

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**MASTER OF ARTS-HISTORY  
SEMESTER -III**

**HISTORIOGRAPHY: CONCEPTS, METHODS  
AND TOOLS**

**CORE 301**

**BLOCK-2**

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## UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

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We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

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# **HISTORIOGRAPHY: CONCEPTS ,METHODS AND TOOLS**

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Unit 3 Subjectivity And Objectivity

Unit 4 Interdisciplinary Approach In History

Unit 5 Relationship Of History With – Archaeology, Geography,  
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# **BLOCK-2**

## **HISTORIOGRAPHY:CONCEPTS ,METHODS AND TOOLS**

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### **Introduction to block**

Chapter 8 is on Graeco Roman tradition of historical writings originating from Europe during Greek and Roman civilisations

Chapter 9 is on Ancient and modern Indian traditions of history writing originating from ancient India to modern India

Chapter 10 concentrates on Positivist historiography and Whigs tradition of historiography

Chapter 11 concentrates on Marxists traditions originating from Karl Marx and the ideology of Communism.

Chapter 12 discusses about the Annales school of historiographic tradition originated from France.

Chapter 13 concentrates on the Paradigm and shifting in writing historiography.

Chapter 14 discusses the approaches to writing Indian history from orientalist, imperialist, nationalist, Marxist, subaltern, post-modern outlook.

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# UNIT 8 GRECO-ROMAN TRADITIONS

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## STRUCTURE

8.0 The Objectives of History-Writing

8.1 Introduction

8.2 The Contexts of History-Writing

8.3 Defining and Drawing on Sources

8.4 Style

8.5 Understanding Historical Events and Processes

8.6 Lets sum up

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8.8 Questions for review

8.9 Suggested Readings

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## 8.0 THE OBJECTIVES OF HISTORY- WRITING

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It is evident that history writing was undertaken with self-conscious deliberation, and with explicitly stated objectives. These could include preserving memories of what were regarded as great, spectacular, or simply important events. Almost inevitably, warfare and battles dominate the narrative. Yet, other goals are also explicitly and sometimes implicitly articulated. We find, for instance, that Herodotus was condemned with providing a narrative that was full, interesting, even fascinating, and included ethnographic accounts that often bordered on the realm of fantasy. His successors were generally more restrained, and, the Latin writers in particular adopt a solemn, moral tone. This has been regarded as a feature of the Augustan age, where the ruler visualised his role in terms of restoring pristine traditions, amongst other things.

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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Many of you are probably aware that the term "History" is derived from a Greek word 'istoria' which means inquiry. The first known author who used the term to describe his work was Herodotus, often considered as the father of history. In many ways, the works of Herodotus and his successors have been regarded as a yardstick for measuring other compositions. As such, it becomes important for us to understand some of the features associated with these works. In this Unit you will learn about some of the historians in ancient Greece and Rome and the historical works written by them.

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## 8.2 THE CONTEXTS OF HISTORY-WRITING

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The four historians we have selected for study are amongst the best-known in antiquity:

Herodotus and Thucydides, who wrote in Greek, and lived in the 5th century BCE (BCE means Before Common Era, also known as BC while CE means Common Era, also known as AD), and Livy and Tacitus, who lived during the Augustan era of the Roman empire (c. 1st century BCE - 1st century CE) and wrote in Latin. The 5th century BCE is often regarded as constituting a classical age in the history you Greece in general, and Athens in particular, while the Augustan era is viewed as marking the heyday of the Roman empire.

The works of these historians can be located within these political and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, it is worth bearing in mind that there are no easy correlations between these contexts and the specific forms of historical investigation that emerged. We might expect that these histories were composed to justify, eulogise, or legitimate contemporary political changes. While this expectation is not belied entirely, it is also evident that Livy and Tacitus were highly critical of their contemporaries: these histories are not simply eulogistic but are marked by anxieties about the present.

### Establishment

The most outstanding originator of Roman historiography was Quintus Fabius Pictor, otherwise called the "Author of Historiography". Prior to the subsequent Punic war, there was no historiography in Rome, yet after, it was expected to celebrate this significant event. Q. Fabius Pictor took up the undertaking and composed a background marked by Rome in Greek, not Latin. This decision of expounding on the war in Greek emerged from a need to address the Greeks and counter another creator, Timaeus, who likewise composed a background marked by Rome until the Second Punic War. Timaeus composed with a negative perspective on Rome. Subsequently, with regards to the Roman state, Q. Fabius Pictor wrote in Greek, utilizing Olympiad dating and a Hellenistic style. Q. Fabius Pictor's style of composing history shielding the Roman state and its activities, and utilizing publicity intensely, in the long run turned into a characterizing normal for Roman historiography.

Q. Fabius Pictor is known for the foundation of the "stomach muscle urbe condita" convention of historiography which is composing history "from the establishing of the city". After Q. Fabius Pictor composed, numerous different creators followed his lead, motivated by the new abstract structure: Lucius Cincius Alimentus, Gaius Acilius, Aulus Postumius Albinus, and Cato the Elder. Cato the Elder is attributed as the primary antiquarian to write in Latin. His work, the *Origines*, was composed to encourage Romans being Roman. Like Q. Fabius Pictor, Cato the Elder composed stomach muscle urbe condita, and the early history is loaded up with legends showing Roman ideals. The *Origines* likewise talked about how Rome, yet the other Italian towns were admired, and that the Romans were surely better than the Greeks.

The Romans delighted in genuine undertakings thus the composition of historiography turned out to be exceptionally famous for high society residents who needed to invest their energy in beneficial, prudent, "Roman" exercises. As relaxation time was looked downward on by the Romans, composing history turned into an adequate method to spend retirement.



Nearly when historiography began being utilized by the Romans, it split into two conventions: the annalistic custom and the monographic custom.

### **The annalistic custom**

The creators who utilized the Annalistic custom composed accounts year-by-year, from the earliest starting point, which was most as often as possible from the establishing of the city, as a rule up until the time that they were living in.

#### **Some annalistic creators:**

Gnaeus Gellius (c. 140 BC) composed his history from Aeneas until 146 BC.

Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi (c. 133 BC) worked attempting to make sense of why the Roman culture had started to decay. His history chronicled Rome from the establishment until 154 BC, when he accepted that the general public had hit its absolute bottom.

Publius Mucius Scaevola (c. 133 BC) composed a history from the establishment of the city in 80 books.

Sempronius Asellio (c. 100 BC) composed a history from the Punic Wars until c. 100 BC.

Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius composed that every Roman war are simply, and that the Senate and every Roman managing were noteworthy, in annalistic structure.

### **The monographic convention**

Monographs are progressively like the history books that we are utilized to today; they are for the most part on a solitary theme, yet above all, they don't tell history from the earliest starting point, and they are not even fundamentally annalistic. A significant sub classification that rose up out of the monographic convention was the life story.

#### **Some monographic creators:**

Gaius Gracchus composed a memoir of his sibling, Tiberius Gracchus.

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Gaius Fannius likewise composed a memoir of Tiberius Gracchus, however indicated him in a negative light.

Lucius Coelius Antipater composed a monograph on the Second Punic War.

Sallust composed two monographs: *Bellum Catilinae* (otherwise called *De Catilinae Coniuratione*), which is about the Catilinarian scheme from 66–63 BC, and the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, which is about the war with Jugurtha which occurred from 111–105 BC.

### **Factionalized history**

Frequently, particularly in the midst of political distress or social unrest, antiquarians re-composed history to suit their specific perspectives on the age. In this way, there were a wide range of students of history each changing history a tad to support their case. This was particularly obvious during the 70s BC when the social wars were going on between the populists drove by Marius, and the senatorials drove by Sulla. A few creators composed chronicles during this time, each agreeing with a particular position. Gaius Licinius Macer was hostile to Sullan and composed his history, in light of Gnaeus Gellius in 16 books, from the establishing of the city until the third century BC, though Valerius Antias who was genius Sulla, composed a history in 75 books, from the establishing of the city until 91 BC.

### **Diagram**

The historiography we most promptly relate to the Romans, originating from sources, for example, Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, and other minor creators, owes a lot to its initial roots and Greek forerunners. Notwithstanding, in opposition to the Greek structure, the Roman structure included different demeanors and worries that were viewed as carefully Roman. As the account of Roman history started to develop and come to fruition, numerous qualities came to characterize what we know today as Roman historiography, most outstandingly the solid guard of and devotion to the Roman state and its wide assortment of good goals, the factional idea of certain narratives, the parting of historiography into

two unmistakable classifications, the Annals and the Monograph, and the reworking of history to suit the creator's needs.

### Attributes

Chronicles are a year-by-year course of action of verifiable composition. In Roman historiography, archives for the most part start at the establishing of Rome. Appropriate records incorporate whatever occasions were of significance for every year, just as other data, for example, the names of that year's diplomats, which was the premise by which Romans for the most part distinguished years. The Annal appears to be initially to have been utilized by the brotherhood to monitor signs and omens.

The Annales Maximi were a running arrangement of records kept by the Pontifex Maximus. The Annales Maximi contained such data as names of the judges of every year, open occasions, and signs, for example, shrouds and colossal births. The Annales Maximi covers the period from the early Roman Republic to around the hour of the Gracchi.

