

## On Persian History Writing of XVI-XVII Centuries (In the Example of India)

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**ABSTRACT:** The article highlights the development of writing history in Persian in India, the stages of development and the main factors that had influence on it. In particular, writing history in Persian in India had gradual development starting mainly from Ghaznavids and reached to its peak in the period of Baburids. In particular, tolerance, freedom in faith has become one of the most important factors of the relocation of Iranian scholars in India.

**KEYWORD:** history writing, Turkestan, Persian, India, Baburids.

### Introduction

India is one of the most special places in the development of medieval Persian history writing. Although this country seems to have no relationship with Persian and its literature at first glance, it played a specific role as an integral part of a huge historical and cultural region, which is usually called the East, in the development of the Persian language and literature for several centuries. There are precise reasons for this, and of course, they are directly connected with the continuous process of political, economic, and cultural relations of people in this vast region. The issue of the development of literature and history writing in Persian in India is one of branches of this process. Therefore, there is dwelled on the state of history writing in Persian in India in the XVI-XVII centuries.

In short, there is only one reason why this period and country was chosen as the subject of research. The value of the period, that is, the XVI-XVII centuries, is great in all respects both from the perspective of the development of Persian literary studies and history writing and from the point of view of its role in the development of history writing in Persian in India.

### Main part

History writing of Persian India developed on the basis and with the help of certain factors in the 16th-17th centuries and had a certain past. In our opinion, these factors and foundations are as follows:

1. History writing in Persian had had a specific centuries-long development path by the period under study in Indian land, more specifically in North India [it includes contemporary Pakistan as well]. It did not come into existence “accidentally”. The beginning of history writing in Persian is associated with the rule of the Ghaznavid dynasty in North India (351/ 963-582 /1186-1187).
2. The process of the development of history writing in Persian in North India was closely correlated to the political events happening in Central Asia and the Middle East. This is especially evident in the years and events related to the establishment of Mongol rule in Turkestan, Khorasan, and Iran. Many scientists, poets,

historians of these lands found refuge in North India and developed a new qualitative change in the development of history writing in Persian there.

3. History writing in Persian in general had one of its most flourishing periods during the Timurid period. This process also had its positive influence on history writing in Persian in North India.

4. The Baburid dynasty that was a member of the Timurid dynasty established its rule in the north of India and later in its other regions starting from the 16th century. Baburids were intellectuals, promoters and donators of science and culture, which was one of the characteristics of the Timurids. This played a great importance in the development of history writing in the period under study.

5. In addition to the Baburids, investment to science and culture, in particular, attention to history writing, became natural for local dynasties, officials, and nobles.

6. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the mutual political relations and rivalry between the existing political dynasties in Central Asia, India and Iran (Shaibanids and Ashtarkhanids, Safavids, Baburids) influenced directly the process of history writing in Persian in India.

7. The development of science and culture, in particular, history writing in India in the XVI-XVII centuries is determined by the activity of high class scientists and sages in the period under study.

8. Local culture and historiography also played a significant role in the development history writing in the period under study. Of course, the range of these factors can be further expanded. It has been attempted to draw attention to the most important ones of them above, and we will dwell on each of them in more detail below.

1. The 9th-11th centuries are rightfully considered the Renaissance period in the history of oriental countries. Its origin and development are closely associated with the political process happening in the region during that period. The success of the Samanid dynasty (204/819 – 395/1005) in Turkestan and the events related to their activities, as well as the establishment of the rule of the Ghaznavid dynasty first in Ghazna and in Khorasan, Seistan and North India later on had a decisive influence on the cultural life of these places.

Ismail Somoni's (279/892-295/907) efforts to run independent policy from the Arab caliphate first in Turkestan and then in other regions of Central Asia opened the way for crucial changes in cultural relations in this region. For instance, the status of the Persian language commenced to rise in the country and cultural life. The policy of strengthening the status of the Persian language was such that, according to the famous historian Hamdullah Qazvini's statement, Ismail's successor Ahmad (295/907-301/914) restored the position of the Arabic language and ran a policy of supporting officials who knew the Arabic language. Consequently, this policy caused to the protest of Turkic commanders and he was soon executed [Qazvini. 79; Narshakhi. 160; Gardizi.66]. Though how hard the Samanids tried to support the means for the development of the Persian language and literature, the Arabic language, which had gained a strong position in the past long period, did not lose its importance. This is especially noticeably seen in the development of science. Furthermore, the issue becomes much clearer if it is looked at history writing of the paper. That is, it is difficult to find any serious works written in Persian during the Samanid period. Skimming the relevant chapters of Storey's famous work "Persian Literature" provides evidences to be sure of this [Storey. 279-288; Ahmedov. 116-118; Taqi Bahor. Vol. II]. Persian language and literature, especially history writing in it truly jumped to a high level during the Ghaznavid dynasty. Although it has become a praxis to give a unilateral interpretation towards the role of this dynasty in the history of the region in some literatures [Gafurov. 382, 390, 391, 433.], the examples of development in the fields of science, literature and art in the same period confirm that having such an approach is wrong. When only the field of historiography is analyzed, it is found out that the masterpieces of Persian prose literature, such as "Tarihi Bayhaqi" by Abulfazl Bayhaqi, "Zain al-akhbar" by Abusaid Gardizi, which were written in the very Ghaznavid period and environment, gained great

