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How Did Imam At-Thabari's Interpretation with Tafsir bil Ma'tsur Style Influence Qur'anic Exegesis and Ulama During the Abbasid Dynasty Era?

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Abstract

Tafsir bil ma'tsur is a method of interpreting the Qur'an based on authoritative sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, opinions of companions, and tabi'in. In the Abbasid era, this method developed rapidly along with the increasing attention to the science of interpretation and codification of hadith. Imam At-Thabari was one of the leading figures who lived in the Abbasid era when science developed rapidly. The purpose of this study is to analyze the characteristics of Imam At-Thabari's interpretation in interpreting the Qur'an. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach. The data collection techniques used are documentation techniques and reading techniques. The results of this study indicate that tafsir bil ma'tsur in the Abbasid era experienced more mature methodological developments, especially in the aspects of criticism of sanad and the selection of stronger narrations. The influence of its methodology was very significant in the Abbasid era, which became the main reference for subsequent interpreters and formed the standard in the tradition of interpreting the Qur'an. This study contributes to the understanding of the evolution of tafsir methodology in the golden age of Islam and its relevance to the development of contemporary studies.

Keywords: Abbasid Era; Bil Ma'tsur; Imam At-Thabari.

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Introduction

The bil ma'tsur style of interpretation is an important approach in understanding the Al-Qur'an in the era of the Abbasid Dynasty, especially through the perspective of Imam At-Thabari. In this context, tafsir bil ma'tsur refers to the interpretation of the Qur'an which is based on the history or hadith of the Prophet Muhammad as well as the opinions of the companions and tabi'in. This approach emphasizes the importance of authoritative sources in explaining the meaning of sacred texts, thus providing a guarantee of accuracy and authenticity in interpretation.

Imam At-Thabari, a great scholar and prominent commentator, played a central role in the development of this style. His monumental work, "Jami' Al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an," is one of the main references that combines various histories and understandings from previous scholars [1]. In his interpretation, At-Thabari not only provides explanations of the verses of the Qur'an, but also provides the historical and social context behind the revelation, as well as making connections between the text and the experiences of Muslims at that time.

Through the study in this discussion, it is expected to provide benefits, including; 1) Digging deeper into the pattern of interpretation of bil ma'tsur carried by Imam At-Thabari in his interpretation in the Abbasid era, 2) Providing an understanding of the history of the development of interpretation in the Abbasid Dynasty era, 3) The influence of Imam At-Thabari's interpretation on the understanding of religion among Muslims in the Abbasid era 4) Adding to the richness of Islamic history and civilization studies that can be a reference for research and writing scientific works in the future. Therefore, by examining the methods and approaches used, it is expected to gain a more comprehensive understanding of At-Thabari's contribution to the tradition of interpretation in the Abbasid era, as well as its relevance to the present day.

A parallel study was written by Eman Suherman and Kahirul Katsirin entitled "*Corak dan Logika Penafsiran At-Thabari dalam Jami'ul Bayan 'an Ta'wilil Qur'an*" in 2023. This study briefly examines the logic of At-Thabari's thinking through the perspective of The History of the Idea of Qur'anic Interpretation theory with a descriptive-deductive approach. At-Thabari's interpretation is more oriented towards linguistic and fiqh aspects. In addition, based on the theory of The History of the Idea of Qur'anic Interpretation, At-Thabari's interpretation thought pattern can be categorized as critical-quotis reasoning [2].

Second, research by Abdul Kholiq, Fitroh Ni'matul Kafiyah, and Ibrahim Abdul Jabbar entitled "*Mengkaji Corak Tafsir Periode Pertengahan*" in 2023. This study explains the patterns of interpretation, starting from the background of the interpreter, education, and the purpose of the interpreter in compiling the

interpretation book. One of the figures who was researched was Imam At-Thabari with his written work, namely the book Tafsir At-Thabari which has a fiqh style [3].