Gracchan Annalist appears to allude to the scholars of history in annalistic structure who started composing after the hour of the Gracchi. Contrasted with different types of annalistic history, these appear to be more fictionalized as Roman students of history utilized their narratives to represent focuses about their own time, and were not really out to deliver hard certainty. All things considered, Gracchan annalists have delivered intriguing knowledge into the essayist's own time, if not really into the time on which they composed. Sallust and Tacitus are reasonable instances of Gracchan Annalists.

A monograph is an exhaustive work on a solitary subject. The monograph could be expounded on a solitary occasion, a system, talk, or one of any number of different subjects. For instance, Pliny the Elder once distributed a monograph on the utilization of the tossing lance by mounted force. Monographs were among the most widely recognized chronicled works found in Roman compositions.

Abdominal muscle urbe condita, truly "From the establishing of the city", depicts the Roman convention of starting narratives at the

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establishing of the city of Rome. For models, see Tacitus, Livy, Sallust, et al. In Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, much time is spent on the early history of Rome, and on the establishing of the city itself. In Sallust's accounts, the establishing and early history of Rome is nearly diminished to a solitary sentence. Hence, the abdominal muscle *urbe condita* structure is incredibly factor while proceeding to shape Roman chronicles.

"Senatorial History" portrays history composed by or with data from a Roman Senator. Senatorial narratives are commonly especially enlightening due to their "insider's" point of view. A general example of Senatorial narratives is that they appear to perpetually contain an explanation that the writer is composing chronicles as opposed to staying engaged with legislative issues.

Sullan annalists politicized their past. They were partisans of the Sullan group who carried on the Marius and Sulla strife through their accounts, regularly revising them to accommodate their own motivation. Some Sullan annalists may have been hotspots for Livy. Valerius Antias (fl. 80-60 BC) was a Sullan annalist however he was not seen as a solid history specialist. He appears to have been attempting to counter the Marian student of history, C. Licinius Macer. Antias' history, written in seventy-six books, is sensational and frequently loaded up with distortions and falsehoods. In his history, anybody named Cornelius is viewed as a saint and anybody named Claudius is an adversary and the resistance to the *populares* never passed by a reliable name yet were rather called "boni", "optime" or "optimates", inferring that they were the heroes.

Roman historiography is additionally very outstanding for incendiary composing styles. The data in the old Roman accounts is frequently imparted by recommendation, allusion, suggestion and intimation in light of the fact that their frames of mind would not generally be generally welcomed. Tacitus contradicted the heads and accepted that they were one reason for the decay of Rome. Tacitus even composed disparagingly of Augustus the most celebrated and dearest of the heads. Obviously

these assessments must be hidden since they would not have gone over well indeed.

In Roman historiography *commentarii* is just a crude record of occasions regularly not proposed for production. It was not viewed as conventional "history" since it did not have the important addresses and artistic twists. *Commentarii* was normally transformed into "history" later on. Many believe Caesar's record of the Gallic Wars, *Commentarii Rerum Gestarum* (Commentaries on Things Done), was called *commentarii* for propagandistic purposes. They accept that it is really "history" since it is so elegantly composed, master Roman and fits the customary examples of historiography.

### **Antiquated Roman students of history**

Herodotus probably lived between c. 484-425 BCE. He was born in a Greek colony in Asia Minor, but travelled widely, through parts of West Asia, including Palestine and Babylon, North Africa, especially Egypt, through several islands in the Mediterranean Sea, and in mainland Greece. His writing is marked by a deep admiration for Athens, and in fact, his work can be understood at least in part as being an attempt to memorialise what he regarded as the historic victory of the Greeks over the Persians, a contest that he visualised as one between civilization and barbarism.

Thucydides' (c. 460-400 BCE) association with Athens was even closer. He was an Athenian, and served as a general (although a somewhat unsuccessful one) during the Peloponnesian war, a conflict between Athens and Sparta that lasted for about thirty years. This was a war in which most other Greek states were also embroiled, as supporters of one or the other. After his failure as a general, Thucydides was evidently exiled, and spent several years amongst the states that were hostile to Athens. His work reflects his rich experience in a variety of ways.

Herodotus and Thucydides were thus products of what has often been projected as the classical age in the history of Greece in general and of Athens in particular. We know from other sources that this was the age of philosophers such as Socrates, and of playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The works of the historians do not, however,

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directly reflect these cultural developments. What we find instead is a preoccupation, especially in Thucydides, with militaristic activities. In fact, if these histories are rich in detail, they are also marked by an extremely narrow focus. Indeed there are times when the present-day reader cannot help but wishing that these writers had devoted some of their considerable skills to a wider range of issues.

As we have seen, Livy and Tacitus were located very closely within the contexts of empire. The Roman empire was a unique institution. It spanned parts of three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa), and lasted for nearly five centuries. It was also remarkable for its ruling elite, membership of which was fairly flexible.

Livy (c. 64 BCE- 17CE) was a contemporary of the most famous imperial figure in Roman history, Augustus. However, he was not part of the senatorial elite, nor was he directly associated with politics. Yet, it is perhaps not accidental that he chose to write a monumental history of Rome, which ran into 142 books. Unfortunately, more than a hundred of these books were lost, and some survive only in summaries written by later authors. In its entirety, the work traced the history of Rome from its legendary origins to c. 9 BCE.

Tacitus (c. 55-119 CE) was closely associated with imperial administration, and a well-known orator. His *Annals* delineated the history of the Roman empire for about fifty years (between c. 14 and 65 CE). The work begins with the end of the reign of Augustus, and represents the concerns of the military/administrative elite, its preoccupations with questions of succession, and the role of the army in political affairs. What distinguishes his account is that, although he was an "insider", he was often critical of imperial policies and intrigues. In other words, his work suggests that the Roman elite was by no means a homogeneous entity.

We can perhaps suggest then, that while the concerns of these early historians were obviously shaped by their contemporary milieu, the connections between the context and the author were by no means simple or unilinear.

Most of the writers state their objectives at the outset. For instance, Herodotus begins his work by declaring:

These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due need (share) of glory, and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feud.

To an extent, this initial assertion is justified by some of his concluding remarks : even while recording and celebrating the victories of the Greeks in general and the Athenians in particular, he recognises the heroism of the Persians as well as the Spartans.

It is evident that what was regarded as being worthy of memorialisation was a great war and its outcome. In a sense, this perspective was shared by Thucydides, whose account begins as follows:

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it. (Book I, section 1). This focus on histories of warfare characterised the works of Livy and Tacitus as well.

At one level, this may not seem surprising, given that the expansion of the Roman empire was inevitably marked by warfare, which was duly memorialised. What is perhaps more unexpected is the tone of moral concern that distinguishes these accounts. While we customarily regard the Augustan age as the heyday of Roman imperialism, it is interesting that these contemporary writers voice a sense of discomfort, and even agony at what was perceived to be a state of decline. Livy's prefatory statement is illuminating:

I invite the reader's attention to the much more serious consideration of the kind of lives our ancestors lived, of who were the men and what the means, both in politics and war, by which Rome's power was first acquired and subsequently expanded. I would then have him trace the process of our moral decline, to watch first the sinking of the foundations

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of morality as the old teaching was allowed to lapse, then the final collapse of the whole edifice, and the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices, nor face the remedies needed to cure them. The preoccupation with military activities, in a somewhat different context, is evident in the work of Tacitus as well. Yet, Tacitus was not simply attempting to valorise marital heroes: he was also, if not more concerned with offering a critique of the contemporary situation:

My purpose is not to relate at length every motion, but only such as were conspicuous for excellence or notorious for infamy. This I regard as history's highest function, to let no worthy action be commemorated, and to hold out the reprobation of posterity as a terror to evil words and deeds.

He was also acutely conscious that what he documented might seem insignificant: Much of what I have related and shall have to relate, may perhaps, I am aware, seem petty trifles to record. But no one must compare my annals with the writings of those who have described Rome in old days. They told of great wars, of the storming of cities, of the defeat and capture of kings, or whenever they tuned by preference to home affairs, they related, with a free scope for digression, the strifes of consuls with tribunes, land and corn-laws, and the struggles between the commons and the aristocracy. My labours are circumscribed and inglorious; peace wholly unbroken or but slightly disturbed, dismal misery in the capital, an emperor careless about the enlargement of the empire, such is my theme. Still it will not be useless to study these at first sight trifling events out of which the movements of vast changes often take their rise. (Annals Book IV, section 32). Both Livy and Tacitus regarded their works as educative. The former argued: What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experiences plainly set out for all to see, and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings. And Tacitus, more despondent, wrote: So now, after a revolution, when Rome is nothing but the realm of a single, despot, there must be good in carefully noting and recording this period, for it is but few who have the foresight to distinguish right from wrong or what is sound from what is hurtful, while



most men learn wisdom from the fortunes of others. Still, though this is instructive, it gives very little pleasure. Descriptions of countries, the various incidents of battles, glorious deaths of great generals, enchain and refresh a reader's mind. I have to present in succession prosecutions, faithless friendships, the ruin of innocence, the same causes issuing in the same results, and I am everywhere confronted by a wearisome monotony in my subject matter.

