



Unit -1

Sources of Medieval India



Learning Objectives

To acquaint ourselves with

- ❖ Sources of the study of medieval India
- ❖ Temples, mosques, tombs, palaces and forts as important sources
- ❖ Literary and inscriptional texts
- ❖ Accounts of Arab and Turkish travellers



Introduction:

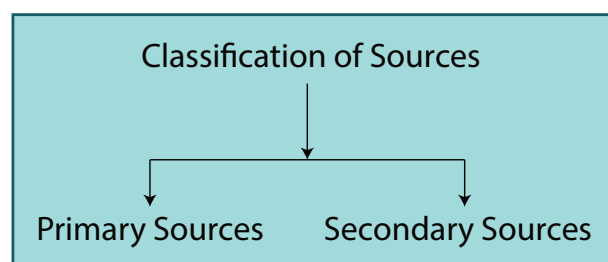
The periods from A.D. (CE) 700 to 1200 and from A.D. (CE) 1200 to 1700 are classified as Early Medieval and Later Medieval periods, respectively, in Indian history. Numerous and varied sources are fortunately available to the historians engaging in the study of Medieval India. Added to the information that can be gleaned from inscriptions, monuments and coins are the accounts left by Arab, Persian and Turkish chroniclers. These accounts are rich in detail and have given first-hand information on the life of kings, though they provide very little information on the life of the common people. The opinions of the courtiers and chroniclers are often one-sided, written in a hyperbolic language, exaggerating the king's achievements. Let us now explore the various sources available for the study of the history of Medieval India.

Do you know the famous words of Khafi Khan, a courtier of Emperor Aurangzeb?

He says, 'It is the duty of an historian to be faithful, to have no hope of profit, no fear of injury, to show no partiality on one side, or animosity on the other, to know no difference between friend and stranger, and to write nothing but with sincerity.'

Sources

Sources are the supporting materials, documents or records in the form of evidence that help to reconstruct the past.





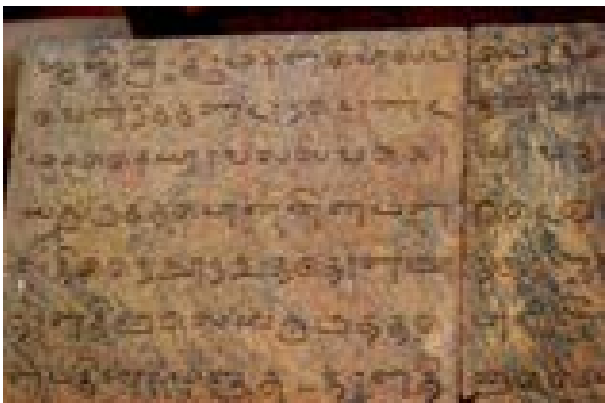
We examine the details of political, economic and socio-cultural developments with the aid of sources.

Primary Sources: Inscriptions, monuments and coins, and the information available in them.

Secondary Sources: Literary works, chronicles, travelogues, biographies and autobiographies.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions are writings engraved on solid surfaces such as rocks, stones, temple walls and metals. The king's royal decrees, dedications and donations, monuments raised in commemoration of victories in wars, those built in memory of deceased warriors, contain rich information about the concerned era. Copper-plate grants, which were treated as legal documents, have significant source value. The Islamic-Persian practices and the relatively high cost of copper plates made palm leaf and paper cheaper alternatives from 13th century onwards.



Rock Inscription

Several copper-plate grants issued during the later Chola period (10th to 13th century) record gifts to individual priests or teachers who were Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina, or to persons of eminence. Both the giver and the receiver are very elaborately described. By contrast, most stone inscriptions differ in their content.