Third, research by Alim Mujahidin and Abdul Matin bin Salman entitled "*Analisis Corak Penulisan Dalam Kitab-Kitab Tafsir Bi Al-Ma'tsur*" in 2024. This research explains the writing styles found in bil ma'tsur tafsir books such as the book Tafsir Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an by Imam At-Thabari, Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adzim by 'Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Idris al-Razi Ibn Abi Hatim, Tafsir Al-Durr Al-Mantsur by Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi. Of the three studies above, the similarity with this research is that they both discuss the interpretation of Imam At-Tabari. Meanwhile, the difference is that this research focuses more on the interpretation of Imam At-Thabari in the Abbasid Era using the interpretation of bil ma'tsur [4].

Method

In analyzing the discussion, the researcher used a qualitative research method, which is an approach to explore and understand a core phenomenon. It means research that produces descriptive data in the form of written words from people and observable behavior. Meanwhile, if viewed from its form, the method used is library research, namely by referring to books, journal articles and other data so that they can be examples that can then be concluded as a topic of discussion regarding the interpretation of Imam At-Thabari in the Abbasid era [5].

Result and Discussion

1. Definition of Tafsir bil Ma'tsur

Tafsir comes from the word *يفسر - تفسير* which means information, explanation, description. According to Ibn Faris and Ibn al-Manzhur, the meaning of tafsir is al-Bayan and al-Wudhuh, which is clear [6]. While the term "bil ma'tsur" comes from the isim maf'ul "atsara," which means something that is transmitted or quoted, indicating that this interpretation is based on sources taken directly from the Qur'an, hadith, or explanations of the companions and tabi'in [7]. So, tafsir bil ma'tsur is a method of interpreting the Qur'an which is based on authentic and direct sources, such as the Qur'an itself, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and explanations from the companions and tabi'in.

Broadly speaking, tafsir bil ma'tsur is divided into four parts. The divisions are as follows:

a. Tafsir Al-Qur'an referring to the Al-Qur'an

Interpretation of the Al-Qur'an with the Al-Qur'an is an interpretation of the verses of the Al-Qur'an which are explained with other related verses. In this method, general verses are explained with more specific verses, or concise verses are clarified with more detailed verses [7]. This principle is based on the belief that the Al-Qur'an is a book that explains each other and there is no contradiction in it. One example of interpreting the Al-Qur'an with the Al-Qur'an is in QS. Al-Fatihah verse 7 and QS. An-Nisa' verse 69:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۚ

“(It is) the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not (the path of) those upon whom You have incurred wrath, nor (the path of) those who go astray.” [8]

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ ۚ وَالصَّالِحِينَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

“Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad), those are the people who (will be gathered) together with those who have been bestowed with favors by Allah, (namely) the prophets, the lovers of truth, the martyrs, and pious people. They are the best friends.” [8]

The verses above include those that require further clarification, such as Surah Al-Fatihah verse 7: "the path of those whom You have bestowed favors." This phrase is elaborated upon in Surah An-Nisa' verse 69, which specifies that the people bestowed favors by Allah SWT are the prophets, the lovers of truth (الصِّدِّيقِينَ), the martyrs (الشُّهَدَاءِ), and the pious (الصَّالِحِينَ). These verses demonstrate the interconnected nature of the Qur'an, where one verse may present a general statement, and another verse offers further details or context to deepen understanding. This method of explanation highlights the coherence of the Qur'anic message, encouraging readers to explore its verses collectively rather than in isolation for a more comprehensive understanding.

b. Interpretation of the Qur'an using hadith

The interpretation of the Qur'an using hadith is a method of interpretation that explains the verses of the Qur'an by referring to the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The hadith acts as an explanation of verses that may require additional details or context that are not explained directly in the Qur'an [9]. This method emphasizes the importance of understanding from the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who received revelation and has the authority to explain the intent of the Qur'an.

