ARABIC AND PERSIAN EPIGRAPHS: RECENT DISCOVERIES

Arabic and Persian Epigraphs: Recent Discoveries

G. S. KHWAJA

ABSTRACT

Many historically important Arabic and Persian epigraphs that were copied during the last fifty years and have a bearing on the medieval history of India are highlighted here, along with a brief sketch of the history of epigraphical researches in the Indian subcontinent.

Two of the epigraphs highlighted here happen to be the only sources that provide information on the existence of new regional sultanates and their rulers. This information is not recorded in any literary work or historical chronicle. The other discoveries listed here provide rare pieces of information on the tolerance between religious communities and also on the works of social welfare done by Muslim rulers.

The author has also cited some evidences from the epigraphs which pinpoint the reigns of rulers, provide records of a coup or rebellion, and also of the socioeconomic aspects of the medieval history of our country. Some of the epigraphs are important for being specimens of contemporary styles of Islamic calligraphy.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF ARABIC AND PERSIAN EPIGRAPHY IN INDIA
3. IMPORTANT EPIGRAPHIC DISCOVERIES: 1961-2011
   A. Mamluk
   B. Khaljī
   C. Tughluq
   D. Lodi
   E. Sūrī
   F. Mughal Emperors
      i. Humāyūn  ii. Akbar  iii. Jahāngīr
      iv. Shāhjahān  v. Aurangzeb
   G. Sultāns of Bengal
   H. Sultāns of Mālwa
   I. Sultāns of Gujrat
1. INTRODUCTION

The new millennium has brought many good new things to us. One of these is the advance in information technology. Now, because of the availability of gadgets for documentation and easy transfer of data from one place to another, the new generation is looking towards archaeological research with more curiosity. The world has become more eager to know about the data stored in inscriptions, coins, seals and archival material. Because of handicaps on recording and printing, the data on discoveries in these fields have not been disseminated to the desirable optimum, but now, with more tools at our disposal, the need to know the past through these source materials has increased manifold.

The dwindling number of epigraphists is, undoubtedly, a big challenge in the proper interpretation of these records but, in commemoration of the one-hundred-and-fiftieth year of the initiation of these studies by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), it will be befitting to present a summary of the important epigraphical discoveries made in the recent past by the Epigraphy Branch of the ASI.

The ASI is a premier institution under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, dealing with the conservation of the cultural heritage of the country. In other words, the ASI has engaged itself for the last one-and-a-half centuries in research, study and preservation of archaeological remains of bygone civilizations, through its well-maintained monuments, sites and museums, and through its many Circles and Branches, engaged in new discoveries and researches.

The Epigraphy Branch of the ASI is an important wing which, along with the Science and Horticulture Branches, provides expertise for studying inscriptions found in various forms and on various materials at different living monuments, including sectarian and secular structures. They include forts, mosques, temples, stūpas, churches, hospices, tombs, caves, idols, graves, bridges, palaces, sarais, gates, wells, tanks, gardens, direction-stones, etc. Inscriptions are also found on coins, utensils, metal-plates, arms, guns, waślis (wall-hangings), seals, signets, etc.

Epigraphy is the discipline that deals with the study of inscriptions after their correct decipherment and translation. The interpretation of texts, alongside critically examining them from the historical and paleographical points of view, provides scholars and students with valuable data on lesser known, or even unknown, features of history.
2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF ARABIC AND PERSIAN EPIGRAPHY IN INDIA

The Epigraphy Branch of the ASI is divided into two constituents: the Arabic and Persian Branch is located at Nagpur in Maharashtra, and the Sanskrit and Dravidian Branch is located at Mysore in Karnataka. The Mysore Branch has two zonal offices at Chennai in the south and at Lucknow in the north. Both the Nagpur and Mysore Branches have all-India jurisdiction.

The study of Arabic and Persian epigraphs commenced in the Indian subcontinent, for all practical purposes, with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones at Calcutta (now Kolkata), way back in AD 1784. The establishment of a separate department named ‘Archaeological Survey of India’ in 1861, headed by Alexander Cunningham, gave impetus to exploration, research, discovery and critical study of various archaeological finds. As a result, epigraphical studies gained importance as a means for dating monuments and icons and also identifying personages, places and events recorded in inscriptions.

Some of the earliest works on Arabic and Persian inscriptions related to Muslim monuments were Sair-u'l-Manāzil (Baig c. 1820) and Āṯhār-uṣ-Ṣanāḍīd (Khan 1846). These two monographs deal mainly with the monuments of Delhi and their inscriptions. Some European Orientalists, who brought to light important Arabic and Persian epigraphs with historical notes, with or without their facsimiles, include H. Cousens, A. Fuhrer, Edmond Smith and H. Blochmann. In his capacity as the Principal of Calcutta Madarsa, H. Blochmann started publishing The Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1894. This journal was a precursor of Epigraphia Indica. Paul Horn of Strasburg University published articles on Arabic and Persian inscriptions from Delhi in the second volume of Epigraphia Indica.

The study of the Arabic and Persian inscriptions pertaining to a particular archaeological site of Gaur was published in 1878 by R. H. Ravenshaw (Ravenshaw 1878). This work was followed by two equally illustrious monographs on two important medieval cities, Lahore (Latif 1896b) and Agra (Latif 1896a). Both were published in 1896 by Sayyid Muhammad Latif. M. A. Chaghtai, a Professor of Persian in Deccan College, Pune, published a study of the monuments of Ahmedabad (Gujarat) through their inscriptions (Chaghtai 1942).

Among the periodicals that served the cause of the study of Arabic and Persian inscriptions, providing an enlightening coverage to Indo-Muslim epigraphy, were Asiatic Researches (Calcutta), Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta), Indian Antiquary (Bombay) and Journal of Bihar Research Society (Patna).

There have been, of course, a few scholars who did pioneering work in the field of Indo-Islamic epigraphy. Among them, mention may be made of Maulawi Bashir-u'd-Din Ahmad who painstakingly wrote a voluminous work entitled Wāqīāt-i-Dārul-Ḥukūmat-e-Dehli (Agra, 1919) and Wāqīāt-e-Mamlīkat-e-Bījāpur; Syed Asghar Ali Bilgiri who authored Maāṯhir-i-Dakan (Hyderabad, 1925) in Urdu, followed two years later by an English version (Bilgiri 1927); and Asghar Ali Hikmat who presented Persian inscriptions in his book in Persian (Hikmat 1958).