importance in the further development of Persian literature. For example, the method of applying for poetry in the process of narration of historical works was formed in the same period and “Tarikhi Bayhaqi” is an example of it while there was further development of this method the next periods and “Zafarnama” is a clear example.

When it is spoken about the development of science and culture during the Ghaznavid period, Lokhur is rightfully mentioned in addition to the capital Ghazna. Indeed, the city, which was developed in historical North India, was one of the largest centers of science and culture of its time. Due to the defeat of the Ghaznavids by the Seljuqs (426/1038-590/1194) (431/1040), the influence of the Ghazna governments on Lahore was further strengthened. This, in turn, laid the needed foundation for the further growth of the Persian language and literature in entire North India.

This condition became more evident during the Ghurids (543/1148-612/1215) and Delhi sultans (602/1205-1206-932/1526) [Ahmad. 15<sup>6</sup>-139<sup>6</sup>; Badowani. 14<sup>a</sup>-112<sup>a</sup>]. There were written such historical books as “Taj al-maasir” by Sadridin Nishopuri, “Tabaqati Nasiri” by Minhajiddin Juzjoni, “Qiran al-sa'dayn” “Miftah al-futuh”, “Khazain al-futuh” and “Tughluqnama” by Khisrav Dehlavi, “Tarikhi Firuzshahi” by Ziyavuddin Barani, “History of Firuzshahi” by Shamsi Siroj Afif, “Tarikhi Mubarakshahi” by Yahya Sirhandi in the very period [Storey. 493-516]. Of course, these works are distinctive by their types of structure and writing styles. For instance, “Tabaqati Nasiri” was written in the form of a general history, while the rest are devoted to the history of the Sultans of Delhi, that is, dynastic histories. Regarding the narrative style, “Taj al-Maasir” and “Khazain al-Futuh” are written in the Saj style with rich complex, metaphorical and homonym words while the works such as “Tabaqati Nasiri”, “Tarikhi Firuzshahi”, “Tarikhi Mubarakshahi” are written more simple and clear. One of the exceptional aspects of this period is that this period grew to a more advanced level than in previous times in terms of poetic history writing (especially the historical epics of Amir Khisrav). Whereas, writing in Persian in Khurasan, Iran, Turkestan did not have a significant revival in this regard with the exception of “Ghazannama” and “Shahanshahnama”.

As can be seen, Indian history writing in Persian traced a specific way in the period from the 12th century to the first quarter of the 16th century. History writing in Persian in this area developed both directly and indirectly in connection with areas such as Iran, Khorasan, Turkestan, and in a distinctive way. This process created a great foundation for Indian history writing in Persian of the 16th-17th centuries. It is noteworthy that the number of historical works created in North India between the first quarter of the 12th and 16th centuries constitutes a considerable part of the volume of historical works written in the Persian-speaking region as a whole [Storey. 493-516].

2. It is known that Central Asia, Middle East and India, as parts of a huge political, economic and cultural region, have been in extremely close and steady relations with each other since the ancient times. Therefore, a significant change that took place in any destinations of these regions certainly had mutual influence on the others. This practice is especially evident during the Mongol period from the point of view of the topic under consideration.