The dreary weight of the present deterred such historians from venturing into the realm of the fantastic. This was in stark contrast to the work of Herodotus who was evidently fascinated by what he considered to be extraordinary, and took great pains to record these elements, even when he realised that it could strain one's credulity. His accounts of India, which he never visited, are especially marked by elements of fantasy, as for instance in his story about gold-digging ants (Book III, section 104, 105).

Writers like Tacitus are far more cautious in their accounts of the fabulous. This is evident, for instance, in his brief digression on the fabled phoenix (Annals, Book VI, section 28):

The bird called the phoenix, after a long succession of ages, appeared in Egypt and furnished the most learned men of that country and of Greece with abundant matter for the discussion of the marvellous phenomenon. It is my wish to make known all on which they agree with several things, questionable enough indeed, but not too absurd to be noticed..... As to the number of years it lives, there are various accounts. The general tradition says five hundred years. Some maintain that it is seen at intervals of fourteen hundred and sixty one years... .But all antiquity is of course obscure.

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## 8.3 DEFINING AND DRAWING ON SOURCES

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The question of authorities or sources is something that is addressed both explicitly and implicitly in some of the works that we are considering. Eyewitness observations were valued, but other sources of information,

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derived from tradition, religious centres, chronicles, interviews, and a range of documentary sources were tapped as well. The possibility of mutually conflicting versions was also recognized and strategies were evolved for resolving such situations. For instance, Herodotus, in discussing the history of the Persian ruler Cyrus states:

And herein I shall follow those Persian authorities whose object it appears to be not to magnify the exploits of Cyrus, but to relate the simple truth. I know besides three ways in which the story of Cyrus is told, all differing from my own narrative. (Book I, section 95)

The archives and traditions clustering around shrines were obviously important sources that were drawn upon. The classic example of this is provided by the shrine of Delphi, whose oracle was invariably consulted by rulers and states before any major event, e.g., going to battle. Herodotus records several of the predictions of the oracle, often couched in (perhaps deliberately) ambiguous language. He also details the offerings sent to the shrine on the successful completion of an enterprise. Herodotus also provides the reader with first-hand accounts, the result of his many travels. Here is his description of agriculture in Mesopotamia: Of all the countries that we know there is none which is so fruitful in grain. It makes no pretension indeed of growing the fig, the olive, the vine, or any other tree of the kind; but in grain it is so fruitful as to yield commonly two hundred fold, and when the production is the greatest, even three-hundred fold. The blade of the wheat plant and barley plant is often four fingers in breadth. As for the millet and the sesame, I shall not say to what height they grow, though within my own knowledge; for I am not ignorant that what I have already written concerning the fruitfulness of Babylonia must seem incredible to those who have never visited the country.

First hand observation is also evident in the vivid description of forms of greeting practised by the Persians: When they meet each other in the streets, you may know if the persons meeting are of equal rank by the following token: if they are, instead of speaking, they kiss each other on the lips. In the case where one is little inferior to the other, the kiss is

given on the cheek; where the difference of rank is great, the inferior prostrates himself upon the ground. (Book I, section 134)

Occasionally, Herodotus drew on folk traditions. For instance, he cites a long conversation between Croesus, a king who was supposed to be incredibly wealthy, and Solon, one of the founding fathers of the Athenian constitution. Croesus, according to this story, is confident that he is the happiest person on earth, but Solon gently, but repeatedly demurs, saying that he could be declared to be the happiest only if his end was known. By this argument, only after his death could it be said that a man had lived a happy life.

Thucydides deliberates far more self-consciously on his sources and attitudes towards the past. He says: The way that most men deal with traditions, even traditions of their own country, is to receive them all alike as they are delivered, without applying any critical test whatever.... So little pains do the vulgar take, accepting readily the first story that comes to hand. In contrast, he considers his own procedure far more rigorous: The conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. (Book I, section 20, 21).

A system of keeping annual records was evidently in existence in Rome for several centuries. These records, known as the *Annales Maximi*, were compiled and maintained by priests. They contained the names of magistrates who were appointed each year, and chronicled what were regarded as important events. Apart from this, elite families had traditions of funerary orations, which were drawn on by later historians.

Perhaps because such traditions and the works of earlier historians such as Polybius could be drawn upon, Livy and Tacitus seem less overtly concerned about their sources. In the case of Tacitus, we find that his insider status vis-à-vis the ruling elite is virtually taken for granted. Nevertheless, there are occasional references to sources, both written and oral, (e.g. Book II, section 88) which he drew on to reconstruct his detailed history of events, including battles, intrigues, senatorial proceedings, building activities and populist measures, that he painstakingly plotted through his *Annals*, a year by year account of the empire. And like Thucydides, he makes a point about sifting through

rumours about intrigues and murders in the imperial family, explicitly denying what he considers to be particularly outrageous speculation: My object ... is ...to request all into whose hands my work shall come, not to catch eagerly at wild and improbable rumours in preference to genuine history which has not been perverted into romance. (Annals, Book IV, section II).

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## 8.4 STYLE

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The authors under consideration evidently wrote for an elite, literate audience, although some of their compositions may have been disseminated orally as well. Virtually every sentence was carefully crafted, with consummate skill that often survives even in translations. Thucydides appears to be most self-conscious in this respect. He assumes a tone of deliberate solemnity and warns the reader: Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggerations of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense. (Book I, section 21)

This solemn tone was often combined with exemplary precision. Perhaps the most outstanding instance of this is provided by Thucydides' graphic description of the plague that hit Athens during the second year of the war. Here is how he delineated the symptoms: people in good health were all of a sudden attacked by violent heats in the head, and redness and inflammation in the eyes, the inward parts, such as the throat or tongue, becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath. (Book II, section 49)

His depiction of the implications of the long-drawn conflict is also incisive: In peace and prosperity, states and individuals have better sentiments, because they do not find themselves confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes away the easy supply of daily wants, and so proves a rough master, that brings most men's characters to a level with their fortunes. (Book III, section 82) And yet, he incorporates speeches, characterised by Finley (1987:13) as "the most interesting and seductive section" of the text. It is intriguing to read what Thucydides himself declares about these: With reference to the speeches in this

history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to can them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what was really said. (italics ours, Book I, section 22).

An example can perhaps serve to clarify how such speeches were used by the author. This excerpt is from a speech attributed to the Corinthians who apparently tried to win the support of the Spartans against the Athenians. Thucydides uses this opportunity to insert a eulogy of Athenian character: The Athenians are addicted to innovation, and their designs are characterised by swiftness alike in conception and execution; you (i.e.the Spartans) have a genius for keeping what you have got, accompanied by a total want of invention, and when forced to act you never go far enough... .Further, there is promptitude on their side against procrastination on yours, they are never at home, you are never from it: for they hope by their absence to extend their acquisitions, you fear by your advance to endanger what you have left behind. (Book I, section 70)

Succinct descriptions mark the work of Livy as well. Here is an instance from his description of the conflict between the common people and the senators (c. 494-493 BCE): Great was the panic in the city, and through mutual fear all was in suspense. The people left in the city dreaded the violence of the senators; the senators dreaded the people remaining in the city.... And Tacitus provides us with a graphic summary in his Histories when he proclaims (Book I, section 2) I am entering on the history of a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors.

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## **8.5 UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL EVENTS AND PROCESSES**

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The most apparent concern of these early historians was with providing a detailed narrative of what they regarded as central events. Rarely do they pause in their relentless sequencing of events to speculate on the whys.

## Notes

Events are carefully located in space and time, but beyond that, there is little obvious reflection on why a particular course of events occurred. Yet, it is possible to discern the perspectives that shaped the narrative. On the one hand, beyond the immediate milieu and its political exigencies, the authors worked with a range of ideas that were probably shared by most literate men of their times. These included, in some instances, an acceptance of fate, which was often interwoven with an acceptance of the validity of omens as indices of future events. Others worked with a notion of a long term steady decline in human fortunes from a golden past. But, in yet other instances, we find an implicit if not explicit recognition of the importance of the human agent. Occasionally, the framing arguments are provided by an acknowledgement of the fickleness of human fortune, a fairly commonplace sentiment. Consider, for instance, this statement of Herodotus:

For the cities which were formerly great have most of them become insignificant; and such as are at present powerful, were weak in the olden time. I shall therefore discourse equally of both, convinced that human happiness never continues long in one stay. (Book I, Section 5)