Epigraphia Indica, the ASI’s official journal dealing with the critical study of ancient epigraphs, was started in 1892. Arabic and Persian epigraphs from the medieval period were found
in large number, hence they needed to be edited in a separate journal. That is why a biennial journal named Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica (EIM) was brought out. Sir E. Denison Ross, the famous British orientalist, was the founder editor of Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, but he edited only one issue of EIM (1907-08). J. Horovitz, Professor of Arabic in Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, edited two subsequent issues of EIM (1909-10 and 1911-12). Afterwards, Ghulam Yazdani, Director of the Archaeology Department in the Nizam's Dominions at Hyderabad, and Honorary Muslim Epigraphist to the Government of India, edited fifteen issues of EIM (1913-14 to 1939-40).

The full-time post of Assistant Superintendent for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions was created by the Government of India in 1946, and the next issue of EIM (1949-50) was edited by Maulavi Ashraf Husain, who had been appointed to that post in 1949.

Zia-ud-Din Desai succeeded Maulawi Ashraf Husain in 1953. Under his versatile guidance, the activities of the Epigraphy Branch expanded both quantitatively and qualitatively. The Epigraphy Branch for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions was shifted from New Delhi to Nagpur in 1958. Desai started editing the Arabic and Persian section under a separate Appendix of the Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE) from 1952-53 onwards. He also shouldered the responsibility of editing the prestigious biennial Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement (EIAPS) from 1951-52 onwards, in continuation to the former EIM. This journal became an annual publication in 1961. By the time Desai retired in 1983, having put in three decades of service as Head of the Epigraphy Branch, Nagpur, he had brought out 20 issues of EIAPS (1951-52 to 1975) – a laudable achievement in the field of Indian epigraphy.

Indian Islamic inscriptions date from the last decade of the twelfth century AD. To be exact, most inscriptions date from AH 587 (AD 1192) when Muhammad Ghori conquered Delhi and established his sultanate there (with the exception of about a dozen or so, which bear earlier dates and have been found in Haryana, Gujarat and Kerala).

These epigraphs, being genuine contemporary records, constitute first-hand source material that may be used to authenticate already known events of history on the one hand, and to provide valuable and definite data on various aspects of the history of different regions on the other. These records frequently fill up lacunae or unconfirmed gaps in our knowledge of India's past. They correct wrong statements, supply correct dates of events, corroborate or contradict the statements of historians, and provide accurate spellings of names and places. They provide data for the local history and political status of a particular region at a given time.

Inscriptions also provide information regarding literary trends in a particular region, interaction among different sections of society, or the socio-economic condition of a particular region at a particular time. They also furnish data on the history of repairs, extensions or additions made to monuments of various descriptions.

The Arabic, Persian and, more recently, Urdu inscriptions of India refer to the following prominent, central dynasties: the Mamluks (more popularly called the Slave dynasty), Khaljis, Tughluqs, Sayyids, Lodis, Mughals and Sūrs. Of the regional dynasties, inscriptions have been found on: the Sultāns of Bengal, Gujarat, Kashmir, Mālwā and Mysore; the Bahmanīs of Gulbargā, Sharqīs of Jaunpur, Adil Shāhīs of Bījāpur, Nizām Shāhīs of Ahmadnagar, Qūtb Shāhīs of Golconda,
Farūqīs of Khāndesh, Āsaf Jāhips of Hyderabad, Nawwābs of Arcot, Awadh and Murshidābād, Bhonsles of Nagpur, Gaikwāds of Baroda, Holkars of Indore, Marāṭhās of Tanjore, Sindhiyās of Gwalior, Rohillas etc.

Arabic, Persian (and more recent Urdu) inscriptions are dated in the Hijri calendar. It is a well known fact that this Islamic era started with the historic event of the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in AD 622. Indeed, the Arabic word hijrat means, literally, ‘migration’. The names of months and week days are also from the Arabic calendar. In many inscriptions and coins, we also get dates given in terms of regnal years.

The Epigraphy Branch at Nagpur deals with Arabic and Persian inscriptions, representing the Muslim dynasties which held sway over the Indian subcontinent. The Branch works mostly on inscriptions in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, as well as in other regional languages. These inscriptions are often in the form of bilingual or trilingual records.

There is no doubt that the language of the epigraphs of the early Sultanate period was Arabic. However, a majority of inscriptions are composed in Persian, in view of the fact that it was the official language of various kingdoms. When the mighty Mughals came to the subcontinent, they used Persian for all academic and administrative activities, epigraphics, coins, farmāns, letters, etc. Under the later Mughals, many regional principalities gained autonomy, and their chiefs continued to use Persian as the official language. Later, over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Urdu language appeared on the scene, its existence, too, was recorded in inscriptions.

Apart from Arabic, Persian and Urdu inscriptions, there are bilingual and trilingual inscriptions. Thus, inscriptions are composed in Arabic as well as regional languages like Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam, or in Persian combined with provincial languages like Kannada, Telugu, Oriya, Tamil, Gujarati and Marathi. Arabic and Persian have also been used with languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Portuguese, etc. Trilingual inscriptions combine Arabic and Persian with Urdu or any other language. There are quadri-lingual epigraphs, too.

Arabic and Persian inscriptions in India, like their counterparts in other countries, are the best known depictions of the history and evolution of the art of Islamic calligraphy. Beautiful panels and bands of calligraphy constitute the most important decorative element in Indian Islamic Architecture. The best examples of this applied art are the Qūb Minâr at New Delhi, Adīnā Mosque at Pandua (Bengal), Aṭālā Masjid at Jaunpur, Jāmī Mosques at Ahmedābād (Gujarat), Golconda and Hyderabad, Akbar's tomb at Sikandarā, Ibrāhīm Raūḍā at Bijāpur, Tāj Mahāl at Agra and Jāmī Masjid at Old Delhi (Shāhjahanābād).

Arabic and Persian epigraphs are found executed in different popular scripts or styles of Islamic Calligraphy, viz., Kūfī, Naskh, Thulth, Riqā and Nasta’liq. India added a new style to Islamic Calligraphy in the fourteenth century, known among art historians as the Bahar style. The decorative Bengal style is an addition to the varieties of the monumental Thulth style in India.