There was a flee of many scholars, thinkers and poets of Eastern Turkestan, Turkestan, Khorasan, and Iran who sought refuge taking their road to India during the Mongol invasion and later on. The life of Muhammad Awfii is characteristic in this regard. In fact, this scholar, who was born and educated in Bukhara, was traveling to Ghazna at the beginning of the Mongol invasion. Here he combined those who were fleeing from Turkestan and Iran towards India. His future life after that was connected with India [Ahmedov. 128]. In this regard, the following statements by Muhammad Qasim Hindushah is noteworthy: according to the appendix written by Sheikh Ainiddin Bijopuri to “Tabaqati Nasiri”, Sultan Ghiyasiddin’s country and prosperity were so great that, in addition to the kings and princes who visited the land of India during the time of the previous sultans, during his realm fifteen princes of Turkestan, Khorasan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Persia, Rum, and Sham,

who left their country centers, came to Delhi due to Genghis Khan's invasion [Hidushah. 75]. It is true that many of the princes and their officials joined the scholars and thinkers to come to India. Therefore, Sultan Ghiyas al-din (664/1265-686/1287) assigned a separate mahalla to each prince, taking into account his officizls: mahalla-i Abbasi, mahalla-i Sanjari, mahalla-i Khorezmshahi, mahalla-i Ghuri, mahalla-i Rumi, mahalla-i Yamani, mahalla-i Mosuli, mahalla-i Samarkandi, mahalla-i Koshghari and others [Hindushah. 75].

There will be provided some of specific examples of how political changes in the region played a significant role in the development of Indian Persian literature (history writing). For example, Sayfiddin Mahmud, the father of Amir Khisrav, lived in the city of Kesh and was considered one of the amirs of the Lachin clan. During the Mongol period, he sought refuge in India and entered the service of Shamsuddin Eltutmish (607/1211–633/1236). Sayfiddin Ahmad, who accomplished the status of Amnr ul-Umara, was one of the educated and cultured people of his time. Scholars such as Muayyeddin Khorezmi, Amir Rouhani Bukhari can also be included among the scholars and thinkers who fled from the Mongols and took refuge in the palace of Shamsiddin Eltutmish [TADI. 3:1. 101, 3:2. 1187-1188]. In general, it becomes clear that many intellectuals and cultured people came from Turkestan, Khurasan, Iran to the Indus land during the time of Delhi sultans, and were busy with their thorough creative work there (Muiniddin Hasan Sajazi, Qutbiddin Bakhtiyar Oshii, Shaykhulislam Fahiddin, Mahiddin Kashi, Fahiddin Marvazi, Karimiddin Samarkandi, Nizamiddn Shirozi, Sayyid Muhammad Mubarak Alavi Kermani and others) [TADI: 820].

3. The era of Timurids (771/1370–912/1506) is considered a special period in the history of not only the natio-ns of the East, but also the whole world. Because it is connected with great achievements and changes in the fields of science and culture in this period. Its proof can be seen in history writing. For example, there were conducted many activities in the direction of the development of history writing in Persian language comparing with the periods of the pre-Temurid dynasties (Samanids, Karakhanids, Seljuks, Ghaznavids, Khorezmshahs, Chingizids - Mongols). History writing in Persian of the Timurid tends to be exceptional both in terms of quantity and quality. For instance, almost all of the historical works written in Persian (with the exception “Zafarnoma” by Sharafiddin Ali Yazdi) were mostly written in fluently and Arabic words, metaphors and homonyms were rarely used which provides fluent reading for readers. Recollecting complex and comprehencive narrative style in “Tarikhi jahongushoy” and “Tarikhi wassaf” is enough. The best way to define it is the comparison of Mongol and Temurid periods history writing in Persian in India. It is seen that the complexity of the narrative style of the historical works, the extensive use of Arabic words and phrases of the former, which in turn led to the strengthening of Arabism in the Persian literary language, while the significance of the change in the narrative style in history writing in Persian becomes clearer in the former [TADI. 3:2. 1154-1160].

There is a factor in the development of history writing in Persian during the Timurid period which is specific to this period, or rather, to this dynasty. From Amir Timur to the “ordinary” prince, the Timurid figures, who were the most knowledgeable and educated people of their time. They most such as Amir Temur, Shohruh, Ulughbek, Ibrahim Sultan, Iskandar Sultan and others are characterized not only for the sponsorship in writing historical works, but also their activities as skilled historians. Such an attitude to history writing became a dynastic tradition and it reflected in the activities of the Babur dynasty, which “separated” from the Timurid dynasty.

4. The Baburid state (932/1526–1274/1858) was founded in this ancient land as soon as Zahiriddin Muhammad Bobur (888/1483–937/1530), a successor of the Timurid dynasty, had established his rule in the land of India [Azimjonova. 112-118]. Babur and his successors were not only able to preserve the great enthusiasm for history writing, which was characteristic of the Timurid family mentioned above, but also developed it at a high level. On the one hand, they themselves created historical works (Babur, Gulbadan

Begum, Jahangir), on the other hand, as patrons, initiators, and contributors of ideas they are directly related to the birth of historical works, which are highly valued in history writing in Persian.

