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Historiography and the Role of Muslim Historians in the Pir Panchal Region of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract: This research paper examines the historiography of the essential historical region of Jammu and Kashmir, Pir Panchal, in depth, emphasising the historical achievements of Muslim historians and their scholarly and research contributions. The Pir Panchal region is distinguished by its unique geographical location, cultural diversity, and historical significance. Historically, the region has been a crossroads of various civilizations, empires, and cultures, which has given it a prominent place in the history of South Asia. However, in traditional historiography, the historical narrative of Kashmir has been given central importance, while the history of the Pir Panchal region has been neglected. The main objective of this study is to analyse the scholarly efforts of the Muslim historians of Pir Panchal, who have played a key role in preserving the region's historical traditions, cultural heritage, social structure, and political evolution. Through a critical review of primary documents, historical manuscripts, and secondary sources, this paper demonstrates that Muslim historians have given a coherent form to the history of Pir Panchal by adopting a systematic research method and analytical approach. At the same time, an attempt has been made to highlight the distinctive identity of the region in the light of the historical traditions of these historians. Furthermore, this paper sheds light on the scholarly role of the Muslim scholars of Pir Panchal in the broader context of South Asian history. It emphasises that their services are indispensable for understanding the region's past and preserving historical facts. This research highlights an important aspect of local historiography and opens the door to new debates on regional history, cultural studies, and the impact of Islamic civilization.

Keywords: Muslim historians; Pir Panchal; cultural heritage; South Asian history; Islamic scholarship; historical narrative

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1. Introduction

Islam is a faith revealed to humanity, the main feature of which is universal and enduring principles. These principles guide individuals and have shaped life in every era. Studying Islamic history and historiography connects us to our cultural heritage, helps us understand our origins, and guides us in determining the future direction. A deep and local understanding of the historical dynamics of the Pir Panchal region plays an important role in the broader debate on the historiography of Jammu and Kashmir.

The term "Tarikh", commonly used to denote history, has roots that are challenging to trace. The term "Tarikh" is derived from the Arabic word "Arkh", meaning to record the timing of an event, suggesting that it often refers to the specific date an event occurred, rather than history in a broader sense (Samee-ullah 2014). During the Jahilliyah period (period of ignorance), this term is rooted in Yemen; the people of Yemen used this word to refer to the time instead of history. Some Scholars of that era referred to history using the term "Akhbar".

According to Ibn Khaldun, history encompasses events unique to particular eras or groups. He describes it as cyclical, gradual growth and decline within various human societies. Classic Arabic historians define history as knowledge of nations, customs, and the remnants of ancient peoples, including an account of contemporary actions. Therefore, we can say that history as a discipline examines the emergence and evolution of civilization.

Historiography, which is defined as the history of history. It studies historical writing and how it has changed over time. As the writing of history changes from time to time and from one generation to the next, a good historian must be able to distinguish the writings of history (Asher 1992). Different factors, including time, political scenarios, economic conditions, religion, society,

and environmental factors, influence the writings of history. The domain of historiography is studying past events, considering all the circumstances at that time, including the approach and the historian's understanding. It interprets historical events using its methods, priorities, and values (Jahangir and Gull 2021).

2. Thought Role of Muslim Historians

Islam emerged in the complete light of history, when history was vividly seen as the subject of the day-to-day discourses. Muslims started writing history when they began writing the Sirah of the Prophet (PBUH). During the life of the Prophet (PBUH), Muslims started writing down the Ahadith (Hodgson 1974). With time, and after the Prophet's (PBUH) demise, a need to collect and preserve Hadith literature. Muslims devised a proper methodology for collecting and preserving the Hadith literature, Sirah, and important events that happened during the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). Muslims started writing history as an obligation and for the cause of Allah (Robinson, 2003). The discipline of history emerged as an academic discipline with a proper methodology.

Ibn Khaldun, an Islamic scholar, sociologist, and historian, is the father of Muslim historiography. His book *Al-Muqadammah* is considered the masterpiece that formed the basis of Muslim historiography. He chronicled and analysed events under social, political, economic, and environmental factors that led to historical change. He critically evaluated historical sources, emphasized the need for the verification of historical sources, and stressed the importance of rejecting uncritical reports.