Since its inception, the Epigraphy Branch at Nagpur has copied nearly fifteen thousand Arabic, Persian and Urdu inscriptions, including mono-lingual, bilingual, trilingual and quadri-lingual inscriptions. These inscriptions, normally copied in the form of estampages (inked rubbings
made with the help of handmade paper and vegetable ink), are stored in the office of the Director (Epigraphy), Nagpur, after proper accession and decipherment.

The inscriptions copied during a financial year are noticed in ARIE, with details about each inscription’s find spot, dynasty and king, date, language, script and gist, prefaced by an exhaustive introduction. Historically important inscriptions are critically studied and edited in the form of articles for inclusion in the EIAPS, along with their facsimiles. Of the fifteen thousand inscriptions copied so far from across the country, about two thousand epigraphs have been published in the EIAPS.

3. IMPORTANT EPIGRAPHIC DISCOVERIES: 1961-2011

Around the time that the ASI was celebrating the centenary of its foundation in 1961, B. C. Chhabra, D. C. Sircar and Z. A. Desai had highlighted important epigraphic discoveries in an article for the Special Jubilee Number of Ancient India (Chhabra et al. 1953). Now, in the 150th year of archaeological researches, let us have a look at the important epigraphical discoveries made in last fifty years.

As has been elaborated above, the medieval period of Indian history is marked by many central and regional dynasties, who ruled from the twelfth century to the mid-nineteenth century. These dynasties and their rulers held sway over different large and small geographical areas. To ease reading, the important discoveries have been arranged in chronological order instead of by region or state.

A. Mamluk

Inscriptions of the Mamluks, or the early Sultaňs of Delhi who are also popularly known as the rulers of Slave dynasty, are very rarely found. One such record, though fragmentary, was found in the premises of Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. This stone slab, not in situ, belongs to the reign of Sultaň Shamsu’d-Din Ilutmish (AD 1210-35) and records the name of Khâń-i-Jâhân, Nîzâm-ul-Mulk Junaidî, the prime minister of the Sultaň. The inscription also mentions the construction of an edifice by Junaidî. Unfortunately, other details including the date of the event are lost.

The Persian text is written in the Naskh style of calligraphy verging on the Riqâ style, which conforms to the early Sultanate period style. Interestingly, the language of the record is Persian, although early Sultanate epigraphs are usually composed in Arabic (Desai 1966: 10, Pl. II (a)).

There is no mention of its provenance either in the epigraph or in the accession register of the library. It is possible that it came from the Jâmi’ Mosque of the city of Kol (i.e., Aligarh). The epigraph throws light on Abû Ḥamîd Muḥammad bin Abû Saîd Junaidî, who was given the titles Qiwâm-ud-Dîn Nîzâm-ul-Mulk by the sultaň and held the iyâlat (governorship) of the province of Kol. He was then, as per the historical records, raised to the post of Khwâjâ-i-Jâhân, i.e., Prime Minister. This discovery is important for authenticating the administrative history of the northern region of India, during the Sultanate period (Fig. 1).
An another record of the Mamluks is in Arabic, dated AH 655 (AD 1257), and belongs to Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah I (AD 1246-65). It was copied from Tonk (though the inscription was originally from Nagaur) in Rajasthan. Historically, this is an important inscription, assigning the construction of a mosque to Aibak as-Sanawi during the governorship of al-Amir al-Isfah Salar, i.e. Commander-in-Chief, whose name is not given. With a greater amount of certainty, the builder of the mosque can be identified as Aibak as-Sanawi, from whom Shamsu’d-Din Ilutmish (AD 1210-35) had purchased Malik Iktiyaru’d-Din Aitgin, a talented Turk. This indicates the fact that Aibak as-Sanawi had been a prominent noble even under Nasiru’d-Din Mahmud Shah (ARIE 1987-BB: Appendix C, No. 141).

B. Khalji

A historically important and unique epigraph is executed on a huge loose pillar now deposited in the Municipal Museum, Allahabad. Unfortunately it is fragmentary without any date, but the extant portion refers to this epigraph being of the reign of Muzaффar ‘Adil-i-A’zam, Iktî Khan Sulatanî. Thus, it provides a new name in the list of reigning monarchs of the house of Khalji.

Historical works mention a prince of the Khalji dynasty who lost his life after making an unsuccessful attempt on his uncle ‘Ala-ud-Din Khalji’s life in AD 1300. His name appears with variant spellings in different historical works: for example, Ikt Khan, Akat Khan, Akad Khan, Lakid or Lakad Khan. In Zafar-ul-Walih, the name is written as Ikit Khan with variant of Yigit.

Though historical works do not give any clues regarding Ikit Khan’s declaration of autonomy, our epigraphical record provides ample ground to believe that the Ikit Khan mentioned here is the prince whose name was misspelt by historians. The epigraph also provides evidence that the prince had proclaimed himself a king before making an attempt on his uncle’s life. In the absence of information about this pillar’s place of find, it is very difficult to ascertain the territory that Ikit Khan declared as his kingdom. It is assumed that his territory was somewhere near Allahabad (ARIE 1969-70: No. C-201).
C. Tughluq

This Tughluq record is of great historical importance (*ARIE* 1987-88: Appendix C, No. 42). This inscription in Persian from Khambat in Kheda District of Gujarat belongs to the reign of Firuz Shah and is dated AH 762 (AD 1361). It recounts certain political events and says that Firuz Shah had first marched against Lakhnau (Gaur, West Bengal) in AH 759 (AD 1358).

While returning from his campaign, he halted at Jaunpur (modern Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh) which he had founded and named after Fakhru’d-Din Jaunna, popularly known as Muhammed bin Tughluq (AD 1325-51). From Jaunpur, he is said to have led his army against the pagan ruler of Jajnagar, in AH 761 (AD 1360) and emerged victorious, laying his hands on large booty.

It was probably in commemoration of such a splendid victory that the eminent noble and step-brother of the sultan, Nabi Barbak Ibrāhīm Sultānī, set up this inscriptional slab in the important town of Khambat. Ibrāhīm Sultānī had enjoyed generous royal patronage under Firuz Shah Tughluq. This epigraph is, in fact, an important royal notice set up for the information of the public, eulogising the victory of the sultan in various military campaigns (Barni 1862: 578; Afif 1890: 428-29).