One example of the interpretation of the Qur'an using hadith is the command to perform the hajj in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 196, which is emphasized by the hadiths that explain how to perform the hajj:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۖ

“Perfect the Hajj and Umrah for the sake of Allah.”[8]

c. Tafsir of the Qur'an uses the opinions of shahabat

After the Prophet died, the people who understood the Qur'an best apart from the Prophet were the Prophet's companions. In this way, tafsir scholars use the opinions of friends as a source in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an. Tafsir Al-Qur'an using the opinion of friends refers to a method of interpretation based on the understanding and explanations of the friends of the Prophet Muhammad SAW [10]. This interpretation has a high standing value in the study of the Qur'an after the interpretation using the Qur'an itself or using the hadiths of the Prophet SAW [11]. Because the companions had a direct closeness to the Prophet and they received religious teachings with a deeper understanding compared to the generations after them. The companions who are famous in providing an interpretation are Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, and Ali bin Abi Thalib.

Examples of companions' interpretations are when they clarify the meanings of verses that may be challenging to understand due to linguistic intricacies, such as uncommon vocabulary or complex syntax, or provide context by explaining the historical and situational background of a verse's revelation (asbab al-nuzul) [12]. In classical tafsir works, such as “Jami' al-Bayan” by Imam At-Tabari, the opinions of the companions are frequently cited because they were direct witnesses to the events surrounding the Qur'an's revelation, had unparalleled access to the

Prophet Muhammad's explanations, and often understood the nuances of Arabic in its purest form, thus strengthening the interpretation of a verse.

d. Interpretation of the Qur'an with the opinions of the tabi'in

What is meant by interpretation is a method of interpretation based on the understanding and explanation given by the tabi'in. Tabi'in is a generation of Muslims who came after the companions and met them directly, but did not meet the Prophet Muhammad SAW [13]. The tabi'in gained knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an from the companions, who were direct students of the Prophet, so they were considered to have authority in providing explanations regarding the verses of the Qur'an. After the death of the generation of companions, Islam began to spread more widely, and the need for interpretation and understanding of the Qur'an increased [14]. Tabi'in as a generation that inherited knowledge from the companions, became the main reference for Muslims in understanding the verses of the Qur'an [10].

2. History of the Development of Tafsir in the Abbasid Era

The Abbasid dynasty was the second dynasty after the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled for more than five centuries. The founder of the Abbasid dynasty was Abdullah bin Ali bin Abdullah bin al-Abbas (721-764 AD), better known by the title al-Saffah. According to Syalabi, the title al-Saffah describes a figure who sheds blood and threatens those who defect, and can be interpreted as a figure who easily gives away wealth. However, historians generally interpret this title as a threat and a source of blood for those who oppose it, especially the Umayyads and their supporters [15].

The Abbasid dynasty got its name from Abbas ibn Abdul Muthalib, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, because its founders claimed descent from him. During its heyday, the Abbasids managed to unite a very large area, from the Middle East to North Africa and most of Central Asia. However, over time, their political power weakened and many regions broke away, forming independent states [16]. The Abbasid dynasty was a caliphate that ruled the Islamic world after overthrowing the Umayyad dynasty in 750 AD. This dynasty ruled until 1258 AD during the conquest by Hulagu Khan (1217-1265 AD) from the Mongols and is known as one of the important periods in Islamic history, one of which is the history of the development of its interpretation [17].

The history of the development of tafsir began during the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, where explanations of the verses of the Qur'an were delivered directly by him and continued by his companions, then

developed rapidly during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, when scholars began to write tafsir books using the method various types, including tafsir bil ma'tsur and tafsir bil ra'yi. The history of tafsir in the era of the Abbasid Dynasty was an important period in the development of the science of interpreting the Qur'an. The Abbasid dynasty, which was founded in the 8th century and lasted until the 13th century, is known for the rise of science, culture and art [18].