Related to this is a belief in omens and signs. Herodotus declares categorically: It mostly happens that there is some warning when great misfortunes are about to befall a state or nation....(Book VI, section 27) In fact, omens and their implications are strewn across the pages of his narrative. We will cite just one example, a prodigy that was evidently seen by the troops of the Persian ruler Xerxes as he marched towards Greece. a mare brought forth a hare. Hereby it was shown plainly enough, that Xerxes would lead forth his host against Greece with mighty pomp and splendour, but, in order to reach again the spot from which he set out, would have to run for his life. (Book VII, section 57) Other authors, such as Thucydides, noted spectacular occurrences without comment. For instance, he mentions the eruption of the volcanic Mount Etna, in Sicily, but makes no attempt to correlate this with contemporary events. (Book III, section 116) Divine wrath is also occasionally invoked. Livy for instance records (Book IX, sections 29-30) how a man named Appius instructed public slaves to perform certain

ritual functions. He adds: The result is wonderful to relate and should make people scrupulous of disturbing the established modes of religious solemnities: for though there were at that time twelve branches of the Politian family (to which Appius belonged), containing thirty grown up persons, yet they were everyone, together with their offspring, cut off within the year; so that the name of the Potiti became extinct, while the censor Appius also was, by the unrelenting wrath of the gods, some years after deprived of his sight. Yet, we would be mistaken to dismiss these authors as simply superstitious. The human agent, with all his/her failings and triumphs, is also duly acknowledged. Herodotus, for

instance, recognized that the Athenian attempt to resist the Persian invasion by creating a formidable fleet was critical. He argues that if the Athenians had opted for peace instead, the rest of Greece would have come under Persian control sooner or later. He writes: If then a man should now say that the Athenians were the saviours of Greece, he would not exceed the truth. For they truly held the scales; and whichever side they espoused must have carried the day... and so, next to the gods, they repulsed the invader. As interesting is Thucydides' assessment of the past (Book II, section 2). He argued that fertile lands were more open to invasion, that Attica (the state of which Athens was the capital) was free from invasions owing to the poverty of its soil, and that hence people from other states came here to seek refuge. At another level, his explanation of the Peloponnesian war is both succinct and telling: The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon (the state of which Sparta was the capital), made war inevitable (Book I, section 23). Tacitus rarely allows himself to move beyond the nitty-gritty of the chronicle to speculate on larger issues. On one of these rare occasions (Annals Book III, section 26) he delineated the origins of legal systems from a state of pristine harmony: Mankind in the earliest age lived for a time without a single vicious impulse, without shame or guilt, and, consequently, without punishment and restraints. Rewards were not needed when everything right was pursued on its own merits; and as men desired nothing against morality, they were debarred from nothing by fear. When however they began to

## Notes

throw off equality, and ambition and violence usurped the place of self-control and modesty, despoticisms grew up and became perpetual among many nations. Some from the beginning, or when tired of kings, preferred codes of laws. And elsewhere (Annals, Book VI, section 22) he speculates on fate and its influence on human fortunes:

Indeed, among the wisest of the ancients and among their disciples you will find conflicting theories, many holding the conviction that heaven does not concern itself with the beginning or the end of our life; or, in short, with mankind at all; and that therefore sorrows are continually the lot of the good, happiness of the wicked; while others, on the contrary, believe that, though there is a harmony between fate and events, yet it is not dependent on wandering stars, but on primary elements, and on a combination of natural causes. Still, they leave us the capacity of choosing our life, maintaining that, the choice once made, there is a fixed sequence of events.

History writing is very important for human society. It not only provide the information about the past but also recognize the identity of the human beings. Many of you are probably aware that the term “History” is derived from a Greek word ‘historia’ which means inquiry. The first known author who used the term to describe his work was Herodotus, often considered as the father of history. In many ways, the works of Herodotus and his successors have been regarded as a yardstick for measuring other compositions. As such, it becomes important for us to understand some of the features associated with these works. In this Unit you will learn about some of the historians in ancient Greece and Rome and the historical works written by them.

### **Their historical perspective-**

The four historians we have selected for study are amongst the best-known in antiquity: Herodotus and Thucydides, who wrote in Greek, and lived in the 5th century, and Livy and Tacitus, who lived during the Augustan era of the Roman Empire (c. 1st century BCE -1st century CE) and wrote in Latin. The 5th century BCE is often regarded as constituting a classical age in the history of Greece in general and Athens in



particular, while the Augustan era is viewed as marking the heyday of the Roman Empire.

Herodotus probably lived between c. 484-425 BCE. He was born in a Greek colony in Asia Minor, but travelled widely, through parts of West Asia, including Palestine and Babylon, North Africa, especially Egypt, through several islands in the Mediterranean Sea, and in mainland Greece. His writing is marked by a deep admiration for Athens, and in fact, his work can be understood at least in part as being an attempt to memorialize what he regarded as the historic victory of the Greeks over the Persians, a contest that he visualised as one between civilization and barbarism.

Thucydides' (c. 460-400 BCE) association with Athens was even closer. He was an Athenian, and served as a general (although a somewhat unsuccessful one) during the Peloponnesian war, a conflict between Athens and Sparta that lasted for about thirty years. This was a war in which most other Greek states were also embroiled, as supporters of one or the other. After his failure as a general, Thucydides was evidently exiled, and spent several years amongst the states that were hostile to Athens. His work reflects his rich experience in a variety of ways.

Herodotus and Thucydides were thus products of what has often been projected as the classical age in the history of Greece in general and of Athens in particular. We know from other sources that this was the age of philosophers such as Socrates, and of playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The works of the historians do not, however, directly reflect these cultural developments. What we find instead is a preoccupation, especially in Thucydides, with militaristic activities. In fact, if these histories are rich in detail, they are also marked by an extremely narrow focus. Indeed there are times when the present-day reader cannot help but wishing that these writers had devoted some of their considerable skills to a wider range of issues.

Livy (c. 64 BCE- 17CE) was a contemporary of the most famous imperial figure in Roman history, Augustus. However, he was not part of the senatorial elite, nor was he directly associated with politics. Yet, it is

## Notes

perhaps not accidental that he chose to write a monumental history of Rome, which ran into 142 books. Unfortunately, more than a hundred of these books were lost, and some survive only in summaries written by later authors. In its entirety, the work traced the history of Rome from its legendary origins.

Tacitus (c. 55-119 CE) was closely associated with imperial administration, and a well-known orator. His *Annals* delineated the history of the Roman empire for about fifty years (between c.14 and 65 CE). The work begins with the end of the reign of Augustus, and represents the concerns of the military/administrative elite, its preoccupations with questions of succession, and the role of the army in political affairs. What distinguishes his account is that, although he was an “insider”, he was often critical of imperial policies and intrigues. In other words, his work suggests that the Roman elite was by no means a homogeneous entity.

### Check your progress –

1. Who is called father of history?

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2. Write about the life of Tacitus.

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## 8.6 LETS SUM UP

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It is perhaps this recognition of humanity as a critical element that accounts for the enduring legacy of these early historians. We may find their focus narrow, and their concerns parochial. Yet, they provide us with some of the earliest instances of raising and addressing questions of authenticity and plausibility. They also grapple with possible historical

explanations. We may differ with them on specific grounds, but their quest remains part of the historian's endeavour even after centuries.

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## 8.7 KEYWORDS

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**economic Determinist:** A historian who believes that economics is the main or sole driving force in human history.

**Marxist. Environmental History:** An approach that examines how nature (i.e. animals, plants, microbes, ecosystems, and geology) has shaped human agency and structures, and how humans have shaped nature. Some historians using an environmental approach even blur the binary distinction between “human” and “nature.”

**”Ethnohistory:** This approach most often addresses the history of native peoples, especially indigenous peoples of the Americas.

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## 8.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- 1) Where would you place the histories written by Herodotus and Thucydides on the scale of objectivity?
- 2) What were the aims of the historians discussed in this Unit for writing history?
- 3) Write a note on the style adopted by these historians in their histories.

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## 8.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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A.H. M. Jones (ed.), *A History of Rome through the Fifth Century*  
Selected

Documents, vol. I (The Republic) and vol. 2 (The Empire) (New York,  
Hamer and

Row, 1968-70)

## Notes

George Rawlinson (tr), The History of Herodotus (the translation originally published

during 1858-60)

Richard Crawley (tr), Thucydides: The History of the Peloponnesian War

(the translation in 1910, reprinted in 1952)

Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (tr), The Annals and the Histories

of Tacitus (Modern Library, 2003)

M.I. Finley, Ancient History: Evidence and Models (London, Penguin, 1985)

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## 8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1 Hint – 8.5

2. Hint – 8.5

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# UNIT 9 ANCIENT INDIAN AND MEDIEVAL INDIAN TRADITION

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## STRUCTURE

9.0 Objective

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Earliest 'Histories': The Vedic Danastutis<sup>7</sup>

9.3 Are the Epics Historical Narratives?

9.4 Puranic Genealogies and What They Tell Us

9.5 Courtly Traditions: Prasastis

9.6 Courtly Traditions: Charitas

9.7 A Poet / Historian: Kalhana and the Rajtarangini

9.8 Other Traditions of Historical Writing

9.9 Dating Systems<sup>7</sup>

9.10 Medieval Indian Traditions Or Indian Muslim Historiography

9.11 Let's sum up

9.12 Keyword

9.13 Questions for review

9.14 Suggested readings

9.15 Answer to check your progress

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## 9.0 OBJECTIVE

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To learn about the ancient Indian tradition of historiography

To learn about the modern Indian historiography

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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## Notes

It might seem rather trite to say that history is a study of the past, but, for understanding ancient traditions of historiography, it is perhaps useful to remember that definitions of history have been changing over time. Today, our understanding of the scope of history has expanded considerably. We no longer understand history to be simply a chronicle of kings. Instead, historians are interested in, explore, and attempt to reconstruct histories of the environment, of gender relations, of social categories and classes that were regarded as marginal, subordinate or even insignificant, of processes, and of regions that were considered peripheral.