Two inscriptions of Nusrat Shāh Tughluq are dated AH 797 (AD 1394-95). One is from Mangrol, Sorath district, and the other from Gogha, Amreli district, are the only inscriptions of the king known to exist so far. The one from Gogha is very important, as it gives the title of the king, which was not hitherto known (*ARIE* 1954-55: Appendix C, Nos. 23 and 36) (Fig. 2).

D. Lodī

An epigraph of Sultan Bahūl Shāh Lodī, the founder of the Lodī dynasty of Pathan rulers, is a simple construction record from Nagaur, Rajasthan, mentioning the erection of a mosque and excavation of a well beside it in AH 888 (AD 1483) (*ARIE* 1961-62: Appendix D, No. 262).

The intriguing aspect of this record is its calligraphy. It is executed in the Nastā‘īq style. Art historians are of the opinion that though Khwājah Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi invented this style of calligraphy in Iran in the mid-fifteenth century AD, it became noticeable in India only during the time of Mughal Emperor Humayun, when some master calligraphers of the court of the Safawid Kings of Iran accompanied him to India. The epigraph under reference is a rarest example that refutes this accepted theory (Fig. 3).

Another record of the Lodīs is a loose bilingual record of Sultan Sikandar Lodī (AD 1488-1517) from Sahar in Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh. Of great historical importance, the inscription records the construction of a Jami’ Mosque in Sahar during the governorship of Masnad-i-‘Alī, A‘zam Humayūn ‘Alāwal Khān in AH 920 (AD 1514-15). The ‘Alāwal Khān of this inscription is none other than the son of Ahmad Khān Mewārī, grandson of Bahādur Khān Nāhir. It was ‘Alāwal Khān’s son Hasan Khān who joined hands with Rānā Sangā against Bābur, and fell fighting in the battle of Khanua in AD 1527 (*ARIE* 1988-89: Appendix C, No. 197 and Appendix B, 158).

One more Lodī record of Sultan Ibrāhīm (AD 1517-26) from Khandar in Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan records the construction of a mosque in AH 928 (AD 1522) by Shaikh Hasan, at the instance of his father Masnad-i-‘Alī Zafar Khān, the conqueror of this town-fort. Ahmad
Gadā'ī was the supervisor of the work. The text was composed by Aḥmad ʿIsā and inscribed by ʿAbdu's Sattār, son of 'Abdul' Haq, the khāṭib of the mosque. This epigraph is historically very important as it confirms the statement of a source, Pārshavnāth Shrawan Shatvīś (MSS) quoted by M. S. Ahluwalia in Muslim Expansion in Rajasthan (Ahluwalia 1978: 192), whereby we come to know that Ibrāhīm Lodī had conquered this region, probably including Ranthambhor, in eastern Rajasthan.

Masnad-i-ʿAlī Zafar Khān, mentioned above, was a renowned figure under the Lodīs. His original name was Miyān Makkān. His son Shaikh Hasan held the charge of the fort of Khandar near Ranthambhor. It was during his tenure that he built the mosque at the behest of his father (ARIE 1987-88: Appendix C, No. 135).

E. Sūrī

This discovery from the Jāmī' Masjid in Patna district of Bihar is an important inscription ascertaining the accession of Sher Khān as Sultān Sher Shāh (AD 1539-45), the founder of the dynasty of Sūr Paṭhāns on the throne of Delhi (ARIE 1961-62: Appendix D, No. 24).
This is a simple, three-line epigraph executed on an already existing epigraph of the early Sultanate period. The Persian text is dated AH 946 (AD 1539). There is no unanimity on date and place among historians regarding the declaration, or accession, of Sher Shāh as sultan. Abbās Sarwānī in Tārīkh-e-Sher Shāhī, the authentic chronicle of Sūr history, does not tell us anything in this respect. Tabagāt-i-Akbarī, Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh and other books say he occupied the throne in AH 946 after his victory at Chausa (27 June, AD 1539). Qanungo fixes it at about the beginning of December, AD 1539. S. R. Sharma’s assertion that Sher Khān proclaimed full independence and assumed the title of Sher Shāh in AH 947 is again baseless in the light of this discovery. This is the earliest record of Sher Shāh Sūrī discovered so far which refers to him as ‘sultān’. Though the day or the month is, unfortunately, not mentioned, the year is written in words and confirms the date of the declaration of Sher Shāh as ‘king’ beyond any doubt (Siddiqi 1967: 29, Pl. VI (a); Sharma 1934: 134) (Fig. 4).

Fig 4 A historically important epigraph of Sher Shāh Sūrī, from Jana, Bihar

F. Mughal Emperors

i. Humāyūn

An inscription from Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh refers to the Mughal Emperor Humāyūn (AD 1530-40 and 1554). It records the construction of mosque in AH 945 (AD 1538) during the rule of Humāyūn and under the ‘amal (administration) of Begum Dildār Aghāchā. Begum Dildār was none other than the queen of Bābur and step-mother of Humāyūn. As per our record, she had been given charge of the administration of the town. There are historical references to the Mughal harem being active in administration, but this epigraph puts the seal of affirmation to this fact beyond any distortion. Aghāchā is the feminine form of Aghā, which means chief in both Persian and Turkish (ARIE 1962-63: Appendix C, No. 263).

ii. Akbar

Muḥammad Māʿṣūm was a noted noble of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (AD 1556-1605) who used ‘Nāmī’ as his nom-de-plume and hailed from Sakkhar, or Bhakkhar, in Sindh. As a result, he also took pleasure in using the sobriquet of Bakkari with his name. Muḥammad Māʿṣūm played an important role as Akbar’s envoy to Iraq. He accompanied Akbar on many expeditions. Nearly eight
records have been discovered and copied, which mention the stay of Mā'sūm Nāmī Bhakkarī at various places while travelling to and fro from Iraq. These important visitor's records are composed in prose and verse by Mā'sūm Nāmī and also calligraphed in beautiful Nasta'īq style by his own pen, a fact that is mentioned in the texts. These records register the date of his travel to Iraq, of his return and the routes he adopted for both journeys. In some of the records, his genealogy is also given, which indicates that his forefathers were Mīrs (Sayyids) from Sabzwar in Iran (Muḥammad Mā'sūm, Tāríkh-i-Mā'sūmī (MS) folios 4-5).

