

## The Emergence of the Historiography in Kashmir: An Analysis

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### Abstract

*Historiography is the study of methodologies, strategies, and approaches to the development of history as a subject in the academic field by historians. This study provides an initial calculation of the formation and early phases of the historiography in the 12th century in the region of Kashmir. To do so, focus on the earliest writing on the subject of oral history of Kashmir, as well as the first person who participated in the process of history-writing in Kashmir. First, the subject was studied by introducing it to the world, and especially in Kashmir, through the entry of foreign historians, reviewing the contribution of some of the earliest authors and most important personalities in historiography in the 12th century in the region of Kashmir. Primary and secondary data are used to explore the facts.*

**Key Words:** Emergence, Historiography, Historians, Kashmir, 12th Century

### Introduction

The study of a specific event in a certain time and space is known as history. A historical event is an important component of study for the students of history and historians, with the dual dimensions of time and place providing the historical context in which an incident is explored. It is an exception in itself due to the uniqueness of the time and space. In other words, the uniqueness of an event is determined by the time and place in which it occurs. (Anjum, 2012)

Historiography is known as an art of writing in the literary world. It is the study of history or historical works. It presents the story of how historical works are judged and developed over time. It has expanded to include changes in historical writing concepts and practices, as well as altering

perspectives on the nature of history and shifting attitudes towards history itself. Finally, it is concerned with the evolution of man's understanding of the past. (Sreedharan, 2004)

Historiography can be traced all the way back to the very first human words spoken. Herodotus was the first one who introduced historiography as a discipline. His history was scientific because he understood the principles of objectivity and subjectivity. He strove to make conclusions based on human logic. Therefore, his historiography was likewise reasonable. Civilizations grew, culture flourished, and human populations grew in size, resulting in a fight for dominance. In both Ancient and Medieval historiography, chronicle texts were used. The rulers hired their own authors to write histories of their eras. The writers didn't have a

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choice but to obey the wishes of their masters. ([Qadir, 1994](#)) In short, historiography is the study of historical texts as well as the writing of history. So, whereas a historian writes history, a historiographer writes on past historical writings as well as the process of historical study.

Historians have written about many periods, continents, regions, countries, institutions, personalities, movements, topics and issues, as well as specific events. In modern times the historical canvas has expanded considerably, and historians are writing histories of things and phenomena that have never been documented before. They focus on topics and ideas that are out of the ordinary. Current issues have been re-interpreted, known 'facts' have been re-examined, and what was once considered a subdivision had been tied to the context of historical research. Historical studies are generally seen as a deeper activity than "filling in the blanks." ([Gardiner, 1988](#)) Furthermore, the historians may concentrate on different areas like; social, political, religious, military, economics, culture, customs, science, wars, traditions, intellectual ideas, art and other activities. ([Hexter, 1961](#))

Historians have attempted to trace the origins and evolution of historical ideas that eventually led to history writing, but they have not been successful in tracing the suitable answer about past events. Ancient historians recorded historical events through textual and archaeological evidence. The use of stone inscriptions to preserve historic writings was common. For example, the ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations endeavored to keep the record of the past. The writings on the Palermo Stone, unearthed among the ruins of ancient Egypt, were written in hieroglyphic characters, which have recently been decoded. The annals or chronicles of Egypt's ancient kings are kept on the Palermo Stone, which dates from roughly 2350 BC. It is considered an important source for ancient Egyptian history as it provides information on the five families of the ancient Egyptian monarchs. ([Reynolds, 1938](#))

The historians used distinct tactics, methodologies, and approaches in different ages and civilizations. Their methods were unmistakably distinct from those of their forefathers. Greek,

Jewish, Chinese, Christian, Persian, Muslim and Indian historiography all took different approaches to history. A brief introduction to the historiography of all mentions is given below in one paragraph respectively.