The development of the interpretation of the Qur'an experienced its heyday in the era of the Abbasid Dynasty, many historians divide the history of the Abbasid dynasty civilization which lasted for about five centuries (750-1258 AD / 132-656 H) into two main periods. The first period took place between 750-945 AD / 132-334 H, when the Abbasid Dynasty had very dominant political power and succeeded in creating the progress of civilization known as the "Golden Age" (The Golden Age). However, during this period, signs of decline and political weakness also began to appear, especially at the end of this period [19]. The second period, namely in the year (945-1258 AD) was a time when the Abbasid Dynasty experienced a decline in political power. During this period, the caliphs lost control over several regions, which was accompanied by the emergence of small countries (duwaylāt) that separated and became independent [20].

The background to the establishment of the Abbasid Dynasty was not only caused by dissatisfaction with the Umayyad Dynasty, but because of the desire to return Islamic leadership to its original teachings. Damascus, which was the center of the Umayyad Dynasty, was considered to have deviated from the values of equality and justice taught by Islam, and discriminated against non-Arabs and Muslim communities in various provinces [21]. In addition, the success of the Abbasid revolution was supported by their ability to exploit general dissatisfaction with the Umayyads [22]. They also succeeded in rallying support from various groups, including Persia, which played an important role in the structure of Abbasid power and administration in the future. Effective military and diplomatic strategies also helped the Abbasids defeat the Umayyads and take over the Caliphate [23].

In general, at the end of the Abbasid rule, the Islamic region was divided into two parts. First, the Arab region which includes Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa, with Egypt as its center. Second, the Persian region which includes the Balkans, Asia Minor, Persia, and Central Asia, with Iran as its center. In reality, these regions were controlled by local governors [24]. Their relationship with the caliph was only in the form of paying tribute, which resulted in the rulers' distrust of the caliph, while they

focused more on developing civilization and culture than on political affairs and expansion [23].

The famous figures of interpretation in the Abbasid Dynasty era include Imam At-Thabari with his interpretive work, namely the interpretation of Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an which is known as the At-Thabari interpretation. At-Thabari's interpretation is one of the most influential works of interpretation and remains the main reference in the field of interpretation studies to this day. In addition, other famous figures of interpretation in the Abbasid era were Ibn Kathir (1300-1374 AD), Al-Baidhawi (707-735 AD), Abu Ja'far Ar-Razi (864-925 AD) and Ibn Athiyyah (1088-1146 AD) also made significant contributions to the development of the science of interpretation so far, with their works still used as references in Islamic studies today [25].

3. Imam At-Thabari

a. Biography of Imam At-Thabari

The full name of Imam At-Thabari is Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Katsir ibn Ghalib At-Thabari is more often known as Imam At-Thabari. He is a writer who has very beautiful expressions of words that are rarely used by other writers. Imam At-Thabari is not only an expert in exegesis, but also an expert in the science of fiqh, history and so on [26]. At-Thabari was born in Amul, an area in the province of Tabaristan, in the year 224 AH/838 AD (some also say 225 AH/839 AD). He lived and settled in Baghdad throughout his life until he died in the year 310 AH/923 AD. He died on Saturday and was buried on Sunday in his house on the fourth day of the end of the month of Shawwal 310 AH. Some opinions state that Imam At-Thabari died on Sunday and was buried on Monday, which is the second to the last day of the month of Shawwal, while other opinions indicate that his burial took place on the seventh day of the end of the month of Shawwal [27].

At-Thabari lived in a family that was quite concerned about education, especially in religious knowledge which was in line with the condition of Islam at that time experiencing glory and progress in the field of thought. Imam at-Thabari once traveled to the Ray region in northern Persia to gain knowledge from Muhammad bin Hamid al-Razi [28]. This teacher's thinking had a big influence on his historical work. Apart from that, he also studied with Ahmad bin Hammad ad-Daulabi, a famous scholar who was an expert in the field of history [26]. At-Thabari also studied in the city of Basrah, where he studied with Muhammad bin Mu'alla and Muhammad bin Basyar, better known as Bandar. After that,

he went to Kuffah to study from Hannad bin al-Siry and Abu Kuraib Muhammad bin 'Ala al-Hamzani. In Kuffah, At-Thabari also studied hadith and fiqh from Ismail bin Musa al-Fazari, especially in the Shafi'i school, he studied with al-Hasan bin Muhammad az-Za'farani. Meanwhile, he learned the science of qiraat from Sulaiman bin Khallad as-Samiri [29].