One such visitor's record of Mā'sūm Nāmī from the reign of Akbar is in Persian, dated AH 1008 (AD 1599-1600) and found in Bada Bagh near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Interestingly enough, it is engraved on the wall of a Shiva temple built with sandstone (ARIE 1990-91: Appendix C, No. 76). It recounts the brief stay of Mīr Muhammad Mā'sūm Nāmī at this place when he was called from his posting at Qandhar (now in Afghanistan). This epigraph is an addition to the series of his different records that have been found at various places, denoting thereby his route of travel to Qandhar and Iraq and back from there to the Deccan. It is quite well known that Nāmī was a celebrated noble of Akbar's court, as also a poet, historian, physician and, above all, a master calligrapher of his time (Fig. 5).

A bunch of five Persian epigraphs was copied from the small village of Shahpur on the banks of river Ganga in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh (ARIE 1969-70: Appendix D, No. 265). It records a very interesting event: the setting up of the Qadam-i-Rasūl, i.e. footprint of Prophet Muḥammad, in a shrine at Shahpur after bringing it from Shergarh when instructed to do so by the Prophet in a dream (or vision). Humāyūn Farmūlī is the name of a person who is designated as Khān-i-Khānān in the text. Humāyūn Farmūlī was also a disciple of saint 'Abdul Qādir Jāłānī and
built this shrine in AH 972 (AD 1565). Though this is not stated, the date suggests that the person was probably an official of Akbar.

This epigraph is interesting and important for information on the religious tradition of setting up footprints of the Prophet. Many epigraphic evidences support this tradition. The shrine of Qadam-i-Rasūl near Kashmiri Gate in Delhi, built during the time of Sultān Muhammad Tughluq, is an eminent example of such a tradition in the Indian subcontinent (Khwaja 1977: 46, Pl. X (a)). There is another detailed epigraph on a marble slab narrating the miracle of softening of the stone and receiving the impression of the Prophet’s foot. Originally from Adchini Masjid on Qutb Road, New Delhi, this epigraph is now fixed in the Naubat Khānā of Diwān-i-ʿĀam in the Lāl Qilā, Delhi, for its safety. Footprints of the Prophet are found at many places in India and are revered by devout Muslims.

The epigraphs from Shahpur have been critically examined in EIAPS (Khwaja 1977) (Fig. 6).

iii. Jahāngīr

The rebellion of prince Sallīm against his father Akbar is a very interesting chapter in Mughal history. An epigraph from Hilsa, a village in Patna district of Bihar, is one of the very few records that throw light on this rebellion. Coming from the dargāh of Shāh Jamman Nadrī, it mentions the construction of the dargāh during the reign of Shāh Sallīm, in AH 1013 (AD 1604-05) by one Ridā (Ahmad 1966: 41, Pl. XII; ARIE 1960-61: Appendix D, No. 23). This inscription is of considerable historical importance as it refers to the rebellion of Prince Sallīm in the concluding years of Akbar’s reign. Some of Akbar’s trusted officers, too, had defected to support Sallīm, especially from the eastern part of the empire. Thus, Bihar was one of the provinces on Sallīm’s side.

The inscription is dated AH 1013 (AD 1604), when Akbar was still alive (Akbar died in AH 1014, or AD 1605). Interestingly, it designates Sallīm as ‘Shāh’ (and not ‘Jahāngīr’, the title he adopted later) and Akbar simply as the father, without the lofty titles of a reigning emperor. This clearly shows that the governor of Bihar had defected to the side of the Prince, who was camping at Allahabad, near Bihar (Dwarkar 1959: 491). Palaeographically speaking, this record is interesting as it records the date in chronogrammatic form despite having it written in Arabic words, Persian words and figures. It assigns separate letters of the chronogrammatic phrase ‘Ridā būd’ with the numerical value of each letter to allow even a beginner to calculate the date as 1013 (Fig. 7).

Another important record of the time of Jahāngīr registers the construction of an Akbarī Sarāī (inn) by none other than ‘Abdur-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal army (Rahim 1962: 75, Pl. XXIV; ARIE 1961-62: Appendix C, No. 71). The text of this epigraph from Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, is dated AH 1027 (AD 1618) and mentions the builder’s designation as Sipah-Sālār.

One more equally important epigraph is from the hammām (bath-house) built by ‘Abdur-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān under orders from Jahāngīr in AH 1016 (AD 1608). It is important to note that it was thanks to ‘Abdur-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān’s innovative efforts that a Turkish public bath was built in Burhanpur to maintain a standard of sanitation. This epigraph is now on display in the Central Museum, Nagpur (Desai 1964: 21-26, Pl. IV; Verma 1955: 116, Pl. XXX; ARIE 1952-53: 304)
Appendix C, No. 71). There already existed one such bath in the small Burhanpur fortress, for the use of royal family. Water was lifted into the bath from the river Tapti, and further channelled through a network of terracotta pipelines. These records throw light on the public welfare activities of the Mughal period. Both the epigraphs have been written in beautiful Nasta'liq by the calligrapher Khalaf of Tabriz, in Iran (Fig. 8).
iv. Shāhjahān

This Persian epigraph is executed on a tablet fixed on the gate of a step-well in Makrāna village of Nagaur district in Rajasthan (ARIJE 1962-63: Appendix D, No. 239). This record from the reign of Emperor Shāhjahān, put up by Mirzā 'Ali Baig, states that the step-well has been reserved for the use of members of the high castes, and that people belonging to low-castes are prohibited to draw water from it. It is dated in the twenty-fifth regnal year of the Shāhjahān, and the Hijri date given is 1061 (AD 1651). It is interesting to note that even a Muslim official of the Mughal court was compelled to obey the caste system prevailing in medieval Rājputānā (Fig. 9).

