Tafsīr*, 4:10.

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 (*'ālī*) *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-Muthannā (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-Muthannā ~ Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī ~ 'Abd al-Razzāq. Within the Science of Ḥadīth, 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 (*'ālī*) *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-Muthannā and Isḥāq 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 *'ālī*, 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.

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[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, Āmul, studying and gathering knowledge about Ḥadth. 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-Āmulī. This information is arrived at by consideration of a statement by Ibn Kāmil,[17] 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,[18] 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, Āmul, 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 Humayd's session." [19] 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.[20] From Kufa al-Ṭabarī made his way to Basra where he met with the prominent scholar, Ibn Bashshār (d. 252/868), al-Ṭabarī's sixth major master. In 253/867 al-Ṭabarī also visited Egypt, where he stayed until 257/870.[21] There al-Ṭabarī was fortunate to meet with his seventh major master, Yūnus al-Miṣrī (d. AH 264), from whom he obtained the *Tafsīr* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam.[22] In Egypt, al-Ṭabarī was also fortunate to obtain the Document (*Ṣaḥīfa*) of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa on *tafsīr*.

It is quite likely that on these journeys and occasions al-Ṭabarī received the bulk of his material transmitted from these most cited authorities. The statements in the biographical literature about al-Ṭabarī's major masters thus coincide broadly with our statistical findings concerning these 19 most cited masters in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.

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 *isnād*s often go back to principal, ancient, distinguished sources, written by well-known scholars, such as the *Tafsīr* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd; or that of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥa (*Ṣaḥīfa*), previously mentioned, from Ibn 'Abbās; or the *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid; or that of al-Daḥḥāk; or Qatāda; or Ibn Abī Najīḥ; or Ibn Jurayj; or al-Suddī; or the Compilation of the *Sīra* and *Maghāzī* of Ibn Isḥāq.[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-Ṭabarī compiled his own *Tafsīr*.

This evidence leads us to the conclusion that the bulk of the source material for the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī was written *tafsīr*s and compilations containing ḥadīths and reports from older works of varying sizes, some of which were complete works while others were only portions which reached al-Ṭabarī through various but specific chains of *isnād*. These works can be reconstructed from the *isnād*s of the texts available to us and may enable us to draw more definite conclusions about the development of traditional exegesis.

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[20] See note on al-Ṭabarī's eighth major master, Chapter VI.
[21] See al-Ṭabarī's biography, Chapter I.
[22] See note on al-Ṭabarī's seventh major master, Chapter VI.
[23] See Chapter VII, the discussion.

The question here is whether we can prove the authenticity of the *isnāds* which al-Ṭabarī 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-Muthannā b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmulī, which covers about 1,118 *isnāds*, i.e. 13.3% of the whole 8,424 investigated *isnāds*. The following conclusions are based on this sample.

According to the information al-Muthannā gave about the origin of his *isnāds*, 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 *isnāds*, i.e. just over 95% of the total 1,118 *isnāds*, from only 11 masters. The remaining 55 *isnāds* (4.9%) are distributed among 30 other masters.

The largest part, about 27.5% was said to come from Isḥāq b. al-Ṭāḥunī; 21% came from Abū Ḥudhayfa al-Baṣrī; 14.6% came from ʿAbdullāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī; 9.2% came from Suwayd al-Marwazī; 8.9% came from Ādam b. Abī Īyās al-Khurasānī; 5.9% came from al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī; 2% came from ʿAmr b. ʿAwn al-Wāsiṭī; 1.9% came from Abū Nuʿaym al-Kūfī; 1.6% came from Ḥibbān b. Mūsā al-Marwazī; 1.4% came from ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd; and 1.1% came from Muslim b. Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī. The remaining 4.9% was distributed among 30 other authorities as follows: five scholars taken together, 1.6% (5 *isnāds* each); two scholars taken together, 0.5% (3 *isnāds* each); seven scholars taken together, 1.3% (2 *isnāds* each); and, finally, seventeen scholars taken together, 1.5% (1 *isnād* each).