A thorough study of the initiatives, organization, and sponsoring activities of the Baburids in the development of science and culture, especially in historiography shows that it would not be an exaggeration to say that each representative of the Baburids was a potential scientist and a poet of fine taste. Khumayun, who had a great talent in mathematics, astronomy, poetry, took the famous historian Khandamir under his protection, it is known that Khandamir's work "Khumayun namah" was written at his request. Akbar is definitely the most prominent figure of the Baburids. The affairs of this remarkable person and ruler, who was very interested in all theological and secular disciplines, were extremely great in the development of history writing in Persian. A number of valuable historical works such as "Akbar namah", "Tabaqoti Akbari", "Tarihi alfi", "Tarihi Khanadoni Timuriya", "Muntakhab al-Tawarikh", Persian translations of several historical and fiction literature written in Sanskrit, Arabic were written and done under the direct instructions, idea, patronage, control of Akbar. Shah Jahan kept his grandfather's way and developed it. For instance, Akbar introduced the post of "palace historian" in his court while Shah Jahan established a special history writing department in the Chancellery Office. As a result, such famous historians as Abdulhamid Lohuri, Abu Talib Qalim Hamadani and others greatly benefited from his patronage in creating their works. During the very period and under his control, famous "Timur tuzuklari (Canons of Temur)" was translated into Persian, and primary research was held on it.

5. In addition to the services of the ruling dynasty, unofficial dynasties (local rulers) and individuals (officials, benefactors) played a big role in the development of history writing during the Babur period. For example, one of the Persian translations of "Baburnama" was conducted under the instructions of Behruz Khan, one of the local governors of the Akbar era. Another Persian translation-edition of "Baburnama" was held by poet and historian Mirza Abdurrahim Khonikhoni, who was one of the most respected emirs of Akbar's realm. Nurullah Dehlavi's "Zubdat al-Tawarikh", Sheikhullah Dod Faizi's "Akbarnama" were written under the instructions of Sheikh Faid Bukhari (Murtaza Khan) who was one of Akbar's officials. Abdalbaki Nihovandiy wrote his work "Maosiri Rahimi" at the request of abovementioned Abdurrahim Khanikhani, and "Jangi Islam Khan" by Muhammadquli Salim Tehrani was prepared under the auspices of Islam Khan who was the governor of Bengal. It is known that that Haji Muhammadjan Kudsi, the author of "Zafarnamai Shahjakhani" was under the patronage of Abdullah Khan Firuzjang who one of Shah Jahan's emirs [Storey. 533, 551- 552, 567]. Besides, when the period of Aurangzeb (1068/1658-1118/1707) is studied, it is seen that Inayatullah Khan, one of the influential emirs of that time, played an important role for the creation of the famous "Maosiri Alamgiri" written by Muhammad Saqi Musta'id Khan. For example, he addressed Mustai'd Khan in this way: "No one can compete with you to describe Aurangzeb, that is, you know him and his realm well" [Mustaishkan. 113]. As for the position of local dynasties in the development of Persian historiography and literature, the Arghun dynasty that ruled Sindh region, deserves attention. It is known that the representatives of the Arghuns were talented individuals who had acquired knowledge in all directions and left a great mark on poetry. It became their habit to have patronage to many poets and thinkers [Ziyo. 1992].

6. it is unequivocally true that the condition of Persian literature, especially history writing in the 16th-17th centuries was influenced by the social and political processes taking place in Central Asia, Iran, and North India. There was a mutual competition between the two countries, Turan and Iran, and Khorasan was considered a place of confrontation between the two countries for centuries. The establishment of Baburids' rule in India grew the number of actors in this competition, and then the Baburids also claimed for Khorasan [PPShII]. Mutual competition is particularly noticeable in the field of science and culture, as well as, in history writing. Because India became the largest center of lovers of Persian literature (prose and verse) during the Baburid period, many scientists, poets and masters of prose began to migrate to India from the

Persian-speaking environment in general, especially from Iran. There were two reasons for this. On the one hand, as mentioned above, necessary atmosphere was created for the development of science and culture, especially Persian literature in the Babur kingdom, and on the other hand, it was clearly noticeable to see the process of lagging behind in this regard in Iran. There was no any significant promotion to the development of Persian language and literature during the Safavids who were ruling Iran (907/150145/1732), especially from the time of Shah Tahmasp (930/1524- 986/1576). This condition can be considered natural to some extent. Because the Safavids, who originally came from Turkic people, led the policy relying on the Turkic stratum both in the center and in the localities. The army, which determines the power of the state, had a storing Turkic foundation. In this regard, the following feelings of Aqo Safi Isfahani draw the attention: “Beyo, soqiy, az ehtiyojam bor or, va z in kishvari bi rivojam bar or, Ba Hindam rason, xush dar on marzu bum...”. In fact, the position of the Turkish language was growing during the Safavid period, and Persian language and literature, was not developing even in the homeland, Iran [TADI 5:1. 494].

