



EPIGRAPHY V. INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

EPIGRAPHY

v. Inscriptions from the Indian subcontinent

The systematic survey and study of Perso-Arabic epigraphy of the Indian subcontinent is not even half a century old. Studies of the Indian region, also of recent origin, have been done by the Perso-Arabic section of the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India. Prior chance finding by Survey and other officials were studied by Henry Blochmann (d. 1878), then teaching at Calcutta, and after his death by Paul Horn. A few local scholars, who were directly or indirectly involved with the compilation of district gazetteers or other writings also published a number of works in Urdu or Persian on the history of towns and their inscriptions (for details see *Ancient India*, pp. 224-32 and annual reports of the archaeological departments of native Indian states, particularly Gwalior and Hyderabad [Deccan]; inscriptions of Delhi were published in the *List of . . . Monuments*; see also Yazdani, Nazim).

These epigraphs as a rule date from the last decade of the 12th century, when permanent Muslim rule was established in northern India, and a short time later elsewhere. Under the Arab occupation of Sind or the later Ghaznavid



occupation of the northwestern region, including Punjab and coastal strips of Gujarat, Konkan, Malabar, and Coromandal, early Muslim settlers quite likely had left such records. No trace of them, however, has been found. The so-called first and second century Hijra (7th and 8th centuries) epigraphs reported at Kovelam near Madras and Kollam in Malabar (now part of Kerala) either no longer exist or have been incorrectly read. About a dozen early records, all in Arabic, have been found in Sind and frontier provinces of Pakistan, and in Gujarat and Haryana states of India (*Pakistan Archaeology* 3, 1966, pls. XXV-XXXIX; *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (hereafter *EIM*), 1921-22, pl. XIIa; *ibid.*, 1925-26, pl. XIb; *Epigraphia Indica* II, 1894, p. 143 [not illustrated]; *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy*, 1963-64, no. 303 of App. D; *idem*, 1972-73, nos. 31-32 of App. D; *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, hereafter *EI-APS*, 1965, pls. I-IV). With most parts of the subcontinent gradually coming under Muslim occupation, the number of these epigraphs increased. They covered almost the entire subcontinent and represented all imperial, provincial, or minor rulers during almost three-fourth of the second millennium.

With an exception or two, the language of these epigraphs remained Arabic for about half a century. Toward the close of the 13th century, the Persian state language was widely used in epigraphs. Under the Mughals (1526-1858), Persian replaced Arabic almost throughout the region. Also after the British established power, Persian remained the medium of epigraphical text. Even after more than four decades of independence, Persian continues to hold its sway. Urdu, the unofficial lingua franca until independence, now gains somewhat more currency, particularly in outlying (*mofaṣṣal*) areas.

A striking aspect of these epigraphs is that Persian has remained totally foreign to the southwestern coastal area, the present Indian state of Kerala. The case is more or less the same in the southeastern and southernmost strip comprising the present Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which during a brief spell of Muslim authority there, in the mid-14th century, under the Madura sultanate, and then under the Qoṭbshāhī rulers and the Mughals in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the semi-independent *nawwābs* of Karnataka, saw extensive use of Persian. Likewise, in easternmost Bengal the epigraphic language was almost exclusively Arabic until the Mughal period, when it was totally replaced by Persian. In Orissa and Assam, which effectively came under Muslim authority in the 17th century, Persian was the language of epigraphs. In westernmost Gujarat, one encounters a curious phenomenon: both prose



and verse epigraphs of the Delhi sultanate period (1296-1406), are generally in Persian, but later replaced by Arabic under the Gujarat sultans (1406-1580). Persian records there are not, however, as rare as in Bengal. Again, under the Mughals Persian eased out Arabic, and under British rule it was in vogue. In the northern and central regions, under the Delhi sultanate and provincial kingdoms of Jaunpur, Malwa, etc., Persian made its appearance in the second half of the 13th century and was used more or less universally from the second half of the 14th century. In Deccan, too, Persian was employed by and large under the Bahmanids (1347-1518, q.v.), their five successor dynasties (16th-17th centuries), the Mughals, their governors ruling the greater part of the territory as Neẓāms of Hyderabad, and the petty chiefs or *nawwābs* of Bankapur, Kalyani, and Savnur in Karnataka and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh.

