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978-1-108-05590-1 - The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians: The
Muhammadan Period: Volume 8

Henry Miers Elliot Edited by John Dowson

Excerpt

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HISTORIANS OF INDIA.

LXXXIV.

MUKHTASIRU-T TAWÁRÍKH.

THE author has nowhere given a distinct title to his work, though he says it is a *mukhtasir*, or abridgment, of the accounts of ancient Sultáns.

Neither the name of the author nor the date of the composition is given; but as, amongst the general authorities which he mentions in his Preface, the latest is the *Ikbál-náma Jahángirí* of Mu'tamad Khán, we may fairly assume that the work was written early during the reign of Sháh Jahán.

The author tells us that next to the knowledge of God and His Will the most important information to acquire is that derived from history; and that acquaintance with the circumstances of former kings, and their nobles and counsellors, is equal to the cup of Jamshíd and the mirror of Alexander; that it also leads to reflections upon the instability of kings and kingdoms, which are always treading the road of annihilation: for when exalted autocrats, with their powerful families, their experienced ministers, their countless armies, and exhaustless treasuries, with all their pomp, splendour and dominion, are swept from off the earth, and no vestige of them remains, what doom can inferior creatures expect?

After these moral reflections, he proceeds to inform us, that though he was endowed with a very small capacity, yet as he

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associated much with the great, and with the chief officers of the government, and had heard many historical anecdotes during his intercourse with them, he thought it expedient to combine this information with that which he had derived from authentic histories, and compose a work calculated to yield gratification to those who should peruse it. The histories he quotes are the *Tárikh-i Mahmúd Ghaznavi*, *Tárikh-i Sultán Shahábu-d dín Ghorí*, *Tárikh-i Sultán 'Aláu-d dín Khiljí*, *Tárikh-i Sultán Muhammad Sháh*, *Tárikh-i Sultán Ghiyásu-d dín Tughlik Sháh*, *Tárikh-i Sultán Fíroz Sháh*, *Tárikh-i Afághana*, *Zafar-náma Timúri*, *Akbar-náma* of Abú-l Fazl, *Tabakát-i Akbari*, *Ikbál-náma Jahángiri*, and *Rájávali*.

He devotes his work chiefly to the Sovereigns of Dehlí, but he also adds a short account of the Kings of Gujarát, Málwá, the Dakhin, Bengal, Jaunpúr, Kashmír, Sind, and Multán, all which provinces, after undergoing various vicissitudes, came to be included within the Empire of Jalálu-d dín Muhammad Akbar.

The copy which I have examined is unfortunately imperfect. It contains none of these minor histories, and does not carry down the Dehlí history later than 962 A.H., just before the accession of Akbar; but this is of very little consequence, for the *Mukhtasiru-t Tawárikh* has been followed verbatim by the better-known *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh*, which exhibits one of the most impudent plagiarisms that even India can produce; for the *Khulásat* mentions every conceivable authority in existence, but carefully excludes this one, from which, up to a certain period, it not only derived its chief information, but its very language, even in many instances to the transcription of the poetical quotations.

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Preface, pp. 1 to 10—Praise of India, its fruits, animals, flowers, cities, etc., pp. 11 to 30—Indrapat, Tughlikábád, and ancient Dehlí, pp. 30 to 35—Description of Sháh-Jahánábád, pp. 36 to 38—History of the Hindú Kings of Ujjain, Dehlí, etc., pp. 38 to 84—The Ghaznvide Dynasty, pp. 84 to 110—The

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MUKHTASIRU-T TAWÁRIKH.

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Ghorians, Khiljís, Saiyids, and Afgháns, pp. 111 to 238—Bábar, pp. 238 to 253—Humáyún, pp. 253 to 290.

SIZE—8vo. The imperfect volume consists of 352 pages of 15 lines to each page.

The following extract is among the passages copied by the *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh*, and shows a ridiculous tendency to exaggeration. [The translation was made by a *munshi*, and was revised by Sir H. M. Elliot.]

The only copy I have seen of the *Mukhtasiru-t Tawárikh* is in one of the Royal Libraries at Lucknow.

EXTRACT.

A Description of Hindústán.