History was interpreted moralistically by Greek historians. The Greeks began to construct conceptions about time and place, as well as concepts of history writing and historical awareness, around the seventh and sixth century B.C. Logography and qualified speech-writing emerged in the sixth century B.C. The "Father of History," Herodotus (484-424 BC), was a notable fifth-century Greek historian. He spent a lot of time traveling around Africa, West Asia, and Europe. *Historia* is a book whose title is derived from the Greek phrase *historie*, which implies investigation or enquiry. ([Sterling, 1992](#)) Unlike Greek history, the apologetic aspect of Jewish historiography distinguishes it. A long prose tale produced by a member of the group who honors the group's traditions while Hellenizing them in order to establish the group's identity in the greater world. ([Greidanus, 1988](#)) Similarly, The Jews were the most prominent group to write the apologetic history as they strove to recast Judaism in Hellenistic culture. Titus Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD) was the strongest representative of the apologetic historiographical practice. ([Sterling, 1992](#)) The role of God in the events that make up Church history was highlighted in Christian historiography. Eusebius of Caesarea (339 AD), a fourth-century Christian bishop, is called the "Father of Church History." ([Anjum, 2012](#))

The historical records of the past 1700 years of China are identified as Chinese historiography. It starts with a mythological period in Chinese history and concludes with Duke Mu of Qin (621 BC). Ssu-Ma Chien (145 BC) is the Grand Historian of China. ([Ivanhoe, 1993](#)) In ancient Persia, the military conquests of Emperor Darius I (522-486 BC) were engraved on the famous Behistun rock in cuneiform script in three different languages: Babylonian, Elamite and Old Persian. Ashoka the Great (232 BC) directed the erection of stone inscriptions throughout his Empire to spread the Buddhist doctrines after embracing Buddhism in 262 BC. ([Jones, 1974](#)) The Muslims made enormous

advances in the fields of history and historiography throughout the tenth century. The Quranic concept, method of collecting Ahadith and Arab historical realization are the foundations of Muslim historiography. The Quran and hadith collections were used as primary materials for composing early Muslim history, principally the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and military history are known as Sirat or Sirah and Maghazi, respectively. ([Rasul, 1968](#))

During the Gupta period (320 to 480 AD), the classic epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were likewise semi-historical and semi-mythological in form. Furthermore, genealogies of pundits and kings were documented on copper plates in ancient India. The ancient Indians developed their own astronomy and timekeeping system. The religious works of Puranic and Vedic in Prakrit, Sanskrit and Pali are in semi-historical and semi-mythological forms. ([Anjum, 2012](#))

### Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore the diverse methods used by different schools of thought. This research is of great importance in making a long journey to reveal the real motives of historiography in Kashmir. This study proves to be an important collection for researchers in determining the overall effects of interpretations of different schools of thought on the beginning of historiography in Kashmir.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the meaning of historiography.
2. To explore the emergence of historiography in Kashmir.
3. To explain the contribution of the Kashmiri historian (Kalhana) in history writing.

### Research Questions

1. How did historiography come into being in Kashmir?
2. How Kalhana try to highlight the history of ancient Kashmir?

### Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study will be from ancient Kashmir to the end of the Lohara dynasty in the 12th century. It covers all aspects of historiography in Kashmir, from the beginning of ancient times to the 12th century.

### Methodology

This study is primarily historical in nature; books, journals, periodicals, and other related materials are gathered from the libraries and where facts are narrated in the light of primary and secondary sources. In this research, an explanatory approach is used to explore the facts.

### Historiography in Kashmir

Despite the presence of royal poets and genealogists in ancient India, Hindu India as a whole lacks historical literature in the Western sense. There are historical Kavyas (Caritas), but their strange nature and abundance of subtle hints limit their historical usefulness. Kashmir has a rich history and a long legacy of historical literature, especially the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana, which gives rise to medieval European and Muslim Oriental histories. ([Stein, 1900](#))

G. Cunningham was able to critically control Kalhana's work as a result of his research into the investigation of old Kashmiri coins and fix the ages of practically all of the monarchs from the commencement of the Karkota dynasty forward with reasonable precision. Except for the existing Nilamatapurapa, none of the sources of Kalhana have been unearthed to allow us to verify his work, but the accuracy of his phases tends to suggest that tradition of recording history in Kashmir began with the Karkota dynasty. It does not appear to have started earlier because Kalhana did not have accurate records for Mehrakula, the white Hunz monarch whose date has been established as the early sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) century of the Christian era based on coin inscriptions and Chinese annals. ([Mohan, 1958](#)) Kalhana described that the chronology system starts from 704-634 BC which is a preposterous difference of 1200 years. However, the concept of history writing appears to be well organized and developed by the time of Kalhana.