These epigraphs, like their Indian counterparts in Sanskrit and Dravidian languages, are basically commemorative. They report events, including construction of religious edifices such as mosques and mausoleums; military structures such as forts, city-walls, gateways, and bastions; secular buildings such as palaces, mansions, pleasure-pavilions, and granaries; and public works such as tanks and cisterns, step-wells and wells, dams and embankments, caravanserais, or schools. Epigraphs communicated state administrative orders or edicts, regarding levy or remission of duties; ordered discontinuation of unauthorized imposts or practices introduced by local officials; and adjusted rates and prices of consumer goods. Epigraphs also announced deeds of endowment of property such as shops and gardens for various purposes, including proper upkeep of mosques, such charitable institutions as free kitchens (*langar-e davāzdah emām*), and such public works as public baths (*ḥammām*). They further indicated boundary-stones of kingdoms, direction-stones to well-known places in different direction from a road junction, and charted distances, etc. Unlike their Indian counterparts, they were inscribed on moveable objects such as guns, swords, daggers, shields, coats-of-mail, porcelain and metal plates, dishes, bowls, astrolabes and celestial globes, as well as precious stones such as gems. Copper-plate inscriptions in Persian, an important branch of Indian epigraphy, and in a way the counterparts of paper documents such as *farmāns* (q.v.), are no longer extant except for a few examples of a more recent date.

Most of these Perso-Arabic inscriptions are religious in nature. Epitaphs are found in greater numbers than mosque inscriptions. Next in order of quantity are epigraphs on forts, bastions, etc., epigraphs pertaining to public works and



to charitable institutions; royal edicts, administrative orders, deeds of endowment, and the like; and miscellaneous epigraphs such as direction-stones, etc. Among inscriptions on moveable objects, those on weapons outnumber the rest.

Persian epigraphs are found both in prose and verse. But unlike their Indian counterparts, they are very brief, at times comprising one line in prose or one or two couplets. They mention only the purport of the record, construction of a structure by such and such a person, the death of a person and the like, on a particular day, month, and year. Often they omit day and month. At times, particularly in epigraphs erected under state patronage or by government officials, there is a reference to the king and the governor of the province, division, or locality. In the epigraphs of the Gujarat sultans and their collaterals, the Kānzāda chiefs of Nagaur in Rajasthan, the full genealogy of the reigning king is given. The epigraphs containing administrative orders or deeds of endowment are, by their very nature, somewhat larger.

The year is usually given in the Hijra era, in words, until about the middle of the 15th century, and thereafter in Arabic numerals. From quite an early period, dates, with or without figures, were given in chronograms calculated according to the *abjad* (q.v.) system. Chronograms appear in much greater numbers in the 18th-20th centuries. Another era used in Indo-Persian epigraphs, and almost exclusively in some parts of Deccan, is the *šohūr* (lit., “months”) *san*, which is a solar adaptation of the Hijra calendar introduced in 741/1340 (for details see, Martin, pp. 81-106). In very few cases Vikrama Samvat (era of Hindu chronology) is also given. In one epigraph from north India the date is given in as many as ten eras (*Annual Report*, 1971-72, App. D, no. 201). Mughal inscriptions of Akbar and a very few of his successors are dated in the Elāhī era introduced by Akbar and based on Persian solar calendar. Such dating later gave way to the regnal year (*san-e jolūs*), which also became a regular feature in coins of Mughal emperor Jahāngīr (r. 1014-37/1605) and his successors. Use of the regnal year in Indo-Persian epigraphs, as in the Persian coin couplet legend, is generally believed to have come into vogue in the Mughal period. In fact, the Gujarat sultans used the regnal year before the advent of the Mughals in India (*EI-APS*, 1974, pp. 41-42).