He traveled to various places to seek knowledge, until finally continuing his studies in Baghdad, Iraq. In this city, his religious knowledge developed rapidly, and his name began to shine among scholars and intellectuals. At-Thabari became very famous, both among those who supported and those who opposed him. As one of the experts in science in the third century of Hijriah, he was very productive in writing in various fields of science and had in-depth analysis, so that he was able to outperform other scholars of his time [26].

Imam At-Thabari chose to live unmarried until the end of his life, which gave him more time to study science. His life was spent studying, teaching, and writing. Although he produced many works, no researcher can be sure of the exact number [30]. They only estimate, as stated in the history of Khatib al-Baghdadi quoted by Ali bin Ubaidillah al-Lughawi asy-Syamsi. According to the history, At-Thabari actively wrote for 40 years. If it is assumed that he wrote around 40 copies every day, then the total number of pages he produced reached 1,068,000 copies [26].

One of his most monumental works of interpretation is Tafsir by At-Thabari (*Jami' Al-Bayan fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*) which consists of 30 volumes and is compiled using the tahlili method, following the order of the Uthmani mushaf. In a historical context, Tafsir At-Thabari was written in the 9th century AD, more precisely between 855 and 923 AD [31]. The source of interpretation in the *Jami' al-Bayan* interpretation is *bil ma'tsur*, namely an interpretation based on the verses of the Qur'an and narrations that rely on the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the opinions of the companions, and the *tabi'in* [32]. However, At-Thabari's interpretation has differences and advantages compared to previous generations of exegetes [33]. He not only quoted the narrations of the Prophet and the opinions of previous exegetes, but also criticized the validity of the narrations, distinguished between the authentic and the unauthentic, and chose the strongest (*rajih*) opinion of the companions if there was a difference of opinion between the companions and the *tabi'in* [34]. At-Thabari's sources of interpretation include the Prophet's hadith, the opinions of companions, *tabi'in*, Arabic poetry, and Nabawiyah sirah [35].

He also criticized the dhaif hadith, both in terms of its sanad and matan [36].

In his interpretation, At-Tabari not only conveys his personal opinion, but also quotes many statements from Ibn Abbas and other early mufassir. The specialty of At-Tabari's interpretation lies in each of his explanations which are always accompanied by a series of isnads that indicate the source of the information [37]. In addition, At-Tabari has his own specialty in terms of superior istinbath (legal derivation) and his ability to explain ambiguous words in i'rab (grammar) [38]. This places his interpretation above other interpretations. As a leading philologist, he explored pre-Islamic poetry to find the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. His main contributions in his collection of tafsir histories include Arabic philology and grammar, as well as discoveries of the laws of faith and jurisprudence concluded from the verses of the Qur'an.

Imam Suyuti and Imam al-Nawawi acknowledged that At-Tabari's work is one of the greatest in the tradition of tafsir, because he presents a detailed explanation by referring to the opinions of the Companions and Tabi'in [31]. This shows that although At-Tabari was written after the time of the Companions, he is still rooted in the existing tradition of tafsir, and thus, can be considered a continuation of the method of tafsir that developed during the time of the Companions. Overall, it can be concluded that At-Tabari is included in the category of tafsir that developed during the time of the Companions, even though it was written after them [39]. At-Tabari reflects the methods and approaches that already exist, and contributes to the development of the science of tafsir more widely among Muslims.

b. Characteristics of Imam At-Tabari's Interpretation

At-Tabari interpreted the Qur'an using two approaches, namely the narration approach (tafsir bil ma'tsur) and (tafsir bil ra'yi). The explanation is as follows:

1) Narrative Approach (Tafsir bil Ma'tsur)