There is another reason why Iranian scholars and thinkers aspired to the land of India. Ideological moderation prevailed in India (especially during the time of Akbar) compared to Iran, and the Safavids strived hard to introduce and expand the Shia sect in Iran and some lands of Khurasan. Shaibanids (903/1500-1009/1601) and Ashtarkhanids (1109/1601 1170/1757), that is Turkestan dynasties fought against this policy of the Safavids. As a result of struggles between Turan and Iran for ideological, political and economic interests, endangered especially Khurasan science and culture. Therefore, their majority had to move to India. This is one of the reasons, why there is information about many educated people who came to India from Iran and Khurasan in the sources of the 16th and 17th centuries. For example: “In the morning, the historian Hondamir, Maulana Shikob, and Mir Ibrahim qanuni, a relative of Yunus Ali came from Khiri with a request, and came and received a request” [Babur. 312]. A representative of famous historians Mir Abduldullatif with his sons who left Iran in 963/1556 and came to Akbar's court in India is another example [Allomi]. He was forced to leave the country because of his association with Sunnis. His son Mir Ghiyosiddin Ali (Naqib Khan) later became one of the most known historians of his time.

Mir Ghiyosiddin Ali (Naqib Khan) took an active part in writing “Tarihi Alfi” and translating “Mahabharat” into Persian [Badovani. 294]. Hasanbek Khoki, the author of the work “Muntakhab al-Tawarikh” written during the reign of Jahangir, originally came from a noble family from Shiraz and emigrated to India [Storey. V. I. 425]. The above-mentioned Abdulbaqi Nihovandi also got tired of the minor affairs and disputes of the palace and exchanged Iran for the land of India [Storey. 552]. So, as is seen, political and social relations of the period under study left its mark on the process of history writing in Persian.

7. The superiority of individuals and talents in the development of any field is known. Great scientists, poets, historians who lived and worked in this period made a great contribution to the development of Persian-speaking Indian history writing of XVI-XVII centuries. Enumerating the names of people who created valuable historical works during the Baburid period can be a proof of the opinion: Khandamir, Zayniddin Khawafi, Mirza Abdurrahman Khanikhani, Sheikh Abulfayz, Sheikh Abulfazl, Abulqadir Badovani, Nizamiddin Ahmed, Abdulhamid Lohuri and others [TADI. V. 5. 1.3.5].

8. It should be mentioned that local factors also played a considerable role in the development of history writing in the period under study. In the first decades of Baburids rule, Babur and Humayun were more engaged in solving political problems in the country. Great attention was paid to the use of local talents and local cultural heritage in further periods, especially from the time of Akbar. There were translated such works as “Mahabharat”, “Roj Trangani”, “Ramayana”, “Singasen Battisi”, “Nal va Daman”, “Katkhasarg Sager”, “Bhagavad Gita”, “Upanishadi”, “Yog Bashisht” into Persian. It enhanced Persian with local vocabulary to which words were derived.

Local educated people began to write appear in Persian as well. The author of “Chahor Chaman” is of example. Chandrobham Brahmin Lohuri served as a special munshi - chronicler in the court of Shah Jahan. Besides this historical work, he wrote a number of poetic works in Persian. Harkaran Matharodos Qambu Multani (d. 1033/1624), the author of “Inshoyi Harkaran”, was also a local talent. His work is helpful to study the reliability of information in other sources on Medieval ages. This work, which consists of seven chapters, contains valuable information about the ruler’s correspondences, decrees, commands, and petitions, etc., and how they were written.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the main factors of the development of history writing in Persian in India in the 16th and 17th centuries has been focused above. As is seen, this process appeared and continued to develop due to the interaction of a number of internal and external and historical factors. Therefore, this process cannot be considered purely “Persian”, or specific to India, or it is related only to the activity of the Baburids. So, the wider and deeper the issues of history writing in Persian in India in the 16th-17th centuries are studied, the more its real essence and significance, colorful aspects will be disclosed.

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