From the literary point of view, the language of these epigraphs, unlike their Indian counterparts, is unexceptional. In many cases, the expression is plain or bereft of literary flavor, not to mention rhetorical artifice or embellishment. The language is occasionally clumsy or grammatically incorrect, but there are



instances in which incomplete sentences render it difficult to make out the exact purport of the epigraph. Quite a few epigraphs of moderate to good length, however, are stylistically well composed. Among them are pre-Mughal records, the epigraph on the 'Alā'ī Darvāza at Delhi, dated 710/1310, and some 14th- and 15th-century epigraphs at Bihar Sharif (Bihar), Debikot (West Bengal), Gogi (Karnataka), etc. Some epigraphs of the Mughal period, such as those on the Jāme' mosques and red forts at Agra, Delhi, and Lahore are fairly long and afford specimens of fine Persian prose (*J[R]ASB*, 1973, p. 251; *Epigraphia Indica* II, p. 292; *EIM*, 1929-30, pp. 10-11, 1931-32, p. 6; *EI-APS*, 1951-1952, pp. 9-10; *List of . . . Monuments* I, p. 16). The epigraph on the Dīvān-e k̄āss in the Delhi red fort is from the pen of the erudite and learned prime minister of Shah Jahān (1627-1658), Sa'd-Allāh Khan (Warit, fol. 387a).

Metrical epigraphs are found in good number, and the quality of composition is somewhat better. Apart from those found in small towns or villages of outlying areas which at times display utter disregard of prosody or idiom, there is a fairly large quantity of good poetical specimens. Many of the metrical epigraphs in northern and central India and Deccan date from the mid-14th century onward. The Deccan includes the present Marathawad region of Maharashtra and Bidar-Bijapur-Raichur districts of Karnataka, which were part of Neẓām's dominions, and which contained such petty chiefdoms as Bankapur, Kalyani, Kurnool and Savanur. The quality of their verse is uneven or, in many cases, rather substandard. The records of Malwa sultans, quite a few of them appearing on step-wells, are in most cases in verse. The poetry is at times good and at times mediocre or bad (*EIM*, 1909-10, pp. 11-16, 19-22, 29; *EI-APS*, 1964, pp. 46, 50, 52-54, 56-60, 63, 65, 67, 70, 73-74, 77-78). The same may be said of 15th century Bahmanid inscriptions (*ibid.*, pp. 22-23, 25, 27, 29-30, 32-33, 40; *EIM*, 1931-32, pp. 10-20), which is rather surprising in view of the close relations between the Bahmanid sultans, who claimed Iranian origin, and Persia, marked by matrimonial alliance with the progeny of the famous Kermān saint and poet Shah Ne'mat-Allāh Walī (d. 834/1430), whom the sultans held in high regard.

The epigraphs of the 16th-17th century 'Ādelšāhī (924-1097/1518-1686, q.v.) and Qoṭbšāhī (924-1098 /1518-1687) rulers of Bijapur and Golkonda-Hyderabad, respectively, who also had close relations with Persia, furnish better poetry. Surprisingly, in the above-mentioned small chiefdoms, as in parts of Tamil Nadu under the *nawwābs* of Karnataka, a considerable number of fairly high quality records is found.



In the pre-Mughal Bengal, the absence of Persian epigraphs explains the lack of metrical epigraphs. The exceptions are the Persian epigraphs of Sekandar Shah (r. 759-92/1358-90), two of the many records of 'Alā'-al-Dīn Ḥosayn Shah (r. 899-925/1493-1519), and about half a dozen of Šēršāh Sūrī (r. 1538-45) in mixed prose and verse. The 765/1363 inscription of Sekandar Shah is from Shah 'Aṭā's tomb at Dinajpur and contains prose and verse of a fairly high order along with an admixture of important-sounding Arabic titles. The Mughal epigraphs of Bengal, with the exception of Akbar's early epigraphs in Arabic, are in Persian, mostly in fairly good verse.

In Gujarat, the quality of the pre-Mughal epigraph is, with exceptions, below average and at times mediocre. The epigraphs of the Mughal period contain good and at times fine verse. As in Deccan, the epigraphs of the petty principality of Cambay (now Khambhat), which contain chronogrammatic metrical obituary notices of members of the ruling family and other leading men, were composed by poets of no mean order. These inscriptions are perhaps not surprising as the Cambay *nawwābs*, of comparatively recent Persian origin, have to date maintained contacts with Persia. There has been an influx of prominent and learned men, including the descendants of the famous Safavid minister Kaḷīfa Solṭān, from Persia to Cambay. An Arabic epitaph at Cambay, dated 685/1287, of a Persian émigré with notable poetic talents, Zayn-al-Dīn 'Alī b. Sālār Yazdī, contains one Persian *ghazal* and two *robā'īs* in highly mystical strain, furnishing a specimen of 13th-century Persian verse in Gujarat (*EI-APS*, 1961, pp. 20-21).