Many of these concerns find little or no place in ancient works that we identify as historical. What then was the focus of these works? As we will see, many of these works were composed by literate men, generally (though not always) brahmanas, for consumption by the ruling elite. They were designed to proclaim and legitimize claims to power by new aspirants (who might otherwise have been dismissed as upstarts or interlopers). They were also deployed to consolidate claims of more established rulers. Thus the concerns of both authors and patrons seem rather narrow. Vast sections of the population, including common women and men, find little or no place within such narratives. It may seem easy, and even fashionable to dismiss these works on account of their limitations. Yet, it is worth remembering that their significance has been debated formerly two centuries, and that a critical appreciation of the traditions within which these texts were located can enrich our understanding of the past. Initially, these texts were opened up for scrutiny using modern techniques of analysis in the colonial context. Works that purported to be itihisas (literally 'so it was') and puranas ('old') were compared with histories produced in ancient Greece and Rome, and were found wanting. They were found to be especially deficient in terms of spatial

Pre - Modern Traditions ---land chronological precision, which was regarded as the minimum requirement of ahistorical work. And this was then used to argue, implicitly and often explicitly, that, as they lacked a sense of history, early Indians and by extension their descendants were intellectually inferior to their western counterparts. Clearly, history and

notions of the past were inextricably enmeshed in notions of power. As may be expected, attempts to suggest that Indians were somehow incapable of writing histories led to a reaction, where virtually any and every textual tradition which had some semblance of chronological underpinnings, was valorised as embodying historical “fact.” These responses have in turn been critically examined and questioned. It is useful to keep these perspectives and contexts in mind as we examine specific examples of early texts and traditions that have historiographical significance.

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## 9.2 EARLIEST ‘HISTORIES’: THE VEDIC DANASTUTIS

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If we understand histories as recording events that were regarded as significant by those who chronicled them, some of the earliest examples of these come from the Rgveda (c. 2nd millennium BCE). These include verses that were identified as danastutis (literally ‘in praise of gifts’). These were composed by the recipients, who were priests, and usually mention the name of the donor. Here is a typical example.

These verses are from the second hymn of the eighth mandala or book of the Rgveda: Skilled is Yadu’s son in giving precious wealth, he who is rich in herds of cattle. May he, Asanga’s son, Svanadratha, obtain all joy and happiness. Asanga, the son of Playoga, has surpassed others, by giving ten thousand. I have got ten bright coloured oxen....As we can see from this example, the recipient acknowledges the gifts he receives and prays for the well-being of the donor. Such acknowledgments or proclamations were apart of major rituals such as the asvamedha as well. As part of the ritual, the sacrificial horse was let loose to wander for a year. During that period, a brahmana priest was expected to sing about the generosity of the patron every morning, while a ksatriya was to sing about his war-like exploits every evening. It is likely that many of the stories that were later compiled in the epics and the Puranas developed out of such narrative practices.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on what would get recorded and why. Only what was regarded as positive or desirable from the point of view of the

brahmana or the ksatriya would find a place in such eulogies. Other activities, or failures, would tend to be glossed over or even obliterated from memory. We may also note that recalling the generosity and prowess of the patron was not meant to be a simple, objective recounting, but was in fact meant to ensure that the patron would continue to live up to expectations. As such, these histories were related to a context of patronage.

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### **9.3 ARE THE EPICS HISTORICAL NARRATIVES?**

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Traditionally, the Mahabharata is recognised as an itihasa while the Ramayana is regarded as a mahakavya (great poem). Each of these texts has a long and complicated history. The kernel of the stories contained in the epics may date back to the early centuries of the 1st millennium BCE, but the texts were finally written down much later (c. 4th-5th centuries CE). As such, the texts have undergone alterations and additions

Historiographical Traditions in Early India over several centuries. The Kurus and Pancalas in general are mentioned in later Vedic literature (c. first half of the 1st millennium BCE). While both these lineages were important in the Mahabharata, references to specific personages mentioned in the epic are relatively sparse in the Vedic corpus. References to the locale of the Ramayana, Kosala and Videha, are even fewer, and, once again, the principal characters of the epic hardly figure in later Vedic literature. Archaeological excavations and explorations indicate that sites such as Hastinapura and Indraprastha (associated with the Mahabharata) and Ayodhya (associated with the Ramayana) were small, pre-urban settlements during this period.

The literal historicity of the events depicted in the epics is unlikely to be established. Nevertheless, the texts can and have been analysed in terms of the genre that they represent. Significantly, both epics contain genealogies. The Mahabharata contains the genealogies of the lunar (chandravamsa) lineage, while the Ramayana contains the genealogy of the solar (suryavamsa) lineage. Several ruling families in the early medieval period (c. 7th century CE) traced descent from these lineages.



While the genealogies may not be literally true, they are important for what they suggest about socio-political processes.

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## 9.4 PURANIC GENEALOGIES AND WHAT THEY TELL US

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By the middle of the 1st millennium CE, another category of literature, the Puranas, was written down. Like the epics, the antecedents of the Puranas can be traced back for several centuries. And as in the case of the Mahabharata, a social group known as the sutas evidently played an important role in the composition, compilation and transmission of at least some of the narratives that were included in the Puranas. The sutas are often regarded as bards. They were important in early states, so much so that they are listed amongst the “jewels” or principal supporters of the raja in the later Vedic texts. They were expected to act as messengers of the king, accompany him in battle, and maintain as well as narrate stories about his exploits. However, sutas are also mentioned as low status people in the Dharma sastras such as the Manusmṛiti.

This would suggest that at least some people in society, perhaps the brahmanas, were contesting the claims of the sutas to be both close to the king and transmitters of royal lore. And when the epics and Puranas were finally written down, the authors were recognised as Brahmanas rather than as sutas. We find two or three types of genealogies in the Puranas. The first includes lineages of sages. Such lineages, which perhaps served as markers of legitimate transmission of knowledge, are found in some of the Upanisads and Dharmasastras as well.

The other genealogies are those of rulers. These in turn are divided into two categories, those that pre-date the onset of the Kaliyuga and those of rulers who are post-Kaliyuga. The first category, delineating the original solar and lunar lineages, includes the heroes of the epics. In fact, the war that constitutes the central event of the Mahabharata is recognised as marking the turning point (for the worse) in human history, and the beginning of an age of decline, i.e. the Kaliyuga. The genealogy of the second category of rulers, clearly lesser mortals, is marked by an interesting feature. All these genealogies, which in some

## Notes

cases run till about the 5th century CE, are constructed in the future tense. For instance, a verse about the Gupta rulers, who ruled in north India from c. 4th century CE, runs as follows:

Kings born of the Gupta family will enjoy all these territories: viz. Prayaga (Allahabad) on the Ganga, Saketa (eastern Uttar Pradesh) and Magadha.

Pre - Modern Traditions ---1 Why were these genealogies compiled, and why did they take such a curious form? There are no easy answers. It is likely that the final compilation was undertaken during the time of the Gupta rulers, as (with few exceptions) later rulers are generally not mentioned. Was the future tense adopted so as to suggest that these rulers were destined to rule, and was this then a possible strategy for legitimation? It is likely that this would have also created an illusion of stability and permanence that may have been valuable in a fluid political situation. What is interesting is that many (though not all) of the rulers mentioned in the Puranic genealogies are known from other sources such as inscriptions and coins as well. At the same time, not all rulers who are known from other sources find place in these genealogies. Clearly, traditions of recording the names of rulers as well as the duration of their reigns were widely prevalent, and were more or less systematised within the Puranic tradition.

It has been suggested that genealogies become particularly important during certain historical moments, when attempts are made to either contest or consolidate power. Invoking genealogies at such moments may become a means of asserting status, which may be especially important when these claims are somewhat tenuous. Claims to continuity, implicit in invoking lineage identities, are also particularly significant when there are major resources that are accumulated and handed down from one generation to the next. These resources could include land, and in the ultimate analysis, kingdoms.

What is also important is to focus on the principles of inclusion and exclusion that underlie genealogies. We can examine whether kinship is traced bilaterally (i.e. through both parents) or is patrilineal or (in some rare instances) matrilineal. We can also examine the positions assigned

to elder and younger brothers in these texts. Thus the genealogies often provide information about the kind of kinship networks that were valorised. What is evident then is that such genealogies need not be literally true. Nevertheless, insofar as they appeal to selected events and ancestors in the past, they allow us to speculate on the circumstances in which such strategies of drawing on or even constructing a mythical past may have been important.

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## **9.5 COURTLY TRADITIONS : PRASASTIS**

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Much of the literature we have been considering so far was written in relatively simple Sanskrit verse. Although access to Sanskrit learning was limited, the Puranas and the epics contain provisions that suggest that these could and probably were read out to all categories of people, including women and sudras, who were otherwise denied access to Sanskrit texts. In other words, there were certain kinds of ‘histories’ that were meant to be accessible to all sections of society. These were not only meant to provide an understanding about the past, but were also probably visualised as a means of disseminating information about social norms. In a sense, these agendas were complementary.