His methodological rigour encouraged later Muslim historians to question the reliability of their sources. Being a sociologist, he integrated social theory with historical analysis (Fromherz 2010).

With the spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, the valley of Jammu and Kashmir witnessed several scholars who contributed to religious sciences, broadened their horizons, and immensely contributed to other disciplines like history. The historiography of the Pir Panjal region in Jammu and Kashmir has been enriched by the contribution of several Muslim historians and scholars who have documented its diverse cultural, social, and political landscapes. Their work provides valuable insights into the region's history and the role of Islam in shaping its identity.

Muslims of the valley took an interest in writing history. Some prominent scholars considered torchbearers for the discipline of history are Sayed Ali, Haider Malik, and Hassan bin Ali Kashmiri.

Sayed Ali is one of the prominent historians of Kashmir. In his book *Ratik-i-Kashmir* (Tareekh-e-Kashmir), the only extended Persian source written in Kashmir before the Mughal occupation in 1586 A.D., Sayyid Ali approaches his subject more like a chronicler than a historian. He lacks knowledge of topography and chronology. The activities of Mir Sayyid Ali and his followers, the iconoclastic actions of sultan Sikandar and Mir Mohammad Hamdani's impact on the sultan's religious beliefs, Zainul Abidin's progressive religious policies and his support of arts and crafts, the power struggle between Mohammad Shah and Fateh Shah, and the belief biographical notices of Sufis and Rishis who flourished during the sultanate period are the main reasons his work is significant, Ali Sayyid provides an eye witness account of Mirza Haider Duglat's reign in Kashmir including his policy toward the Shia's and circumstances that led to his downfall.

Haider Malik, who wrote *Tareekh-i-Kashmir*, provides essential information for 1586-1621. The book is written in a lucid and straightforward style. He wrote this book to preserve his ancestors' memory, which the author claims were crucial in determining how events unfolded in Kashmir. Haider Malik's chronicle occasionally mentions the role of supernatural forces in shaping events. This idea is prevalent in Kashmiri literature, poetry, and folklore. However, the author occasionally addresses historical causation (Sheikh 2019).

Hassan bin Ali Kashmiri is one of the famous historians of Kashmir. His book *Tareekh-i-Kashmir* provides a brief account of Kashmir's past from the earliest times to 1616 A.D., in addition to sharing the same sources. Hassan's *Tareekh* and *Baharistan* appear to have the same flaw, as the events throughout the subsequent Shah Mir's and the Chak's reign are entirely left out. In contrast, Yaqub Shah's submission to Akbar is mentioned casually. The work's significance lies in its treatment of the history of the sultanate period up to the end of Hassan Shah's rule (1472-84) (Sheikh 2019).

Several other scholars who also contributed to the history of Kashmir include Mulla Ali Raina, who was one of the prominent and esteemed Wali Kamil of his age and wrote *Tareekh-ul-Aarfin* (1587); Baba Naseeb, who wrote *Rishi Nama*; Dawood Mishkati, the writer of *Asrar ul Abrar*; Mullah bin Abdus Sahoo, the author of *Khewariq-us-Salikin* (1698); and Abdul Wahab Nuri, who wrote *Fatuh-i-Kubraviya*.

3. Role of Prominent Historians in the Pir Panjal Region

Some of the key contributors in this field are:

Mohammad Ishaq Khan

Mohammad Ishaq Khan is one of the prominent historians of Kashmir. He was a history professor at Kashmir University. His research mainly focused on Kashmir's history, especially its cultural heritage. His primary focus is on Kashmiriyat, the essence of which can be traced through the history of Kashmir. Professor Khan says that Kashmiri culture is the outcome of a cultural shift that is in no way incompatible with Islam as a religion, not a diluted form of pure Islam. He explores the history of Kashmir as a culturally independent and outward-looking community that is closely connected to the rest of the Indian subcontinent while preserving distinctive customs that are accessible to both Muslims and non-Muslims. In his writings, he comprehensively discusses important topics such as various available historical sources, the interrelationship between Islam and Brahmanism, the centrality of Sufis and traditions in Kashmiri Islam, and the impact of Persian civilization on Kashmir. In his seminal work, *"Islamic and Cultural Foundations of Kashmiriyat"*, he presents a fruitful analysis in the light of his observations and experiences as a Kashmiri during the latter half of the twentieth century (Khan 1978).