Copper plate Inscription

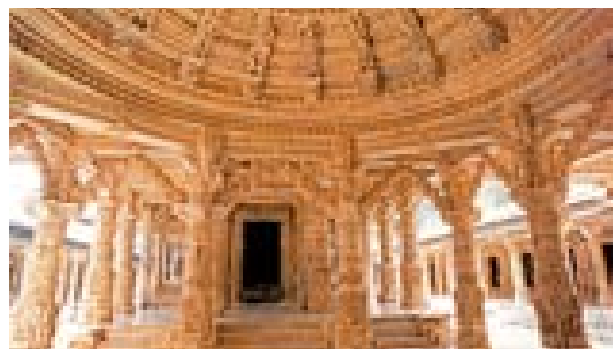
In stone inscriptions, the beneficence of a donor is recorded. The major focus is upon the giver. Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra Chola I and the Anbil plates of Sundara Chola are notable examples. Uttiramerur inscriptions in Kanchipuram district provide details of the way in which the village administration was conducted.

Various types of lands gifted by the Chola kings are known from the inscriptions and copper plates. They are:

<i>Vellanvagai</i>	land of non-brahmin proprietors
<i>Brahmadeya</i>	land gifted to Brahmins
<i>Shalabhoga</i>	land for the maintenance of a school
<i>Devadana</i>	land gifted to temples
<i>Pallichchandam</i>	land donated to Jaina institutions

Monuments

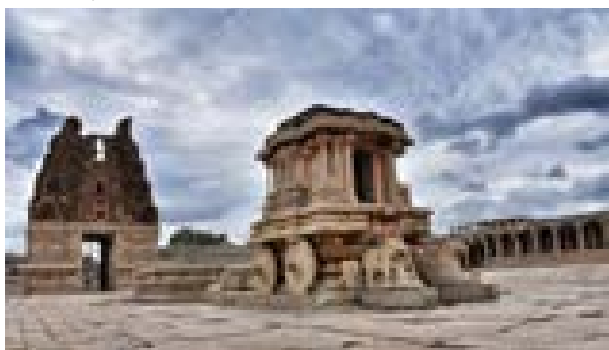
Temples, palaces, mosques, tombs, forts, minars and minarets are called by the collective name monuments.



Dilwara Temple Mt. Abu

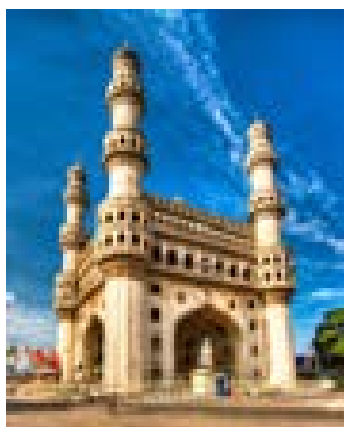


The Sultans of Delhi introduced a new type of architecture. The monuments they built had arches, domes and minarets as the main features. The inscriptions in these monuments contain rich information, which can be used to construct history. The medieval Khajuraho monuments (Madhya Pradesh) and temples in Konark (Odisha) and Dilwara (Mt. Abu, Rajasthan) constitute valuable sources to understand the religion-centered cultural evolution in northern India. Temples in Thanjavur (Brihadeshwara), Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram symbolise the magnificent structures the Later Cholas built in Tamil Nadu. Vitala and Virupaksha temples at Hampi similarly speak of the contribution of Vijayanagara rulers (15th century).



Hampi - Vijayanagar

Quwwat-ul Islam Masjid, Moth-ki-Masjid, Jama Masjid, Fatehpur Sikri Dargah (all in and around Delhi) and Charminar (Hyderabad) are the important mosques belonging to the medieval times.



Charminar

The forts of historical importance are Agra Fort, Chittor Fort, Gwalior Fort and Delhi Red Fort as well as the forts of Daulatabad (Aurangabad) and Firoz Shah Kotla (Delhi). Palaces in Jaipur, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur signify the greatness of the Rajput dynasty that wielded enormous power from these places. Qutb Minar and Alai-Darwaza, the tombs of Iltutmish, Balban and all the Mughal rulers are the other prominent structures recognised as valuable sources of information. Cities in ruin such as Firozabad and Tughlaqabad in north India and Hampi in south India remain rich repositories of the history of medieval India.

Coins

The portrait and the legend on the coins convey the names of kings with their titles, events, places, dates, dynasties and Royal emblems. The composition of metals in the coins gives us information on the economic condition of the empire. Mention of king's achievements like military conquests, territorial expansion, trade links and religious faith can also be found in the coins.