India is a very large country, and it is so extensive that other countries are not equal to a hundredth part of it. Notwithstanding its extensive area, it is populated in all places. It abounds in all quarters and every district with cities, towns, villages, caravanserais, forts, citadels, mosques, temples, monasteries, cells, magnificent buildings, delightful gardens, fine trees, pleasant green fields, running streams, and impetuous rivers. On all the public roads and streets strong bridges are made over every river and rill, and embankments also are raised. Lofty minarets are made at the distance of each *kos* to indicate the road, and at every two *parasangs* inns are built of strong masonry for travellers to dwell in and take rest. At each inn can be obtained every kind of food and drink, all sorts of medicine, and all kinds of necessary instruments and utensils. On all roads shadowy and fruitful trees are planted on both sides. Wells and tanks are dug which contain fresh and sweet water in abundance. The passengers go along the roads under the shadow of the trees, amusing themselves, eating the fruits and drinking cold water, as if they were taking a walk among the beds of a garden. The merchants, tradesmen and all travellers, without any fear of thieves and robbers, take their goods and loads safe to their dis-

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tant destinations. The whole of this country is very fertile, and the productions of Yrán, Túrán, and other climates are not equal to those of even one province of Hindústán. In this country there are also mines of diamonds, ruby, gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron. The soil is generally good, and so productive that in a year it yields two crops, and in some places more. All kinds of grain, the sustenance of human life, are brought forth in such quantities that it is beyond the power of pen to enumerate. Of these productions the *sukhdás* rice is the best. Its qualities and flavour are beyond all praise. It is equally palatable to kings and the common people. It is incomparable in tenderness and sweetness, and has a very agreeable smell and taste. The rich and great men, and those who are fond of good living, think that no other food is so excellent. Men of refined and delicate taste find great relish in eating the fruits of Hindústán. A separate book would have to be written if a full detail were given of all the different kinds of fruits which are produced in spring and autumn, describing all their sweetness, fragrance, and flavour.

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LXXXV.

KHULÁSATU-T TAWÁRÍKH

OF

SUBHÁN RÁÍ.

THIS is a well-known general history of India. It was composed by Munshí Subhán Ráí Khattrí, an inhabitant of Pattiála. Many copies fail to give the name of the author,¹ and the *Ma-ásiru-l Umará* quotes the work merely as being written by a Hindú, without giving his name, in a passage which has been wrongly translated, as being “written in Hindú language.”²

It was written in 1107 A.H. (1695–6 A.D.), and occupied, we are told by the author, two years in its composition. This, however, may be doubted, for the work is chiefly a copy from the *Mukhtasiru-t Tawárikh*, noticed above; although there is no acknowledgment of the extent to which the author is indebted to that anonymous work. Notwithstanding which, he has the impudence to tell us in his Preface, that he has stolen nothing from any one, but composed the work himself—a declaration which, as he was under no necessity to make it, of itself excites suspicions of his honesty.

The author indulges in the same moral reflections, and assigns the same reasons for writing this history, as had already been given by the author of the *Mukhtasiru-t Tawárikh*, and have been quoted in that article.

¹ This is the case with the one in the *Mackenzie* Collection (vol. ii. p. 121), where it is stated that the author “describes himself as the translator of the *Singhasan Battisi*, the *Padmavati*, and *Rájávali*,”—a statement not authorized by any copy I have seen.

² *Oriental Quarterly Magazine*, vol. iv. p. 269.

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The opening chapters, which are the best portion of the work, give a good account of the products of Hindústán, and its Geography, as known in the time of Aurangzeb. He confines the history of the Ghaznivides to the transactions in India alone, and in consequence absurdly reduces the number of their reigns to seven. In the reigns of the early Kings of Dehlí he does not enter into much more detail; yet, notwithstanding the briefness of the narrative, he occasionally indulges in poetical quotations and needless digressions; as where he describes the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter in the Ghaznvide history; and gives us an account of the various games in the reign of Kai-Kubád; of fireworks, and of a famine, in the reign of Jalálu-d dín; and of wine and its effects, in the reigns of Shahábu-d dín and 'Aláu-d dín.