There were at the same time, other categories of texts that were probably meant for circulation amongst a more restricted, elite audience. These were associated with the royal court, and were usually written in ornate Sanskrit, with prolific use of similes, metaphors, and other strategies to render the text weighty. Examples of these texts are found in prasastis or eulogistic inscriptions as well as in caritas. While some of the earliest examples of prasastis are in Prakrit, the best-known examples are in Sanskrit. Such inscriptions become particularly common from c. 4th century CE. These were often independent inscriptions, but could also be part of votive inscriptions, commemorating the generosity of the royal donor.

Perhaps amongst the best-known of such prasastis is Samudragupta’s Prayaga prasasti, also known as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription (it is inscribed on an Asokan pillar). It was composed by Harisena, who evidently was a skilled poet, apart from holding several

offices. The inscription describes how the ruler was chosen by his father, his numerous exploits, and the strategies whereby he won the allegiance of rulers of distant lands, his heroic qualities and his boundless scholarship. In short, the ruler is idealized as an all-rounder, someone who excelled in just about everything. It is likely that some of the descriptions of the ruler's exploits are true. Nonetheless, the element of poetic exaggeration is also more than apparent.

To cite just one example: the ruler's body was described as having become even more handsome as it was adorned with the wounds caused by axes, arrows, spikes, spears, darts, swords, clubs, javelins and other weapons. Such elaborate descriptions, couched in ornate Sanskrit, were probably meant to impress the ruling elite. While the inscription was literally visible, its contents would probably have been accessible only to a relatively limited audience. Another famous prasasti is that of Pulakesin II, the Calukya ruler of the 7th century CE. The poet who composed this particular prasasti, Ravikirti, compared his skills to those of Kalidasa and Bharavi. Once again, we have a description of Pulakesin's accession to the throne, and his military exploits, which included pushing back the contemporary ruler of north India, Harsa, when he attempted to cross the Vindhyas. Ravikirti's composition is part of a votive inscription that also records how the poet donated a house for a Jaina teacher.

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## **9.6 COURTLY TRADITIONS : CHARITAS**

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Another genre of text associated primarily with the courts was the charita. These were meant to be accounts of the lives and achievements of 'great men.' Most of the surviving examples of charitas are in Sanskrit, and, like the prasastis, the style of these compositions is extremely ornate. Given the length of these texts, it seems likely that these were composed entirely for elite consumption. Somewhat paradoxically, one of the earliest charitas that survive is the Buddhacharita, composed by Asvaghosa (c.1st century CE). Although purporting to be the life of a world renouncer, the author dwells at length on the luxuries of courtly life, including elaborate descriptions of women.

It is possible that this was meant to serve as a presentation of life at the Kusana court. Perhaps the best-known of the Charita genre is the Harsacharita, composed by Banabhatta. This is an account of the early years of Harsa's reign. Bana's composition contains some of the most complex prose sentences in Sanskrit literature, carefully crafted so as to lend an aura of exclusiveness to the ruler who was eulogized. The description of Harsa's feet, cited below, is just one example of this style: His feet were very red as if with wrath at insubordinate kings, and they shed a bright ruby light on the crowded crests of the prostrate monarchs, and caused a sunset of all the fierce luminaries of war and poured streams of honey from the flowers of the crest garlands of the local kings, and were never even for a moment unattended, as by the heads of slain enemies, by swarms of bees which fluttered bewildered by the sweet odour of the chaplets on the heads of all the feudal chiefs.....The writers of charitas adopted other strategies as well. We find that Sandhyakaranand in, a poet who eulogized the Pala ruler Rama Pala of eastern India (c. 11-12th centuries CE), composed the Ramacharita in such a way that each verse could be interpreted as referring either to the life of the epic hero or to that of his patron.

#### Pre - Modern Traditions ---1

It is likely that both prasastis and charitas were especially valuable in situations where rulers were somewhat insecure. In the case of all the four rulers we have mentioned, it is evident that their claims to the throne did not rest on primogeniture. In Samudragupta's case Harisena states that he was chosen by his father, ignoring the claims of rivals. Pulakesin was the nephew of his predecessor. Harsa succeeded to the throne on the sudden death of his elder brother, and claimed the kingdom of his deceased brother-in-law as well. Rama Pala, too, had no direct claim to the throne. It is possible that these elaborate texts were to some extent visualized as strategies for exalting rulers who might otherwise have been vulnerable.

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## **9.7 A POET / HISTORIAN: KALHANA AND THE RAJTARANGINI**

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## Notes

It is often said that the only truly historical work produced in ancient India was the *Rajatarangini*, or the river of kings, authored by Kalhana, (12th century CE). The *Rajatarangini* is, at one level, a history of Kashmir since its inception (the account begins with the creation of the land from primeval waters). It consists of eight books or tarangas, and is composed in verse. The first three tarangas deal with the history of the region till the 7th century CE, tarangas 4 to 6 carry the story forward till the 11th century, while the last two tarangas (which are also the longest) deal with the 12th century. What is interesting is to see how the tone of the narrative changes: in the first section, the author, who was a brahmana, the son of a minister, and a learned Sanskrit scholar, paints a picture of what, from his point of view, was an ideal world, one in which sons succeeded fathers, and in which the Brahmanical norms of varna and gender hierarchies were strictly followed.

However, in the next two sections, he documents in detail how these norms were violated. Amongst the “horrors” according to Kalhana is the phenomenon of women rulers. As is obvious, not all present-day readers will share Kalhana’s perspective, even as they might derive information from his writing. What makes Kalhana’s work unique is that he mentions at the outset the sources he consulted. These included sasanas or royal proclamations pertaining to religious endowments, prasastis or eulogies, and the sastras:

By the inspection of ordinances of former kings relating to religious foundations and grants, laudatory inscriptions, as well as written records, all wearisome error has been set at rest. He also attempts to distinguish between the plausible and the fantastic, and offers explanations for changes in fortune. These are, more often than not, in terms of invoking fate, whose ways, according to the author, were mysterious. Kalhana is scathing in his critique of earlier writers, whose works, according to him, were full of errors and lacked style. Unfortunately, none of the works of his predecessors have survived, so we have no means of assessing his claims. He himself set a precedent that was emulated by later writers, who continued his narrative down to the times of the sultans of Kashmir. Kalhana regarded himself as a poet. Ideally, according to him, a poet was supposed to be endowed with divine insight, (*divyadrsti*), and was almost

as powerful as Prajapati, the god recognised as the creator within the Brahmanical tradition. He also envisaged his work as a didactic text, meant especially for the education of kings. There is an emphasis on trying to offer impartial judgments, and to cultivate a sense of detachment. As a poet, moreover, Kalhana functioned within the Sanskrit tradition according to which every composition was expected to have a dominant rasa (emotion, mood or sentiment). The rasa he valorised was the santa rasa (tranquility), although there are sections where the heroic tone dominates. There are also sections where the horrors of war and the destruction it leaves in its trail are graphically highlighted. Interestingly, although Kalhana was clearly close to the court, he was not the court poet.

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## **9.8 OTHER TRADITIONS OF HISTORICAL WRITING**

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While most traditions of historical writing were related to kings, other traditions developed around religious institutions. These included the Buddhist, Jaina, and Brahmanical institutions. Of these, the early Buddhist tradition is perhaps the best-known at present. Buddhist traditions record the convening of three (according to some versions four) Buddhist councils, where early Buddhist doctrines and teachings were recorded. Gradually, as the monastic order was consolidated, more systematic records were kept, and a system of chronology, marking years in terms of the mahaparinirvana or the death of the Buddha, was evolved. Maintaining such records probably became more important as monasteries became rich institutions, receiving endowments of villages, lands, and other goods, as well as cash, from benefactors including kings. Such chronicles were best preserved in Sri Lanka, where there was a close bonding between the state and the monasteries. This relationship was documented in texts such as the Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa.

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## **9.9 DATING SYSTEMS**

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## Notes

Chronologies are crucial to history, and it is in this context that it is worth examining the varieties of dating systems that were used in early India. One of the earliest systems to be documented, and one that remained popular for several centuries, was the use of regnal years. This was a system whereby kings took the first year when they began ruling as a starting point, counting years of their rule in terms of this beginning. This was used by the Mauryan emperor Asoka, for instance. He used dates derived from the time of his abhiseka (sprinkling with sacred water). We learn from his thirteenth major rock edict that he attacked Kalinga eight years after he had been installed as king. In other instances, dynastic eras were developed. Perhaps the best-known example of this is provided by the era of the Guptas.

This was projected as beginning from c. 320CE, the date assigned to the first important Gupta ruler, Chandragupta I. Interestingly, the use of the era began with retrospective effect, from the time of Chandragupta II, about 80 years after the date from which it was supposed to begin. Clearly, it was only after they had consolidated their power that the Gupta rulers thought it fit to begin an era, pushing back the antiquity of their claims to power as far back as possible. Other eras that have endured for about two millennia are the Vikrama era (c. 58 BCE) and the Saka era (c. 78 CE). Both of these eras were probably of royal origin, but there is little or no consensus regarding who the kings in question were. The Vikram era is particularly problematic from this point of view, as several kings in early India adopted the title of vikramaditya (literally the sun of valour), and we have no means of determining which one amongst these initiated the era which is still in use. The Saka era may mark the beginning of the reign of Kaniska, arguably the most illustrious of the Kusana rulers. However, it is worth remembering that the Kusanas and Sakas were different groups of Central Asian peoples. What is possible is that the term Saka was used as a generic term for foreigners, and an era that may have been begun by the Kusanas came to be known by this name.



