Historical Overview

SUMMARY

1. Qur'anic Exegesis as a whole is introduced with a basic definition of terms, what it means and how it has developed down the centuries.
2. An introduction to the most prominent exegetes and their works has been given listing key *tafsīr* titles.
3. The Qur'an clearly has many layers of meaning and other vast elements (verse 59:21 states "Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily, thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of Allah"). But the question is do we as human beings have access to that meaning? Qur'anic exegesis involves understanding/elucidating/interpreting each verse. Do we take the clear, obvious meaning or do we try to look beneath the surface and unveil more hidden ones? Do we have the ability to do so, should we do so given our limited capacities, should we only adhere to what we know from Prophetic traditions?
4. What methodological standards should be adopted in Qur'anic exegesis? Should we rely on hadith and the Companion's comments only? Or, accounting for the time-space factor, adopt some level of reasoning, and/or rational understanding in interpretation of text?

These and other questions integral to Qur'anic exegesis have followed Muslims down the centuries. It has led to exegetes praising each other, criticizing each other, and even opposing each other. This chapter gives a brief overview of the issues involved.

THE SCIENCE OF *Tafsīr* aims to explain the meanings of Allah's word as revealed in His Sacred Book, the Qur'an, to His Messenger Muhammad, and is usually rendered as Qur'anic 'interpretation' or exegesis. It is one of the major Islamic sciences. The Arabic root *f-s-r* means to unveil, to uncover,[1] and traditional or classical Muslim scholars state that the verbal noun *tafsīr* is derived from *fassara* meaning to explain. The terms, *fassara*, *tafsirah*, and *tafsīr* all denote explanation, elucidating, exposition, and unveiling.

Tafsīr, literally meaning 'explanation', and *ta'wīl*, interpretation, are two terms usually used by scholars as synonymous or inter-changeable to denote Qur'anic interpretation or exegesis. Both of these terms are derived from transitive verbs, although the term *tafsīr* is used more for its intensive signification.[2] According to Arabic lexicographers, the word *ta'wīl* is a derivation of either *awwala* (to return, or to arrive at the final end) and/or *iyālah* (the *maṣdar* meaning verbal noun of *āla*, to arrange or to shape).

The Difference Between *Tafsīr* and *Ta'wīl*

According to Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Maturidī (d. 333 AH), *tafsīr* is the explanation of the ultimate meaning of the text that unveils what God exclusively intended by the text, while *ta'wīl* applies to upholding the more likely interpretation when the text has more than one possible meanings.[3] Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502 AH) stated that *tafsīr* is more comprehensive than *ta'wīl* and is used more commonly to mean the explanation of words and isolated terms. *Ta'wīl* is often used to elucidate meanings and sentences and is most used in theological texts or books, whilst *tafsīr* is used in theological texts and other areas (such as the sciences of the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence).[4] Al-Suyūṭī for his part reported that *ta'wīl* is information about the actual intended meaning, while *tafsīr i*s information about the indication of the meaning.[5] Other scholars understand *tafsīr* as an explanation of the Qur'an based on the transmitted traditions from the Prophet, his Companions and *Tābiʿūn*, whereas they consider *ta'wīl* as personal knowledge, which goes beyond the apparent meaning. The following example may help in clarifying this point. We read in verse 110:1-3:

> When comes the help of God, and victory, and thou dost see the
> people enter God's Religion in crowds, celebrate the praises of thy

Lord and pray for His forgiveness: For, He is Oft-returning (in Grace and Mercy).[6]

The *tafsīr*, or meaning of these verses, is the apparent meaning as indicated in the translation. The *ta'wīl* of the verses, however, is the way ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās interpreted them. He stated that this chapter or the verses together foreshadowed the impending passing of the Prophet Muhammad. Under this personal interpretation, the Prophet is a messenger and his mission had come to an end with the acceptance of Islam by the people in Arabia. Thus, he had to return to God, Who sent him.