Muhammad Ghori had stamped the figure of Goddess Lakshmi on his gold coins and had his name inscribed on it. This coin tells us that this early Turkish invader was in all likelihood liberal in religious outlook.

Copper Jitals are available for the study of the period of the Delhi Sultans.

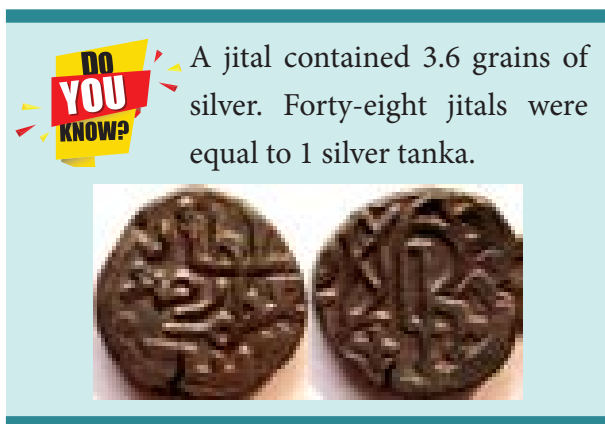


Lakshmi Coin of Ghori



Coins of Khalji

Silver Tanka introduced by Iltutmish, Ala-ud-din Khalji's gold coins, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq's copper *token currency* are indicative of coinage as well as the economic prosperity or otherwise of the country of the time.



Religious Literature

Devotional movement in South India and later in North resulted in the development of bhakti or devotional literature. The Chola period was known as the period of devotional literature and works such as *Kamba Ramayanam*, Sekkizhar's *Periyapuranam*, *Nalayira Divyaprabhandham*, composed by 12 Azhwars and compiled by Nathamuni, *Devaram* composed by Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar and compiled by Nambiyandar Nambi, Manikkavasakar's *Thiruvagasam*, all were scripted during the Chola times. Jayadeva's *Gita Govindam* (12th century) was a follow-up of the Bhakti Movement in South India. Kabir Das, a 15th century mystic poet, also had an influence on the Bhakti Movement in India.

Secular Literature

Madura Vijayam and *Amuktamalyatha* were poems composed by Gangadevi and Krishnadevaraya respectively that help us gain insight into the events and individuals associated with the Vijayanagara Empire. Chand Bardai's *Prithiviraj Raso* portrays the

Rajput king's valour. For pre-Islamic periods, the only exception was Kalhana's *Rajtarangini* (11th century).

Books, Biographies and Autobiographies

Minhaj-us-Siraj, patronised by Sultan Nazir-ud-din Mahmud of Slave Dynasty, wrote *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*. The compendium deals with the period from the conquest of Muhammad Ghori to A.D. (CE) 1260. The compendium was named after his patron. In the 13th century, Hasan Nizami, a migrant from Ghazni wrote *Taj-ul-Ma'asir* towards the end of Iltutmish's rule. It provides information about Qutb-ud-din Aibak and is considered the first official history of the Delhi Sultanate. Zia-ud-din Barani, a courtier of Muhammad Tughluq, wrote *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, in which he dealt with the history of Delhi Sultanate from Ghiyas-ud-din Balban to the early years of the reign of Firoz Shah Tughluq. Ferishta's *Tarikh-i-Frishta* (16th century) deals with the history of the rise of the Mughal power in India.

Tabakat is an Arabic word meaning 'generations or centuries'.

Tuzk is a Persian word meaning 'autobiography'.

Tarikh or **Tahquiq** are Arabic words meaning 'history'.

In the 16th century, emperor Babur's *Babur Nama* and Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari* and Akbar Nama provided detailed information about these two emperors. In the 17th century, Jahangir wrote his memoir, *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri*, throwing a lot of light on the period. Apart from autobiographies of emperors, *Tabakat-i-Akbari*, authored by Nizam-ud-din Ahmad, is considered reliable than the exaggerated account



of Abul Fazal. Similarly, Badauni's outstanding work, *Tarikh-i-Badauni* (Badauni's History), was published in 1595. This work spans three volumes. The volume on Akbar's reign is a frank and critical account of Akbar's administration, particularly of his religious policy.

