

SOURCES OF MEDIEVAL INDIAN HISTORY (PART-3)

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SOURCES

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history-writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period up to his own time, the year 1259, seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of Central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans. He himself served under different Ghurid princes and nobles before his migration to India.

SOURCES

In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed as the head of the Firuzi Madrassa (government college) in Uch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sindh and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236- 40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of Madrassa-i Nasiri in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the position of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam up to his own time.

SOURCES

In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of Central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol activities under Chingiz Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterised by objectivity in approach.

SOURCES

Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm Shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingiz Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had firsthand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan.

SOURCES

Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan. The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines.

SOURCES

As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticised directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltutmish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Muslim, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage.