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Mesut Kaya. Taberî Tefsirinin Kaynakları. Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2022. 415 Sayfa.

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Abstract

Mesut Kaya identifies the sources that Ṭabarī used in his tafsir and provided a thorough analysis of those sources in his book *Taberi Tefsirinin Kaynakları*. The author also provides the reader with a significant amount of information about the early exegetical tradition. Ṭabarī's narrations from the first-period commentaries is rigorously eveluated. By doing this, the author offers us with the neccesary information to critically identify, analyze and assess the original and early tafsir sources and works. Through referencing siginificant classical works and names, the book brought to light groundbreaking ways to reread the past and shape the future academic endeavors in fields such as hadith and tafsir. Because of its strategy, in-depth information, and outcomes, this book significantly contributes to the literature. Kaya, has done a comprehensive and a thorough work in narrowing down and manifesting various works and authors consulted by Ṭabarī. Not sufficing with mentioning the said classical works and auhtors, Kaya, endulged in an intense assesment of every related issue he dealt with in the book. Given the book's significance, this work, attempts to evaluate the approach and content of *Taberi Tafsiri'nin Kaynakları*, as well as the author's comments and findings. The author's reference to Fuat Sezgin and his methodology in analyzing isnad, is also referred to and dealt with systematically.

Keywords: Tafsir, Ṭabarī, Mesut Kaya, Jāmiʿ al-bayān.

Öz

Mesut Kaya, Taberî'nin tefsirinde kullandığı kaynakları tespit etmiş ve bu kaynakların ayrıntılı bir incelemesini *Taberî Tefsirinin Kaynakları* adlı kitabında vermiştir. Yazar, ayrıca okuyucuya erken dönem tefsir geleneği hakkında zengin bir birikim sunmaktadır. Taberî'nin ilk dönem tefsirlerindeki rivayetleri titizlikle değerlendiren yazar, orijinal ve erken dönem tefsir kaynaklarını eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmiş ve değerlendirmiştir. Kitap, önemli klasik eserlere ve müelliflere atıfta bulunarak, hadis ve tefsir gibi alanlarının geleceğini şekillendirmenin yollarını gün ışığına çıkarmıştır. Stratejisi, derinlemesine bilgisi ve sonuçları nedeniyle bu kitap literatüre önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunmaktadır. Kaya, Taberî'nin kullandığı çeşitli eser ve müelliflerin tasnifinde kapsamlı ve titiz bir çalışma yapmıştır. Söz konusu klasik eserleri ve müelliflerini zikretmekle yetinmeyen Kaya, kitapta ele aldığı her konu hakkında yoğun bir değerlendirmede bulunmuştur. Kitabın önemi göz önünde bulundurularak bu çalışma, *Taberî Tefsiri'nin Kaynakları*'nın yaklaşım ve muhtevası ile yazarın yorum ve tespitlerini analiz etmektedir. Buna paralel olarak müellifin isnad tahlilinde Fuat Sezgin'e ve metodolojisine aşırı gönderme yapması da değerlendirmede dikkate alınmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tefsir, Taberî, Mesut Kaya, Câmiu'l-beyân.

The book under review here titled *Taberî Tefsirinin Kaynakları* (Sources of Ṭabarī's Tafsir) is written by Mesut Kaya whose main research areas are Qurʾanic exegeses, contemporary trends in Qur'anic studies, history of Tafsir, methodology of Tafsir and contemporary Islamic thought. Apart from the foreword, index, and bibliography, the book contains an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Prior to focusing on the content in technical terms, the salient features of the first stage of the work can be listed as follows: Written in immersive Turkish, the book is highly systematic and structurally complementary, harmonious in its usage of classical sources and modern studies on different disciplines regarding the subject and strict on the conceptual and critical analysis of exegetical narrators and distinct early period exegeses.