Ksemendra addresses the characteristics of poets and also deliberates *Itihasa* as one of their needed activities in his "*Kavikanthabharana*" ([Sastri, 1954](#)). When he mentions *Itihasa* in his work, it does not mean that it is other than the history and historical events. For this, he claimed that he wrote a chronicle (*Nrpavali*), though no document is available. Kalhana did not consider Ksemendra's work perfect in history writing and said this work is riddled with errors. When Mullah Ahmad started the history writing about ancient Kashmir during the time of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, he also pointed out that the Ksemendra's work was rife with inaccuracies. It cannot be said that Mullah Ahmed simply repeated Kalhana's words about Ksemendra's work or he gave this statement after the comparison between the works of Ksemendra and Kalhana in history writing ([Mohan, 1958](#)). Despite this, Ksemendra's work is very important in history writing. His work provided us with an opportunity for comparative study among some available literature and Kalhana's works.

Alberuni (1130), writing about Indian times before Ksemendra, mentions the Kashmiri Calendar and the ages included therein. The Kashmiri calendar appears to be nothing more than a history written by a previous author. It demonstrates that the practice of writing history existed in both India and Kashmir. In response to the lack of interest of Hindus in narrating the historical succession of their Kings whereas Sahi monarchs of Kabul had a genealogy of their royal dynasty inscribed on silk which he could not see despite his desire. (Alberuni, 1964)

The Chinese have kept historical documents since the beginning of time. Archival records for each court were developed in China during the 10th and 8th century B.C. Confucius' revised "*Spring and Autumn Annals*," a history of the state of Lu from Y22 to 481 B.C., is thought to be the source. The first expression of the idea that the responsibility of historians is to protect morality, that it is his professional task and responsibility to fairly award praise and blame, not through long personal remarks, but through the manner and focus of his record. China had the most extensive, continuous, and accurate records of any ancient nation. ([Gardner, 1961](#))

Lalitaditya Mukta Paid, the king of Kashmir, had a strong desire and excessive love to learn about the past. We have already mentioned how he persuaded Atrigupta (forefather of Abhinavagupta) to come to Kashmir for residence. He had Tokhara (Upper Oxus) minister mentioned as Cankuna, an an ethical form of the Chinese name. Chinese Annals provide the names of Kashmiri kings of the Karkota dynasty. It appears that historiography in Kashmir evolved from strong ties with the Chinese and was sustained by the enthusiasm of the king for learning. The remains of Pandrethan and Parihasapura from the reign of King Lalitaditya Mukta Paid show Chinese influence ([Goetz, 1955](#)). The royal practice of Karkota dynasty was influenced by Chinese culture, where brother-to-brother succession was frequent, and we haven't seen this move mirrored anywhere else. ([Stein, 1900](#))

History writing was also practiced in India, primarily in outlying kingdoms that had been in close connection with China for a number of centuries. Muslims had a strong sense of history, and the fact that Kalhana started presenting accurate histories during this time does not imply that the Kashmiris learned it from Muslims. Kashmir is shielded by its mountainous ranges and has long been immune to Muslim incursions. Approximately a century before Kalhana's time, however, due to the fall of Sahis of Kabul at the hands of Mahmud of Ghazni, we discover indications of Muslim influence, but historiography existed in Kashmir even before this time. ([Mohan, 1958](#))

Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajnabhata, and Suka continued Kalhana's work of history writing but none of these even come close to generating a faint reflection of his work, though they occasionally make a very bad attempt at simulating him. The three independent works together only cover nearly half of the text of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. Although Hindu learning suffered greatly during the turbulent period preceding the conquest of Akbar (with the exception of Zain-ul-Abidin's reign), even Muslim historians were more attentive in their own time than in the past. Some of their works feature accounts of the Hindu period, particularly from the imaginary and subjective parts of the *Rajatarangini*. Heimskjag Kringla of Snorri Sturlasson, poet,

scholar, officials, and above all history writers of 12<sup>th</sup> century Iceland, and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the poetic history of 12<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir, have a remarkable parallel and a very thought-provoking similarity. ([Morris & Sirikr, 1895](#))

At the beginning of his career, Kalhana's limits were primarily due to the type of material he was dealing with. The *Heimskringla*, on the other hand, had a story-telling tradition in which the storyteller was frequently placed in front of critical audiences. In most cases, the leaders themselves, as well as their relatives and children, would be amongst the crowd of eager listeners and would be sure to interfere and precise the reciter, if necessary, whenever his delivery lacked factual accuracy or offended justice. In truth, the storyteller attended a school that instilled in him the ideals of objectivity and the importance of methodically accumulating data because it was up to them to demonstrate which side of the narrative was accurate and which was false and to what extent. As a result, presenting a tale openly and honestly has become an ethical obligation and the highest form of honor, whereas giving a "leaning story" has become the most heinous of acts, losing the perpetrator his life on multiple occasions. The cause of Iceland's oral saga tradition's faithfulness is hidden in the interaction that exists between reciters and their audiences ([Mohan, 1958](#)).

The *Rajatarangini*'s earlier volumes are untrustworthy and full of legendary legends. Even for the well-informed, religious imagination and classic literature have a matter of fact. There is no skepticism capable of teaching how to discriminate between historical realities and traditions or between facts and their reverberations in the collective unconscious (Stain, 1900). This appears to be the case when we consider that the entire sequence of measures from the time of Lalitaditya to onward is assigned to the judgment of the gallant hero whom the Kashmiris venerated through popular tradition. Some of the rulings on the *Heimskringla* are listed below.

"The *Heimskringla* is a chronicle, or rather a series of memoirs, of kings and other personages and of the events in which they have been involved in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, and other countries, from the early ages, when mythology

and history are inextricably mixed together, down to the period roughly equal to Snorro Sturlesson's own birth, 1170. Snorro begins with Odin and the Yugling/ dynasty's half-fabulous tales, skipping over them as a required preface to genuine historical events and narratives, unlike many current saga historians and antiquaries. From the middle of the ninth century, from Halfdan the Black's rule from about 841 to 863, to Magnus Erlingsson's reign from about 1162 to 1184. He provides a continuous narrative of events and incidents in public and private life, very descriptive and characteristic of the men and manners of those times, as well as their home and fireside, and he occasionally provides very graphic descriptions of domestic manners, thinking, acting and living in those ages." ([Laing, 1044](#))

Surprisingly, Kalhana recounts the first accurate date of King Avantivarman's accession in 855/56, and from then on, the tale that he brings before us has been found to be correct, as far as it can be determined from contemporary Indian sources and coins. The latter two books of the *Rajatarangini*, like the *Heimskringla*, are the most visual and comprehensive. The writing of Snorri is outstanding in the Middle Ages for the dynamic rendering of historical events through incidents, stories, speeches, and naturalistic touches, bringing out the character and personality of each famous actor in historical events. It is debatable if anyone has ever equaled Snorro Sturlesson in historical portrayals since the Middle Ages, with the exception of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott. ([Laing, 1044](#))