This strange distribution of authorities in the work of al-Muthannā argues, in my opinion, against the suggestion that he was a forger who projected his *isnāds* 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 Isḥāq 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 Isḥāq al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥunī.[24] There is still another explanation, which is that Isḥāq (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 Ḥudhayfa and Muslim b. Ibrāhīm, or the two Kufan scholars Abū Nu'aym and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, or the two Marwazī scholars Mūsā and Ḥibbān, or Ādam al-Khurasānī, or 'Amr b. 'Awn al-Wāṣiṭī, or the Egyptian scholar 'Abdullāh 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 *isnād*s summarized under different names would not be essentially different from each other, at least formally. But if one studies the *isnād*s from his 11 most frequently cited masters (strands of transmissions), which amount to 95% of all the *isnād*s, 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 *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s range from extensive narrations from a few persons to scattered narrations from many others. We see for instance, that Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī, al-Muthannā's most cited master, narrates from 35 masters, but the majority of his *isnād*s came mainly via 5 masters, from whom Isḥāq narrates 256

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[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 Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī to see whether it is a true or false *isnād*. It is noticeable that Isḥāq narrated almost 50% of his *isnāds* from ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Jaʿfar al-Rāzī (d. AH 205). In turn, Ibn Abī Jaʿfar narrated from 3 masters, but the majority of his *isnāds*, i.e. 98%, came via his father Abū Jaʿfar al-Rāzī (AH 90-160). Abū Jaʿfar al-Rāzī on his own narrated from 6 masters, but mainly from 1, al-Rabīʿ b. Anas (d. 139/756), from whom he narrated almost 95% of his *isnāds*. According to biographical literature, Ibn Abī Jaʿfar learned from his father Abū Jaʿfar, and Abū Jaʿfar heard the *Tafsīr* of al-Rabīʿ from al-Rabīʿ himself during their residence in a village called Burz.[26] This biographical information confirms that there was a relationship between the son Ibn Abī Jaʿfar and his father Abū Jaʿfar, and a similar relationship between the disciple Abū Jaʿfar and the master al-Rabīʿ 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 ḥadīths 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.[27] 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,[28] 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-'Awfī, in the following pattern: Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-'Awfī ~ Sa'd al-'Awfī ~ al-Ḥusayn al-'Awfī ~ al- Ḥasan al-'Awfī ~ 'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī ~ Ibn 'Abbās.[29] In some cases the relationship is that of student or disciple to a master, as in the case al-Muthannā and Isḥāq al-Ṭāḥunī, 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. Wakī' 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-Qannād, or Ibn Ṭāwūs and Ṭāwūs, 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.[30] 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 *isnād*s (i.e. 52.5%) going back to the Companions, 3,480 *isnād*s (i.e. 41.3%) attributed to the Followers, and 521 *isnād*s (i.e. 6.2%) being ḥadīths ascribed to the Prophet. It is found that a large number, nearly 19%, of the strands of *isnād*s of Abū Kurayb alone contain Prophetic ḥadīths. 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. Wakī'. Some have only a few Prophetic ḥadīths as in the case of 0.4% of the *isnād*s of Ibn Bashshār. Some have no Prophetic ḥadīths at all, like the *isnād*s of al-'Awfī and Muḥammad b. 'Amr. A high proportion of *isnād*s go back to the generation of the Companions, as is the case with the *isnād*s of Mūsā b. Hārūn, Ibn Ḥumayd, and al-'Awfī. But there are remarkably few citations of the Companions in the *isnād*s of Muḥammad b. 'Amr al-Bāhilī and 'Alī b. 'Amr al-Ṣayrafī. A very high proportion of *isnād*s is found going back to the generations of the Followers and those who followed after them, as with the *isnād*s 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 *isnād*s flowing from the 19 major masters of al-Ṭabarī. *Isnād*s from Mūsā b. Hārūn, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Jurjānī, Yūnus al-Miṣrī, and Aḥmād b. Isḥāq al-Ahwāzī occur very rarely, while in the transmissions from Ibn Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, Ya'qūb al-Dawraqī, and al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī, divergent *isnād*s occur more frequently. They may be said to occur very frequently in the transmissions of al-Muthannā al-Āmulī, Abū Kurayb al-Kūfī, Hannād al-Kūfī, Ibn Bashshār al-Baṣrī, and Ibn al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī. This indicates that al-Ṭabarī was, more or less, influenced by the transmission of the Kufan and Basran *isnād*s and, of course, by the *isnād*s of the scholar of his native town, al-Muthannā, from whom he transmitted 45 strands of *isnād*s.