As a leading historian, Muhammad Ishaq Khan has critically studied Islam's profound cultural and civilizational impact on Kashmir. His research includes an in-depth analysis of the Rishi tradition and a study of the formation process of Kashmiriyat,

which offers a new perspective on the region's unique blend of religious values and cultural traditions. His scholarly contributions are notable masterpieces, such as "Rishi Tradition and the Formation of Kashmiriyyat" and "Islam in Kashmir".

Mohammad Din Fauq

Muhammad Din Fauq is an excellent name in Kashmiri historiography, who has earned a prominent place with his famous work "Tareekh Kashmir (Kamil)". In three volumes, this comprehensive work covers the historical evolution of the region from the Hindu period to the Muslim rule and then to the Dogra Raj. Fauq compiled the events and presented a deep critical analysis of them, providing valuable insight into the thousand-year civilizational journey of Kashmir. His work is a primary source for researchers and historians.

An important aspect of Fauq's scholarly greatness was his linguistic skills. He was fluent in Urdu and Persian, the period's literary and official languages. This skill is visible in his masterpiece "Tareekh-e Kashmir". He gave a new direction to historiography by adopting a reformist and anti-colonialist perspective. After critically examining ancient sources such as Kalhan's "Rajatarangini" and the chronicles of John Raja, he presented a more comprehensive and balanced picture of Kashmir's past by harmonizing Persian Islamic traditions and local Kashmiri culture.

Fauq's research methodology distinguishes him from other historians. He made oral traditions a part of written history and highlighted historical narratives' cultural context. This is why even today, modern historians consider his work as the foundation of Kashmiri historiography. His contributions gave new dimensions to the historiography of Kashmir and the entire South Asia, which helped understand the region's history globally. This scholarly legacy of Fauq is still a beacon of light for students and researchers of history. His approach balanced factual analysis with conventional storytelling, reflecting a proto-modern historiographical style.

Fauq frequently used historiography to further cultural and political revivalist goals; his emphasis on Kashmiris' Islamic identity and the region's decline under Dogra rule struck a chord with a growing political consciousness of Muslims. His writing laid the theoretical foundation for the Muslim conference and the Kashmir freedom struggle by subtly criticising colonialism and feudal oppression. His historical works sought to preserve and revitalise Kashmiri Muslim identity by recounting a glorious Islamic past. He emphasised how Sufi scholars, saints, and rulers shaped Kashmiri society. By doing this, he contributed to developing historical awareness among Kashmiri Muslims—those who had been disenfranchised for a long time by previous Governments (Fauq 1938).

Aseer Kishtiwari

Aseer Kishtawari is a prominent historian, author, and researcher from Jammu and Kashmir. Born on August 2, 1954, in Berwar Kishtwar, he has significantly impacted the study of history, literature, and cultural heritage in the region (Zutshi 2004). He did his schooling from Kishtawar and then graduated in 1974 from the government degree college, Bhaderwah, and then he did his masters in Urdu from the University of Jammu. In 1977, he qualified as KAS 1977 and was appointed to different offices like Doda's chief accounts officer and the district fund office. He was assigned to the position of deputy director of accounts and treasuries in Jammu in April 1999. He regularly participated in cultural events, competitions, seminars, and debates.

As a historian, Kishtwari has produced a wealth of literature on Jammu and Kashmir's historical and cultural aspects. His important works include:

1. *Zilla Doda Ki Adabi Shinakhat*

This book provides an extensive history of the Doda district, addressing its political, socio-cultural, and literary developmental dimensions. It was initially published in 1993 and emphasises the political, socio-cultural, and developmental history of the erstwhile Doda district. It also provides a rich contribution from local poets. Academic researchers and other stakeholders have found the book helpful (My Kishtawar 2012).

2. *Focus on Jammu and Kashmir*

A thorough exploration of the state's history, detailing its political, social, and cultural evolution. This book has received significant attention from the pulsating posterity. The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages named the book the best English book of 2017. This book has been published in four editions (Aseer 2011).