His accounts of the reigns of the first four Mughal Emperors are copious, considering the nature of the work; but he has said very little of Sháh Jahán, excusing himself on the ground of Wáris Khán's having already written a copious history of that Emperor's reign. His account of the contests between Aurangzeb and his brothers is very full, and he closes with the period when that Emperor has succeeded in getting rid of his rivals, and has no longer a competitor for the throne. Beyond this period he enters into no particulars, though he wrote in the fortieth year of the reign.

He gives no separate history of the independent monarchies of India, such as of the Dakhin, Bengal, Gujarát, etc., but merely gives a brief account of each king's reign, when he comes to mention the final absorption of each province in the Mughal Empire. Thus, the Kings of Multán are treated of in the reign of Bábar, the Kings of Málwá, Gujarát, Bengal, Kashmír, Sind, and the Dakhin in the reign of Akbar. The accounts of the Kings of Multán and Kashmír are given at greater length than the others.

The work is better known to the public by the Urdú translation, called the *A'ráish-i Mahfil*, of Mír Sher 'Alí Ja'farí, with

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the poetical designation of Afsos, son of Saiyid 'Alí Muzaffar Khán, and one of Dr. Gilchrist's chief coadjutors in the editing and correcting of his useful Hindústání publications, such as the *Bágh-i Urdú*, a translation of the *Gulistán*, *Kuliyát-i Saudá*, and *Nasr-i Be-nazír*. The beginning of this translation was printed in Calcutta in a folio volume in 1808. Sher 'Alí Afsos represents that he has not made a literal translation, but added or rejected as he thought proper. He has made the greatest alterations in the accounts of the *súbas* and *sarkárs*, and the least in the accounts of forts, and none at all in the revenues of the provinces, as he has no means of bringing down the information to his own time. [He has kept, he says, many passages relating to the miracles and marvels of *Súfis* merely for conformity with the original work; and for the same reason he has retained many marvellous statements about Hindú devotees and temples, although they are contrary to reason, and he is not the man to believe them.] The beginning of this translation had already been made, when, at the instigation of Mr. Harington, he was induced to continue the work from the time of the Muhammadan Emperors. The latter portion has never been printed, but is stated by M. Garcin de Tassy to exist in manuscript in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta.¹

There is little to indicate that this work was written by a Hindú, except that the date of composition is recorded, not only in the Hijra and Julús years, but in the era of the Kali-yug, Bikramájít, and Sáliváhana.²

The *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh* professes to be founded on the best authorities, no less than twenty-seven being quoted by name, of which those which are the rarest are the *History of Mahmúd Subuktigin* by Mauláná 'Unsúrí, *History of Sultán Shahábu-d*

¹ *Histoire de la Littérature Hindoui et Hindoustani*, vol. i. p. 31.

² [It is written with the intolerance and virulence of a bigoted Musulmán, and carefully records many stories about Musulmán saints and their tombs. So it would appear to have proceeded from the pen of a Musulmán rather than a Hindú. But this, though a ground for presumption as to the authorship, is by no means conclusive.]

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din Ghori, *History of Sultán 'Aláu-d din Khilji*, *Tárikh-i Firoz-sháhi* by 'Izzu-d din Khálidkhání,¹ the *History of the Afgháns* by Husain Khán, the *History of Akbar* by 'Atá Beg Kazwíni, and the *Tárikh-i Bahádur-sháhi*, containing the history of Gujarát. Whether these works were really read and examined may be questioned, for there is nothing in this history which would seem to be derived from these unusual sources of information.

Many verses, some said to be original, and some extracted from various authors, are inserted in different passages of the narrative, to which they were considered appropriate.

[Colonel Lees, in his article upon Indian Historians in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (N.S. vol. iii.), has bestowed very great praise upon the author of the *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh*. He says, "It is one of the most carefully compiled general histories of India I know of. The author commences with the Pándus, and brings his narrative down to the end of the year 1107 A.H. It was continued for some years later by another hand; and here I may mention, as an instance of how desirable it is to print the texts of all the valuable histories of India compiled in former times we can, that the author of the well-known *Siyaru-l Muta-akhhhirin*, who wrote his history when Lord Hastings was Governor-General, has transferred almost the whole of this work to his pages verbatim, without ever once mentioning the author's name. A more glaring instance of plagiarism it would be impossible to conceive; yet the author of the *Siyar* has a great reputation, especially among European writers, and the name of the modest Subhán Rái, the real historian, is probably wholly unknown. To make matters worse, this dishonest copyist says, in the preface of his book, that he found a few pages of an old book, prepared by some *munshí* for one of the Muhammadan Emperors, which he made use of, but it was full of mistakes, which he corrected. This is nothing else but a barefaced falsehood; for if there are mistakes in Subhán

¹ [This work and its author, whose name has not been found elsewhere, are not given in a MS. belonging to the R. Asiatic Society to which I have referred.]

