

SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY (PART-2)

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SOURCES

The pioneer in history-writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhri Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period.

In Lahore he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab*, the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri).

SOURCES

The compiler wanted to present it to the Sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as Sipahsalar of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 up to his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India.

SOURCES

It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting.

SOURCES

Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends. No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogising the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance.

SOURCES

For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land-grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others.

SOURCES

The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour was abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. Another important work compiled by Mudabbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish.

SOURCES

It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period.

The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne.

SOURCES

In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. He begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam.

SOURCES

However, from the year 1192 up to 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202. Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was taking part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak.

SOURCES

No mentions has been made by the compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority. His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

(To be continued)