

B.A- PART-1, PAPER-1

THE GUPTAS-SOURCES (PART-3)

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Epigraphic sources

Inscriptions are another indispensable source for the Gupta history. *Dr. Fleet* brought together not only the inscriptions of the early Guptas but also of the later Guptas. The first 16 inscriptions in the "*Corpus Inscription Indecorum or Inscriptions*" refer to the early Guptas. The direct line of the early Gupta dynasty is taken to aid with Skandagupta. Buddhagupta and Bhanu Gupta with their respective dates 484 A.D. and 510 A.D are mentioned in Nos. 19 and 20 the 'Corpus'.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta gives us a detailed account of the conquests of Indian Napoleon. The "Eran stone No.2 Inscription" of Samudragupta's period



Epigraphic sources

contains a record of the power and achievements of Samudragupta. The Udaygiri Cave Inscription', "The Mathura Stone Inscription", "the Sanchi Stone Inscription" and "the Gadhwa Stone Inscription " of the time of Chandragupta- it gives us a lot of information regarding the religious condition.

The "Godhwa Stone Inscription", the "Bilsad stone Pillar Inscription and the "Man-Kuwar stone Image Inscription" indicates to Kumaragupta-I. The 'Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription' in two parts the "Bhiari Stone Pillar Inscription", the "Junagadh Rock Inscription", and the "Kahaun Stone Pillar Inscription and the "Indore copper plate Inscription" refer to Skandagupta.



Epigraphic sources

The "Mahrauli Iron Pillar Inscription" indicates that King Chandra conquered the Vanga countries after fighting against a confederacy of enemies united against him. He also conquered the Vahlikas in a running fight across the seven mouths of the river Sindu. The "Bhitari Pillar Inscription" of Skandagupta tells us about the fight with the Pushyamitras and probably also with the Hunas during the reign of his father Kumaragupta-I.

Besides these inscriptions there are a number of copperplates also called "Tamrapatra". These Copper Plates are mostly of donatives nature. They refer about the donor, donee and donation. Most of these are in fact the religious grants made by history manual the Gupta rulers to these temples. The copper plates or "Tamrapatras" usually provide us information on the genealogy of the kings mentioned in them.



Epigraphic sources

However, scholars tend to consider these type of plates as having lesser authenticity and even term them ‘quasi-monumental documents’. The fundamental reason for this relative insignificance of land grant plates is the fact that in a number of cases it has been found that the date of the document and that of the signature of the granting authority have centuries in variance. This dichotomy could be attributed to the tendency in the beneficiary families to ante-date the grant to reinforce their claim to the land in question. From a historian’s perspective this trend diminishes the value of such evidence, making it necessary to corroborate information from these plates with other sources. In terms of inscriptions, the most trusted data are one that are gathered from writings on stone



Epigraphic sources

which need not be only on specially erected pillars, but also to be found on the walls of buildings, as well as within temples or caves, made to commemorate an event of even purely local significance.



seals

A large number of seals have been found from Vaisali in the Muzaffarpur District. Among these seals, we have the seal of "Mahadevi Dhruvaswamini", queen of Chandragupta-II. She was the mother of Maharaj Govind Gupta. Probably, he was the younger brother of Kumaragupta-I who was the Governor of Vaisali in the reign of his father Chandragupta-II. The variety and character of the seals give us an insight into the provincial and local administration. These seals were related to the high and low officials, by which we can draw a long list of civil and military administration officers.



Monuments

The Monuments of the Gupta period are also a reliable source of artistic and religious history of that period. They not only depict different aspects of life but also illustrate different schools of art and architecture viz. Mathura centre, Banaras School and Nalanda School. The Gupta art was free from foreign influence.

The image of seated Buddha in the Sarnath museum belongs to the Banaras school of Art, is a master-piece of Indian art. Illustrations of the Nalanda School are to be found at Nalanda and Kurkihar. The temples of the Gupta period give us an idea of the religious beliefs of the people.



Monuments

They represent the religions and the deities of the period viz. Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Jain Thirthankaras, Buddha or Bodhisattvas. The temples at Udaygiri Pathari illustrate the worship of Vishnu. A temple at Deogarh is dedicated to the worship of Shiva and Vishnu. A temple at Aioli is dedicated to the worship of Durga.

The paintings of Ajanta and Ellora caves pointed the artistic tastes of the people. These paintings throw a flood of light on Indian culture. Thus these paintings and monuments help us a lot for the reconstruction of the social and religious history of the Guptas.



Numismatics

A lot of useful and authentic information for the history of the Guptas is to be found in the coins of the Gupta emperors. Allan published in 1914, "*Catalogue of the coins of the Gupta Dynasties*". We have the various varieties of coins of Chandragupta-I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta-II, Kumaragupta-I and Skandagupta viz tiger type, lyrist type, asvamedha type, standard type, archer type, couch type, chhatra type, lion slayer type, horsemen type, tiger slayer type, elephant-rider type etc. The archer type coins of Skandagupta are mainly of gold. The legends on the coins possess great poetic merit. Samudragupta and Chandragupta issued as many as six types of gold coins. (Concluded)