Tafsir bil ma'tsur is the main approach used by Imam At-Tabari in his monumental tafsir work, *Jami' Al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*. This approach focuses on the interpretation of the Qur'an based on the authentic narrations of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, his companions, and tabi'in. Imam At-Tabari is known to be very loyal to this narration approach in compiling his tafsir, prioritizing authoritative sources from the early Islamic period. He begins his

interpretation by mentioning a verse of the Qur'an, then presents narrations related to the explanation of the verse. The main sources used are the hadith of the Prophet, the opinions of companions such as Ibn Abbas, and the views of the tabi'in [2]. As for an example of Imam At-Thabari's interpretation in his interpretation, namely Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an, which is the interpretation of the Qur'an with the hadith of the Prophet which is found in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 187:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

"Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes clear to you from the black thread of dawn." [8]

According to the interpretation of Imam At-Thabari, Adi bin Hatim said: "I took a white thread and a black thread and put them under my pillow. I kept observing them until the difference was clear, and then I came to the Messenger of Allah SAW and told him about it. He said: 'That is the darkness of the night and the light of the day.'" (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

2) Combination of History and Reason (Ra'yi)

Although his interpretation is rooted in historical reports, Imam al-Tabari also incorporates reasoning (*ra'yi*) in his tafsir. He employs reason to analyze verses for which no clear historical reports are available or to connect historical narrations to the broader context and themes of a verse [40]. By doing so, he ensures that the interpretation is not solely reliant on transmitted reports but also takes into account linguistic, rhetorical, and contextual elements to derive a comprehensive understanding. This balanced approach between transmitted knowledge and independent reasoning makes his interpretation not only flexible but also enriched with depth, enabling it to address diverse questions and complexities in understanding the Qur'an. An example of the interpretation of bil ra'yi is in QS. Al-Fatihah verse 6:

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

"Guide us to the straight path." [8]

Imam At-Thabari interpreted that, "...the straight path" refers to the true religion and the straight path of life, not just the physical meaning of the path. At-Thabari explained that this understanding is

based on the structure of the Arabic language and the context of the use of the word صِرَاط in various verses of the Qur'an. In addition to citing the opinions of previous scholars, he finally concluded that the most appropriate meaning of this verse is a guide to the truth in Islam. In this case, At-Tabari applied the interpretation of bil ra'yi by analyzing the meaning of the word صِرَاط linguistically and contextually.

4. The Influence of Tafsir At-Tabari During the Abbasid Dynasty

Tafsir At-Tabari (Jami' Al-Bayan fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an) by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (838–923 AD) had a very large influence during the Abbasid Dynasty, both in terms of interpretation methodology and contribution to the development of the science of interpretation at that time. The following are some of the important influences of Tafsir At-Tabari [41]:

a. Systematization of Interpretation of Narratives

Imam al-Tabari is renowned as a pioneer in blending interpretation based on transmitted narrations (*tafsir bi'l-ma'thur*) with interpretation rooted in reasoning (*tafsir bi'l-ra'yi*). He meticulously gathered numerous narrations from the companions, *tabi'in* (successors), and earlier scholars to provide a rich repository of historical and contextual explanations for interpreting Qur'anic verses [2]. At the same time, he used reasoning to critically assess, reconcile, and elaborate on these narrations, ensuring coherence and contextual relevance. This dual approach allowed him to systematize the process of interpretation, creating a structured and methodological framework that balanced reliance on authoritative sources with intellectual inquiry. This methodology not only strengthened his own tafsir but also laid a solid foundation for later commentators, enabling them to interpret verses with a clear, detailed, and well-substantiated basis. His work thus serves as a bridge between traditional scholarship and analytical reasoning, making it a cornerstone of classical Qur'anic exegesis.

