

The Historiography of Tafsīr in the Indian Subcontinent: A Study of Banjabīrī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*

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Abstract

The genre known as ‘ṭabaqāt’ in the classical period and ‘biography’ in the modern period is a common type of writing among Islamic scholars. In this type of writing, personalities who stand out for their scientific, political and social identities are brought together in a specific order and method, and information about them is presented. Ṭabaqāt books, the first examples of which began to appear in the second century AH, exhibits certain differences according to the scientific knowledge, intellectual identities and perspectives on historical events of their authors. In this sense, a rich literature has developed in Islamic historiography that clearly reflects this observation, bearing names such as ‘ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’, ‘ṭabaqāt al-muḥaddithīn’, ‘ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn’ and ‘ṭabaqāt al-qurrā’. Such works shed light on researchers in the process of identifying information about the life of the authors, as well as constituting the main sources of reference in revealing the name, content and important aspects of the works of the authors in question. In this context, one of the works of the ‘ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn’ genre in the historiography of tafsīr is the work of Muhammad Tahir Banjabīrī (d. 1986), one of the scholars of the Indian subcontinent, entitled *Nayl al-Sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*. In this article will present some assessments of Banjabīrī’s contribution to the history of exegesis in the Indian subcontinent, specifically in relation to the work in question. In addition, Banjabīrī’s contributions to the history of tafsīr in the modern period will be examined. In this study, which adopts the content analysis approach as a method, we will also focus on the question of whether the perspective presented by the author in the work in question constitutes an innovation for the tradition of tafsīr ṭabaqāt or whether it is a continuation of the classical ṭabaqāt tradition. As far as we have been able to determine, this study, which is the first study to examine *Nayl al-Sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn* as an independent work, aims to contribute to a greater emphasis on the Indian subcontinent in the context of tafsīr historiography studies.

Keywords

Tafsīr, Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn, Indian Subcontinent, Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-Sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*.

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Hint Alt Kıtasında Tefsir Tarihi Yazıcılığı: Pencabîrî'nin *Tabakâtü'l-Müfessirîn*'i Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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Öz

Klasik dönemde ‘tabakât’ modern dönemde ise ‘biyografi’ olarak adlandırılan telif türü İslam âlimleri arasında yaygın bir yazım türüdür. Bu yazım türünde ilmî, siyasî ve sosyal kimlikleriyle ön plana çıkan şahsiyetler belli bir sıra ve yöntem gözetilerek bir araya getirilip haklarında bilgi sunulur. Hicrî II. yüzyılda ilk örnekleri ortaya çıkmaya başlayan tabakât eserleri, yazarlarının bilimsel birikimleri, entelektüel kimlikleri ve tarihsel olaylara bakış açılarına göre bazı farklılıklar taşır. Bu anlamda İslam tarih yazıcılığında söz konusu tespiti açıkça yansıtan ‘tabakâtü'l-fukahâ’, ‘tabakâtü'l-muhaddisîn’, ‘tabakâtü'l-müfessirîn’ ve ‘tabakâtü'l-kurrâ’ gibi isimler taşıyan zengin bir literatür oluşmuştur. Bu tarz eserler araştırmacılara müelliflerin hayatına yönelik bilgileri tespit sürecinde ışık tuttuğu gibi söz konusu müelliflerin yaptığı çalışmaların isim, muhteva ve önemli yönlerini ortaya koymada temel başvuru kaynaklarını oluşturmaktadır. Bu kapsamda tefsir tarihi yazıcılığında tefsir ilmi ve müfessirlerle ilgili olarak telif edilen ‘tabakâtü'l-müfessirîn’ türü eserlerden biri de Hint alt kıtası âlimlerinden Muhammed Tahir Pencabîrî'nin (öl. 1986), *Neylû's-Sâ'irîn fî Tabakâti'l-Müfessirîn* isimli eseridir. Bu makalede Pencabîrî'nin, söz konusu eseri özelinde Hint alt kıtasındaki tefsir tarihi yazıcılığına ilişkin bazı değerlendirmelerde bulunulacak, bunun yanında Pencabîrî'nin modern dönemde tefsir tarihine katkıları ortaya konulmaya çalışılacaktır. Muhteva analizi yaklaşımının bir yöntem olarak benimsendiği bu çalışmada aynı zamanda müellifin söz konusu eserinde ortaya koyduğu bakış açısının tefsir tabakât geleneği için bir yenilik mi oluşturduğu yoksa klasik tabakât geleneğinin bir devamı niteliğinde mi olduğu problematiği üzerinde durulacaktır. Tespit edebildiğimiz kadarıyla *Neylû's-Sâ'irîn fî Tabakâti'l-Müfessirîn* isimli eseri müstakil olarak inceleyen ilk çalışma hüviyetine sahip bu araştırmanın tefsir tarihi yazıcılığı çalışmaları bağlamında Hint alt kıtası üzerinde daha fazla durulmasına katkı sunması hedeflenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Tefsir, Tabakâtü'l-Müfessirîn, Hint Alt Kıtası, Pencabîrî, Neylû's-Sâ'irîn fî Tabakâti'l-Müfessirîn.

Atıf Bilgisi

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Introduction

Since the early years of Islam, Muslims have traveled to different parts of the Indian subcontinent both for commercial reasons and through conquests. As a result, the Muslim presence in the region gradually strengthened under the Ghaznavids, the Turkish Sultanates of Delhi and the Mongols.¹ Sūfis and scholars who endeavored to teach Islamic values to the local population in the Indian subcontinent played an important role in this process. Accordingly, it is not far-fetched that some of the basic sources of Islam were translated into Indian languages early on so that the people could read and understand them. The role played by the Qur'ān, the founding text of Islam, Qur'ān translations and Qur'ānic commentaries in the Islamization of the Indian region and the formation of the religious knowledge of the people is quite significant. It must be said that although there were some attempts to translate the Qur'ān from the earliest periods, it is understood that the efforts of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1762) and his family constituted an important turning point in the translation of the Qur'ān into the languages spoken in the Indian subcontinent.² It is known that after the Dihlawī family, partial or complete translations of the Qur'ān became widespread in the region.³ Especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī and his family left a lasting and transformative impact on Qur'ānic and exegetical studies in the Indian subcontinent. For it was through Dihlawī's Persian translation of the Qur'ān, *Fath al-Rahmān fī tarjamat al-Qur'ān*⁴ that the universal message of the Qur'ān became accessible to ordinary Muslims.⁵ Thus, the vast majority of extant translations of the Qur'ān in Indian languages have been produced in the last few centuries. It has been stated that one of the main reasons for the intensification of translations since the last two centuries is that Muslim scholars have focused on Qur'ānic studies in response to the activities of missionaries reaching Indian lands.⁶

The writing of tafsīr among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent began in the seventh century AH. Mostly written in different languages such as Arabic, Persian and Urdu, tafsīrs increased in quality and quantity in the following centuries.⁷ Indian scholars,⁸ who

- 1 For detailed information on the introduction and development of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, see Cemil Kutlutürk, *Hint Düşüncesinde İslam Algısı* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2019), 35-76; Ahmet Aydın, *Yavana: İslam Medeniyetinin Büyük Havzası: Hint* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınevi, 2021), 75-311; Abdülhamit Bırışık, *Hind Altıktası Düşünce ve Tefsir Ekolleri* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2012), 27-32.
- 2 Cemil Kutlutürk, "Kur'an-ı Kerim'in Sanskrit Diline Tercümesi: Hindu Bilgin Gunderao'nun Fātiha Suresi Çevirisi ve Kullandığı Kavramların Semantik Tahlili", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 66/1 (2025), 490.
- 3 For a study on the contributions of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī and his family to the science of tafsīr, see Enayetullah Azimi, *Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî ve Ailesinin Tefsir İlmine Katkısı* (Eskişehir: Osmangazi University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2025), 61-300.
- 4 This work, one of the early works of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī, is among the first complete translations of the Qur'ān written in Persian.
- 5 Abdul Kader Choughley, *Tradition of Tafsir (Qur'anic Exegesis) in the Indian Subcontinent* (Rome: Tawasul International Centre for Publishing, Research and Dialogue, 2024), Preface, I.
- 6 Abdülhamit Bırışık, "Urduca Kur'an Tercümeleri'nin Tarihi Gelişiminde Batı'nın Etkisi", *İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi* 16/3 (2003), 382.
- 7 For a study on the birth, development and schooling of the tafsīr tradition in the Indian subcontinent, see Choughley, *Tradition of Tafsir (Qur'anic Exegesis) in the Indian Subcontinent*, 19-347.
- 8 Selim Demirci, *Sömürge Döneminde Hadis ve Yorum: İngiliz İdaresi Gölgesinde Hint Alt Kıtası Hadis Alimleri ve Şerhleri* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınevi, 2024), 90, 92, 168, 204.