While outlining his motivations for writing the book, Kaya, frequently refers to the intellectual impact Ṭabarī's *Jami*`, Zamakhsharī's` *al- Kashshāf* and Fuat Sezgin's works on isnād (chain of narration) had on his understanding of exegetical narrations. In that regard, the author notes that, Fuat Sezgin, in both of his works (*al-Bukhārī 's Sources* and *Tarīkh al-Turās al-Arabī*) in question, made serious remarks about Ṭabarī's sources and pointed out that these sources should be studied. For this reason, "I took a lot of notes from what I read and created a file" as one of his motivations for delving and preoccupying his mind with Ṭabarī (p. 14). The

book under review, came as a result of Kaya's preoccupation with Ṭabarī. By problematizing the issue, in the first chapter, the author focused on the historiography and the periodization of tafsir. Having written an article[1] on the subject previously, he reviewed and updated his take on the issue, thanks to Ibrahim Abdullah Rufayda's stance on the subject matter.[2] To understand the change made by the author on the subject, the general picture of tafsir historiography should be presented firstly. Generally speaking, the accustomed perception of the tafsir periodization, is three facets. Namely, periodic, methodological and contemporary. Periodic classification includes four main periods, starting with the prophet, his companions, successors and post-successors' tafsir activities. Using the methodological approach, tafsir activities are divided into linguistic, sectarian, philosophical, mystic and jurisprudential tafsir. Finally, the contemporary category deals with the modern view of Qur'anic understanding like sociological and scientific tafsir.

In the previously mentioned article written by the author, he roughly divided the history of tafsir into four as the formative period, the systematization period, the maturity period and, the modern period. Pursuing an intellectual maturity, the author, inspired by Rufayda's approach, indicated that by considering the various classification styles available in the classical period, the classification of Rufayda and the classification he made before, he will try to determine the place of Ṭabarī in his current periodization (p. 24). According to the author, the most obvious characteristic of the formative period, is that the first seeds of systematic tafsir activity were planted in this process (29).

From the beginning of the second century, the science of tafsir began to be compiled and the first written works of tafsir began to appear. However, it is too early to see the science of tafsir as a fully formed science during the mentioned period. In response to the known discussion regarding the origin of tafsir, Kaya, positioned himself to see tafsir, as, though rudimentary then, but as an evolving independent field. Not as others put it to be "initially formed as a branch of the science of hadith, but that it emerged as an independent science". Kaya, as other scholars did, also classifies Ṭabarī as the turning point in tafsir. He, under the title "the period of systematization" discussed how and why Ṭabarī is considered to be a game changer in tafsir, in terms of his writing and methodology. He conducted such task in reference to elite prominent scholars and works. Under the title "period of maturity", the author, moving century wise, discussed what and how each century contributed to the evolvement of tafsir by mentioning the works, theories, authors and discussions held for the desired end. Ṭabarī, not surpassed in the field, became and unmounted mountain, a source only revolved around. Considered to be stagnant after Ṭabarī by some scholars[3], the field of tafsir transited into a new realm. One entitled as "Taḥqīq: The Period of Commentary, Annotation and Treatises". After which followed the period of Translation and Tajdīd, in which, as the title depicts, focused on the translation of classical sources to Muslim majority languages in search of ways to keep the field moving in the contemporary era. Finally, the Contemporary Period/Social Interpretation Period (XX. Century) is in search of making Qur'an a social phenomenon, making it available to the public.

Given the title of the book, the introductory part seems longer than necessary. However, since the section is well written, it could have been a separate article on its own. For, though

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[1] Mesut Kaya, "Dönemsel İlmî Şartların Müfessirin Donanımı Üzerindeki Belirleyiciliği: Klasik ve Modern Dönem Mukayesesi", *Marife*, Kış 2013, 9-31.

[2] Ibrahim Abdullah Rufayda, *al-Naḥw wa Kutub al-Tafsīr* (Bingazi: Dār al-Jamāhiriyya, 1990), 563-568.

[3] Jalāluddīn al-Suyūtī, *al-İtqān fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, thk. Muhammed Abū al-Fadl Ibrahim (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1394/1974), IV/242.

the section helped in mapping out Ṭabarī, that could have been achieved differently. As for the historiography of tafsir provided in the introductory section, not much could be said to be added to the already existing literature. On the other hand, Kaya, indeed revised his view of the historiography of tafsir, and the new stance appear to be more comprehensive and rigorous. Additionally, the added table at the end of the introduction part serves as a summary of the chapter presented in persistent and effective way of learning and remembering.