b. Important Reference for Other Tafsir Scholars

Imam al-Tabari's *Tafsir* became a foundational reference for later commentators due to its comprehensive and methodical approach. Many renowned scholars, such as al-Zamakhshari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir, extensively quoted his interpretations in their works, acknowledging the depth and authority of his exegesis. One key factor contributing to the

widespread reliance on al-Tabari's *Tafsir* is his rigorous methodology in verifying narrations [42]. He critically assessed the chains of transmission (*isnad*) and the content of reports to ensure their authenticity and reliability. This meticulous approach gave his *Tafsir* a level of credibility and trust unmatched by many other works of its time. Furthermore, his balanced use of narrations and reasoning made his interpretations versatile and applicable across various contexts, establishing his *Tafsir* as a standard reference in both classical and modern Qur'anic studies.

c. The Spread of Tafsir Science Among Ulama

During the Abbasid Dynasty, Baghdad emerged as the epicenter of Islamic civilization, fostering a vibrant intellectual climate that attracted scholars from diverse disciplines, including tafsir. The city became a hub for learning, where scholars exchanged ideas, debated theories, and produced influential works. Within this rich scholarly environment, *Tafsir al-Tabari* gained prominence as one of the most studied and taught texts among the *ulama*. Its comprehensive approach to Qur'anic interpretation, blending historical narrations and analytical reasoning, resonated with scholars seeking a structured and authoritative source for understanding the Qur'an [43].

The intellectual influence of *Tafsir al-Tabari* extended far beyond Baghdad, reaching various regions of the Abbasid empire through the dissemination of manuscripts and the teaching of his methodologies. This widespread study of his work contributed to the standardization and systematization of Qur'anic exegesis, ensuring its enduring impact on the Islamic intellectual tradition. Baghdad's role as a center of knowledge amplified the reach of *Tafsir al-Tabari*, cementing its place as a cornerstone in the field of Qur'anic studies[36].

d. Influence in the Study of Fiqh and Hadith

Apart from his expertise in tafsir, Imam al-Tabari was also a distinguished scholar in the fields of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *hadith* (prophetic traditions). His deep understanding of these disciplines significantly influenced his methodology in Qur'anic interpretation, particularly in addressing *asbab al-nuzul* (the reasons for the revelation of verses) and exploring the intricate relationship between Qur'anic verses and hadith [27].

By referring to authentic hadiths and the views of the companions, al-Tabari enriched his interpretations with historical and situational context, offering a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an. This

approach not only clarified the practical applications of the verses but also provided a framework for understanding the synergy between divine revelation and the Prophet's teachings [41]. His methodology set a precedent for later scholars, emphasizing the importance of integrating textual evidence with historical insights to achieve a nuanced and well-rounded exegesis. Thus, al-Tabari's contributions extended beyond tafsir, shaping the broader Islamic scholarship and guiding subsequent *ulama* in their studies.

e. Rational Approach in Interpretation

Although Imam al-Tabari's interpretation relies heavily on *tafsir bi'l-ma'thur* (interpretation based on narration), he does not disregard the use of *tafsir bi'l-ra'yi* (interpretation based on reasoning) in instances where no authentic narrations are available or when addressing verses that require further analysis. This approach allows him to navigate complex or ambiguous texts, using reason to explore linguistic nuances, contextual meanings, and thematic coherence [40].

Such a balanced methodology was particularly relevant during the Abbasid Dynasty, an era renowned for its flourishing intellectual culture, where philosophy, logic, and rational sciences were actively developed and integrated into Islamic thought [17]. By combining the authority of transmitted reports with rational inquiry, al-Tabari's *tafsir* not only preserved traditional scholarship but also engaged with the intellectual trends of his time. This dual approach made his work adaptable, resonating with both traditional scholars and those influenced by the rationalist movements of the Abbasid period, thus ensuring its lasting significance in Islamic scholarship.

f. Strengthening the Identity of Islamic Science

During the Abbasid period, there was an assimilation of sciences from various civilizations such as Greece and Persia. At-Tabari's Tafsir, with its strong focus on the tradition of Islamic narration, helped strengthen the identity of Islamic science, especially in dealing with foreign thoughts. His Tafsir maintained the orthodoxy of interpretation rooted in Islamic tradition while at the same time opening up space for rational reasoning [15].