studied *Anwār al-tanzil wa-asrār al-ta'wil* and *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* tafsirs—which were taught in madrasas and later became indispensable sources for tafsirs—and analysed them, made significant contributions to the science of tafsirs throughout history. However, these contributions are not sufficiently known in today's world. This is because in the historiography of tafsir, the Indian subcontinent, like the Ottoman world, has mostly remained as a missing link. Both in general historiography and in the historiography of tafsir, which is a special form of historiography, the authors from the Indian subcontinent and their scholarly works have not yet received the place they deserve. Therefore, one of the main objectives of our study is to reveal the contributions of the scholars of the Indian subcontinent to the science of tafsir and to reveal their place in the history of tafsir.

Muslim authors have followed different methods of writing the history of tafsir from past to present. In this sense, it is possible to classify the works on the history of tafsir in terms of content and method. In terms of content, works on the history of tafsir can be divided into two parts: Independent and non-independent works.⁹ Independent works, as the name suggests, are works devoted to the history of tafsir. Non-independent works, on the other hand, are works that are not exclusively related to the history of tafsir but contain information about the history of tafsir. In terms of methodology, there are those who accept a dual classification as *ṭabaqāt* and school-centered works or a triple classification by adding another title as encyclopedic works on the history of tafsir.¹⁰ The first of these three classifications, the *ṭabaqāt* method, constitutes the oldest and most ancient type of writing in the historiography of tafsir. The works written in this genre are called *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin*. This type of writing is also divided into two groups. The first is the works that classify the mufasssirs alphabetically. The first work written in alphabetical order is Suyūṭî's (d. 911/1505) *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin*.¹¹ Such works are far from following a certain historical perspective and suggesting a methodology about tafsir and mufasssirs.¹² The second is the works that divide each hijrî century into a stratum and describe the mufasssirs according to their death dates. In this sense, the first work that deals with mufasssirs according to their dates of death is the work of Adirnavî (d. 1095/1684) titled *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin*.¹³ *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin*¹⁴ which is the main subject of this article, also draws our attention as a work of *ṭabaqāt* within this scope. In addition to providing the reader with a historical perspective, these works also reveal the general characteristics of each century. At the same time, these works, which offer the reader the opportunity to see the chronological integrity of the history of tafsir, are far from the artificial taxonomies that eliminate the integrity of school-centered works.¹⁵ The second of the three classifications is called school

9 Mustafa Karagöz, *Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı ve Problemleri* (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2012), 53.

10 Mehmet Çiçek- Burhan Yazıcı, "Edirnevî'nin Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssirin Adlı Eserinin Tefsir Tabakat Literatüründeki Yeri", *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 22/41 (2020), 116-117.

11 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn Abî Bakr Jalâl al-Dîn al-Suyûṭî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1396).

12 Bilal Deliser, "Tarih Felsefesi ve Metodolojisi, Biyografik Tarih Yazımı Çerçevesinde, Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı Açısından Şemsüddîn Muhammed b. Ali ed-Dâvûdî ve "Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssirin" Adlı Eseri", *Gümüshane Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/8 (2015), 192.

13 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Adirnavî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin* (Medina: Maktabat al-'Ulûm wa-al-Ḥikam al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, 1997).

14 Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Banjabirî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirin*, ed. Maḥmûd Jirātullāh (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2011).

15 Karagöz, *Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı ve Problemleri*, 69.

and sect-based exegetical historiography. The authors of this type of writing, which we encounter in the modern period, give their works different names such as schools of tafsîr, history of tafsîr, orientations to the Qur'an, and introduction to tafsîr.¹⁶ Works in this genre, in which exegetes are classified and ranked according to their sects or the method they followed in their exegesis, were first written by orientalists. The first work in this genre was *Die Richtungen Der Islamischen Koranauslegung*, written in German by Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921).¹⁷ In this work, the mufasssirs are discussed according to various categories and information is given about their works. As a matter of fact, Goldziher discusses the mufasssirs under the headings of first stage, narration, dirâyah, sûfi, sectarian and contemporary.¹⁸ The last of the three classifications is the encyclopedic style of writing the history of tafsîr. The most well-known example of encyclopedic tafsîr historiography is Âdil Nuwayhid's (d. 1996) *Mu'jam al-mufasssirîn*. According to the proponents of this genre, this work can be included neither in the genre of ṭabaqât nor in the category of school-centered history of tafsîr. This is because, unlike other genres, this type of writing deals only with mufasssirîs.¹⁹

After giving this information about the historiography of tafsîr, it would be appropriate to briefly give some basic information about the genre of the writing of ṭabaqât. In the most general sense, ṭabaqât is a type of writing that provides information about the lives of people interested in a field and introduces their works, if any. In other words, they are biographical sources that classify scholars who worked in a particular branch of science on the basis of generation or sect. In this context, studies that focus on the lives and works of mufasssirs are called 'ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn'.²⁰ The works in the genre of ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn deal with the lives, works, methods, and scholarly lineages of the mufasssirs who were engaged in the science of tafsîr.²¹

First of all, it should be noted that, compared to other types of ṭabaqât, works of ṭabaqât on mufasssirs began to be written at a relatively late period. Thanks to the works of ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn, the formation, development, change, and uninterrupted process of the science of tafsîr can be followed to the present day. Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn works are very important for tafsîr researchers. Because researchers are aware of the sources of tafsîr through these works and can determine the right sources for their studies. In addition, through these works, the works in manuscript form are also known and can be handled and analyzed.²² In ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn books, topics such as the birthplace of the mufasssir, his teachers, his students, some developments in his period, his works, his views, and his death are briefly covered. From time to time, this information can also be detailed. In the event

16 Karagöz, *Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı ve Problemleri*, 70-71.

17 Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen Der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952).

18 Goldziher, *Die Richtungen Der Islamischen Koranauslegung*, 1-370.

19 Mesut Okumuş, "Darülfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi Muallimi Cevdet Bey ve 'Tefsir Tarihi' Adlı Eserinin Tefsir Tarihi Yazıcılığındaki Yeri", *Darülfünun İlahiyat Sempozyumu 18-19 Kasım 2009 Tebliğleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, 2010), 432.

20 For the birth and development of the literature of Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn, see Muḥammad ibn Bakr Âl 'Âbid, *İlm Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn nash'atuhu wa-taṭawwuruh* (Tâ'if: Dâr al-Ṭarafayn, 2011), 11-26.

21 For analyses and observations concerning the emergence of the ṭabaqât genre and the subsequent development of studies on the ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn, see Mesut Kaya, "Hadis ve Tarih İlimleri Arasında Tefsir Tabakat Literatürü: Histografik Bir İnceleme", *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 31 (2014), 33-65.

22 Esat Özcan, "Tefsir Tabakât Eserleri", *Harran Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 26/44 (2020), 85-86.

that important information is found about the mufasssîr whose biography is given, remarkable anecdotes are also conveyed. In addition to the biographical information of hundreds of mufasssîrs, the author of *Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* presents their place in the tradition of science in general and in the history of tafsîr in particular. In this way, a history of tafsîr is constructed through the works of *Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*.