However, Abū ʿUbaydah Muʿammar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 210 AH) and al-Ṭabarī differ with the above-cited definitions of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*. To them, there is no difference between the two terms, which they regard as synonymous.[7] The term *tafsīr* – according to my own finding – when used to mean the explanation of the Qur'an was developed towards the second half or the end of the first Islamic century. Perhaps, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar was the first person known to have used the word *tafsīr* to mean interpretation of the Qur'an when he said "*mā yaʿjibunī jarā'at ibn ʿAbbās ʿalā tafsīr al-Qur'ān fal ān qad ʿalemtu annahu 'ūtiya ʿilm*" ("I do not like or I do not admire ibn ʿAbbās' daring on Qur'anic commentary but now, I know he has been given knowledge."[8] Indeed, we find no mention of this term in the Qur'an and the Hadith to mean the explanation of the meaning of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, on the other hand, used the word *tafsīr* in one place (25:33) to mean 'explanation': "*wa lā ya'tūnaka bimathalin illa ji'nāka bi al-ḥaqqi wa aḥsana tafsīran*" ("and no question or example do they bring to you but We reveal to you the truth and the best explanation (thereof)"). The terms that both Qur'an and Hadith use for Qur'anic interpretation are *bayān*, *tabyīn*, *ta'wīl*, and *qawl*. The following passages of the Qur'an and Hadith support my statement:

It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have

promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear) "*bayanahu*." (Qur'an 75:17-19)

The word *bayānah* is used to mean explanation or clarification.

and We have sent down unto you (also) the Message; that you may explain clearly "*litubayyina*" to men what is sent for them... (Qur'an 16:44)

In this verse, the word *litubayyina*, the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of which is *tabyīn* refers to the clarification or elucidation of the Qur'anic verses.

Verse 3:7 of the Qur'an states, "but no one knows its hidden meanings (*ta'wīl*) except God." The word *ta'wīl* means the actual meaning or interpretation. In a popular hadith, Prophet Muhammad asks Allah to grant Ibn ʿAbbās knowledge of both the understanding of *al-dīn* (religion, Islam) and the Qur'an: "*Allāhumma faqqihhu fī al-dīn wa ʿallimhu al-ta'wīl*," meaning: "Oh God, grant him knowledge about Islam and teach him the explanation or interpretation of the Qur'an."[9]

In al-Tirmidhī's collection of Hadith, one narration reads: "*man qāla fī al-Qur'ān bi ra'yihi fal yatabawwa' maqʿadahu min al nār*,"[10] that is to say, "Whosoever interprets the Qur'an using his own opinion, let him take his seat in the Hell fire." The term *qāla* (currently meaning 'to say') in the context of the hadith, refers to the interpretation of the Qur'an. Furthermore, both the Prophet and the Companions allegorically interpreted some Qur'anic verses. Yet, their interpretations are being called *tafsīr*, not *ta'wīl*. This, I assume, is because many scholars of *tafsīr*, if not the majority, have not seen any differences between the two meanings.

The use of these terms in the Qur'an and Hadith leads us to postulate that a number of Qur'an interpreters (*mufassirūn*), including

scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī and others used the words *bayān*, *ta'wīl* and *qawl* in the title of their books because of these terms' connection with the Qur'anic explanation. Al-Ṭabarī's voluminous work is entitled *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Ta'wīl Āyat al-Qur'ān*, and al-Zamakhsharī's famous book of *tafsīr* is entitled "*Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl.*

The Prophet Muhammad and *Tafsīr*

The Prophet Muhammad was the first exegete or interpreter of the Qur'an (*mufassir*). But he did not, however, explain the whole of the Qur'an word for word because many of the verses were clear to the people of his time by virtue of their being Arabs who understood their own language. Generally, his explanations of Qur'anic scriptures occurred on one of three occasions: when a particular passage could not be comprehended through a typical understanding of Arabic; when the literal meaning of a verse, according to Muslim scholars, was not intended by God; or when a Companion asked for clarification of certain verses. For example, ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit asked the Prophet about the meaning of *bushrā* (glad tidings) in Qur'anic verses 10:63–64 which state: "Those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil [that is those who have *taqwā*]. For them are glad tidings [*bushrā*], in the life of the present and in the Hereafter; no change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity." The Prophet replied: "you have asked me something none of my Ummah (the Muslim community) has ever asked before you." *Bushrā* the Prophet explained, meant in this verse a good dream that a man sees or which is seen on his behalf.[11]