In the northern and northwestern part of the subcontinent, where a considerable number of epigraphs disappeared in the aftermath of partition of the country, epigraphs in verse were identified from the 14th century onward. Recently, a few metrical epitaphs of the 7th/13th century have been found at Bilram in Uttar Pradesh (*Annual Report*, 1966-67, App. D, nos. 249-50). The quality of verse in most of these epigraphs, as elsewhere, is uneven, but on the whole, above average. As usual, again, the epigraphs of the Mughal period furnish better specimens of verse than those of the pre-Mughal period. The former include epigraphs composed by known and well-known poets like Kāteb-al-Molk Dawrī and Mīr Moḥammad-Ma'sūm Nāmī Bakkarī, who engraved epigraphs containing his own verses in excellent *nasta'liq* script (see CALLIGRAPHY) on pillars, minar-bases, and architraves, and on walls of mosques, tombs, temples, caravanserais, etc. His works appear at places in India, Afghanistan, and even Persia, where he went as the Mughal emperor



Akbar's envoy to Shah 'Abbās I (q.v.). Other epigraphs of the Mughal period were composed by the poets Shaikh 'Alī Ḥazīn, Mīr Ḡolām-'Alī Āzād Belgrāmī, Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Ḡāleb, the last Mughal emperor Bahādor Shah and others. A far greater number of metrical epigraphs were composed by lesser known poets or poets who are not known from any other source. Quite a few of them appear to be poets of no mean order, such as the composer of the epitaph of Yūsufī (d. 884/1479-80), which contain a couple of *ḡazals* and *robā'īs* (*Annual Reports*, 1963-64, App. D, p. 305; *Epigraphia Indica* II, 1894, p. 139). Four mosque inscriptions of fairly high poetic content were composed by Moḥammad-Šarīf, whose *taḳallosá* (pen name) was Yomnī. He was a retainer of Mughal emperor Awrangzēb's maternal uncle Šāyasta Khan (ibid., 1960-61, App. D, 132; 1965-66, App. D, p. 174; 1969-70, App. D, p. 204; 1971-72, App. D, pp. 167-68, 180). Dawrī and Yomnī were, like Nāmī, excellent *nasta'liq* calligraphers, a fact known from their records only. The well-known and outstanding *nask* and *tolṭ* calligrapher of Akbar's tomb and Taj Mahal at Agra, 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq Šīrāzī, whose title was Amānat Khan, was also a poet of merit. This fact is known only from the inscription composed and designed by him and executed in faïence on the gateway of the *sarāy* he built in 1050/1640-41. The *sarāy* near Amritsar, in Punjab, was named after him, and continues to be called in government records, as Sarāy-e Amānat Khan (Begley, 1985b, pp. 283-89).

These epigraphs do not generally furnish the detailed historical information of their Indian counterparts. In the absence of history-writing tradition in ancient India, Indian epigraphs were chiefly intended to convey as much information as possible. In the medieval period, such information was available in works of history, travelogues, state archival material, endowment deeds, etc. Nevertheless, epigraphs are valuable and authentic, providing dates not vouchsafed even by a contemporary literary source, for the reconstruction of various aspects of history. They supply missing links in the chronology or succession lists of rulers or governors. As is well-known, the entire chronology and succession order of the Bengal sultans has been reconstructed only on evidence furnished by epigraphs. They also throw new light on events and people not recorded in literature. A large number of officials at different levels of state administration or holding positions in public life would have remained in obscurity but for epigraphs. In addition, epigraphs correct anachronisms, incongruity and confusing or contradictory narratives of historical works; furnish important information about the posting locations of petty and middle-level officials who are generally overlooked by imperial or



provincial historians; and provide the chief, and in most cases the only, source for local village, division, or province level history. Even the names of three successive 14th-century Toghloqian governors of Bihar are known through epigraphs only.