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## 9.10 MEDIEVAL INDIAN TRADITIONS OR INDIAN MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY

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### Muslim Historiography

In the early stage of Islam, in the beginning of 9th century Muslim scholars and historians considered historiography to be the third source of knowledge after the research of Quran and Sunnah. For this reason, after the collection and compilation of the Hadith of the prophet, they start writing of the history. It seems very interesting to me that the same tradition was followed to the collection, compilation and preservation of the Hadith of the prophet and the history of the primary age of Islam. This tradition was followed till hijra 3rd century (9th and 10th C.E).

Since Arab historiography was mostly around with the description of the events and religious theme. In course of time, it was enlarged and enriched with the research of tribal, regional and national history. Also by the description of the world history, Arab historiography becomes a major part of the world historiography and it starts the glorious steps of the Muslims in the development of knowledge. Standing on this, Arab historiography took its multi-formation not only discussion of the historical events but also fixed its relation to the cause and effects along with deeply analyzed criticism attached with the history.

In this way, the Muslim scholars developed historiography at the same time Arabic language was also developed because the state language was Arabic at that time and research work on historiography was continued naturally in Arabic. In 1258 A.D, having destroyed Abbassids Khilafat and Ilkhani dynasty was established. With the Ilkhani dynasty, 'Persi' language became the state language and it was developed during the time of Timurids and Safavids.

In this way, 'Persi' entered in Indian sub-continent by the change of political power around the world. When Turkish replaced Persians, historiography was also started in Turkish language. But, the research of historiography in Turkish language has not so far enriched. Turkish

## Notes

sultans also patronized the Persian language later and at that time, regional and dynastic history continued in Persian language. Though the Arab historiography follows the Persian trends in the research of historiography, there is something different in the Arab historiography.

Main theme of the Persian historiography was the conduct occupation of the kings. In the Persian history, general people was totally absent or a little bit was seen in their historiography during Ilkhani period composed in Persian language “Jami-at-Tawarikh” by Rashid-ud-din. In this book, the author tries to follow the trends of At-Tabari’s writings but in his writings, the character of Arab historiography is totally absent in this write up. But, Rawatas-Safa composed by Mirkhand represents Arab trends and nature. During the Timurids period, the same trends ‘Tarikhi-Khani’ and ‘Jafarnama’ were composed. In these two books, Timurids dynastic history was arranged superbly. It is said that Muslim historiography was influenced later by the trends of Arab and Persian historiography. The Persian and Turkish carried on the central Asian trends of historiography towards Indian subcontinent.

### **.Historiography in Sultanate period**

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned, we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan.

Even the style is also generally eulogizing or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written. In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works. Apart from historical texts, a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdu’r Razzaq’s

Matla'us Sa'dain (travelogue), Tutsi's Siyasatnama (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period.

Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar) have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will study the historiography for the whole Sultanate period in separate subsections..

### **The Pioneers**

The pioneer in history writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhr-I Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period. In Lahore, he compiled Shajra-i-Ansab, the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri). The compiler wanted to present it to the sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as Muqidimma (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as Sipahsalar of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India. It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting. Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends.

No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogizing the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the

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selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance.

For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. This ceremony, indeed, implied operational legitimacy for Sultan's claim to authority. Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others.

The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour were abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian Conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. It was in view of its importance that in 1927, the English scholar, E. Denison Ross separated it from the manuscript of *Shajra-i Ansab* and published its critically edited text with his introduction (in English) under the title *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*.

Another important work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It is written in the episodic form of historiography. It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period.

The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of

Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. Being a literary genius and a master of the conceits of Arabic and Persian poetry, Hasan Nizami makes abundant use of metaphors, similes and rhetoric for the sake of literary ornamentation.

The work abounds in unnecessary verbiage. Sans verbiage and unnecessary details, the historical material could be reduced to almost half of the book's size without any loss of the content. As for his approach, he begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam. However, from the year 1192 upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 A.D.

Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was, took part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak.

No mention has been made by the Compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority.

His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. For example, when he refers to the Hindu Chiefs attending the

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Sultan's court, he simply states, "the carpet of the auspicious court became the Kissing place of Rajs of India". It contains no biographical details of the nobles, though many of them were the architects of the Sultanate. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (hereafter mentioned as Minhaj) was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period upto his own time, the year 1259 A.D., seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkoh and Ghazna.

He himself served under different Ghurid Princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed the head of the Firuzi Madrassa (government college) in Uch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sind and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate.

He served as Qazi (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236-40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of Madrassa-i Nasiri in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the position of the Chief Qazi of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-I Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history writing.

The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and

was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol irruption under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterized by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes.

Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had first-hand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan.

The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections, he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticized directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltutmish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan.

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Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptions to writing on the period covered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*. He rather preferred to begin his account from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban.

### **The Fourteenth Century Historiography**

Many scholars seem to have written the 14th century histories of the Khalji and the Tughlaq Sultans. Ziauddin Barani mentions the official history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's reign by Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi but it is now extant. Amir Khusrau also compiled the *Khazainul Futuh*, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji.

Khusrau also composed five historical masnavis (poems) in each of which historical events are described (in verse). It may, however, be recalled that neither Ziauddin Barani nor modern scholar, Peter Hardy regards Khusrau as a historian. They consider Khusrau's works as literary pieces rather than a historical work. Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami's *Futuh us Salatin* (1350), Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (1357), anonymous *Sirat-I-Firuzshahi* (1370-71) and Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (c.1400) are important historical works. A few of these 14th century historical works need to be analysed separately.

### **Isami's Narrative**

The *Futuh-us Salatin* of Isami is a versified history of the Muslim rulers of India. It begins with the account of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's reign (999-1030 A.D.) and comes to a close with that of the foundation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan by Alauddin Bahaman Shah, a rebel against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, in 1350. Though much is not known about the author, yet it may be added that his ancestors served the Delhi court since the time of Sultan Iltutmish. Ziauddin Barani includes one of the Isami family in the list of the leading nobles of Sultan Balban. Isami, himself was brought



up by his grandfather, Izuddin Isami, a retired noble. he was still in his teens when his family was forcibly shifted to Daulatabad in 1327.

His grandfather died on the way and the young Isami was filled with hatred against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The hostility towards Sultan Mohammad Tughluq is quite evident in his account and needs to be treated with caution. The early part of Isami's narrative is based on popular legends and oral traditions which had reached to him through the time. His account of the early Sultans of India is also based on popular tales with historical facts available to him through earlier works. But the details of historical events from the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji are much more authentic and can be of corroborative and supplementary importance. In this part Isami supplements the information contained in Barani's Tarikh-i Firuzshahi about the siege operations conducted by the military commanders of the Delhi Sultanate in different regions during the Khalji and the Tughluq period. Isami's description of the foundation of Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughluq as the second most important city and his account of socio-economic growth of Delhi under Alauddin Khalji and other cities is graphic and insightful. Barani has precedence on Isami only in his analysis of cause and effect, connected with historical events.

**Check your progress –**

1. Who was the most famous Islamic historian who first discussed India?

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2. Who was Isami?

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**9.11 LETS SUM UP**

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## Notes

It is evident then that a sense of history, if by this we mean an awareness of the past, was well-developed in early India. There were several systems of reckoning dates that were in existence, and that were commonly used, as is evident from finds of inscriptions bearing dates. These have been found throughout the subcontinent. Inscriptions and in textual traditions tell us about how elites thought about the past and attempted to both use and manipulate it through specific strategies of recording. These include recording the names and deeds of generous patrons, as for instance in the Vedic *danastutis*. Genealogies, too, could be constructed to meet political exigencies, and could be extended in innovative ways. Besides, distinctive genres were developed to proclaim the status of rulers, most evident in the *prasastis* and the *charitas*. Yet, there seem to have been other traditions as well. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, though for and about kings, is very different in its tone and tenor. It is when we search for histories of non-elite groups that we run into problems. These were clearly of marginal interest to the literate few, who compiled the textual traditions we have examined. So we are left with the sense of historiographical traditions that were rich, but restricted.

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## 9.12 KEYWORDS

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**Top-Down Approach:**Scholarship that emphasizes elites and leaders, as opposed to average people. Think, for instance, of a book of World War II that focused on Franklin Roosevelt rather than on the lives of ordinary Americans.

**Traditional:**Scholarship that does not employ any special approach can be called "traditional \_\_\_ history" [fill in the relevant topic]. You can use this to refer to works that do not employ quantitative, cultural, structuralist, and poststructuralist approaches. For instance, a straightforward narrative of a labor union's formation might be called "traditional labor history." A straightforward account of a Congressional election would be "traditional political history."