3. *Tareekh-e-Auliya-e-Jammu wa Kashmir*

A historical overview of the Sufi Saints and mystics of Jammu and Kashmir. This book was selected as the best Urdu book of 2015 and received a state award from the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages. In this book, he introduced more than 400 Auliyyauallah (Sufi Saints) and their shrines, which spread throughout the state, including Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, and beyond the line of control. This book, published in 2013, is an authentic book on mysticism in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. His other book, "Jamis Manz Kashir Zaban-o-Adab" (Tawareekh Te Tanqeed), received the Sahitya Academy Award for 2020 (Aseer 2013).

K.D. Maini

Maini is renowned for recording the area's history and culture. After retiring, Maini wrote and researched about 25 books, many of which were self-published. His work filled a gap because little previous scholarly attention had been paid to Poonch. He published the first thorough regional history in 1988. Additionally, he has documented particular facts of Rajouri's history and Poonch's princely state. Third-party reviews are necessary to analyse his historical conclusion critically, but his localised perspective and access to community sources offer insights.

K.D. Maini is a prominent Indian historian and author known for his expertise in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. Through his publications, Maini played a vital role in safeguarding distorted and missing historical records of the Pir Panjal region, particularly the Rajouri and Poonch regions. Many people came to know about the region's rich historical records. One of the striking features of his publications is that, other than English and Urdu languages, he has also published his books in Pahari language, which is one of the accessible languages to the local people of the region. Maini has extensively documented the region's history, exploring various eras from ancient to modern times. He has also captured the cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover,

Mani's exhaustive research on the Dogra dynasty has provided important insights into the political and social history of the region. Some of K.D. Mani's notable works are as follows:

1. *Mukammal Tareekh Rajouri*

This book presents a precise historical analysis of the Rajouri region's social, political, and cultural developments in Jammu and Kashmir. The book consists of three parts. The first part discusses the Hindu Raj. The second part covers the Muslim rule from 1194 to 1846. The third part sheds light on the Dogra rule and the events 1947. Furthermore, it also mentions an ancient Indo-Aryan tribe that migrated from Central Asia and settled in areas like Rajouri, Poonch, and Chenab Valley (Meni 1998).

2. *Poonch, the Battlefield of Kashmir*

This book explores the rich history of the Poonch region of Jammu and Kashmir, including the region's strategic importance and the historic battles. It provides readers a comprehensive overview of the region's history through maps and black and white photographs (Meni 2012).

3. *Jammu Kashmir Ka Pahadi Lok Adab Wa Tamadun*

This comprehensive book discusses the Pahari language, its origins, its interaction with other languages, and the Pahari culture and history (Meni 2024).

4. *Pir Panchal of Jammu and Kashmir*

This book explores the Pir Panchal Mountain range, an important geographical region of Jammu and Kashmir. It highlights its geography, history, culture, socio-political importance, strategic location, biodiversity, and the lives of local communities (such as the Gujjars and the Bakarwals). In addition, it also examines the impact of development challenges, militancy, and conflict. This book offers a comprehensive study of the natural beauty, historical heritage, and contemporary issues of Pir Panchal (Meni 2020).

Ameer Mohammad Shamsi

Amir Muhammad Shamsi was born on January 5, 1960, in Tarla village, 15 km from the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir. He received his early education in his native village from Maulana Usman and Qazi Ahad Rahim Qureshi. Later, he studied Quranic commentary and Persian literature under the guidance of the late Maulana Rafiq Sahib. Under the guidance of Maulana Mian Lal-ud-Din, he began his educational journey at Madrasah Asghariyah, a renowned institution in India. Eventually, he joined Darul Uloom Deoband, where he completed his education.

He is active in the academic, religious, and social service of Muslims, and his works reflect this era. Some of his important works include the following books:

1. *Tareekh-e Rajouri*

This book is a small compendium of 80 pages. It describes Rajouri's ancient names, discusses Rajouri's different forts and inns, and discusses the different castes of this region (Shamsi 1989).

2. *Rajouri Main Islam Aur Musalmanu Ki Amaad*

This book discusses the population of Rajouri, the ancient people of Rajouri and their religion, the Arrival of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, the Jaral Family of Rajouri (First Muslim Family), and concludes with Rajouri during Dogra rule (Shamsi 2015).