The authors that came after him appreciated Kalhana's brilliance. Jonaraja states, "Let my work, which is blended with that of Pandit Kalhana, be accepted, for even reedy marsh water is taken for a drink when it has merged with river water." ([Dutt, 1879](#)) There is not much to compare between Geoffrey of Monmouth's translation of *The British History* and the *Rajatarangini*. We don't want to compare Geoffrey of Monmouth to Bede in terms of reliability, so we don't include the *British History* in our series of early English records as a work having an accurate narrative." While Geoffrey's task was to interpret the manuscript from one language to another, Kalhana's goal was to piece together the past using incomplete documents. Geoffrey writes

of his manner, "If I had swollen the pages with linguistic accompaniments, I must have fatigued my readers by concentrating their attention more on my words than on the history." (Giles, 1842)

Likewise, Kalhana begins his work by declaring that diversity could not be ensured by amplification due to the length of the narrative; there may be something in it that will suit the correctly minded." (Dutt, 1879) Geoffrey's tale begins with a description of Britain's early occupants, whilst Kalhana describes the territory of Kashmir and Kasyapa's reclamation of it. In the first, the historian links the events to the Trojan War, while in the second, Gonanda-I is linked to the Mahabharata War. (Giles, 1842) The location of the two themes is where the narrative diverges. Brutus' exploits are similar to Babur's early forays or Alexander's campaigns. We discover only chronological events in all of British History's narratives. The author does not make a decision for himself. The documents are more in the type of a description of a society in the early stages of development.

Kalhana formed a unique historical arrangement and language by consciously using and reacting to previous literary genres and conceptions. Kalhana's stylistic, formal, artistic, and philosophical decisions can be best appreciated by reading the *Rajatarangini* alongside other Kashmiri texts. Within this complicated literary setting, a more nuanced interpretation of Kalhana can provide a new perspective on a certain period in the history of Kashmir as well as the history of South Asia. For starters, a more thorough contextualization can aid in thinking beyond the arbitrary and ineffective binary of history vs. poetry. The poetic genealogy of the *Rajatarangini* is dictated by the Kashmiri lokakath, a style of Kashmiri literature, and a concept of *santa rasa*-based aesthetics. Both of these aspects suggest to a different form of regionalism at work in the *Rajatarangini*, one that is shaped by literary history and intellectual progress. *Rajatarangini* is a Sanskrit history poem recreated using Kashmiri Kath stylistics and *santa rasa* based aesthetics against the distant backdrop of global Sanskrit *kvya*. This image has the

potential to be tough since it gives a more nuanced view of Kalhana and his intellectual goal. Given the text's nature, it is vital to situate the origins of *Rajataragi* in the context of twelfth-century Kashmiri intellectual life. It is impossible to categorise the history writing of Kalhana in terms of western or Sanskrit theoretical frameworks. It is vital to situate the emergence of the *Rajataragi* in the context of Kashmiri intellectual activity in the twelfth century. This concept results in a exclusively Kashmiri method of expression, one that, while comparable to Western genres in terms of mimetic and moral imagination, is rooted in Sanskrit's twelfth-century Kashmiri literature and philosophy yet still anchored in Sanskrit twelfth-century Kashmiri poetry and thinking. (Obrock, 2015)

## Conclusion

Historiography in antiquity has depended not only on the narration of what people have heard from the heart, but also on the verbal acknowledgment of their authenticity. Rather, no date and time can be recognized as accurate and reliable unless reliable sources have been used for its writing. The most important of these sources are the documents that lead to the correct entry of any event at a particular time. Historiography is always arranged according to certain rules and regulations so that the reader can be sure of the authenticity of these events. Narrating an event without knowing the facts is nothing but a mythical story. The history of Kashmir starts from 3180 BC. Initially, it was ruled by the tribal system and later, a personal government was established. Regular historiography in Kashmir was written in Sanskrit language in a poetic form by the Kashmiri historian Pandit Kalhana in 1148 during the reign of the Kashmiri ruler Jay Siya with his book "*Rajatarangini*." *Rajatarangini* covers the period from the ancient times of Kashmir to the twelfth century in 7826 verses and divided into eight chapters. It highlights the periods of the rulers of Kashmir and their political, economic and religious situation. *Rajatarangini* has a certificate in the history of Kashmir.

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