The first chapter deals with Ṭabarī's journey to different cities in search of knowledge (Riḥla). For a better understanding and visualization of the said journey, the author provided the reader with a map portraying Ṭabarī's journeys sided with the distance in kilometers. Analysis regarding the author's life, death and any other relevant bibliographical information, like his authority in different fields, his theological stance and how he is viewed by prominent scholars is given by referencing the ṭabaqāt books. Under the title "*Jāmiʿ al-bayān* and Its Characteristics", dating from his childhood, the author, narrated how Ṭabarī envisioned himself as a mufassir by saying, "Ṭabarī himself states that the idea of writing tafsir dates back to his childhood, as he stated that, 'When I was a child, a voice inside me was whispering this to me'. When Ṭabarī intended to write his tafsir, he prayed and asked for Allah's help for three years in order to actualize his dream and his prayer got answered" (p. 79). Another significant feature of this chapter is that it manifests an in-depth analysis of *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* in reference to scholars' views of it, how and why the exegesis is considered to be more inclusive and comprehensive than the previous works and how it served as an irremissible and unavoidable source. In addition to its positioning of Ṭabarī's tafsir, the provided analysis enlightens our understanding of exegetical activities with regard to the relevant time and environment. Under 10 bullet points, Kaya, dealt with the content of Ṭabarī's exegesis. Said differently, the author confronts us with all the necessary characteristics of the tafsir by referring to how Ṭabarī handled different issues related to the history of tafsir, history of the Qur'ān and the methodology of tafsir such as Israiliyyat, different readings (*qirāʾāt*) theological and jurisprudential matters (p. 89). Meanwhile, the author also used the opportunity to discuss contemporary discussions on tafsir methodology, such as that of riwāyah – dirāyah dichotomy, and to which Ṭabarī's tafsir belongs to (p. 86). Subsequently, under the title "Studies on the Sources of Classical Works", Kaya, introduced us to what will serve as foundational to our understanding of classical works and how, if need be, a person can extract the used sources in any classical work. After the expertly written previous section, the author proceeded, to what can be considered to be the first most relevant title in accord with the book's title. Entitled as "Introduction to the Sources of Ṭabarī's Commentary", Kaya, initially acquaint us with the primary sources of Ṭabarī. According to him, the most mentioned commentators in Ṭabarī's tafsir are the *mawālī* exegetes and the tafsir is largely shaped by their works. As a matter of fact, it is stated that "the narrations corresponding to 60 percent in Ṭabarī's tafsir were transmitted by the commentators of the Tābiʿūn (successors) period, and approximately 11488 tafsir narrations were attributed to Mujāhid and Qatāda" (p. 104).[4] The discussions held towards the end of this chapter, prepares the mind to what is to come in the upcoming chapter. For, it dealt with narration and information related to classical sources, which the later parts of the book tackled.

Under the heading "Mujāhid's narrations in Ṭabarī's tafsir", Kaya commenced with short introduction of Mujāhid's life in collaboration with how scholars viewed him and posi-

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[4] Also see: Muhammed b. Abdullah al-Hudayri, *Tafsir al-tabiīn: Ardh wa dirāsa muqārana*, (Riyad: Dār al-Watan, ts.), I/21-24.

