



LITERARY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY



The literary works of Persian and Arab people are the most important sources of history of the medieval period (the Sultanate period). These Persian and Arabic works can be divided into three broad categories such as – the chronicles, the travel stories and the modern works.

THE CHRONICLES



TARIKH-I-HIND (Literary Works of Al-Beruni)

- ▶ Al-Beruni, came to India and took up service under Mahmud of Ghazni. He was well acquainted in Arabic, Persian and had a great intellectual in Medicine, Logic, Mathematics, Philosophy, Theology and Religion. During his stay in India he learnt Sanskrit and studied Hindu religion and philosophy.
- ▶ He even translated two Sanskrit works into Arabic. His most important literary work being Tarikh-ul-Hind written in masterly Arabic with great accuracy and scholarly presentation, gives us an account of the literature, science and religion of the Hindus of the 11th century. The book gives us an account of India at the time of Mahmud of Gazni's invasion of India.

CHACH-NAMA



- Chach-Nama is a historical work about the Arab conquest of Sindh. The book was originally written in Arabic and later translated into Persian. An account of Sindh before and after the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim is highlighted in this Chach-Nama. The names of the places and details of important incidents are mentioned in this book. Through Chach-Nama, we get an inclusive idea about Sindh when it was dominated by the Arabs.

KITAB-UL-YAMINI

- ▶ *Kitab-ul-Yamini* by *Aby Naser-bin-Muhammad al Jabbarul Utbi* , gave us information's about the reign of *Subuktigin* and *Mahmud of Ghazni* up to 1020 A.D.. *Utbi* has not given us any details, nor gave us the exact dates also. But his work has been considered as one of the most authentic work of the early life and activities of *Muhmad*.

Khazain-ul-Futuh by Amir Khusrov

- The Khazain-ul-Futuh by Amir Khusrov – an well-known poet of Laureate from 1290 till his death in 1325 and thus was contemporary to all Sultans of Delhi from Jala-ud-din Khalji to Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. As he was an eye witness of most of the happenings his narrative work is of great value.

Taj-ul-Maasir by Hasan Nizam

- In his book Taj-ul-Maasir, Hasan Nizami described the occurrences from 1192 to 1228 and thus became an important account on the career and reign of Qutub-ud-din Aibak and the early years of Iltutmish. His work is the primary source of the early years of the Sultanate period in Delhi.

Tabqat-i-Nasiri by Minhaj-Us-Siraj

- Minhaj-us-Siraj concluded his famous work Tabqat-i-Nasiri sometimes in 1260 A.D. The book gave us an account of the conquest of Hindustan by Muhammad of Ghor. Minhaj was the chief Qazi in Delhi under Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. His book is a vital source of the early history of Delhi Sultanate.

Kitab-ur-Rahlab

- ▶ Another important work is Kitab-ur-Rahlab a book of travels by the famous Moorish traveler, Ibn Battuta. Travelling Northern Africa, Arabia, Iran and Constantinople Ibn Battuta came to India in 1333. He remained in this country up to 1342 and was appointed by Muhammad-bin-Tughluq, the Qazi of Delhi for long eight years. The Sultan, however, became displeased with him and was dismissed and imprisoned though after some times he was released and sent to China in 1342 as an ambassador. Ibn Battuta wrote his book in Arabic. His work is also primary authority on the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq and also the manners, customs and the condition of India during the Sultanate period. His work, however, suffers from some defects.

Tarikh-i-Firozshahi

- Zia-ud-din Barani wrote Tarikh-i-Firozshahi . Barani was an exact contemporary of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq and Firoz Shah Tughluq. His work started with Balban and came down to the sixth year of the reign of Firoz Tughluq. The work was completed in 1359 and thus was the most important work on the Khalji period, the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq and a part of Firoz Tughluq's reign. The chief merit of the book is that, as the author held an important post in the revenue department, he was fully acquainted with revenue administration which he has been described in details.

Tarikh-i-Masumi



- Tarikh-i-Masumi or Tarikh-i-Sindh is another written source by Mir Muhammad Masum or Bhakkra. This book was written sometimes in 1600 A.D.. Tarikh-i-Masumi gave us a in depth history of Sindh from the date of its conquest by the Arabs till the days of Akbar the great Mughal. The book is divided into four chapters. It gave us a clear picture as to how Muhammad-bin-Qasim conquered the land and what was condition of Sindh, just in the eve of Arab conquest.

Other Books

Apart from these works there are other chronicles as well which deserves mention. They include the works like—

- Zaina-ul-Akhbar by Abu Said,
- Tarikh-i-Masudi by Abul Fazal Muhammad-bin-Husain-al-Baihaqi,
- Kamil-ut-Tawarikh by Shaikh Abdul Hasan,
- Fatawah-i-Jahandari by Zia-ud-din-Barani,
- Futuh-us-Salatin by Khwaja Abu Malik Isami,
- Tarikh-i-Firozshahi by Shams-i-Siraj Afif,
- The Sirat-i-Firozshahi an anonymous work,
- Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi by Yahia-bin-Ahmad,
- Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana by Ahmad Yadgar,
- Tarikh-i-Shershahi alias Tohfa-i-Akbarshahi by Abbas Sarwani,
- Makhzan-i-Afghana by Niamatullah and Tarik-i-Dandi by Abdullah.



Travel Stories

The travel-stories written by travelers are of great importance for constructing the history of medieval India. The great Turkish traveler Al-Beruni was one of the earliest travelers in India. His famous work is known as Al-Beruni's India.

The Italian traveler Nicolo Conti travelled India in 1520. He also gave a vivid account of the manners, customs and conditions of the people of India.



Domingos Paes was a Portuguese traveler who also visited Southern India. He also left a detailed description of Vijaynagar.

Edoardo Barbosa visited India in 1516 and gave a detailed description of Vijaynagar and Southern India of the period of our study.

The world famous traveler Marco Polo visited Southern India in the 13th Century. This travels of Marco Polo is a significant book for the study of Sultanate India. A Persian traveler Abdur Razzaq came as an envoy to the king of Vijaynagar where he stayed for a year from 1442 to 1443. He had given a vivid and realistic account of political, administrative, economic and cultural account of Vijaynagar.

There are some literary works as well like Amir Khusrav's Qiran-us-sadain and Ain-ul-Mulk Multani's Munsha-i-Mahru which are also worth mentioning works in this regard.

COINS
AND
MONUMENTS

□ The coins and monuments are important sources for the construction of the history medieval period of India. The Sultans were great lovers of architecture. The architecture which the Turkish conquerors of India brought in this land in the last decade of the twelfth century was not exclusively Muslim or even Arabian. Rather their buildings had the influence of indigenous art traditions.

□ **Balban built the Red Palace.**

□ **Alauddin-Khalji built the Jamaat
Khan Masjid at the shrine of
Nizam-ud-din-Auliya and the
famous Ali Darwaja at the Qutub
Minar.**

□ The Tughluq's erected the tomb of Tughluq Shah, the city of Tughluqabad and Kuffa Firoz Shah. Sikandar Lodi also built Moth Ki Masjid.

**□ Sultan Qutubud-din-Aibak
constructed the famous Quwat-ul-Islam
mosque at Delhi, the Dhai-Din ka
Jhoupra at Ajmer, the Qutub Minar at
Delhi.**



□ There are several other like architectures scattered in many provinces like Multan, Bengal, Gujrat, Malwa, Jaunpur, Kashmir and Dakhin also helped us to form a comprehensive idea about the history of the Sultanate period of India.