Remarkable differences are to be observed when examining the technical terms of transmission, that is, the method al-Ṭabarī employed to cite his *isnād*s. The two words *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā* are used very frequently (on 95.7% of occasions), the term *ḥuddithtu* 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 *akhbaranā*, 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-'Awfī. The term *haddathanā* 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-Wāqidī, Ibn al-Muthannā, and Aḥmad b. Isḥāq al-Ahwāzi. As for the term *ḥuddithtu*, al-Ṭabarī employs it to introduce interrupted *isnāds* flowing from an anonymous person. He uses the word *qāla* consistently to introduce 24 Prophetic ḥadīths, 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.

EPILOGUE

The main objective of this thesis has been to examine some questions, discussed in the introduction, concerning the value of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī resort to material from written sources, or from various oral narrations, or from both? (In other words, we have investigated the possibility of his *Tafsīr*'s containing written sources.)

III. Is the claim of the authors of the late second and third centuries (such as al-Ṭabarī) 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*?

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-Ṭabarī's mentioning some *isnāds* repeatedly and more extensively than others? In connection with this, does al-Ṭabarī's evident confidence in some chains of transmission 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, the Prophet's biography (*Sīra*), etc?

Since these questions and others touch closely upon al-Ṭabarī'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 *Tārīkh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭīb 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, Wāsiṭ, 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 Qur'ān (*'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*), 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 Qur'ān, that is, after the Qur'ān itself, which is esteemed to be its own best interpreter. But this does not mean that he interpreted the meanings of the Qur'ān

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-Nasā'ī, 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-Qur'ān* (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 *sūra*s, *al-Fātiḥa* 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-Nasā'ī, and al-Ḥākim.

The Companions took particular care in reflecting on the Qur'ānic 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 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ūd, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Ubayy b. Ka'b.

The Followers (*Tābi'ūn*) also took especial care in explaining the Qur'ānic verses. The most famous exegetes among the Followers were Mujāhid b. Jabr, Sa'īd b. Jubayr, 'Ikrima, Qatāda, Abū al-'Aliya, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk. After them the second generation (*Tābi' al-Tābi'īn*) 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, Shu'ba 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 ḥadīths.

The emergence of a full-blown work of *tafsīr*, such as *Jāmi' 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, it has seemed appropriate to devote an introductory chapter to this book, touching upon such topics as the value of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* in the view of well-known scholars and the methodological achievement of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. With regard to the former topic, we have found that many Muslim and some Western scholars praised this *Tafsīr*. Some indeed believed that *Jāmi' al-Bayān* is not simply a compilation of extant exegetical materials, but is a fully structured work demonstrating considerable insight and judgement, and that al-Ṭabarī was clearly aware of methodological issues, as is evident from the very first pages. Contrary to this view, there are others who criticized this *Tafsīr* for containing a lot of randomly quoted narrations. We have found that there was a story behind the compilation of this *Tafsīr*, that al-Ṭabarī initially planned his *Tafsīr* 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 *Tafsīr*, we found that first al-Ṭabarī wrote his *Tafsīr*, then asked his students to copy it down while he dictated it to them. We have also found that al-Ṭabarī read his *Tafsīr* 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-Ṭabarī's commentary has reached us after reading, copying down, and authentication by al-Ṭabarī himself and then by his students and his students' students through the generations. We reached the conclusion that during the time of al-Ṭabarī there existed a master copy, in the handwriting and arrangement of al-Ṭabarī himself.