3. *Dogra Ahad Ka Rajouri*

This book by Ameer Mohammad Shamsi briefly introduces Rajouri and its climate, geography, culture, and tradition. He also discusses the Paul dynasty of Rajouri (the region's last Hindu dynasty) and details the Dogra rule (Shamsi 2020).

4. Sufi Saints and Scholars

The Pir Panjal region is renowned for its association with Sufi saints, who were important in fostering communal harmony and a composite culture (Lawrence 1983). Figures such as Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah, Sain Miran Poonch, and Miyan Nizamuddin emphasised unity and brotherhood across religious divides. Their teaching and subsequent documentation by scholars have highlighted the evolution of a unique socio-cultural fabric in the area.

5. Medieval Chroniclers

During the medieval period, chroniclers like Junaraj, Sharivara, and Prajyabhatta extended Kalhana's "Rajatarangini", documenting events up to the Mughal conquest of Kashmir. Junaraj (1411-1460) continued Kalhan's historical work, the Raj Tarangani, covering the period from 1148 to 1459 (including the reigns of the Shah Mir dynasty and Sultan Zainul-Abideen). Sharivara (1459-1486) continued Junaraj's work, covering the reigns of Sultan Hasan Shah and the later rulers (up to 1486). Prajyabhatta (or Prajan Bhat) (late 16th century) wrote a short supplementary history covering the period up to Akbar's conquest of Kashmir (1586).

Written in Sanskrit and later translated into Persian, their works provide detailed accounts of the region's history during the sultanate period (Stein 1900). Zain-ul-abidin hired Jonaraja to compile and compose the verified history of the Shah Miri Dynasty in the manner of the more illustrious poet and historian Kalhana's Rajatarangini fame. By then, he had established himself as a brilliant poet, philosopher, and a Shaivist master (Guru). However, he was not a historian by training; he possessed an eye for events and a style for describing them, with clarity being its defining characteristic. Shrivara was also a court historian and author of Zaina Rajatarangini, a book that narrates the life of Zain-ul-abiding. The book consists of 2150 Shaloks or stanzas, of which 800 stanzas specially mention Zain-ul-Abidin's (Badshah) life, accomplishments, and works (Dutt 2007).

6. Persian Historians

Persian texts such as "Baharistan-i-Shahi" and Haider Malik's "Tarikh-i-Kashmir" are crucial sources for understanding the history of Kashmir during the sultanate era. These works offer perspectives on political, social, and religious development, reflecting the historiography traditions of their time (Alam and Sanjay 2011). These contributions collectively enhance our understanding of the Pir Panjal region's distorted history, illustrating Muslim historians and scholars' significant role in documenting and interpreting its past.

7. Conclusions

In ancient times, writing in history was often based on hearsay and its evidence. However, no historical event can be considered definitive or reliable based on hearsay or traditional stories alone. To make history accurate and reliable, it is necessary to write it in the light of authentic sources, documents, and evidence. That is why special rules and regulations of history writing have been formulated, following which historians combine events so that readers can be sure of their truth. The region of Jammu and Kashmir is distinguished by its unique geographical and cultural importance, and it has produced renowned historians in the field of history writing. These historians not only considered the fragility of time, the culture of the area, the topography, and the historical context of the past, but also went into the depth of the events and explained their causes and effects. Their writings are not limited to events but also help understand the background of social, political, and religious changes. Muslim historians of Kashmir have particularly documented the early period of Islam, the spiritual and cultural influences of the Sufis, and their integration with local traditions. They have also presented an in-depth study of the periods of Muslim rule in Kashmir and its trade, diplomatic, and cultural relations with other regions. Their scholarly efforts have preserved important turning points in Kashmir's history and made it a valuable intellectual legacy for future generations. Historiography is an indispensable scholarly process for understanding the present through the lens of the past and paving the way for the future. By preserving the unique historical narrative of this region, the historians of Jammu and Kashmir have not only maintained regional identity but have also made it clear that history is not just a record of events, but also a mirror of the social factors and human experiences behind it. In the present era, when multiple sources of information are available, the importance of quality historiography and authentic sources has become doubly important. Therefore, history must be compiled and read on impartial and research-based principles, so it is possible to build a bright future by benefiting from past experiences.

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