The known history of the tradition of *ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* goes back to Suyûṭî. In the introduction to his work *ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, Suyûṭî stated that no such work on mufasssîrs had been written before him.²³ At the same time, Suyûṭî was the first person to include the subject of *ṭabaqât* in his work *al-Itqân* as one of the 'Ulûm al-Qur'ân.²⁴ After Suyûṭî, al-Dâwûdî is another name who wrote in this field. He wrote this work by taking up the work that his teacher Suyûṭî could not complete. 704 mufasssîrs biographies are included in this work, which is organized in alphabetical order, and while brief information is given about the lives of the mufasssîrs, their works and scholarly aspects are discussed in more detail.²⁵ The works of *ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, which were created by class and period distinction in accordance with the definition and content of the concept of *ṭabaqât*, started with Ahmad b. Muhammad Adirnawî (d. 1095/1684) and continued until today with Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen (d. 1971) and other authors. It is possible to see the classification of *ṭabaqât* works according to centuries not only as an option, but also as a historically conscious classification made to express the distance of the elapsed time from the period of nuzûl to the information in the source.²⁶

In this article, we will first briefly touch upon the pre-Banjabîrî tafsîr *ṭabaqât* literature from the historical process to the present day. Such a briefing will provide the reader with a general information about the tradition of *ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, as well as an idea of where the work of the author we will discuss stands within the tradition of *ṭabaqât*. Then, his work *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, which is considered to be an independent work in terms of content and one of the works of the history of tafsîr in terms of methodology, will be discussed. In this context, information about Banjabîrî's life will be given first. Subsequently, the various editions of the work, its sources, methodology, and its relation to the tafsîr *ṭabaqât* literature will be analyzed. As far as we can see, there is no detached study in the history of tafsîr in Türkiye whose main topic is "*Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*". Although some evaluations have been made about "*Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*" as a separate title in some articles,²⁷ as a separate article there has not yet been a study on the place and importance of this work in the historiography of tafsîr. Therefore, as the main objective of our research, we will try to reveal the features of Banjabîrî and his work, which presents a new geography to the tafsîr studies, through the tafsîr *ṭabaqât* literature. In this sense, the study aims to reveal the contribution and impact of the work on the

23 Suyûṭî, *Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 21.

24 Harun Bekiroğlu, *Tefsîr Metodolojisi Açısından el-Burhân ve el-Itkân* (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2013), 252.

25 Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Dâwûdî, *Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1983).

26 Enes Temel, "Tabakâtü'l-müfesssîrîn Literatürünün Müfesssîr Kimliğinin Tespitine Katkıları-I: Süyûtî'nin Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssîrîn'i Bağlamında Tematik ve Metodolojik Bir İnceleme", *Tefsîr Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7/1 (2023), 399.

27 Özcan, "Tefsîr Tabakât Eserleri", 75-82; Bilal Deliser, "Tarihsel Arka Planlı Yüzyıl Okumaları -I: Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen'in Büyük Tefsîr Tarihi/Tabakatü'l Müfesssîrîn Adlı Eserinin İlk Üç Tabakası", *Apjir* 7/3 (2023), 303.

tafsir *ṭabaqāt* in one dimension. On the other hand, it is thought that it will contribute to a broader perspective and to a greater emphasis on the Indian region in the context of the historiography of tafsir.

1. The Literature of *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssirîn* Before Banjabîrî

1.1. Suyūṭî's *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssirîn*

We have already mentioned in the introduction that the earliest extant and printed work of the *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn* literature is "*Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*" written by Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūṭî. In this work of Suyūṭî, in which the mufasssirs are classified alphabetically, there are biographies of 136 mufasssirs in total. In the introduction of his work, Suyūṭî categorized the mufasssirs into four groups. The first of these is the saḥābah, tābî'ūn, and 'aṭḥau't-tābîin. The second is the muḥaddith scholars who transmitted the sayings of the saḥābah and tābî'ūn about tafsir with their isnads and wrote tafsir. The third are the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah who are the people of narration and tradition. The last are mutazilites, Shiites and people of bid'ah.²⁸ It was Suyūṭî who was the first to realize that there had not been any *ṭabaqāt* of mufasssirs and wrote a work on this subject. He was unable to complete this work due to his short lifespan.

1.2. Dāwūdî's *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssirîn*

Another name who contributed to the literature of *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn* is Suyūṭî's student Muhammad b. 'Alî b. Aḥmad al-Dāwūdî. Dāwūdî first of all, he edited his teacher's unfinished work and then wrote a larger work of the same name. Dāwūdî did not write any introduction to his work and did not make any evaluations about the mufasssirs. In total, Dāwūdî cited the biographies of 704 mufasssirs. He also adhered to his teacher's method and listed the mufasssirs in alphabetical order.²⁹ This work stands out as the most comprehensive work in this field in the classical period. One of the important aspects of Dāwūdî's work is that it provides information about many tafsir books that are known to be lost in the field of tafsir.

1.3. Adirnawî's *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssirîn*

Another representatives of the history of tafsir in the style of *ṭabaqāt* is the Ottoman scholar Aḥmad b. Muhammad al-Adirnawî. In his work, Adirnawî organized the mufasssirs not in alphabetical order, as Suyūṭî and Dāwūdî did, but by dividing each hijrî century into a stratum and arranged the mufasssirs according to their death dates. Thus, he classified and analyzed the mufasssirs in layers of centuries until he reached the end of the eleventh century.³⁰ In his work, Adirnawî included the biographies of 644 mufasssirs in 13 layers. In addition to the name, tag, nisbah and nickname of the mufasssir, his place in the science of tafsir and his connection with other sciences are also mentioned in the work. It also provides information about his religious life, his theological and practical sect, his works, his teachers, his students, and his depth of knowledge. Sometimes information is given about

28 Suyūṭî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 21.

29 Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Dāwūdî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1983).

30 Adirnawî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 3-444.

the personal characteristics of the mufasssîr, the opinion of the ulema about that mufasssîr, the content of his work and its importance in Islamic thought, the commentaries, sharḥs, ıktisâr, ta'lıq and dhayl.³¹ In a short introduction at the beginning of his work, Adirnavî, like Suyûtî, complained about the lack of works specifically on the strata of mufasssîrs and mentioned some of the sources he used while preparing his work.³²

1.4. Bilmen's *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssîrîn*

One of the contemporary and comprehensive examples of ṭabaqāt-style tafsîr historiography is Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen's *Great History of Tafsîr/Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssîrîn*.³³ The first part of the two-volume work is devoted to the methodology of tafsîr and the second part to the history of tafsîr.³⁴ In total, 709 tafsîr works are mentioned together with their authors. Bilmen first presents a general list of mufasssîrs, which he categorizes into fourteen strata according to the dates of their deaths, starting with the saḥâbah exegetes, whom he calls the "distinguished stratum (mümtez tabaka)".³⁵ The fact that Bilmen conveys the heritage of tafsîr before him until his time increases the importance of the work. The work includes the date of birth, date of death, names, and sequence number of the mufasssîrs in the book. At the same time, it is clear how many people are in each layer.³⁶ The author briefly mentions the life of each mufasssîr, his place in science, his profession in tafsîr, his works, and the sources of this information, without discriminating between sects. The work, which includes the biographies of 464 mufasssîrs, has many important features. Another important feature of the work is the extensive coverage of Turkish mufasssîrs. On the other hand, the fact that Bilmen conveys the heritage of tafsîr before him until his time increases the importance of the work.