In Chapter IV, focusing essentially on the long Introduction with which al-Ṭabarī's prefixed his *Tafsīr*, we discussed the principles on which his commentary was based, his general methodology in his *Tafsīr*. We have seen how specific examples witness to the fact that his *Tafsīr* was based not only on ḥadīths and reports transmitted from the Prophet, Companions, and Followers, but also on his personal opinion (*ra'y*) 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-Ṭabarī placed importance on clarity of discourse (*bayān*) when people attempt to express the depths of their hearts

and indicate the promptings of their souls. In fact, al-Ṭabarī adopted a comparative method, comparing the *bayān* of the people and the *bayān* of the Qur'ān, which is in fact the words of God. The ultimate purpose of al-Ṭabarī's comparison was to conclude that the *bayān* of the Qur'ān is the most eloquent because it is uttered by God.

We have seen that al-Ṭabarī was convinced that knowledge relating to the interpretation of the Qur'ān can only be attained at three levels. These are classified into two main types: the *muḥkam* and the *mutashābih*. Under the *muḥkam*, al-Ṭabarī mentioned two levels of comprehension. First, there is that attaching to those verses which can only be interpreted by the Prophet Muḥammad, because in al-Ṭabarī's view, explaining the meaning of the Qur'ān is part of the Prophet's message. Second, under *muḥkam*, according to al-Ṭabarī, is that level of comprehension attaching to those verses of which everyone who possesses knowledge of the language in which the Qur'ān was sent down knows their interpretation. The third level of knowledge is that relating to the ambiguous (*mutashābih*) verses which, according to al-Ṭabarī, 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 Qur'ānic text, al-Ṭabarī 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 Qur'ān there are no redundant words and there are no expressions other than Arabic ones.

We have also considered al-Ṭabarī's attitude towards the seven *aḥruf* (sing. *ḥarf*), i.e. the different ways in which the Qur'ān is said to have been revealed, and found that in al-Ṭabarī's opinion, the *umma* (the Prophet's community) chose to read the Qur'ān according to one *ḥarf* and excluded the other *aḥruf*. Finally, we have sought to explain some of the methods employed by al-Ṭabarī in interpreting the Qur'ān, such as his use of the word *ta'wīl* instead of *tafsīr*, his use of references to linguistics, *i'rāb* (parsing or syntax), poems, and his more common method of

interpreting the Qur'ān verse by verse. We have seen that al-Ṭabarī 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 *isnāds* which al-Ṭabarī employed to interpret the two *sūras*, *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Baqara*.

With regard to the first question, it is evident that in citing his *isnāds* and narrations as well as in interpreting the verses of the Qur'ān, al-Ṭabarī was clearly aware of methodological issues and that it may be safely asserted that in compiling his *Tafsīr*, he was following a systematic method. We arrived at the conclusion that although al-Ṭabarī's *isnāds* show variants and diversity, it is nevertheless evident that a certain method was followed by him in dealing with these *isnāds*. 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-Ṭabarī's most cited narrators, demonstrate that in the course of citing his *isnāds*, al-Ṭabarī was accustomed to referring to a select group of *isnāds*, 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 *isnāds* 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 *isnāds*. Moreover, it becomes clear that these selected and most frequently quoted *isnāds* were deemed important because they go back to the principal ancient sources. It was from these that al-Ṭabarī 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 *muṣannafāt* (compilations), which were composed by well-known scholars over the generations of the pre-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī intended to consult the oldest possible authorities in compiling his *Tafsīr*. While this hypothesis is suggested by our statistical study of al-Ṭabarī'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 Mas'ūd, 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 Isḥāq, the author of the *Sīra*, and Wahb b. Munabbih, the story-teller. He would similarly resort to specific individuals specializing in jurisprudence, such 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, al-Sha'bī, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, 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 Yaḥya b. Zīyād 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- *ḥaddathanī* and *ḥaddathanā*- 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-Ṭabarī used the term *ḥaddathanī* 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-Ṭabarī used the term *ḥaddathanī* 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-Ṭabarī's masters from whom he heard alone, or person-to-person. Al-Ṭabarī also used the term *ḥaddathanā* frequently. In fact, he used this term to introduce 45.5% of all the investigated *isnāds*. He used the term *ḥaddathanā* 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-Ṭabarī from whom he heard in the company of others and that when transmitting from them he used the term *ḥaddathanā*. Al-Ṭabarī also used *ḥuddithtu* on 4% of occasions and, rarely (in only 0.3% of instances), *qāla*. This indicates how al-Ṭabarī 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 *ḥuddithtu* 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 (*ṣaḥīfa*) 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), *ḥuddithtu* (it was narrated to me), or *qāla* (he said). 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 0.3% of all the investigated *isnāds*. Al-Ṭabarī almost never uses the two terms *akhbaranī* and *akhbaranā*. We have suggested that since there is no major difference in the usage of any of the transmission terms *ḥaddathanī*, *akhbaranī*, *ḥaddathanā*, or *akhbaranā*, al-Ṭabarī may have sought consistency by choosing to use *ḥaddathanī* or *ḥaddathanā* 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 *ḥaddathanī* (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 *ḥaddathanī*.