Shāhjahān's Persian records are carved on an ivory palanquin (pālki) now kept in the ASI's Hazardwarī Palace Museum at Murshidabad, West Bengal. The records refer to the Emperor as Shahābu'd-Dīn Muhammad Shāh Jahān Bādashāh, with the place name Dīlī and the date AH 1050 (AD 1640-41), which indicates that the palanquin was manufactured at Delhi. The emperor's name, inlaid in the wood of the pālki with ivory, suggests that it was in the personal use of the emperor. It is possible that when Prince Shujā' was given the administration of Bengal, he was gifted the pālki, or that he himself carried it as a souvenir from his father (ARIJE 1990-91: Appendix C, 125-26).

v. Aurangzeb

India can boast of a unique unity in diversity in its multi-religious society. Though its rulers fought fiercely for the throne with native kings, whenever peace was restored unmatched examples of religious tolerance came to the fore. An example of such religious tolerance is contained in an inscription of none other than the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (AD 1658-1707), who is usually seen in poor light as a religious bigot. The epigraph in question comes from Udbal in Bidar district of Karnataka (ARIJE 1984-85: Appendix C, No. 97). It records that this house, obviously a mosque, was constructed by Rāmchanda, son of Pākharmal Kāyath (i.e., Kāyasth) Māthur, a servant of the royal court, in the year AH 1072 (AD 1661-62). This record throws light on the harmonious atmosphere and communal amity then prevailing in the region.
A metrical Persian record of Aurangzeb, speaks about the construction of a rabāṭ (inn) by Lashkar Khan in Ludhiana district of Punjab. The builder, Lashkar Khan, was a well-known figure under Shāhjahān and Aurangzeb. His original name was Yādgār Beg and his father, Zabardast Khan, was a Wālāshāhī (bodyguard) of Shāhjahān. In the nineteenth regnal year (AD 1645-46) of Shāhjahān, he was appointed ambassador to Persia. It was in the twenty-fifth regnal year (AD 1651-52) that he was bestowed with the title Lashkar Khan.

Under Aurangzeb, too, Lashkar Khan had various important assignments. His daughter was married to Lutfu’l-lah Khan, son of Sa’du’l-lah Khan, the Prime Minister of Shāhjahān. A notable point in this inscription is that the place name is referred to as Lashkar Nagar, obviously after the name of the builder. Today, the name has changed from Lashkar Nagar to Sarā-i-Lashkar Khan (ARIÉ 1991-92: Appendix C, No. 43; Parihar 1985: 13).

Another record of Aurangzeb, from Nahargarh in Kota district of Rajasthan, assigns the construction of a fort to Quṭbudd-Dīn, son of Nāhib Dil of the Raipūt clan, in AH 1090 (AD 1679). The Nāhib Dil of this record can be identified with Nāhib Dil Chela, who is reported to have intercepted a secret letter from Shāhjahān to Dārā Shīkōh and given it to Aurangzeb. It is his son, Quṭbudd-Dīn, who named the village and the fort after his father, as Nāhibagarh. This is a rare piece of information gleaned from this inscription (ARIÉ 1987-88: Appendix C, No. 124).

Two Mughal records of Aurangzeb’s time from Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu complement each other (ARIÉ 1988-89: Appendix C, Nos. 154-55). Both contain rare pieces of information. One records that Shaikh Islām founded a market (painīh) and named it Islāmpur, after himself, during the governorship of Nāwāw Dā’ud Khan in AH 1116 (AD 1704-05). It further recounts that the revenue accruing from the said market would be used for the noble cause of running a free kitchen for the destitute. The responsibility for the collection of revenue and its expenditure for the said purpose would devolve upon Yellā Pallā Thulkarnī and his sons.

The other record, dated AH 1117 (AD 1705-06), contains an official order pertaining to the revenue demands of the government and informing the dwellers of Islāmpur that its first-grade weaving industries would pay two falāms (small gold coin of south India) whereas second-grade (or) other industries would pay one falām every month. Likewise, the shopkeepers occupying the front row in the market would pay two falāms a month. As regards the Wednesday Market, shop owners would pay their taxes according to the usual practice.

These two records, engraved on the obverse and reverse sides of a slab, represent the two sides: official notification and what the shopkeepers of Islāmpur had to do in response to it, taking cognizance of the rates of government demand from them.

G. Sulṭāns of Bengal

The inscriptions of the Sulṭāns of Bengal have always been of immense value and importance for art historians. Besides being a source of history, the calligraphy of these inscriptions has got an individuality of its own. An extraordinary calligraphic specimen is the record of Rukn-ud-Dīn Bārbak Shāh (AD 1459-74) from Mahdipur in Malda district of West Bengal (ARIÉ 1987-88: Appendix C,
No. 182; Begley 1985: 60-61). It records the erection of a splendid middle gateway (mayāna dar) of a structure situated between the judicial court and the treasury. This epigraph is largely identical in purport and executed almost in the same hand as the inscription that is now on display in the University Museum of Philadelphia, United States Of America (Fig. 10).

'Ala-ud-Din Husain Shāh (AD 1493-1519), another Sultan of Bengal, is represented in a record from Qasba Mahso in West Dinajpur district of West Bengal, which is a fine specimen of Naskh set in Tughra calligraphy (ARIE 1989-90: Appendix C, No. 121). This epigraph assigns the construction of a mosque to Rukn Khan, son of 'Ala-ud-Din, in AH 906 (AD 1500-01). The builder Rukn Khan hailed from Sylhet and was the administrative head of the well-known city Muzaffarabad and Chief Police Officer at FIRuzabad. He was the hero of the campaign for the subjugation of Kāmrūp, Kāmtā, Jājnagar and Orissa. Inscriptions from Tribeni and Debikot also mention his name, suggesting his interest in building activities.

![Fig 10 Epigraph of Sultan Barbak Shah of Bengal, from Mahdipur, West Bengal](image)

**H. Sultāns of Mālwā**

One record of the Sultāns of Mālwā from their seat of power in Māndu, Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, mentions the construction of a lofty mosque in AH 817 (AD 1414), during the reign of Alp Khan (ARIE 1962-63: Appendix C, No. 53; Yazdani 1911-12: 10 (without facsimile)). What makes this Persian epigraph important is the royal titles used for Alp Khan. He is addressed as Ḥusam-ud-Din A’zam Humayun. These titles are recorded in another record too, which is dated AH 820 and was copied from Dhar. Its reading was published by Ghulam Yazdani in *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (1911-12), but since the very name Alp Khan was not deciphered correctly the identification of the personage could not be done and, as a result, the bestowing of these titles on Alp Khan was not ascertained. This record makes it very clear that, in fact, Alp Khan had not assumed the regal name Hoshang Shāh until AH 850 (AD 1446-47), which is a very important fact in the reconstruction of the history of medieval Malwa. In the absence of contemporary records to authenticate the medieval history of Mālwā, the information stored in these Persian inscriptions becomes very important as a primary source (Fig. 11).