tioned him in different fields of Islamic studies. In that regard, Abdurrahman al-Ṭāhir b. Muhammad al-Suratī in 1976 under the name of *Tafsiru Mujāhid* published a tafsir attributed to Mujāhid. From the portrayed picture of the tafsir, it seems to be recognized as unavoidable milestone achievable by few. As for Mujāhid's relationship with Ṭabarī, he is considered to be one of the leading tafsir commentators from whom Ṭabarī conveys the most opinions on tafsir, often preferring, approving and sometimes criticizing his views (p. 117). By analyzing 10 primary narrators from Mujāhid, Kaya thoroughly discussed how Mujāhid contributed to Ṭabarī's tafsir reaching the zenith of compilation (p. 123-132). The first isnād (chain of narration), via which Mujāhid's narrations took place in Ṭabarī's tafsir is through Ibn Abī Najīh. After giving a synopsis of the narrator, other transmitters through which reports appeared in Ṭabarī's tafsir are dealt with by citing examples. Same is the case for the second chain, actualized through Ibn Jurayj. Who is considered to be the second reporter with the most narrations in Ṭabarī's tafsir. The third chain, occurred through Mansur b. Mu'tamar, brought to light the distinct narrations reported through him from Ibn Jurayj. The fourth isnād through Lays b. Abī Sulaiman al-Kūfī is given with an examplary narration. As for the final narrator in this regard, the fifth chain is through Qāsim b. Abī Bazzah. A striking feature in this part of the book is the way the section is conducted. The author, with expertise, gave us a summary of each name's biography and any relevant information. He, additionally, presented tables showing who reported from which narrator and how they are all dating back to Mujāhid. The author also cited various examples of reports exemplifying the narrators' existence in his work. Following the same approach, Kaya, under the title "Reporters Transmitting Less Than Mujāhid", mentioned narrators, as the title depicts, who have lesser reports than Mujāhid, who are in the name of Jābir al-Ju'fī, al-A'mash, Humayd al-A'raj, Husayf b. Abdurrahman, Hakam b. Utayba, and Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī. While and after each discussion, the author, manifested his expertise and authority over the topics at hand. which is obvious through his usage of resources, how he analyzed them and the meaningful and relevant conclusions he drew from them. Additionally, Kaya, added a headline with the name "Other Reporters from Mujāhid", which is probably as a result of later discovery. For the author seems to have laid his hands on more narrators from Mujāhid, who he didn't include under the most relevant title and felt the need to include them. However, if the latterly discovered narrators had been given under the most relevant title, the set up would have been more appealing.

After notifying us with Ṭabarī's main resources on narrations, the author continued the elucidation by acquainting us with Ṭabarī's fundamental exegetical sources in the third chapter. The author asserted "One of Ṭabarī's most trusted sources is Ali b. Abī Talha's compilation of narrations from Ibn Abbas" (p. 208). The first part of the chapter, thoroughly discussed the position of Ibn Abbas in tafsir and how he is considered to be an unshakable and comprehensive authority. It can indeed be considered as a short encyclopedia for Ibn Abbas. Generally, the third chapter can categorically be divided into two. In connection with the chapter's title, the first and most salient feature, is the analysis of 19 early period exegetical works by including biographical information of every author together with other scholars' analysis and criticisms of the author. The said 19 early period exegetical works together with their authors are as follows; Tafsiru Daḥāk b. Muzāḥim, Tafsiru Aṭiyya al-Awfī, Tafsir al-Ṣuddī, Tafsiru Rabi' b. Anas, Tafsiru Muqātil b. Ḥayyān, Tafsiru Ibn Jurayj, Tafsiru Said b. Abī Arūba (Tafsiru Qatāda), Tafsiru Muhammed b. Sawr (Tafsiru Qatāda through the chain of Ma'mar b. Rashīd), Tafsiru Abdurrazzāk, Tafsiru Shu'ba b. Hajjāj, Tafsiru Sufyan al-Sawrī, Tafsiru Abdullah b. Mubārak, Tafsiru Sufyān b. Uyayna, Jami' Abdullah b. Wahb (Tafsiru Abdurrahmān b. Zayd, Tafsiru Zayd b. Aslam), Tafsiru Hushaym b. Bashīr, Tafsiru Waki' b. Jarrāh, Tafsiru

Yazīd b. Hārun and Tafsiru Sunayd (Hussain b. Dāwūd al-Missisi). The second characteristic of this chapter is that, in addition to the titled tafsir works, Ṭabarī, narrated a huge number of reports from a group of people who are not mentioned to have authored any exegetical work, yet occupied a considerable place in the tafsir. In accordance with that, Ṭabarī narrated over 450 narrations from Abū Aḥmad al-Zubayrī, 50 reports from Musa b. Abdurrahmān al-Masrūqī and 50 narrations from Kalbī (p. 308-316). With regards to the criticisms associated with the name Kalbī in tabaqāt books, Kaya favoured the opinon that the Kalbī reported from, in the tafsir, is not the same as the Kalbī criticized in tabaqat works. Unfortunately, though, provided with an analysis of his intellectual personality, Abdulwāris b. Said's narrations are not numbered like the previously mentioned narrators. However, regardless of his prominence, Ṭabarī, did not narrate any report from Muqātil b. Sulaimān (p. 316). He considered the evaluations regarding him striking enough to make him unreliable. At the end of the chapter, Kaya discussed and evaluated Yāqut al-Hamawī's analysis of some narrations in Ṭabarī's tafsir. For, al-Hamawī listed names of narrators and the number of reports he considered to be available in Ṭabarī's exegesis.