Travellers and Travelogues

Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller, visited when the Pandya kingdom was becoming the leading Tamil power in the 13th century. Marco Polo was twice in Kayal, which was a port city (presently in Thoothukudi district of Tamilnadu). It was full of ships from Arabia and China. Marco Polo tells us that he himself came by a ship from China. According to Marco Polo, thousands of horses were imported into southern India by sea from Arabia and Persia.

Al-Beruni (11th century) accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni in one of his campaigns, and stayed in India for 10 years. The most accurate account of Mahmud's Somnath expedition is that of Alberuni. As learned man and a scholar, he travelled all over India trying to understand India and her people. He learnt Sanskrit and studied the philosophy of India. In his book *Tahqiq-i-Hind*, Alberuni discussed the Indian conditions, systems of knowledge, social norms and religion.

Ibn Battuta (14th century), an Arab-born Morocco scholar, travelled from Morocco right across North Africa to Egypt and then to Central Asia and India. His travelogue (*Rihla* [*The Travels*]) contains rich details about the

people and the countries he visited. According to him, Egypt was rich then, because of the whole of the Indian trade with the West passed through it. Ibn Battuta tells us of caste in India and the practice of *sati*. We learn from him that Indian merchants were carrying on a brisk trade in foreign ports and Indian ships in the seas. He describes the city of Delhi a vast and magnificent city. Those were the days when Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq transferred his capital from Delhi to Devagiri (Daulatabad) in the south, converting this city into a desert.



Ibn Battuta

In the South, Vijayanagar had many foreign visitors who left behind their detailed accounts of the state. An Italian named Nicolo Conti came in 1420. Abdur-Razzaq came from Heart (the court of Great Khan in Central Asia) in 1443. Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveller, visited the city in 1522. All of them recorded their observations, which are very useful for us today to know the glory of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Summary

- ❖ The period from A.D. (CE) 700 to 1200 and from A.D. (CE) 1200 to 1700 are classified as Early Medieval and Later Medieval periods in Indian history.
- ❖ Sources are classified as primary and secondary sources.



- ❖ Inscriptions on stones, rocks and temple walls and copper-plate grants with royal orders and events in the courts, which have evidentiary value are dealt with.
- ❖ Temples, palaces, mosques, tombs, forts, minars and minarets, collectively known as monuments, belonging to early Medieval and Mughal periods, are highlighted.
- ❖ The coins of Iltutmish, Ala-ud-din Khalji and copper coins of the later Islamic rulers are discussed.
- ❖ Devotional literature belonging to the era of Bhakthi Movement is provided.
- ❖ Books, biographies and autobiographies that provide information about the political, social and economic conditions of the medieval times are detailed.
- ❖ Travellers' accounts mostly by the visiting Arab and Persian scholars are given in the end.

Glossary

chronicler	a person who writes accounts of important historical events	வரலாற்றுப் பதிவாளர்
animosity	hostility, antagonism	விநோதம், பகைமை
travelogue	a book or illustrated account of the places visited and experiences encountered by a traveller	பயணக்குறிப்புகள்
commemoration	in remembrance of	நினைவாக
elaborately	in detail	விரிவாக
minarets	a tall tower, typically part of a mosque	தூபிகள்
repositories	the places, buildings where materials are stored or kept	களஞ்சியங்கள்
portraits	pictures, images in drawing or painting	உருவப்படங்கள்
compendium	a collection of detailed information about a particular subject, especially in a book	தொகுப்பு
substantiate	to prove with evidence	சான்றுகளுடன் நிரூபித்தல்



Evaluation

I. Choose the correct answer

1. _____ are the writings engraved on solid surfaces such as rocks, stones, temple walls and metals.



- a) Chronicles b) Travelogues
c) Coins d) Inscriptions

2. _____ was the land gifted to temples.

- a) Vellanvagai b) Shalabhoga
c) Brahmadeya d) Devadana

3. _____ period was known as the period of devotional literature.