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 ʿAbbās, or perhaps even earlier in that of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib or Ibn Masʿūd, as in the time of those scholars who came after, such as Mujāhid, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, and al-Rabīʿ 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 *Ṣaḥīfa* of ʿAlī b. Abī

Ṭalḥa 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 ʿAbbās, who left a written source compiled either by himself or by one of his students, such as Mujāhid b. Jabr, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, or Abū Mālik, or Abū Ṣāliḥ. When we move on through the generation of the *Tābiʿ al-Tābiʿīn*, a *tafsīr* tradition becomes even more evident, so that we may consider it certain that people like al-Suddī (d. 128/745), ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Najīḥ (d. 131/749 or 132/750), ʿAbd al-Malik b. Jurayj (d. 150/767), Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), and Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (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 *tafsīr*s. 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 ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799), ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), and Isḥāq b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Ṭāḥūnī (d. 220/840), was continued by scholars like Mūsā b. Hārūn al-Baghdādī (d. AH 294), al-Muthannā al-Āmulī (d. after 240/862), Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī (d. 248/862), and Muḥammad b. Bashshār (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 *isnād*s. It is therefore possible that the following books were available to him: the *Tafsīr* of al-Suddī, the *Ṣaḥīfa* of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalḥa, the *Tafsīr* of the ʿAwfī family, the *Tafsīr* of Mujāhid, the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, the *Tafsīr* of al-Rabīʿ b. Anas, the *Tafsīr* of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam, and books on *Maghāzī* and *Sīra*, especially that of Ibn Isḥāq.

This leads us to the conclusion that the bulk of the *Jāmi' al-Bayān* of al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī, 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, 'Alī 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 *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī containing information taken from early compilations of transmissions, such as those main sources found in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, where the Prophetic Ḥadīth 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-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī 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 ḥadīths helping to explain the meaning of the Qur'ān, he would be content with that. So ḥadīths handed down from the Prophet himself were one of al-Ṭabarī'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 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, to whom in fact al-Ṭabarī referred hundreds of times. Eventually, as a third step, al-Ṭabarī would refer to the interpretation of the Followers and those who followed after them. From this it would seem that al-Ṭabarī intended to consult the oldest possible sources of commentary in compiling his *Tafsīr*.

In conclusion, one can say that the claim that al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* help to inform us concerning the ancient sources which were written in the early days and in circulation during the time of al-Ṭabarī, 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'āt*), 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-Ṭabarī mentions at the end of *isnāds* the word *mithlahu* (like it) or *naḥwahu* (similar to it) and without stating the *matn* (text) of the ḥadīth or report itself. Does this indicate an attempt made by al-Ṭabarī 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-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān* which invite investigation.

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