One historically very important Arabic record was discovered at Alhanpur, near the famous fort of Ranthambhor in Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan. The record registers the name of a new ruler from the house of the Sultāns of Mālwā. It records the construction of a step-well in AH 874 (AD 1469) during the reign ’Ala-ud-Dunya wa’d-Din Abul Muẓaffar Fidan Shāh. This epigraph throws light on the existence of a sovereign principality set up at Ranthambhor by Sultan Fidan Shāh who was the real younger brother of Ghiyāth Shāh, the Sultan of Mālwā.
We know from historical chronicles that the administration of Ranthambhor had been given to Fidan Shāh by Sultan Mahmūd Shāh Khaljī. But no chronicle mentions his declaring himself an independent sultan of Ranthambhor. It is this epigraph which records this important historical fact. Interestingly, Fidan Shāh had adopted the lofty titles Malik-i-Riqāb-u'l-Umam, Maulā-i-Mulāk-i-Turk-al-'Arab wa'l-'Ajam, Shihāb-ut-Tāj wa'l-Khatam, which were generally adopted by the Khaljī sultāns of Delhi (ARIE 1983-84: Appendix C, No. 134). The epigraph under discussion is the only source about the existence of Fidan Shāh and his kingdom, as we do not know about the history of his independent rule nor anything else about the fate of this sultan from any other source after AD 1469 (Fig. 12).

Fig 11 Epigraph of Alp Khan, from Dhār, Madhya Pradesh

Fig 12 Arabic epigraph of Sultan Fidan Shāh, from Ranthambhor, Rajasthan
I. Sultâns of Gujarat

Four inscriptions of Zafar Khân of Gujarat discovered at Kapadwanj (Kaira district), Baroda and Patan refer to Zafar Khân, son of Wajihu'll Mulk, who later assumed sovereignty of Gujarat. The inscriptions are dated to both before and during his reign. One of the former group is dated AH 806 (AD 1404), barely a month after the death of Muhammad Shâh I. That Zafar Khân did not assume royal titles then (and for some years to come) is corroborated by this epigraph. The two inscriptions from his reign are dated AH 812 (AD 1409-10) and AH 813 (AD 1410-11) respectively. The discovery of these inscriptions, together with inscriptions found earlier, mean that we now have inscriptions relating to every year of his reign (ARIE 1954-55: Appendix C, Nos. 23, 47 and 136).

Of the two inscriptions from Mangrol, the one dated AH 805 (AD 1402-03) mentions Malik Shâh Badr as ordering the remission of a marriage-tax then levied on a particular community. The second one casually mentions Prince Fateh Khân's expedition to Qala'i-Girnâr during the reign of Sultan Ahmad I, and his order for the removal of a certain duty imposed by local authorities.

Among the inscriptions from Junagarh, one is from the reign of Sultân Ma'hmûd I and mentions the conquest of the Girnâr fort (also referred to here as Mustafâbâd) and the construction of the Jami' Mosque, by which is probably meant the mosque in Upârkok. Two small epigraphs, not noticed so far, mention how Hindu sculptors who were responsible for the execution of the mosque's elaborately-carved central prayer-niche and the carving of the inscriptive tablet were awarded some land as a gift for their work.

Both the latter epigraphs are important for the cultural history of the medieval Gujarat because they throw light on the participation of Hindu sculptors in the decoration of a mosque. It is recorded in the art history of Islamic architecture that the typical style of the sultâns of Gujarat was influenced by the Hindu temple architecture of Gujarat. Hájí-u'd-Dabir has vividly described this phenomenon in his celebrated work of history in Arabic, Zafar-ul-Walih bi Muqaffar wa Alih (London, 1928). These Persian records are the epigraphic evidence of it (ARIE 1954-55: Appendix C, No. 128).

An extremely important Arabic epigraph comes from Prantij in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat. It mentions the construction of a mosque in AH 844 (AD 1441) by al-Barâmad al-Khân(i?) during the governorship of Khân-i-A'zam Mubârak Khân, son of Ahmad Shâh, the Sultan of Gujarat. In the light of this inscription, a rare piece of information comes to light about Khân-i-A'zam Mubârak Khân, who held charge as governor in the region when his father, Ahmad Shâh I, was ruling Gujarat from AD 1410-42. It was during the reign of Muhammad Shâh (AD 1442-51) that Khân-i-A'zam Mubârak Khân joined the court of Sultân Ma'hmûd Khalji (AD 1436-69) of Mâlwâ (ARIE 1991-92: Appendix C, No. 22).

J. Niżâm Shâhîs of Aḥmadnagar

It is part of history that when the Bahmani Sultanate broke into five regional principalities, the 'Ādil Shâhîs of Bijâpur, Niżâm Shâhîs of Aḥmadnagar, Quṭb Shâhîs of Golconda, Barîd Shâhîs of Bîdar and Imâd Shâhîs of Ellichpur (modern Achalpur) came into existence. The Niżâm Shâhî Sultâns ruled from Aḥmadnagar and their dominion was surrounded by many territories. Hence, they
preferred to place epigraphic slabs defining their boundaries as well as indicating the directions of known cities. Interestingly, there records are bilingual and historically so important that, on the basis of three direction stones from Antur (Maharashtra), the very reign of Burhan Nizām Shah could be established (Yazdani 1919-20: 15, Pl. IX (a)). Many such records have been copied from different parts of the erstwhile Ahmadnagar Sultanate, which belong to different sultanats of the Nizām Shāhī dynasty (Fig. 13).

K. ʿAdil Shāhīs of Bījāpur

An interesting Persian record of the ʿAdil Shāhī Sultāns of Bījāpur has been copied from Goa, which was then under their control. This Persian record of ʿĀli ʿAdil Shāh I, dated AH 978 (AD 1570-71), contains a royal order prohibiting the evil practice of niputrik then prevalent in the Konkan region, in which was included the port town of Goa. Under this practice, the property of a deceased man was to be confiscated by the state if he could not bear a male child. As a result, female heirs and other close relatives were deprived of their legitimate share in the land or other property of the deceased. This practice was reportedly brought to the notice of the sultan by Zāhid Baig, the governor of Goa, and as a result the royal order was issued (Kadiri: 1965: 43, Pl. XIII; ARJE 1963-64: Appendix C, No. 61).