The Qur'anic command pertaining to the time of breaking the fast during the month of Ramadan states: "and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread" (2:187). To comply with this regulation, ʿUday ibn Ḥātim, who did not understand this figure of speech, kept a white and black

thread specifically to see when the early light of dawn would allow him to differentiate the threads in order for him to begin fasting for the day. The Prophet Muhammad explained to him that the white and black thread mentioned in the Qur'anic verse referred to the early morning light of the horizon contrasting with the darkness of the sky.[12]

Tafsīr After the Passing of Prophet Muhammad

The Muslims living immediately after the death of the Prophet recognized certain Companions' skills and capabilities in terms of Qur'anic knowledge. Before he died, the Prophet proclaimed their superior status concerning the Qur'an in three ways. First, he used to send them to other cities to teach the Qur'an and Islam. For example, he sent Muṣʿab ibn ʿUmayr to Madinah before the general hijrah or 'migration' of the Muslims from Makkah to Madinah.[13] Similarly, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.39 AH) and Muʿadh ibn Jabal (d.18 AH) were sent to Yemen at different times to instruct the new Muslims about Islam and invite non-Muslims to accept it.[14]

Secondly, the Prophet would praise certain Companions such as ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 32 AH), Ubay ibn Kaʿb al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (d. 21 AH), Zayd ibn Thābit (d. 45 AH) and Muʿādh ibn Jabal for their skill in reciting the the Qur'an properly and thoroughly.[15]

Thirdly, he would ask certain Companions to give fatwas (legal opinions) in his presence.[16] For example, on different occasions, he requested Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 13 AH), ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23 AH), ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 34 AH), and ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib to do so in his presence. After the death of the Prophet, Muslims turned to these Companions and others to learn about the Qur'an and its *tafsīr*. Other Companions noted for their exegetical ability were Abū Mūsa al-Ashʿarī (d. 44 AH), ʿĀ'ishah bint Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (d. 58 AH), Abū al-Dardā' ʿUwaymir ibn Zayd (d. 32 AH), and ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73 AH).

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After the death of the Prophet and with the spread of Islam, Muslims settled in the formerly non-Muslim lands and took upon themselves the responsibility of propagating the faith and teaching Qur'anic recitation and interpretation. Subsequently, four distinct schools of Qur'anic interpretation and recitation (*qirā'ah*) emerged and were identified by the areas in which they became prominent: Makkah, Madinah, Kufah (in the area of present day Iraq), and al-Shām (present day Palestine, Syria and Lebanon).

The Makkan School

According to Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH), the Qur'anic interpretation of the Makkah school was the best because its proponents were students of Ibn ʿAbbās, the principal teacher of the Makkan school of *tafsīr*.[17] Most of the knowledge he acquired with regards to interpretation, Hadith and other sciences came through the prominent Companions. That was because he was only thirteen years of age when the Prophet died. His teachers included ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ubay ibn Kaʿb, Zayd ibn Thābit, and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Praise for Ibn ʿAbbās from various contemporaries of the Prophet abounds in Islamic literature and he was given honorific titles such as the *ra's al-mufassirīn* (the leading Qur'an interpreter) and *ḥabr hādhihi al-ummah* (the learned or chief scholar of the Muslim community).

After the assassination of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whom Ibn ʿAbbās supported and fought for throughout the Caliph's stormy tenure, Ibn ʿAbbās returned to Makkah, his place of birth. He dedicated himself, until his death in Taif some twenty years later, to the teaching of the Qur'an and its interpretation, history, jurisprudence (fiqh), Hadith, Arabic, and poetry. His classrooms were the mosque and his house, and by all accounts his eloquence was superb and persuasive. Indeed students from different cities would travel to Makkah to study under him, with his teaching circles always full, and his numerous students going on to transmit his knowledge after him. The most prominent of them were: ʿIkrimah al-Barbarī (d. 105 AH), Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. 95

AH), and Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 104 AH). Mujāhid has received the greatest acclaim, for it is reported that he went through the Qur'an verse by verse three times with Ibn ʿAbbās,[18] although this does not mean that he did not disagree with his teacher's interpretation and so have his own opinion regarding interpretation of some verses.