1.5. 'Ādil Nuwayhiḍ's *Mu'jam al-Mufasssîrîn*

One of the authors in this field is the Algerian scholar 'Ādil Nuwayhiḍ (d. 1996). The full title of his work is *Mu'jam al-Mufasssîrîn min Şadr al-Islām wa-ḥattâ al-'aşr al-ḥāḍir*. Although this work does not bear the title of *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssîrîn*, it actually falls within the scope of the ṭabaqāt type of work in terms of content. In the work, which consists of two volumes, the mufasssîrs are discussed in alphabetical order as in the works of Suyûtî and Dāwūdî. Nuwayhiḍ's work provides information about the lives of approximately two thousand mufasssîrs. At the beginning of each letter, a list of mufasssîrs beginning with that letter is given, and the name under which these mufasssîrs will be examined is indicated. Then, it moves on to the lives of the mufasssîrs who will be discussed in the aforementioned letter. At the

31 Çiçek-Yazıcı, "Edirnevî'nin Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssîrîn Adlı Eserinin Tefsir Tabakat Literatüründeki Yeri", 130-131.

32 Adirnavî, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssîrîn*, 1.

33 For an assessment of the works Bilmen used as sources when writing his own ṭabaqāt and other new works of the same type written in Turkish under the same title, see Muhammet Abay, "Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen'in Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssîrîn Yazıcılığına Katkıları", *Müftü ve Müderris Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen Sempozyum Tebliğleri (8-9 Kasım 2014)*, ed. Nail Okuyucu et al. (İstanbul: Marmara Akademi Yayınları, 2017), 143-162.

34 Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi (Tabakatü'l-Müfesssîrîn)* (İstanbul: Ravza Yayınları, 2008), 1/179-432; 2/435-872.

35 Bilmen, *Büyük Tefsir Tarihi*, 2/179-872.

36 Ömer Duml, "Tefsir Tarihi Yazıcılığı Açısından Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen'in Büyük Tefsir Tarihi: Tabakâtü'l-Müfesssîrîn Adlı Eseri Üzerine", *Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı Sempozyumu*, ed. Mustafa Karagöz (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2015), 138.

end of the work, various indexes are included for the convenience of the reader. One of them is the alphabetical index of books, which lists the mufasssirs in the work and the books written by those mufasssirs alphabetically,³⁷ another index is the opposite, which lists all the mufasssirs in the work alphabetically.³⁸ This work, like Bilmen's work, is an encyclopedic biography and, like Bilmen's work, it is important in terms of conveying to us the legacy of tafsîr that preceded it until the period in which the author lived.

It should be noted that apart from the works we have listed here, it is known that there are works on the history of tafsîr both in previous periods and in the recent period. However, since in this study we aim to outline the adventure of the historiography of tafsîr, it would be beyond the limits of our study to mention and evaluate all of these works here.

2. Banjabîrî and *Nayl al-Sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn*

2.1. The Life Of Muhammed al-Banjabîrî

There is no detailed information about Banjabîrî in contemporary sources. The most reliable and concise information about him is contained in his biography, which he added to the end of his own work, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn*. The author summarizes his scholarly background and works here. Accordingly, the author's full name is Muhammad b. Ṭāhir al-Banjabîrî and he was born in the city of Banjabîr in 1917. He stated that he was born and resided there, and that he belonged to the Hanafî madhhab and the Naqshbandî order. He stated that he received his first education in his hometown and then studied fiqh, tafsîr, hadith and Islamic mysticism from his teacher Hussein Ali al-Mayānawālî (d. 1964), reading fundamental works such as *Hidayah*, *Jalalayn Tafsîr*, *Sahîh al-Bukharî* and *Sahîh al-Muslim*, *Mishkât al-anwâr*, as well as Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnavî* and some of his other works. He stated that he joined the Naqshbandî order after becoming a follower of his teacher and that he joined the "Dār al-ʿUlûm al-Dîyûbendiyya". He stated that he then traveled to Mecca and took tafsîr and Islamic mysticism lessons from the versatile scholar Ubaydullah al-Sindî (d. 1944), from whom he received his *jāzat* after reading the books of Shāh Walî Allāh Dihlawî and the works of Shāhid Ismâil al-Mujāhid. He stated that in 1356 AH he went to Madinah and studied hadith from ʿUmar b. Hamdan al-Fāsî (d. 1949). He died in 1986, and it is possible to understand that Banjabîrî was close to the salafist line from his works in the form of refutations against bid'ahs.³⁹

2.2. The Methodology and Thematic Analysis of the *Nayl al-Sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn*

Banjabîrî's *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn*, one of the contemporary authors, is one of the examples of the classical ṭabaqât style of tafsîr writing in the Indian subcontinent. There are two different Arabic editions of this work⁴⁰ which was first published in Urdu⁴¹

37 ʿAdil Nuwayhiq, *Mu'jam al-mufasssirîn min Ṣadr al-Islām wa-ḥattâ al-ʿaṣr al-ḥādir* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nuwayhiq al-Thaqāfiyah, 1988), 2/811-898.

38 Nuwayhiq, *Mu'jam al-mufasssirîn*, 2/899-978.

39 Banjabîrî's works, see Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn*, 496.

40 Āl ʿĀbid, *ʿIlm Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn nashʿatuhu wa-taṭawwuruh*, 53.

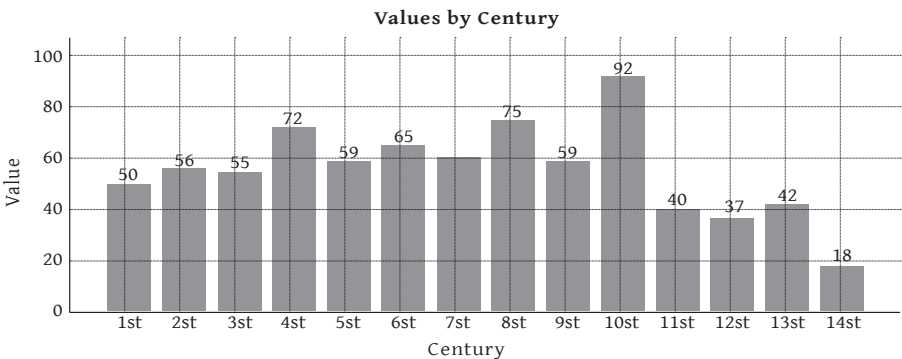
41 Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn* (Pakistan: Maktabat al-Yamān, 2000); Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn*, 2011.

and the Arabic edition of the work published in 2011 has been preferred in our study. As the author states in the introduction, this work actually constitutes a part of his work titled “*Murshid al-ḥayrān li-usūli al-Qur’ān*” and was published separately by giving this part the title “*Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*”.⁴²

The author stated that his friends had been encouraging him for a long time to write a book on the biographies of mufasssirs and that he wrote this work based on this encouragement.⁴³ In addition, Banjabīrī stated that he wrote this work in order to distinguish reliable, solid, meticulous tafsīrs and mufasssirs from those who are not, because some tafsīrs contain fabricated reports/narrations, parables, and slander against some prophets, and me tafsīrs interpret many verses in a way that is unworthy of the Book of Allah, and this is becoming increasingly common.⁴⁴ This shows that he had a high sensitivity to fabricated narrations and information originating from Israiliyāt.

In this work, Banjabīrī divides the mufasssirs into centuries(strata) and presents each mufasssīr in the stratum of the century in which he died. After narrating the lives of the mufasssirs of each century, evaluations are made about the status of tafsīr and the methods of tafsīr in the relevant century under the title of “The Distinctive Feature of This Century”. Thus, the changing, transforming and developing aspects of the science of tafsīr in the century in question are seen, as well as the prominent methods of tafsīr in that century. In our opinion, this aspect of the work is one of its most important features. However, for some reason, the author did not make any evaluation for the seventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and did not provide any explanation for this situation. The author, who took the hijrī date as a basis when giving the death dates of the mufasssirs, included the biographies of 779 mufasssirs⁴⁵ in total, including himself, in the work he created from 14 layers.⁴⁶ The table of these is as follows:

Table-1: Distribution of the Mufasssirs in *Nayl al-Sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*



42 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 13.

43 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 15.

44 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 16.

45 While the Arabic edition of the work published in 2000 included the biographies of 688 mufasssirs, the Arabic edition of 2011, which we are based on, included the biographies of 779 mufasssirs.

46 According to our calculation, the biographies of a total of 780 mufasssirs were included in the work, instead of 779 as claimed by the muhaqqiq. This is because the author used the number 192 twice for two mufasssirs instead of one mufasssīr. See Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 130-131.