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KHULÁSATU-T TAWÁRIKH.

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Ráí's history, he has copied them all, and made very many of his own besides. Another dishonest writer translated the same history into Hindústání, and giving it a new name, the *A'ráish-i Mahfil*, passed it off as an original composition. He was, however, more honest than the other, as, though he denies that his book is a translation, he acknowledges *some* obligation."

Col. Lees and Sir H. M. Elliot are thus in direct antagonism; but if Sir Henry's judgment was correct, Subhán Rái was the great plagiarist, and he must be deprived of the praise which Col. Lees has bestowed upon him. The discovery of the *Mukhtasiru-t Tawárikh* makes it possible also that the author of the *Siyar* was veracious, when he said that he used the book of an old *munshí*. Still, his statement was disingenuous, for the *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh* could hardly have been unknown to him, and it would have been more honest to have made some direct reference to that well-known work. The censure cast by Col. Lees on the author of the *A'ráish-i Mahfil* is still less deserved, for Sher 'Alí, in his title-page, states that his book was "derived from the contents of the *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh*." Like many other authors and translators, he has magnified his own labours, but the book is not a mere translation. To say nothing of the elegance of the composition, there is a good deal of additional matter in it, and it contains accounts of things which happened long after the date of the *Khulásat*, such as the establishment of the British Government, and the building of Calcutta.]¹

CONTENTS.

Preface, p. 1—Hindústán, its products and men, p. 12—
Descriptive Geography of the *súbas*, p. 28—Hindú Rájas, p. 94—
The Ghaznivides, p. 172—Muhammadan Kings of Dehlí,

¹["Quoique cet ouvrage ait pour base un livre Persan intitulé *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh*, qui est dû au *munshi* Subhán Rái de Patala, on peut le considérer néanmoins comme originale soit à cause de la quantité de faits qu'Afsos a puisés ailleurs, soit parceque souvent loin de répéter les assertions hasardées de l'auteur Persan il en a rectifié les erreurs."—Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la Littérature Hindoui et Hindoustani*."]

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p. 196—Reign of Bábar, p. 294—Reign of Humáyún, p. 310—Reign of Akbar, p. 347—Reign of Jahángír, p. 441—Reign of Sháh Jahán, p. 479—Reign of Aurangzeb, p. 487.

SIZE—Quarto ; containing 534 pages of 19 lines each.

The *Khulásatu-t Tawárikh* is one of the commonest works in India, and is not rare in Europe. There are several copies in the British Museum. The Asiatic Society of Bengal has a very good copy, with a few leaves deficient at the end, and there are two copies in the Royal Asiatic Society's Library.

Several copies, even from such widely distant places as London, Calcutta, Dehlí, Patna, and Saháranpúr, all conclude with stating the date of Aurangzeb's death; which, as the work was composed in the fortieth year of his reign, must have been added by some transcriber in a very early copy; for though it is not improbable that any transcriber should add the date of the Emperor's death, yet, unless the original entry had been very early, so many copies could not have concurred in giving it in the same form and words.

[The Editor has translated the account of Dehlí; but has not thought it necessary to give extracts from the historical part of the work.]

EXTRACT.

The Metropolitan Province of Sháh-Jahán-ábád.

[In Hindú and Persian histories I have read that in ancient times the city of Hastinápúr was the capital of the rulers of Hindústán. This city stood upon the bank of the Ganges, and a great deal has been written about the (great) extent and size of this city in that age. It is very populous at the present time, but nothing like what it was in those old days. When dissensions broke out between the two royal races the Kauravas and Pándavas, the latter removed from Hastinápúr to the city of Indarprast on the Jumna, and made it their capital. A long while afterwards, in the year 440 of Bikramájít, Rája Anang Pál