The Iraqi School

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Suyūṭī and others, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 32 AH), was the founder of the Iraqi School of *tafsīr*.[19] ʿAbd Allāh, the sixth person to accept Islam and one of the first scribes of the Qur'an, was born in Makkah and died in Madinah. He was one of the four Companions whom the Prophet recognized for their excellent recitation of the Qur'an. Ibn Masʿūd claimed to have learned seventy chapters of Qur'an directly from the Prophet.[20] His contemporaries highly praised his knowledge of *tafsīr*, Hadith, and *Qirā'ah* to the extent that Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī (d. 52 AH) said to those who came to him with certain queries, "do not ask me anything as long as ibn Masʿūd is among you." After the Prophet's death and prior to the time when Ibn ʿAbbās came to be recognized as the most scholarly in *tafsīr*, no one took offense to Ibn Masʿūd's claim to being the most Islamically learned in Kufah. He is known for stating: "If I knew anyone with greater knowledge of the Book of God than me, I would go to him; there is no verse but that I know where and when it was revealed."[21] Ibn Masʿūd became the founder of the Kufah School when Caliph ʿUmar sent him there as an advisor to the Kufa governor and to teach Islam to the general population. Among his many students, the most prominent were Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaʿ (d. 63 AH), ʿAlqamah ibn Qays (d. 63 AH), and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH).

The Madinan School

The main teacher of this school was Ubay ibn Kaʿab ibn Qays al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (d. 21 AH), who was of Jewish origin, and who was

born in Madinah and died there. Ubay was one of the first people of Madinah to accept Islam before the migration of the Prophet to Madinah. He participated in all the Prophet's wars. Ubay was one of the four Companions whose recitation of the Qur'an was praised by the Prophet. He recommended to the Companions to learn the Qur'an from him. He also memorized the whole Qur'an and gave fatwas during the Prophet's life time. According to Ibn Saʿd, the Prophet said that Ubay was the best reciter of the Qur'an in the Prophet's community."[22]

Ubay's contemporaries, such as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, acknowledged his Qur'anic knowledge. Both Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān appointed Ubay to the committee that codified the Qur'an.[23] It is recorded that ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb announced: "Whoever wants to learn the Qur'an, let him go to Ubay."[24]

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Ubay dedicated himself to teaching the Qur'an and its interpretation in Madinah. Students from al-Shām and other cities came to Madinah specifically to learn from him.[25] Ubay continued to teach the Qur'an and *tafsīr* till his death. Among the prominent students who transmitted Ubay's knowledge was his son, Ṭufayl ibn Ubay (d. 85 AH).

The School of Al-Shām

The principal teacher of this school was ʿUmayr ibn Zayd ibn Qays al-Khazrajī (d. 32 AH) who converted to Islam in the third year after the hijrah, and was popularly known as Abū al-Dardā'. During his tenure in al-Shām, where he later died, he taught the Qur'an in the Umayyad mosque. Abū al-Dardā' was a famous scholar and an ascetic (*zāhid*). He was one of the few Companions who compiled a complete hand-written Qur'an copy during the Prophet's lifetime.[26]

There were a number of important scholars from this school. One of the most prominent was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghannām al-Anṣārī (d. 78 AH)[27] who was sent to al-Shām by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to

teach the Qur'an and the Sunnah.[28] Another prominent student of this school was Rajā' ibn Ḥaywah al-Kindī (d. 131 AH). A third student was ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Marwān (d. 101 AH), the eighth Umayyad Caliph. He was recognized as an authority in jurisprudence, Qur'anic sciences and Hadith, and acquired a great reputation for asceticism (*zuhd*) and being a just (*ʿādil*) leader.[29]