When we look at the general outlines of the method followed by the author in his work, he includes the most important information that should be known about a mufasssir, such as the name, tag, nickname, date and place of birth, date and place of death, his education, his place in the science of tafsîr, his teachers and students who received knowledge from him, the works he left behind, especially works on Qur'anic exegesis, the words of scholars about the mufasssir in question, their praise or condemnatory statements, and other information about his life. In addition to these, from time to time, information is given about the pious characteristics of the mufasssir in question, such as his asceticism and taqwa, his theological and practical sect, and his depth in knowledge. Sometimes the personal characteristics of the name in question are also emphasized. The book also makes some evaluations about the place of the mufasssir in the history of tafsîr. In this context, the content of the work, the number of volumes, its importance in Islamic thought, and the commentaries, sharh's, ikhtisâr, ta'liq and dhayl made on the work are given.

When we look at the sources of the work, we come across a rich pool of sources. Based on this, it would be appropriate to classify the works that the author utilized in five main categories.

Table-2: Sources Used in *Nayl al-Sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn*

Sources of Ṭabaqât and Biography	<i>Suyûṭî's Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn, Bughyat al-wu'ât fî Ṭabaqât al-lughawîyîn wa-al-nuhât, al-Durar kâminah, al-Badr al-ṭâlî' bi-mahâsin min ba'da al-qarn al-sâbi', Şifat al-Şafwah, Ṭabaqât al-Ḥanâbilah, al-Dibâj al-madhhab fî ma'rîfat a'yân 'ulamâ' al-muzhab, al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ, Nuzhat al-khawâṭir wa-bahjat al-masâmi' wa-al-nawâzîr, al-Jawâhir al-muḍîyah fî Ṭabaqât al-Ḥanafîyah, al-Fawâ'id al-bahîyah fî tarâjim al-Ḥanafîyah, Tâj al-tarâjim, Nafahât al-uns min ḥaḍarât al-Quds.</i>
Historical Sources	<i>al-Muntaẓam fî Târikh al-mulûk wa-al-umam, Duwal al-Islâm (al-Târikh al-Şaghîr), al-Bidâyah wa-al-nihâyah, Shadharât al-dhahab fî Akhbâr min dhahab, Târikh Ibn Khallikân.</i>
Bibliography Sources	<i>Kashf al-zunûn 'an Asmâ' al-Kutub wa-al-Funûn, al-Fihrist, Miftâḥ al-Sa'âdah wa-mişbâḥ al-siyâdah fî mawḍû'ât al-'Ulûm, Tadhkirat al-Nawâdir.</i>
Sources of Rijâl	<i>Tahdhîb al-tahdhîb, Lisân al-mizân, Tadhkirat al-huffâz, Mizân al-i'tidâl fî Naqd al-rijâl, al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta'dîl.</i>
Sources on 'Ulûm al-Qur'ân and Tafsîr	<i>al-Itqân fî 'Ulûm al-Qur'ân, Mir'ât al-tafsîr.</i>

As can be seen from these various sources, Banjabîrî explored many direct and indirect sources on the biographies of mufasssirs. However, despite his use of *Suyûṭî's Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn*, the first work of ṭabaqât literature, he did not make use of the works of the most important names in the literature of ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn such as Dâwūdî, Adirnavî, Bilmen, and 'Âdil Nuwayhidî. This is one of the weaknesses of *Nayl al-Sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssirîn* in terms of sources.

After making these basic evaluations about the noteworthy and different features of the work, it would be appropriate to include some prominent issues regarding the content of the work.

In his work, Banjabīrī sees the Prophet as the first exegete of the Qur'ān and emphasizes the exegetical aspects of the Qur'ān⁴⁷ by justifying that he had the duty of exegeting the Qur'ān with the relevant verses.⁴⁸ What is noteworthy at this point is the situation, as Deliser points out, is that none of the classical ṭabaqāt-style works on the history of tafsīr beginning with Suyūṭī characterizes the Prophet as the first mufasssīr. Banjabīrī's approach gives the impression that there is a differentiation in the meaning attributed to tafsīr and exegesis in the contemporary period.⁴⁹

Recording fifteen names of the saḥābah and tābi'ūn who became prominent as exegetes after the Prophet, Banjabīrī brought up the names of the ten saḥābah whose names are most frequently mentioned in the history of tafsīr and mentioned the four caliphs, 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd, 'Ubay b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thabit, 'Abdullah b. Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ash'arī and 'Abdullah b. Zubayr respectively. According to him, the main reason why the narrations of the saḥābah about tafsīr are very important is that they were with the prophet and witnessed the revelation and had more knowledge about the Qur'ān.⁵⁰

Bringing up thirty-four names of the tābi'ūn mufasssīrs who lived in the first century of hijrī after the saḥābah, Banjabīrī mentions that they were chosen to transmit Islam to the next generations. He also states that many mufasssīrs were raised from the tābi'ūn and that they were very good at examining and memorizing the narrations related to tafsīr.⁵¹ In conclusion, he emphasized that the generation of the saḥābah and tābi'ūn, most of whom lived in the first century of hijrī, had a high level of taqwā, justice and trustworthiness, and that the tafsīr information coming from them was reliable because they knew tafsīr and ta'wīl, so there was no unnecessary and unreliable information in this period.⁵²

In his evaluation of this period, Banjabīrī, who includes a total of fifty-six names in the second century, focuses on the reasons for not writing down the narrations related to tafsīr in the early period of the saḥābah and tābi'ūn. He then lists these reasons by quoting Ibn Hajar al-Askalānī (d. 852/1449) as the Prophet did not allow the writing of anything other than the Qur'ān, the ability of the relevant mufasssīrs to memorize the narrations, and the illiteracy of most of the scholars. Banjabīrī, stated that tafsīr works were not edited in this century due to the reasons mentioned above, and that the dispersion of scholars to different cities and the spread of bid'ahs since the end of the tābi'ūn century made it necessary to write works. According to him, some of those who wrote works in this century were careful and included the isnad of the opinions they conveyed, while others were careless and included the opinions in their books without mentioning the owners of the opinions they conveyed.⁵³

47 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 17-18, 75.

48 al-Naḥl 16/44, 64; al-Nisā' 4/165.

49 Deliser, "Tarih Felsefesi ve Metodolojisi, Biyografik Tarih Yazımı Çerçevesinde, Tefsir Tarihi Yazımı Açısından Şemsüddin Muhammed b. Ali ed-Dāvūdī ve *Tabakātü'l-Müfesssīrīn* Adlı Eseri", 303.

50 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 20-26, 75.

51 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 28.

52 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 42.

53 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 75.

Banjabîrî, who mentions the most reliable narrators and the weakest narrators, says that the most reliable narrator is the narrator of 'Ali b. Abû Talha (d. 143/760). He also mentioned that Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/855) praised it and Bukhârî (d. 256/870) relied on it, and then mentioned the weak chains of narrators. Banjabîrî lists the main centers of knowledge in this period as Mecca, Medina, Basra, and Kufa, and includes the names of those who grew up in these centers.⁵⁴

In his evaluations, Banjabîrî also touched upon the religious, theological, and political debates of the second century, and he discussed the emergence of the theological sects through the relevant names. After emphasizing the need to be sensitive about the opinions and narrations of these names, he drew attention to Amr b. 'Ubayd (d. 144/761), Wâşil b. 'Atâ (d. 131/748) and Ma'bed b. 'Abdullah (d. 83/702). According to him, these names opened the issue of fate to discussion and inculcated the Mutazilite sect in people. In addition in this century, Jahm b. Safwân (d. 128/746) claimed that the Qur'ân was created. Continuing his analysis in this direction, Banjabîrî stated that before the second century, tafsîr was done with narrations and the opinions of the sahâbah and other great scholars, but in this century, with the elimination of the sanad, the right and wrong were mixed with each other. He then said that later scholars transmitted the narrations as they were, regardless of whether they were true or not, so that tafsîr became a field where everyone wrote something according to their own minds. As a result, a fragmented structure emerged, and in this context, he said that the purpose of the nahwists became to make i'râb in the name of tafsîr, to deduce possible wajihis even if they were far from the verse, and to write down the issues, rules, and disputes of nahw; the purpose of the parable writers became to narrate the parables without examining them, and most of the tafsîr information that came from them contained false, fabricated, and unworthy of the prophets, taken from the Jews.⁵⁵