Known to be a historian himself, Ṭabarī, seems to have been impacted by his predecessor, Ibn Ishāq in various aspects. As the author noted, "the structure and method of Ṭabarī's tafsir have similar characteristics (to that of ibn Ishāq's *Maghāzī*) to a large extent. Considered to be the earliest of its kind, Ibn Ishāq's *Maghāzī*, is an encyclopedic source on its own. Covering distinct issues beginning with prophet Adam till the time of its writing. One of the outstanding roles of Ibn Ishāq's work on Ṭabarī's tafsir, is that, it served as the most significant source informing and explicating the period before the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) (p. 330). Although the work didn't survive till today, Kaya asserted that Ṭabarī had a complete copy of Ibn Ishāq's work while writing his exegesis (p. 331).[5] Besides giving a detailed analysis of Ibn Ishāq's life and work, Kaya, moved on to discuss other aspects of roles his work served in Ṭabarī's tafsir. The author, narrowed down reports from Ibn Ishāq in four main categories. Narrations he transmitted from Ibn Abbas, reports he narrated from the successors like Mujāhid, the ones he reported from *ahl al-kitāb* narrators and the ones whose source is himself. Citing examples under each category, Kaya, remarked that with his usage of a work classified in the field of history and sirah as a source in his tafsir, in a way that we have not seen in any commentator before him, enabled him to make a transformation in tafsir (p. 357). The fourth chapter ended with a table, showing the sources of Ibn Ishāq's narrations.

In the final chapter, Kaya deftly equipped the reader with information regarding early linguistic exegetical activities, hence facilitating the reader's understanding of what is to come. By discussing the rudimentary endeavors in linguistic tafsir under the title "Pre-Ṭabarī Linguistic Interpretation", the author gave a short introduction of early linguistic approaches in understanding the Qur'ān, by mentioning and analyzing the main works and their authors. Being comprehensive in all aspects, Ṭabarīdidn't neglect the usage of linguistic sources for its immense effect in understanding the Qur'an. While Ṭabarī interpreted the Qur'an from a philological point of view, he sustained the discussions carried out in the works written before him into his tafsir and analyzed the views when need be. When making a linguistic reference to semantic and syntax scholars, Ṭabarī used the phrase "Qāla baʿdu ahl al-Kūfa", or "Qāla baʿdu ahl al-Basra" or "Qāla baʿdu ahl al-Arabiyya" in situations where he chose not to mention names (p. 364). Following an extensive discussion of the earliest most prominent works in exegetical

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[5] Heribert Horst, "Taberî'nin Kur'an Tefsiri'ndeki Rivayetler", çev. Sabri Çap, *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 16/1 (2016), 323, 324, 328.

linguistic, is an analysis of Ṭabarī's usage of *qirāʾāt* works. Ṭabarī, having a certificate of authority (*ijāzah*) on Abū Ubayd Qasim b. Sallam's work, who is classified as the first reliable Imam to collect the recitations (*qirāʾāt*) in a book, identifying 25 reciters, including those famous seven[67], used the source adequately (p. 388). However, Ṭabarī didn't only refer to Abū Ubayd's book on this subject, but also included the opinions of the Imams of recitation without the need for any attribution (p. 395).

In conclusion, the book at hand is thoroughly researched and meticulously written. Thanks to the author's expertise and motivations in writing the book. For his analysis of the mentioned classical works, authors and historical events, especially in connection with the field of tafsir is admirable. The fact that you can feel the author's existence in almost every page, makes the work's originality meritorious. However, there exists some repetitions in the book. Nevertheless, the book serves as an encyclopedia as well as a source for furthere reseach or a source to be taught at higher institutes.

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[6] Ibn al-Jazari, *Sharhu Tayyibat al-Nashr*, thk. Anas Muhra (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1420/2000), I/159.

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Etik Beyan / Ethical Statement:

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur / It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.

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Çıkar Çatışması / Competing Interests
Yazarlar, çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan ederler. / The authors declare that they have no competing interests.