Tafsīr: From Early Interpreters to Modern Times

The Era of the Tābiʿūn

By the middle of the first century AH, the prominent Companions who were interpreters of the Qur'an had died, except Ibn ʿAbbās who died in 68 AH. In this period, *tafsīr* was taught by scholars using their independent reasoning, based on the sound principles of sciences of *tafsīr* or sound understanding of the Arabic language, (*tafsīr bi al-ra'y*) and the transmission by the students of the Companions, the *Tābiʿūn*. Among the most outstanding were Mujāhid ibn Jabr,[30] Saʿīd ibn Jubayr,[31] ʿIkrimah al-Barbarī,[32] ʿAlqamah ibn Qays,[33] Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaʿ,[34] Muḥammad ibn Kaʿab al-Quraẓī,[35] Abū al-ʿĀliyah Rāfiʿ ibn Maḥram[36] (d. 90 AH), Zayd ibn Aslam (d. 13 AH),[37] Rajā' ibn Ḥaywah (d. 131 AH)[38], and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghannām (d. 78 AH).[39] Each of these scholars learned from many Companions, although each of them associated himself with one Companion over a period of many years and, ultimately, became known as a student of that particular Companion. For instance, Mujāhid ibn Jabr, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, and ʿIkrimah were known as students of Ibn ʿAbbās, while ʿAlqamah ibn Qays and Masrūq ibn al-Ajdaʿ were known as students of Ibn Masʿūd.

During this time some new trends in Qur'anic interpretation began to emerge, which resorted to the individual authors' personal opinion, with no precedence in the Prophet's tradition or that of his Companions, which led, in some instances, to interpretations that contradicted those of the Prophet and his Companions. The word

ra'ɣ is a verbal noun which means opinion, belief, analogy, and exertion. Technically, it is independent opinion, that is used to denote the interpretation of the Qur'an by exerting the mind in understanding the word of God based on the sound knowledge of the Arabic language and the implementation of the principles of *al-tafsīr*. This type of *al-tafsīr*, however, is divided into two parts: *al-Ra'ɣ al-Maḥmūd* or *al-Mamdūḥ* (praiseworthy), and *al-Ra'ɣ al-Madhdmūm* (blameworthy). The subject of *al-ra'ɣ* (both praiseworthy and blameworthy) as well as that of *isrā'iliɣɣāt* (body of narratives originating from Jewish and Christian traditions) will be discussed in more detail in following chapters.

Blameworthy *al-ra'ɣ* was also used to interpret the meanings of the Qur'an in such a way that later on it was termed 'sectarian *tafsīr*'. Furthermore, story tellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) became more involved in this period of Qur'anic interpretation using incredible imagination and drawing from legendary sources, with perhaps, Mujāhid ibn Jabr being the best example to cite here. For example, his interpretation of Qur'anic verses 75:22-23: "*wujūhn yawma'idhin nāẓiratun ilā Rabbihā nāẓiratun*" ("Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty); looking towards their Lord") contradicted that of the Prophet. Whilst according to the authentic Hadith of the Prophet and his Companions's *tafsīr*, these verses refer to the face of Allah that Muslims will see with the naked eye on the Day of Judgement, Mujāhid explains the word (*nāẓirah*) as Muslims will be expecting a reward from God, meaning ergo that Muslims will not see Allah on the Day of Judgement. Despite this Mujāhid's interpretation was later adopted by the Muᶜtazilites and became identified with them instead of being linked to Mujāhid, its author.[40]

Other prominent scholars, notably, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH) and Qatādah ibn Duᶜāmah were accused of using sectarian arguments in their *tafsīr*.[41] With the aforementioned trends mainly using *Isrā'iliɣɣāt* sources (both Jewish and Christian) and relying on subjective opinion (*al-ra'ɣ*) without referring to the Prophetic tradition or

to his Companions in explaining some Qur'anic passages, some scholars exercised great caution vis-à-vis the interpretations of Mujāhid, ʿIkrimah, Zayd ibn Aslam, and others. They believed that *ra'y* and *Isrā'illiyāt* had become incorporated into their *tafsīr*.[42] Other scholars such as al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr (d. 106 AH), a grandson of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ḥafṣ (d. 280 AH), a grandson of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, abstained altogether from Qur'anic interpretation to avoid such accusations.[43]