According to Banjabîrî, who quotes at length Zehebi's views on the ways of narration and the state of education in the third century within the scope of the distinctive features of the third century, tafsîr was done with narrations received from the teachers before this century.⁵⁶ In this century, tafsîr was filled with narrations without separating right and wrong. Later, tafsirs were also written with the method of dirâyah. In this century, the opinions of the people of bid'ah and fabricated hadiths confirming these opinions entered the tafsirs. On the other hand, bid'ah groups such as the Mutazilites criticized authentic hadiths and claimed that they were fabricated. The Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mûn (d. 218/833) made it clear that he embraced Shi'ism and claimed that the caliphate after the Prophet was the right of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Later on, he claimed that the Qur'ân was created and tried to make everyone accept it.⁵⁷ Banjabîrî, who characterized this century as a century in which sciences diversified and the number of scholars increased, then gave the names of famous scholars in various sciences (Arabic language, hadith, sûfism, etc.) in this century, and concluded his comments by mentioning the names of the leading representatives of bid'ah sects.⁵⁸

54 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 76-78.

55 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 81-83.

56 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 110-111.

57 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 112-113.

58 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 113-117.

In his evaluations about the fourth century, Banjabīrī stated that not much importance was given to isnad in this century, and therefore the right and wrong were mixed together. According to Banjabīrī, who says that the Qur'ān began to be exegeted with the method of *dirāyah* by using the data of different sciences and that the views of the people of *bid'ah* were tried to be refuted, in the tafsīrs written in this century, *qirā'āts* and *i'rāb* were also included in abundance. Banjabīrī points out that the most valuable and useful tafsīr written in this century is Tabarī's *al-Jāmi'u'l-bayān fi ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, in which Tabarī revealed his preference for the narrations, included *i'rāb*, and tried to deduce various rulings from the verses.⁵⁹ Banjabīrī then lists the names of the scholars who lived in this century and were interested in sciences other than tafsīr, such as muḥaddiths, fuqaha, and mutakallim, under the title of the branch of science they were interested in.⁶⁰ Making evaluations on the theological debates of the period, Banjabīrī concludes that the Qur'ānic interpretations were negatively affected by the emergence of the Qarmatians in this century and that the Qarmatians' main aim in this regard was to falsify the verses of the Qur'ān.⁶¹

Banjabīrī, who included the distinctive features of the tafsīrs written in the fifth century, determined that weak and even fabricated narrations about the virtues of *sūrahs* and prophet parables were included in this century, especially by the Shiites. In this context, he especially emphasized the name of Tha'labī (d. 427/1035), whom he criticized for being a follower of the Shiites. He stated that he included fabricated and weak reports and elaborated this situation with concrete examples. In this regard, he quoted Ibn Taymiyah's opinion about Tha'labī that although he was a righteous person, he had no knowledge of sound and weak ḥadith, sunnah and *bid'ah*. He also drew attention to the existence of some mufasssīrs in this period who included fabricated reports of Rāfīzis and heretics."⁶² He then moves on to the next century by giving the names of Ahl al-Sunnah, Mutazila and Shiite scholars who lived in this century.⁶³

Banjabīrī says that in the sixth century, an eloquence-intensive understanding of tafsīr came to the forefront compared to the previous century, and that those who wanted to interpret the Qur'ān in this century were interested in the following subjects: lexicon, grammar, 'ilm al-naḥw, 'ilm al-ṣarf, ishtiqaq, 'ilm al-me'ānī, 'ilm al-bayān, 'ilm al-badī', *qirā'āt*, *usūl al-dīn*, *usūl al-fiqh*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *qīṣaṣ*. He stated that it was expressed that the mufasssīrs should know sciences such as *nāsikh-mansūkh*, *fiqh*, ḥadith very well, and that it was claimed that the mufasssīrs should know these sciences very well, and that the rules and principles of sciences such as 'ilm al-me'ānī, declaration, and 'ilm al-badī' were applied to tafsīr. Banjabīrī stated that some mufasssīrs in this century wrote works that summarized the tafsīrs written in previous centuries, and that sectarian tafsīrs increased in this period, while *sūfī* tafsīrs also began to increase in a remarkable manner. However, he criticized both *sūfī* and sectarian tafsīrs for taking verses out of their context and making distant interpretations.⁶⁴

59 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 149.

60 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 150-154.

61 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 154.

62 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 187-188.

63 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 188-189.

64 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fi Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 224-225.

After giving information about the lives and works of the seventh-century mufasssirs, Banjabîrî, who moved on to the following centuries without making any evaluation of this century, limited his evaluation of the eighth century only by stating that there were many muhaddiths and fuḡahā in this century. In other words, in his evaluation of the eighth century, after a brief explanation that some of those who wrote tafsîr in the eighth century were also distinguished in both hadith and fiqh, he did not make any evaluation and only mentioned the names of the muhaddiths and fuḡahā he mentioned.⁶⁵

Evaluating the ninth century as a period in which commentaries and sharḥs proliferated and tafsîr courses were widely taught, Banjabîrî stated that the aforementioned commentaries and sharḥs were concentrated around al-Bayḏāwî's (d. 685/1286) *Anwār al-tanzîl* and Zamakhsharî's (d. 538/1144) *al-Kashshāf*, and that especially *al-Kashshāf* was widely taught and many commentaries and sharḥs were written on it. He mentioned famous sharḥs such as the sharḥs of Ṭibî (d. 743/1343) and Chârperdî (d. 746/1346) as examples of these sharḥs. Underlining that both critical and supportive works were written on *al-Kashshāf* in this century, Banjabîrî also mentioned the names of sūfî scholars and rulers who lived in the Indian subcontinent in this century.⁶⁶ Banjabîrî also makes religious, historical and political analyses of the period, and in this context, he draws attention to the entry of the Mongol ruler Timur into the Indian region and the various events that followed.⁶⁷

After giving the lives and works of some of the tenth-century mufasssirs, he opens a separate chapter and gives information about some of the short sūrah commentaries written in this century and their authors.⁶⁸ Banjabîrî states that the distinctive feature of this century is that it was a period in which many commentaries and sharḥs were written on Bayḏāwî's *Anwār al-tanzîl*, and then he mentions the names and authors of these commentaries. He stated that commentaries and sharḥs were also written on Bayḏāwî in the previous century; however, these studies were not as intense as in this century.⁶⁹ After stating that many scholars, sūfis and administrators who grew up in the Indian region in this period attracted attention, he mentioned the names of the scholars, sūfis and administrators who lived in the Indian subcontinent in this century.⁷⁰ On the other hand, he stated that Mughalshah came to power in Delhi during this period and some religious and political events took place afterwards.⁷¹

After giving information about the mufasssirs living in the eleventh century and their works, he mentioned some sūrah and verse commentaries and their authors.⁷² Banjabîrî also stated that in this century, Mahmud al-Wāridî (d. 1061/1651) wrote a Turkish work titled *Tertibu āyātî'l-Qur'ānî'l-'azîm*, in which the verses of the Qur'ān are listed alphabetically, and that the Indian region was full of great scholars such as mufasssirs, muhaddiths, etc. In this century, and that people flocked to the region from all over the world to benefit from

65 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 309-310.

66 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 358-360.

67 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 360.

68 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 378-384.

69 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 385-394.

70 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 394-397.

71 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 396-397.