Apart from political history, these epigraphs furnish valuable data for administrative as well as social and economic life of the period. They refer to abolition of taxes and levies unauthorized by central authority; or put an end to undesirable customs such as *niputrik* in certain parts of Karnataka, whereby the property of a person, without heirs, upon his death reverted to the state; prohibit the marriage tax levied on certain communities by local officials or forced labor by certain groups; terminate the practice of Mughal fiefholders who compelled local merchants to purchase the produce of their lands in lot; adjust rates of levies on different professional communities; provide tank or irrigation facilities to increase agricultural production; increase marketing facilities in remote rural areas by establishing weekly village-markets (*peinths*); and provide tax concessions for a limited period, etc. A few endowment deeds give an insight into the workings of a public bath (*ḥammām*), detailing items and amounts of expenditure. An interesting caravansary epigraph, inscribed in Surat, in Gujarat, the embarkation port for Ḥajj pilgrimage from the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, specifically forbids occupation of rooms by military personnel and prescribes the use of income from occupancy by merchants and bona fide travelers primarily for the proper upkeep of various facilities; it also decrees that savings, if any, are to be given to travelers to the holy cities in Arabia. A few epigraphs also give the cost of buildings, wage rates, price schedule of vegetables, etc. (*EIM*, 1915-16, pp. 38-39, 1917-18, pp. 52, 55-56, 1925-26, p. 23, 1933-34, Sup., pp. 10-12, 1937-38, p. 1; *EI-APS*, 1953-54, pp. 25-27, 1955-56, p. 78, 1962, pp. 63-64; *Annual Report*, 1958-59, App. D, no. 123, 1962-63, App. D nos. 8, 139, 1963-64, nos. 188-89, App. D, 253). Such records also have been found in the southern Indian and, to a lesser extent, in the western subcontinent.

These epigraphs are also a totally neglected but important source for the study of Persian language and literature in the subcontinent, particularly during the pre-Mughal period and, to a lesser extent, under the Mughal rule. Not less important is the indirect evidence they provide on the extent and patterns of Indo-Persian relations at different times in different regions. Since the 12th and 13th centuries, when Persian merchant families from Bam, in Kermān (*EI-APS*, 1961, pp. 5, 9), settled in India, down to more recent times, there has been



a steady flow of men from many walks of life from Persia to India. For example, at Karhad in Satara district of Maharashtra, dozens of Persian epitaphs of men and women from different parts of that country have been found (*Annual Report*, 1963-64, App. D, nos. 212-40). A record referring to the footprint of Imam 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb (q.v.) has also been found there (*EI-APS*, 1965-66, App. D, no. 216).

No less important are these epigraphs for the study of Islamic art and architecture. They provide authentic dates of a variety of monuments, data essential to determine the origin and development of architectural styles in different regions at different periods (see further Desai, pp. 251-56). They also provide useful material on the history of Islamic calligraphic art in India, especially during the pre-Mughal period, whence calligraphic specimens in other media are not available. The large number of epigraphs spread over a vast region present a rich variety of high-quality calligraphic styles, from plain and ornamental *kūfī* of early inscriptions to *nasta'liq* of the modern epigraphs. Some early Delhi sultanate inscriptions in northern India present an excellent quality of monumental *nask* and *tolṭ*, remarkable for elegance coupled with vigor and boldness and sometimes appearing against floral background. Their visual effect is enhanced by ornamental devices such as the peculiar shape of the letter *kāf* with its cross-drawn upper tail. In excellent *tolṭ* inscriptions of this period the vertical strokes of letters ending in slanting but blunt upper ends and pointed tapering or slightly inclined lower ends have a rhythmic harmony with the fine contour and proportion of its not-so-oval curves (*EIM*, 1911-12, pls. III, VIa, VIIa-b, XIIIa, XVIa, 1913-14, pl. IVb; *EI-APS*, 1966, pls. Ib, VIa).