Overall, Imam al-Tabari's *Tafsir* had a profound and lasting impact on the development of Qur'anic interpretation during the Abbasid Dynasty, a period marked by intense intellectual activity and the formalization of Islamic sciences. His work became a cornerstone in the tradition of Islamic

exegesis, serving as a model for balancing narration (*tafsir bi'l-ma'thur*) with reasoning (*tafsir bi'l-ra'yi*). The influence of *Tafsir al-Tabari* extended far beyond the Abbasid period, shaping the approaches of later scholars like al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, and others. Its enduring relevance lies in its comprehensive scope and methodological depth, which continue to guide contemporary Qur'anic studies and uphold the intellectual legacy of Islamic interpretation.

Based on the discussion in this study, the interpretation style of *bil ma'tsur* during the Abbasid era, particularly from Imam al-Tabari's perspective, involves an approach where the Qur'an is explained through direct references to established reports, including the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and the early generations of scholars. Imam al-Tabari, in his *Jami' al-Bayan* (The Comprehensive Explanation), adopted this method extensively, relying heavily on various sources to explain the meanings of the Qur'an.

The *bil ma'tsur* method that Imam al-Tabari adopted emphasized the importance of preserving the knowledge and interpretations passed down through authentic reports. This was crucial in the Abbasid era when intellectual movements, like Kalam (Islamic theology) and philosophical discourse, were influencing the way the Qur'an was understood. Imam al-Tabari's insistence on grounding interpretations in the *mutawatir* (widely reported) narrations ensured that the Qur'anic interpretation remained rooted in the authoritative traditions of the Prophet and his companions.

Moreover, his methodology offered a counterbalance to speculative interpretations that sought to rationalize the Qur'an's meanings beyond the scope of the early traditions. Al-Tabari's style reinforced the value of textual authenticity, which helped preserve the integrity of Islamic teachings. In this sense, his approach was a defense of the traditional Islamic hermeneutical framework, focusing on narrations that could trace their lineage back to the Prophet's direct companions and early generations of Muslims.

Conclusion

The history of the development of interpretation in the Abbasid era reflects significant progress in the understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an. During this period, the approach of interpretation *bil ma'tsur*, which relies on the narrations of the Prophet and his companions, became dominant, while the method of interpretation *bil ra'yi* began to be introduced, adding an analytical dimension to interpretation. The *bil ma'tsur* method was foundational in the Abbasid era as it preserved the classical exegesis tradition. Imam al-Tabari's contribution was monumental in ensuring that the Qur'anic

interpretations aligned with the original and authentic sources, protecting the Qur'an from being misinterpreted through later intellectual and philosophical movements.

The works of commentators, such as Imam At-Tabari, showed the integration between oral tradition and rational thought, creating a strong foundation for the subsequent development of the science of interpretation. Overall, the Abbasid era not only marked progress in interpretation, but also formed the framework for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of religion in the Islamic tradition. The style of interpretation of bil ma'tsur in the Abbasid era, especially from the perspective of Imam At-Tabari, shows a very tradition-oriented approach. At-Tabari emphasized the importance of valid textual sources, such as the Koran, hadith and the opinions of friends. In his work, "Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an", he combines various narrations to explain the verses of the Qur'an, and tries to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the text.

This gave rise to the influence of At-Tabari's interpretation on the development of interpretation in the Abbasid era, which is seen in the development of a more systematic and structured interpretation method, as well as the application of historical and social contexts in understanding revelation. This approach not only enriches the treasury of interpretation science, but also encourages the emergence of critical and analytical thinking among scholars. Therefore, the interpretation of bil ma'tsur carried by Imam At-Tabari not only strengthens the foundation of understanding the Qur'an in the Abbasid era, but also has a lasting impact on the tradition of Islamic interpretation to this day.

Author Contributions

Diana Durrotul Lum'ah: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Nasrullah:** Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Investigation. **Bilqist Adna Salsabila:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Investigation. **Faruk Almaliki:** Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

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