Of great interest and historical importance is an ʿAdil Shāhī record from Arag in Sangli district of Maharashtra. Its contents are of a rare nature. This is an inscription of Sultan ʿIbrāhīm ʿAdil Shāh II (AD 1580-1627) declaring that, according to a royal order and in the time of Mir Jumlá Khan-i-Aʿzam Dilāwar Khān, the boundaries of the village of ‘Arak’ were fixed in the presence of Dīwān-i-Hadd (surveyor-general) in AH 996 (AD 1587-88). The other administrative officers mentioned in the record include Bilāl Khān, the Ḥawaldār; Sayyid Mahmūd, the Nāʿib-i-Ghaibat...
(Deputy, or Minister-in-Absence) of Mubārkabād district (or Miraj); Malik Raihān, the Silahdār (armour-bearer); Sharza Khān, the Muqāsadār (district revenue officer); and Manṣūr Khān, the Sarbarātī (welfare in-charge of guests) of the village ‘Arak’.

Khān-i-‘Azām Dīlāwār Khān, mentioned above, was the regent of Sūltān Ibrāhīm ‘Adil Shāh II. By the end of the sixteenth century, the ‘Adil Shāhī ruler, being in league with ‘Ain-ul-Mulk Kīnānī, got rid of him (ARIE 1986-87: Appendix C, No. 126). This record highlights the then prevalent systems of demarcating the boundaries of villages in consultation with revenue officials, administrative officers and fief-holders. It ends with an imprecation for whomsoever alters the boundaries of the village or disobeys the royal orders (Fig. 14).

L. Sūltāns of Mysore

An interesting and important Persian epigraph of Tīpū Sūltān (AD 1772-1799), the ruler of Mysore, comes from the foundation of the Krishnaraja Sagar dam in Mandya district of Karnataka. This valuable record, dated AH 1212 (AD 1798) mentions that a huge dam was constructed across the river Kaveri on Tīpū Sūltān’s orders for irrigation of fallow land, at a cost of lakhs of rupees. It further elaborates that cultivators using this water will be entitled to one-third of the produce, the rest of it going to the state, and that right of cultivation would be vested with them and their descendants forever.

Benjamin Rice has wrongly added a claim of apostleship by Tīpū Sūltān in his interpretation of this record in the third volume of Epigraphia Carnatica (Rice 1894: 1-4 (without facsimile)). In fact, the Persian text of this epigraph doesn’t imply any such thing. This epigraph shows the development and welfare plan of Tīpū Sūltān and his benevolence towards cultivators of his dominion, who certainly belonged to different religious groups (ARIE 1963-64: Appendix C, No. 258).

The other interesting feature of this record is its date. It contains, beside the Hijri date, the year and the month’s day of the Maulūdī Era, invented and popularised by Tīpū Sūltān.

M. Nawwābs of Awadh

One interesting inscription from Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh belongs to the famous ruler of Awadh, Nawwāb Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (AD 1847-56). This Persian inscription is dated to after the deposition of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, and its text assigns the erection of a mosque to Amīr Māhāl, in AH 1285 (AD 1868-69). The metrical text was composed by the Nawwāb himself, who used the pen-name ‘Aḵhtar’. Amīr Māhāl, the builder of the mosque, was one of the secondary wives of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, who entered his harem at the age of eighteen, when he was still a prince. She was a beautiful dancing girl, with a melodious voice, popularly known as Kārma Bakhsī Wāli. After his deposition in AD 1856, when the Nawwāb left for Calcutta, he offered to divorce those wives who did not wish to accompany him. One of these was Amīr Māhāl, who remarried the Qādī of Barabanki named Aṣghār ‘Alī. She lies buried at Barabanki (ARIE 1991-92: Appendix C, No. 53).
N. Nawwābs of Tonk

A fine example of Hindu-Muslim religious tolerance is reflected in a Persian epigraph dated AH 1228 (AD 1813), which is an order issued by Nawwāb Muhammad Shāh Khān, the trusted lieutenant of the Tonk ruler Amīr Khān (ARIE 1962-63: Appendix D, No. 242). This record, from Niwai village of Tonk district, Rajasthan, asks the officers, risāladārs and jamadārs of the army of Tonk to note that the temple of Jaldarnāth in Niwai village should be respected, as it was by rulers of past. It also says that the temple and its activities should not be interfered with in any way. This epigraph is important from the point of view of unity in diversity, which existed in our country during Muslim rule (Fig. 15).

![Fig 15 (left) Epigraph of the Nawwāb of Tonk, from Niwai, Rajasthan](image1)

![Fig 16 The earliest Arabic epigraph in Kūfi, from Baliapatam, Kerala](image2)

O. Kūfi Inscription from Southern India

The earliest inscription in India is an Arabic epigraph in Kūfi characters from Baliapatam in Cannanore district of Kerala (ARIE 1990-91: Appendix C, No. 54). Until its discovery, the epitaph of Shāh Ibrāhīm, locally called Lāl Shāhbāz, from Bhadreshwar (Gujarat) dated AD 1159-60 was considered the earliest epigraph on Indian soil. However, the discovery of the Baliapatam epitaph has taken back the date of the earliest Arabic or Persian inscription by nearly a century.
There is a recorded inscription from a mosque at Bhambore, near Karachi in Pakistan, which is the earliest among all the records in Arabic and Persian in the Indian sub-continent. However, as the region of Sindh, in which Bhambore village is located, now falls within the boundaries of Pakistan, our recent discovery becomes more important. The Baliapatam record is a fragmentary epitaph that speaks about the death of one 'Ali son of Kansuri(?) in AH 471 (AD 1078). Its importance lies in the fact that it corroborates the historical fact that Arab settlements existed in the coastal south for commercial activities much before the establishment of Muslim rule in India. Epigraphists have found many epitaphs of Arab traders who came to India and, after death, lie buried here. The record's style of calligraphy is square Kufi, which corroborates its antiquity (Fig. 16).

References
Afif, Shams Siraj 1890. Ṭārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī. Calcutta.
Baig, Mirzā Sangīn c. 1820. Sair-ūl-Manāzil. Delhi.
EIAPS: Epigraphia Indica-Arabic and Persian Supplement (reference year cited where appropriate)
Ma’sum, Muhammad. Tārīkh-i-Ma’sūmī (MS) Folios 4-5.
ARABIC AND PERSIAN EPIGRAPHS: RECENT DISCOVERIES

Rice, Benjamin 1894. Inscriptions in Arabic and Persian, Mysore Taluq. Epigraphia Carnatica III. Director of Archaeological Research, Mysore.