- a) Chola b) Pandya
c) Rajput d) Vijayanagara

4. _____ provides information about the first Sultan of Delhi.
a) Ain-i-Akbari b) Taj-ul-Ma'asir
c) Tuzk-i-Jahangiri d) Tarikh-i-Frishta
5. _____, an Arab-born Morocco scholar, travelled from Morocco to India.
a) Marco Polo b) Al Beruni
c) Domingo Paes d) Ibn Battuta

II Fill in the Blanks

1. _____ inscriptions provide details about administration in a Brahmadeya village.
2. _____ had stamped the figure of Goddess Lakshmi on his gold coins and had his name inscribed on it.
3. 3.6 grains of silver amounted to a _____.
4. _____ was patronised by Sultan Nazir-ud-din Mahmud of Slave Dynasty.
5. An Italian traveller _____ visited Vijayanagar Empire in 1420.

III Match the following

1. Khajuraho - Odisha
2. Konark - Hampi
3. Dilwara - Madhya Pradesh
4. Virupaksha - Rajasthan

IV State true or false

1. Pallichchandam was the land donated to Jaina institution.
2. The composition of metal coins gives us information on the political condition of the empire.
3. The high cost of copper made palm leaf and paper cheaper alternatives for recording royal orders and events in royal courts.

4. Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveller, visited the Chola Empire in 1522.

V Match the statement with the reason

Tick (✓) the appropriate answer.

- 1) **Assertion(A):** Muhammad Ghorī's gold coins carried the figure of Goddess Lakshmi.

Reason(R): The Turkish invader was liberal in his religious outlook.

- a) R is the correct explanation of A.
b) R is not the correct explanation of A.
c) A is wrong and R is correct.
d) A and R are wrong.

2) Find out the wrong pair

- a) *Madura Vijayam* - Gangadevi
b) Abul Fazal - *Ain-i-Akbari*
c) Ibn Battuta - *Tahqiq-i-Hind*
d) *Amuktamalyatha* - Krishnadevaraya

3) Find out the odd one

- a) Inscriptions b) Travelogues
c) Monuments d) Coins

VI Answer the following in one or two sentences

1. Who compiled *Nalayira Divyaprabhandham*?
2. What does the word *Tuzk* mean?
3. Name Jahangir's memoir.
4. Name the two different types of sources for the study of history.
5. List out the important mosques and forts constructed during the medieval times.
6. Mention the important foreign travellers who visited India during the medieval period.

VII Answer the following in detail

1. Describe the different types of coins introduced by the rulers of Delhi Sultanate.

VIII Answer Grid

1. _____ was a courtier of Emperor Aurangzeb. Ans:	2. Tiruvalangadu copper plates belong to _____. Ans:
3. _____ was the land for the maintenance of the school. Ans:	4. _____ compiled Periyapuramam. Ans:
5. _____ is an Arabic word meaning history. Ans:	6. Muhammed bin Tughluq transferred his capital from Delhi to _____ in the south. Ans:

IX HOTs

- The composition of metals in coins is indicative of the economic prosperity of the empire – Substantiate.

X Student Activity

- Prepare an album collecting pictures of palaces, tombs, mosques and forts of Medieval India.

XI Life skill

- Find out from the libraries in your town or village and prepare a report about the primary and secondary sources available there.

References

- Abraham Eraly, *The Age of Wrath*, New Delhi: Penguin Group, 2014.
- Burton Stein, *A History of India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004 (Reprint).
- K.A. Neelankanta Shastri, *Cholas*. Madras: University of Madras (Reprint).
- S.K. Singh, *History of Medieval India*. New Delhi: Axis Books Private Ltd, 2013.



ICT CORNER

Sources of Medieval India

PROCEDURE :

- Step 1:** Open the Browser and type the given URL (or) Scan the QR Code.
- Step 2:** Click “India ” Option and then select any period (Ex. Medieval)
- Step 3:** Select any dynasty and then select any Kingdom (Ex. Sultanate)
- Step 4:** Explore the coins with pictorial descriptions.

Sources of Medieval India URL:

<https://www.mintageworld.com/> (or) scan the QR Code