72 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssirîn*, 418-420.

these scholars, almost turning the region into a center of knowledge and guidance. After mentioning Indian sūfis and especially Imam Rabbānī, Banjabīrī then mentioned muḥad-diths and gave the names of Indian scholars and some rulers who lived in this century. In this context, he especially mentions Akbar Shāh, his religious views and religious activities that drew reactions.⁷³

Banjabīrī states that in addition to tafsīr, works on 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān were also written in the twelfth century and mentions some of the scholars and their works.⁷⁴ In the section on the distinctive features of this century, he stated that many great scholars lived in India in this century as in the previous century, and he mentioned the names of these scholars, their works and some of their characteristics.⁷⁵ In this section, he also mentions the names of some of the rulers who ruled in India during this period.

After giving information about the lives of the mufasssīrs who died in the thirteenth century, he mentioned the verse and sūrah tafsīrs and ta'lik works written in this century and the authors of these works, and listed the famous scholars and sūfis of the Indian region by name.⁷⁶ However, Banjabīrī did not evaluate the state of the science of tafsīr in this century.

Banjabīrī mentions the abundance of tafsīrs in the fourteenth century and states that most of them were written by Indian scholars in Urdu⁷⁷ adding that there were both brief and detailed tafsīrs among them, and that most of them were translated into Indian language. He also stated that translations of the Qur'ān, which were purified from weak narrations and fabricated parables, were written, and then included the names of the scholars who translated the Qur'ān in this period.⁷⁸ Banjabīrī also mentioned in detail the life and works of Şiddiq Ḥasan Khān (d. 1307/1890) as an important mufasssīr of this period.⁷⁹ Banjabīrī also mentioned the life, works and influence of his own teacher Husayn Ali Banjabī.⁸⁰

It should be noted that these developments, particularly in Qur'ān and tafsīr studies during the fourteenth century, cannot be considered independently of the reform (iṣlāḥ) and reviving (iḥyā') movements in the Indian subcontinent. This is because tafsīr activities in the Indian subcontinent during this period took shape not only as a continuation of the classical tradition of Qur'ānic interpretation, but also as an intellectual extension of the reform and reviving movements. During this period, tafsīrs became an intellectual tool at the centre of social and political transformations; the Qur'ān was seen as a fundamental reference source in the reconstruction of Muslim identity in the modern world. In other words, recent tafsīr studies in the Indian subcontinent emerged as a scholarly reflection

73 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 427-430.

74 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 431-453.

75 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 453-457.

76 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 458-486.

77 For a study on Urdu tafsīrs in the Indian subcontinent and their evaluation, see Zobia Parveen, "A Critical Analysis of the Origin, Evolution, and Development of Urdu Exegetical Literature in the Indian Subcontinent", *Al-Idrāk Research Journal* 4/1 (2024), 72-90.

78 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 487-494.

79 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 487-488.

80 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā'irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 494-496.

of reform and reviving; Qur'ân and tafsîr studies became one of the most dynamic areas of scholarly activity in the process of reinterpreting Islam in response to the challenges of the modern age.

2.3. Distinctive Features of the *Nayl al-Sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-Mufasssîrîn*

First of all, it should be emphasized that the most noteworthy and unique aspect of this work is that it provides biographies of mufasssirs and Qur'ânîc scholars in the Indian subcontinent and also presents their works in the field of tafsîr.⁸¹ In the pre-Banjabîrî ṭabaqât works, Mecca, Medina, Hijaz, Kufa, Basra, Baghdad, Bukhara, Termez, Damascus, Cairo, Andalusia, Istanbul, Herat, Nishapur, Kirman, Khwarezm, Tabriz, Meraga, while mentioning the role of the mufasssirs who grew up in scientific centers such as Isfahân, Rey, Qazvin, Qâshân, and Hemedân in the history of tafsîr, with this work of Banjabîrî, Delhi is one of the most important cities in the history of tafsîr besides the cities mentioned in the history of tafsîr, the role of mufasssirs who grew up in Indian subcontinent cities such as Hyderabad, Kashmir, Gujarat, Sindh, Punjab, Stateabad, Akbarabad, Lahore, Siyalkut, Dekken, Naqur, Aqra, Leknev, Saharenpur and Hyderabad in the history of tafsîr is included. Thus, new scholarly centers and mufasssirs from as far away as the Indian subcontinent were included in the history of tafsîr. Therefore, it can be said that *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* is one of the leading works in terms of geographical diversity and inclusiveness among the works of the ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn genre. However, this does not mean that the author covered everyone who was engaged in tafsîr in the Muslim world. In general terms, what he has done is to write biographies of many people who worked on the exegesis and understanding of the Qur'ân from the time of the Prophet until his own time. It can even be said that the author's time and means did not allow him to include in his book many of his contemporaries, especially those from Damascus, Jazira, Egypt, and North Africa who lived outside the Indian subcontinent. On the contrary, he was more interested in his contemporaries from the Indian subcontinent.

Another remarkable aspect of the work is that Banjabîrî does not refrain from explaining what he finds wrong about the mufasssir and his works. For instance, he includes Ma'bed al-Juhani (d. 83/702) among those who passed away after the first century. After stating that Ma'bed was the first person in Basra to speak about fate and that he was one of the first representatives of the Qadariyya thought, he states that he moved from Basra to Medina and corrupted people there with his thoughts. In addition, he characterized Jahm b. Safwân (d. 118/737) as the head of the Jahmîs, a deviant and a person of innovation.⁸² Pointing out the weaknesses of al-Tabarî's tafsîr, one of the names he praised both for himself and his work, Banjabîrî also pointed out that this tafsîr contains many contrary views and that there are many unauthentic narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt in al-Tabarî's tafsîr as a warning.⁸³

Sometimes Banjabîrî quotes from the tafsîr book of the mufasssir whose life he gives

81 For a study on Urdu exegesis in the Indian subcontinent and their evaluation, see Muḥammed 'Ārif 'U-mari, *Tezkire-yi Mufasssîrîn-i Hind* (Ā'zamgarh: Dāru'l-Muḥannifin, 2006); Also biographies of scholars from the Indian subcontinent, see Mevlevi Rahman Ali, *Tazkira-i Ulema-i Hind*, trans. Muhammed Eyyub Kadiri (Karaçi: Pakistan Historical Society, n.d.).

82 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 73-74.

83 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn*, 123.

information about in order to concretize his tafsīr method. In this way, he does not only provide theoretical information, but also provides the researcher with the information on the subject he focuses on and reveals the reliability of the information he conveys.

If the mufasssīr he dealt with had a literary identity and was known to be a poet, he gave some examples of his poems. For example, when talking about the life of ‘Abdullah b. al-Mubāraq (d. 181/797), one of the prominent members of the *taba’u’t-tābiin*, he gave an example of one of his poems because he was also one of the leading poets of his time.⁸⁴ Or, if someone else wrote poems in praise of the life and views of the mufasssīr in question, he presented some excerpts from those poems. This made the mufasssīr memorable and made the text more colorful and attractive.

If the mufasssīr in question or his work has a different aspect from other tafsīrs or mufasssīrs, he tried to convey it as much as possible. For example, while talking about Muhammad b. Sāib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), one of the scholars of tafsīr and ‘ilm al-nasab of the second century of hijrah, he cited the negative evaluations of hadīth authorities about al-Kalbī⁸⁵, and stated that the narrations from him should be approached with caution.