One of the prominent authors of these scholars' period was Muqātil ibn Sulaymān. His outstanding work *Al-Wujūh wa al-Naẓā'ir* is believed to be the first complete work on *al-ra'y* (a detailed account of it will be given in chapter three). The *tafsīr* of this period is classified as being "the best" and "the worst," with the best referring to that *tafsīr* which does not contain *al-ra'y*, and the worst referring to that which is based entirely on *al-ra'y*. Among the best works are those of Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid and others; among the worst are those of al-Dhaḥḥāk and Abū Ṣāliḥ.[44]

Tafsīr After the Era of the *Tābiʿūn*

By the end of the second century AH, the students of the Companions of the Prophet, the *Tābiʿūn*, had died. No interpreter of that period had produced works devoted exclusively to Qur'anic interpretation. It has been claimed that Muājhid wrote a complete *tafsīr* of the Qur'an. During the latter half of the second century AH, various scholars began compiling works on the Qur'an according to their specialties and interests. *Tafsīr* emerged as one such specialty. Scholars or traditionists such as Shuʿbah ibn al-ʿAjjāj (d. 160 AH), Ibn al-Ward (d. 160 AH),[45] Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197 AH),[46] and Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah ibn Maymūn (d. 198 AH),[47] paid special attention to the narration of *tafsīr* attributed to the Prophet, his Companions and the *Tābiʿūn*. Grammarians and linguists wrote authoritative works on the Qur'an demonstrating their expertise. Some of these works

include *Maʿānī al-Qur'ān*, by Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Ziyād al-Farrā' (d. 207 AH), and *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, by Abū ʿUbaydah ibn Muʿammar ibn al-Muthannā al-Taymī (d. 204 or 224 AH).[48] Al-Farrā's work contained a small amount of Qur'anic interpretation from the Prophet, his Companions and the *Tābiʿūn*.[49]

According to Ibn Khallikān, a person called Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl asked Abū ʿUbaydah about some meanings of the Qur'an. After Abū ʿUbaydah had explained the meanings requested, Abū ʿUbaydah committed himself to writing a book explaining the meanings of the Qur'an.[50] The completed work approaches the Qur'an from linguistic and grammatical perspectives and also includes explanations of difficult words known as *gharīb*. He used poetry extensively as part of his explanations. The work was published in one volume edited by Fuat Sezgin in 1959.

These approaches, as well as the methodologies used by grammarians and linguists and by the traditionists flourished until the end of the third century and the early fourth century AH. Hence, *tafsīr* literature became separated from the main body of Hadith literature. Both came to be established as independent sciences.

After the separation of *tafsīr* literature from the main body of Hadith, each became an independent science with its own literature and concerns. Hadith literature, for instance, is concerned with transmitted reports on the Prophet's actions and sayings only.

These reports were the subject of intense research during the first two and a half centuries of the Islamic era. They were collected into many written compilations and gradually six of these became recognized in most, if not all, Sunni circles as the most authentic. The six books are technically called *al-Kutub al-Sittah* (the authentic six books of Hadith) and are:

1. *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī.
2. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Abū al-Ḥasan Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī.

3. *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* by Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath al-Sijistānī.

4. *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* or *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* by Abū ʿĪsa Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsa al-Tirmidhī.

5. *Sunan al-Nasāʾī* by Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥīman ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī.

6. *Sunan Ibn Mājah* by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Yazīd ibn Mājah.

Tafsīr literature deals with the transmission of reports regarding the Prophet's explanation of the Qurʾan, as well as those of the Companions and the *Tābiʿūn*, together with linguistic, rhetoric, juridical and theological considerations. These reports and consider-ations were the subject of intense study after the separation between Hadith and *tafsīr* had taken place. *Tafsīr* literature was eventually divided into two major types technically known as *al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y*. *Al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* works include books such as the *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Ta'wīl Āyāt al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz fi Tafsīr al-ʿAzīz* by ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn Ghālib ibn ʿAṭiyyah, and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm* by ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr. Examples of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y* works are *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, also known as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, by Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Athīr al-Dīn ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, and *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq wa Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, by Abū al-qāsim Muḥmūd ibn ʿAmr ibn Muḥammad al-Zamakhsharī.