This bold monumental style did not conform to the rules of penmanship but was marked by variations and flourishes. The style was influenced by the period, locality, and subject above all, to the ingenuity and creativity of the artist. For example, in Bengal and Bihar in the east and in Gujarat in the west, a highly ornamental monumental calligraphy was developed which does not conform to either *tolṭ* or *nask*". In the earlier phase, it is akin to both, bearing a strong resemblance to the manuscript calligraphic style of the 9th-10th/15th-16th century termed *bahār*. This style is almost *nask*" in structure, with strokes thicker toward the left and terminating into blunt or solid points (e.g., *Epigraphia Indica* II, pl. facing p. 292; *EI-APS* V, 1964, C; *Inscriptions of Bengal* 29, fig. 18; *Indo-Iranica*, Calcutta, September-December 1976, pls. III-V). The style did not become popular and was soon replaced by a



typical calligraphic style. Free from the conventional rules, the latter style combines features of *tolṭ*, *reqāʿ*, etc. (see CALLIGRAPHY). Its key note is a highly refined delicacy coupled with ornamental devices and decorative flourishes (*EIM*, 1917-18, pls. VIb, XII; *EI-APS*, 1955-56, pls. IIa-b, IIe, 1961, pls. VIb, VIIa-b, VIIIa-b, IXa-b, Xa-c).

This decorative style received a new design and dimension from the hands of the sensitive artists of Bengal proper, who created a highly stylistic form of ornamental *ṭogrā*. Their skillful and ingenuous manipulation of vertical upward strokes and horizontally curved letters produced a superb picturesque effect. This style, generally called the Bow-and-Arrow variety of Bengal, is unique in the entire range of Islamic monumental calligraphy. The calligraphers of Bengal have effectively drawn on hard stones of amazing size, as large as 3.5 by .6 m in one case (*EI-APS*, 1955-56, pl. IVb), to such pictorial forms as a row of bows with strung arrows pointing upwards, a line of earthen lamps aflame, birds flying in mid-air, ducks gliding majestically on water with their heads thrust out, serpents with raised hoods, railing of arches, etc. In some epigraphs, short and pointed letters are more pronounced in their straightness than roundness: for example, the loops of the middle, initial, or final *ʿayn* or final *hā* are fashioned into a colorful trefoil or almond-shaped eye (*EI-APS*, 1955-56, pls. IIIc, IVb-c, VIIa, VIIc; 1B, figs. 21, 23, 26-27, 35-36, 38, 46, 49).

The typical calligraphic styles mentioned above occurred also at Gujarat and, within a much shorter time span and smaller space, in Kandes and Rajastan. There are some exquisite specimens to be found there, such as the epigraph with a motif of a passing army with raised banners or of rope-knots intervening, like halters, in the line of flags (*EIM*, 1922-23, pls. VIIa-c). They undeniably lack, however, the highly artistic form and variety of their Bengal counterparts. Gujarat has its share of unique calligraphic styles in marble, arch-shaped epitaphs of the 7th-8th/13th-14th centuries. Most are found in coastal towns but some also appear in land. Fashioned after a highly standardized pattern of arched, square, or rectangular panels, their singularly exquisite calligraphy is basically *nask* or *tolṭ*, with *reqāʿ*-like flourishes and ornamental *kūfī* in *Besmela* panels (*EI-APS*, 1961, pls. XVII, XIX, 1970, pls. IIC, Va, VIb, VIIb, 1971, pp. 3-4 and pls. IVa, Xb, XIIb, XIVb).

A similarly highly standardized and perfect pattern of calligraphy is found in the 11th/17th-century epitaphs of Hyderabad, mostly of Persian emigrant officials of the Qoṭṭšāhī rulers and learned men. The style of writing of these is



excellent *tolṭ* with *toḡrā* flourishes.

During the Mughal period, *nasta'liq* was almost universally employed as the calligraphic medium. By its very formative elements, the perfectly graceful oval *nasta'liq* largely precludes distinctive varieties, except for some highly decorative picturesque forms such as *golzār*, *māhī*, *ṭāwūs*, *ma'kūs*, etc. These forms are restricted to paper-panel specimens popularly called *waṣlī* and never used in manuscript or monumental calligraphy. The exception is *ma'kūs*, of which quite a few specimens have been found (*EI-APS*, 1951-52, XIXa-b; *Annual Report*, 1967-68, App. D, nos. 23, 28, 38-39, 1968-69, App. D, nos. 91-92, 319, 324). *Toḡrā* portraits of lions appear on some Deccan forts, and similar figures of a parrot and tiger, even a human face, occur in epigraphs (*EIM*, 1935-36, pl. XXXI; *Annual Report*, 1960-61, App. D, no. 121, 1967-68, App. D, no. 82). A large number of inscriptions from the 10th/16th century onward, throughout the subcontinent, including those of Mughal emperor Jahāngīr executed against a floral background, provide outstanding Persian specimens of this style. A few epigraphs of Shah Jahān's time, such as those at Agra, Ajmer, and Delhi are written in excellent *nask* and *tolṭ* by master calligraphers. Likewise, koranic inscriptions continued to be executed in *nask* or *tolṭ*. Even in more recent times, the *nasta'liq* calligraphy of epigraphs is, on the whole, of a high order.