In some places, Banjabīrī also relates his personal experiences and observations. In this context, while talking about Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938), one of the important names in the history of tafsīr, he says that he personally examined his book *al-Jarḥ wa’t-ta’dīl*, which is one of the first books written on the criticism of hadīth narrators, and that this work is a qualified study that gives an idea about the height and reliability of his hifz.⁸⁶

Although Banjabīrī gives very detailed information about the mufasssīrs who grew up in the Indian subcontinent, it is not possible to see the same detail and care about Māturīdī, the founder of the Māturīdiyya sect, mufasssīr and jurist, and Abussuud (d. 982/1574), the Ottoman sheikhulislām, jurist and mufasssīr, who are important figures in the history of tafsīr. Because he only gives very brief information about these two mufasssīrs and their works.⁸⁷

Banjabīrī, who occasionally touches upon the sectarian affiliation of the mufasssīr he provides information about, first emphasized his Shi’ite identity while giving information about Sharīf al-Murtazā (d. 436/1044), who was a leading Shi’ite scholar of fiqh and theology and also a man of letters. Then, he stated that although his tafsīr was full of fabricated parables and weak narrations, Shi’ite authors quoted from this tafsīr because he was one of the leading figures of the Shi’ites.⁸⁸

In this context, Banjabīrī, who specifically mentioned the works that left an impact on the history of tafsīr, stated that *al-Mufradāt*, the dictionary of the Qur’ān’s gharīb words by the mufasssīr and Arabic language scholar Rāgib al-Isfahānī (d. first quarter of the 5./11. century), became a Qur’ānic dictionary that everyone consulted in the period after it was written. He also emphasizes that anyone interested in the science of tafsīr and trying to

84 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 61.

85 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 62.

86 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 130.

87 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 133, 374.

88 Banjabīrī, *Nayl al-sā’irīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 166-167.

understand the Qur'ân should benefit from Ibn Kathîr's tafsîr.⁸⁹

He dwells at length on some mufasssirs in his work. For example, Muqâtil Ibn Sulaymân, Mamer al-Musennâ, Ibn Qutayba, Tabarî, Mâverdi, al-Ghazzâlî, Zamahsharî, Omar Neseî, al-Bayzawî, Semîn al-Khalabî, Ibn Kathîr, Ibn al-Jazarî, Mullah Fanarî, Suyûtî, Shawkânî, and Âlusî. In addition to these, there are names whose lives and works he praises and emphasizes in more detail, such as Ibn Jawzî, Ibn Taymiyah, Abu Hayyân al-Andalusî, Fîruzabadî, Mehâimî, Abu'l-Feyz ibn Mubarak (Feyzî), Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân, Senâullah Penipatî.

Starting from the eighth century hijrî, Banjabîrî began to mention the mufasssirs and tafsîrs of the Indian subcontinent, and in the following centuries he included more scholars and mufasssirs from the Indian region. This ratio peaks especially in the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

It should be noted here that one of the striking features of the Indian subcontinent mufasssirs is that they wrote works on many and varied subjects. Moreover, the fact that these works were written in different languages such as Arabic, Persian and Urdu is another remarkable feature of the subject. For example, Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân, who is considered one of the important figures of the Ahl al-Hadith school, is one of them. In fact, it is stated that he wrote more than two hundred works and these works were written in different fields such as hadith, al-'aqedah, fiqh, politics, history, literature, and Islamic mysticism, especially in the field of tafsîr. Therefore, one of the names that Banjabîrî emphasized the most in terms of his life and works was Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân. Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân is not a rare and singular example in the region. There are other scholars in the subcontinent who wrote a considerable number of works. For example, Leknawî, who passed away at a young age, wrote nearly 120 works, Ashraf Ali al-Tanawî wrote more than 150⁹⁰, including treatises, Muhammad Zakariya Kandahlawî, Muhammad Shafi Diyobandî and other scholars like them wrote many more. Therefore, similar names in the Indian subcontinent, such as Şiddîq Ḥasan Khân, were among the names Banjabîrî focused on the most.

It should be emphasized that Shâh Walî Allâh Dihlawî and his family are among the names Shâh Walî Allâh Dihlawî and his family are among the names that Banjabîrî, who stands out with his extensive coverage of the Indian subcontinent's tafsîr and mufasssir throughout his work, both in terms of general mufasssirs and the mufasssirs of the Indian region. This is evident in the biographies of many mufasssir scholars in the Indian subcontinent, and demonstrates the influence of Dihlawî and his family.

Conclusion

When the works of Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn, which are the foremost works of the historiography of tafsîr, are considered as a whole, it is seen that this work of Banjabîrî is among the voluminous works written in the genre of ṭabaqât in the contemporary period. In this work, Banjabîrî has mentioned the biographies of hundreds of mufasssirs who were famous for tafsîr, sometimes in a brief manner and sometimes in an extensive manner. Through

89 Banjabîrî, *Nayl al-sâ'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssirîn*, 192.

90 A. S. Bazmee Ansari, "Eşref Ali", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995), 11/472-473.

this work, which is based on chronological rather than alphabetical order, the reader gains a historical perspective and recognizes the general identity of each century from the time of the Prophet. In this way, the reader also grasps the integrity of Islamic thought and follows the scientific developments throughout the historical process. Banjabîrî's chronological style of ṭabaqât emphasizes the exegete more than the style that emphasizes the exegetical work or method. It is clear that this line that Banjabîrî follows has an important place in the history of tafsîr with its unique and original contributions. This approach that he brought to the historiography of tafsîr has extended to the last period we are in and is waiting for researchers who will carry it further.

One of the original aspects of Banjabîrî's work *Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* is that it includes biographies of his contemporary mufasssîrs. Again, he wrote the most comprehensive ṭabaqât of mufasssîrs in the Indian subcontinent according to the classical ṭabaqât method. The wealth of information he provides about the mufasssîrs of the Indian subcontinent is important in that it allows us to draw a map of tafsîrs in the Indian subcontinent. For this reason, he represents the final link in the chain of classical ṭabaqât writers. Furthermore, this work, written by Banjabîrî according to the classical method, demonstrates both the greater consistency of the classical method and the continuity that is fundamental to the history of tafsîr.

If we were to compare Banjabîrî's method with that of Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen, who is considered one of the Ottoman scholars of his time, the following could be said. Bilmen adopted a refined style when discussing both classical and contemporary mufasssîrs, and he endeavoured to maintain a fair perspective when evaluating the views of mufasssîrs that were subject to criticism. In contrast, Banjabîrî, who appears to be close to a salafist line of thought, adopted a more rigid and harsh style when evaluating both classical and contemporary mufasssîrs, and at times overstepped the bounds of moderation when directing certain criticisms at them from a sectarian and doctrinal perspective.

The tafsîr tradition of the Indian subcontinent, to which Banjabîrî belongs, has its own distinctive character. More precisely, the Indian subcontinent exegetical tradition has different shades and interpretations, largely influenced by local factors, temperaments, and scholarship. Therefore, if one compares the scholars of the Indian subcontinent with the Umayyad, Abbasid, Andalusian, Ayyubid, Mamluk or Ottoman scholars who preceded them, one will see that they differed from them in many ways. The differences within the period in which these scholars lived affected the educational processes and preferences of the scholars living in the subcontinent. The traces of these differences can also be observed in this work of Banjabîrî.

It is known that various information about the mufasssîrs is also included in the other works of ṭabaqât in general terms. This is because a mufasssîr can also be a linguist, a jurist, a muḥaddith, or a theologian. Therefore, when conducting research on a mufasssîr or a work of tafsîr, it is necessary to refer to biographical sources that examine other scholars, especially works on tafsîr and mufasssîrs. Banjabîrî has taken an inclusive approach in this regard and has consulted many of the relevant ṭabaqât works.

In conclusion, *Nayl al-sā'irîn fî Ṭabaqât al-mufasssîrîn* is a new and useful work with its

biographies of Indian subcontinent scholars in Islamic sciences and Qur'ānic studies. Ban-jabîrî's work has played a critical role in the recognition of the Indian subcontinent's mufassirs who wrote works in the sub-branches of tafsîr and whose birth and death dates are not much known in the books of ʔabaqāt and history.

The need for comparative and more detailed studies within the framework of Qur'ānic studies and tafsîr activities in the Indian subcontinent is clearly felt. Because, although there are many studies on mufassir and tafsîrs, this field has still not reached what it should be. For this reason, there is a need for studies that introduce the scholars and their works who wrote tafsîr, translation and Qur'ānic sciences in different languages. The preparation of an encyclopedia on exegetes and tafsîr or a separate work on tafsîr studies in different languages will fill this gap.

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