

CC-5:HISTORY OF INDIA(CE 750-1206)

I.STUDYING EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA:

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY SOURCES:TEXT,EPIGRAPHIC AND NUMISMATIC DATA

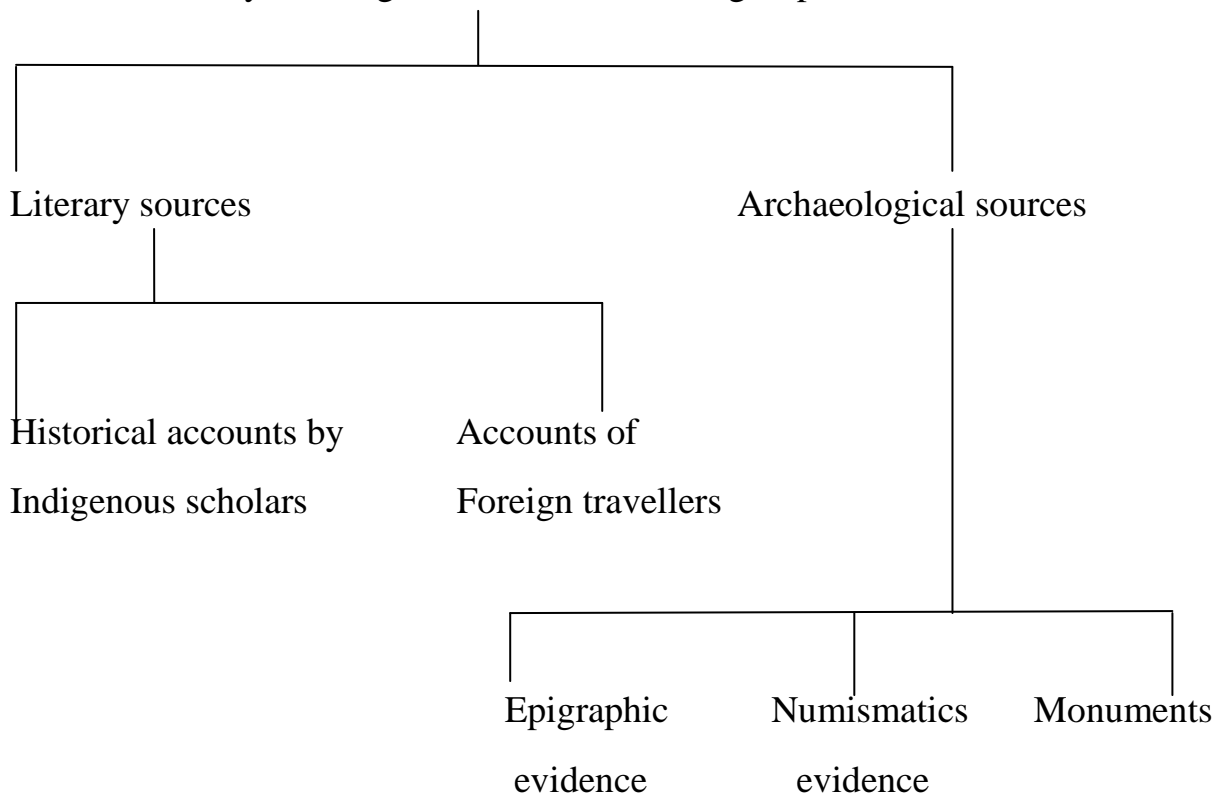
INTRODUCTION

The term 'Early Medieval' denotes an intermediate phase between the ancient and the medieval. The time bracket allotted to the early medieval period in India is between 600-1200 CE.

A large number of reliable sources are available for the reconstruction of early medieval period in Indian history. They provide a good deal of insight and knowledge about the condition of those times covering all the aspects of the society, polity, economy and cultural.

CATEGORIZATION

The sources may be categorised under different groups:-



BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE SOURCES

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS BY THE INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS

The decline of the Gupta Empire paved way for the emergence of the regional powers in North India as well as in South India.

The growth of the regional powers was accompanied by the composition of Royal Biographies by court poets. For example

- Banabhatta's *Harshacharita* is one of the well known works of this genre.
- Sandhyakaranandin's *Ramacharita* is written in shlesha (with double meaning) and simultaneously tells the story of the Epic Hero Rama and the Pala king Ramapala.
- Bilhana wrote the *Vikramankadevavcharita*, an eulogistic work about vikramaditya VI, the Chalukya king of kalyani.

Literary sources offers both direct as well as indirect informations about their time. An example of a text that gives direct, useful historical information is the anonymous *Lekkapaddhati*, a work in Sanskrit and Prakrit composed in Gujrat in about the 13th century which contains models of various legal documents. Another example is Krishi-Parashara, an early medieval text of Bengal dealing with agriculture.

Chand Bardai's *Prithvirajraso* is an Epic woven around the exploits of the Chauhan king Prithviraj Chauhan.

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is a historical chronicle of the Rulers of Kashmir from the earliest time upto the 12th century CE.

ACCOUNTS OF THE FOREIGN TRAVELLERS

Apart from the indigenous texts, Chinese and Arab accounts are useful sources of information for early medieval India. The Chinese travellers who made the arduous journey from China to India and back included monks and diplomats. Mention must be made of monks Xuanzang(c.600-64CE) and Yijing (635-713CE) both of whom visited India.

The important Arab works include the 9th-10th century writings of travellers and geographers such as Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, Ibn Haukal. Later Arab writers and few others give useful information on trade through their accounts.

EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

Just like the previous centuries inscriptions continues to form a major source of historical information for the early medieval period as well. For example:-

- The Aihole inscription of Pulakeshin II, the Chalukyan king-composed by the court poet Ravi Kirti. It contains many details about the history of the dynasty. It also contains an account of the early kings of the Chalukya line.
- The Banskhera and the Madhuban inscription of the reign of the king Harshavardhana of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The Banskhera inscription has the king's signature.
- Kalimpur copper plate of Dharmapala-records a land grant made by the king for construction of temple.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

All the regional powers that developed in the post Gupta period and made a mark on the political history of India during the early medieval period issued their own coins in gold, silver, copper.

MONUMENTAL EVIDENCE

We have evidence of construction of massive monuments in the form of temple architecture and new capital cities by the kings to commemorate their victory over other kings or dynasties or neighbouring regions. For example:-

- The Chola king Rajendra I, to commemorate victories over Mahendra V the ruler of Sri Lanka and against the Pandyas, the Chalukyas and the ruler of Kerala, built a new capital at Gangaikondacholapuram.
- The Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, Karnataka was constructed at the behest of queen Lokamahadevi to commemorate the conquest of Kanchipuram by her husband king Vikramaditya II.

REFERENCE

Singh Upinder, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India. Delhi, 2008.