While a majority of the outstanding specimens of monumental calligraphy are unsigned, a few contain the names of master-artists who made their valuable contributions to this branch of Islamic art: to name only a few, most of them Persian by birth or origin, Moḡīṭ-al-Qārī Šīrāzī, Abū Ṭāleb Ḥosaynī Zarrīn-qalam, 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq Šīrāzī entitled Amānat Khan, Kalaf Tabrīzī, Jalāl-al-Dīn Fakḵār Šīrāzī, Moḥammad-Amīn Mašhadī, Moḥammad-Šāleḥ Baḥrānī, 'Arab Šīrāzī, and his son Esmā'īl. We also have at least one exquisite *tolṭ* epigraph penned by a Bahmanid king and another by a Qoṭbšāhī nobleman (*EIM*, 1925-26, pl. VIII, 1935-36, pl. XXXIX).

The study of Perso-Arabic epigraphs of the subcontinent has not received adequate attention of scholars, evidently because other historical sources were available to them. Sporadic attempts were made during the past 200 years to publish photographic reproductions of some epigraphs, as they came to the attention of officials of the Archaeological Survey of India. Competent scholars such as Henry Blochmann of Calcutta (1838-78) and Paul Horn of Vienna published such findings in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and *Epigraphia Indica*. Other scholars who published a sizable number of



epigraphs include M. ‘Abd-Allāh Čaġatā’ī of Lahore, S. A. A. Belgrāmī of Hyderabad, Mawlawī Šams-al-Dīn Aḥmad of Rajshahi (Pakistan), B. D. Verma of Poona, Qīām-al-Dīn of Patna, and Subaš Parihar.

At the turn of the present century the Archaeological Survey began publishing a biennial supplement to its journal of Sanskrit and Dravidian inscriptions, the *Epigraphia Indica*. The issue of 1907-8 was edited by (later Sir) Denison Ross (1871-1940). The next issue was published under the new title *EIM*. The issues of 1909-10 and 1911-12 were edited by J. Horovitz, Professor of Arabic at Mohamedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh and Government Epigraphist for Muslim Inscriptions. Horovitz also compiled and published in the 1909-10 issue a list of 1,249 published Muslim inscriptions of India along with a scholarly introduction (pp. 30-144). Fourteen subsequent issues and one supplement were edited by (late Dr.) Ġolām Yazdānī, Director of Archaeology of H. E. H. Nežām’s Dominions. World War II delayed the publication of the next issue, compiled by Yazdānī. After about a decade it appeared as the 1949-50 issue under the editorship of Moḥammad Ašraf Ḥosayn, Assistant Superintendent for Epigraphy. V. S. Bendre compiled a chronological list of inscriptions published in this series, with a brief description of their contents and an exhaustive introduction covering all aspects of epigraphical research. His work was published in Bombay around 1944.

With the 1951-52 issue, the series was renamed as *EI-APS*. It became an annual after its 1959-60 issue. Between 1953 and 1983 twenty issues of larger format were published under the editorship of Z. A. Desai. Under him systematic collection of epigraphs from various parts of the country also began. The epigraphs are listed regularly under separate indices for Persian and Arabic inscriptions in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, which began publication in 1883 as the *Annual Report of the Government Epigraphist, Madras*.

In Pakistan and Bangladesh, no systematic work is undertaken in this field, although the government has created an office for this purpose. Individual scholars, such as the late Ḥosām-al-Dīn Rāšedī, the late Mawlawī Šams-al-Dīn Aḥmad, Mohammad Abdul Ghafur, and Abdul Karim, have published a considerable number of epigraphs.



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