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## 9.13 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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Write notes on the following :a)Vedic Danastutisb)Charitasc)Prasastis

2)Discuss the tradition of Puranic genealogies.

3)Who was Kalhana? Discuss his historical work.

4)Write a note on the dating systems used by various dynasties in early India.

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## 9.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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V.S. Pathak, Ancient Historians of India (London, Asia Publishing House, 1963).

C.H. Philips (ed), Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon ( London, OxfordUniversity Press, (1961) 1967 ).

Romila Thapar, Cultural Pasts:Essays in Early Indian History (New Delhi, OxfordUniversity Press, 2000)

A.K. Warder, An Introduction to Indian Historiography (Bombay, 1972)

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## 9.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Hint – 9.10

2. Hint – 9.10

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# UNIT 10 POSITIVIST TRADITIONS AND WHIGS THEORY

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## STRUCTURE

10.0 Objective

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Positivist Theory

10.3 Whigs Theory

10.4 Lets Sum Up

10.5 Keywords

10.6 Questions For Review

10.7 Suggested Readings

10.8 Answers To Check Your Progress

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## 10.0 OBJECTIVE

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To learn about the positivist theory

To learn about the Whig theory

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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What we commonly understand as the positivist view of history derives basically from three traditions :

a) The Positivist Philosophy enunciated by the French thinker Auguste Comte

;b) The Empiricist Tradition which had a long history but was most deeply entrenched in the British philosophical and historical tradition; and

c)The tradition of history-writing which followed the guidelines laid down by the German historian Leopold von Ranke. These three

traditions fused in various mixtures to produce, what E.H.Carr calls, ‘the common sense view of history’. At philosophical level, these traditions cannot be said to be one. In fact, there are many contradictions between them. Sometimes, these contradictions, as between Positivism and Empiricism, may be seemingly opposed to each other. For example, while Positivism enunciated universalistic principles, general laws and had a teleological view of history, Empiricism doubted the grand theoretical schemes and relied on sense impressions and the knowledge gained from that. Nevertheless, in the sphere of history-writing, they have been used interchangeably, both by their followers and critics. In this Unit we will discuss all the three trends separately as well as their combined impact on the writing of history. Let us start with the Positivist philosophy.

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## 10.2 THE POSITIVIST PHILOSOPHY

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Auguste Comte (1798-1857), a French thinker, enunciated the Positivist Philosophy. He followed the Enlightenment tradition which believed in universalism. The Enlightenment thinkers believed that what was applicable to one society was valid for all the others. They, therefore, thought that it was possible to formulate universal laws which would be valid for the whole world. Comte also favoured this universal principle and was opposed to individualism which the Romanticists were preaching. Comte was a disciple of Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), a utopian socialist, from 1814 to 1824.

Apart from Saint-Simon, the other influences on him were those of John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). All these influences went into the making of his own system of philosophy. The main books he published were titled : The Course of Positive Philosophy and The Course of Positive Politics. It is in the first book, published in six volumes from 1830 to 1842, that he elaborated his theoretical model about history. According to Comte, there was a successive progression of all conceptions and knowledge through three stages. These stages are in chronological sequence : ‘the Theological or fictitious; the Metaphysical or abstract; and the scientific or Positive’. Of

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these three stages the first one is the primary stage through which the human mind must necessarily pass. The second stage is transitional, and the third stage is the final and the 'fixed and definite state' of human understanding. Comte also sees a parallel between this evolution of thought in history and the development of an individual from childhood to adulthood. According to him, the first two stages were now past while the third stage, that is, the Positive stage, was emergent.

Comte considered that the Positive stage was dominated by science and industry. In this age the scientists have replaced the theologians and the priests, and the industrialists, including traders, managers and financiers, have replaced the warriors. Comte believed in the absolute primacy of science. In the Positive stage, there is a search for the laws of various phenomena. 'Reasoning and observation', Comte said, 'are the means of this knowledge.' Ultimately, all isolated phenomena and events are to be related to certain general laws. For Comte, the Positivist system would attain perfection if it could 'represent all phenomena as particular aspects of a single general fact; such as gravitation, for instance'.

Positivism, therefore, upheld that knowledge could be generated through observation. In this respect, Positivism had very close resemblance to the Empiricist tradition which emphasised the role of sense experience. Thus observation and experience were considered as the most important and essential function. Facts were the outcome of this process. However, at its most fundamental level, the Positivist philosophy was not concerned with individual facts. They, instead, believed in general laws. These laws were to be derived through the method of induction, that is, by first determining the facts through observation and experience and then derive laws through commonness among them. For Positivists, therefore, general laws are only colligation of facts derived from sense experience. Thus, facts are determined by sense experience and then tested by experiments which ultimately leads to the formation of general laws.

These general laws, like those in the sciences, would be related to the basic laws of human development. Once discovered (and formulated), these laws could be used to predict and modify the patterns of development in society. In such a scheme, individual facts, or humans for

that matter, were of no consequence. Comte, therefore, looked down upon the historians as mere collectors of facts which were of no relevance to him once general laws were known. There were three major presuppositions in Comte's system of philosophy :

1)He envisaged that the industrial society, which Western Europe had pioneered, was the model of the future society all over the world.

2)He believed that scientific thinking, which he called the positivist philosophy, was applicable both for the sciences and for the society. Moreover, he thought that this thinking, and by implication the positivist philosophy, would soon become prevalent in the whole world, in all societies.

3)Comte believed that the human nature was the same everywhere. It was, therefore, possible to apply the general laws of development, discovered by him, to all societies. Some of these ideas were common in Comte's age. The belief that the age of religion was over and the age of science and industry had arrived was shared by many. Comte's main ideas derived from two sources – principle of determinism found in thoughts of Montesquieu (1689-1755), a French political philosopher, and the idea of inevitable progress through certain stages propounded by Condorcet (1743-1794), another French philosopher. Thus Comte's central thesis can be stated in Raymond Aron's words as follows; 'Social phenomena are subject to strict determinism which operates in the form of an inevitable evolution of human societies – an evolution which is itself governed by the progress of the human mind.'

Armed with this principle, Comte strove to find in the human world a basic pattern which would explain everything. Thus, for him, 'a final result of all our historical analysis' would-be 'the rational co-ordination of the fundamental sequence of the various events of human history according to a single design'. The Positivist method, as envisaged by Comte, would consist in the observation of facts and data, their verification through experimentation which would finally lead to the establishment of general laws. This method was to be applied in the sciences as well as inhumanities such as sociology, history, etc. And, as in the sciences, the individual had not much role in determining the

process of development. Thus, for the historians, Comte's method could have following implications:

- 1) History, like sciences, is subject to certain general laws which could explain the process of human development.
- 2) Human mind progresses through certain stages which are inevitable for all societies and cultures.
- 3) Individuals cannot change the course of history.
- 4) The inductive method, which Comte believed was applicable in sciences, consisting of observation of facts, experimentation and then formulation of general laws, should be applied in the writing of history as well.

### **EMPIRICIST TRADITION**

The word 'empiricism' derives from the Greek word 'emporia' which means 'experience'. In philosophy, it means that all knowledge is based on experience and experience alone is the justification of all knowledge in the world. According to the Empiricists, the knowledge acquired through tradition, speculation, theoretical reasoning or imagination is not the proper form of knowledge. Therefore, the bodies of knowledge derived from religious systems, metaphysical speculations, moral preaching and art and literature are not verifiable and therefore not reliable. The Empiricists believe that the only legitimate form of knowledge is that whose truth can be verified. Both the Empiricists and the Positivists maintain that only the observable world which is perceptible can provide the source of genuine knowledge. They include texts as the physical objects which can form part of the knowledge. They reject the metaphysical, unobservable and unverifiable modes of knowledge. Empiricism has a long history. In western philosophical tradition, the earliest Empiricists were the Greek sophists who made the concrete things the focus of their enquiries. They did not rely on speculations as did many of other Greek philosophers. Aristotle is also sometimes considered as the founder of the Empiricist tradition, but he may equally be claimed by other traditions opposed to Empiricism. In medieval Europe, Thomas Aquinas believed in the primacy of senses as the source of knowledge. He said that 'there is nothing in the intellect that is not first in the senses'. In Britain, there existed a very strong



Empiricist tradition. In the 16th century, Francis Bacon believed that an accurate picture of the world could be derived only through the collection of observed data. He tried to base philosophical enquiries on scientific grounds. In the 17th century, John Locke was the leading Empiricist philosopher. The other important Empiricist philosophers in Britain were George Berkeley (1685-1753), David Hume (1711-1776), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

The theories of Empiricism hold that our senses (eyes, ears, nose, etc.) act as mirrors for the things and events in the world. It is on the basis of those impressions that we understand the world and establish connections between things and events. The world in all its particulars corresponds to how we describe it in language. Thus when we say potato, it exactly denotes a particular material thing in nature. Empiricism can be said to have generated the following ideas:

- 1) The real world as we experience is made of concrete things and events and their properties and relationships.
- 2) Individual experience can be isolated from each other and from its object and from the position of its subject. Thus an experience can be described without reference to the person who experienced it or the circumstances which generated it. In relation to the practice of history, it means that the facts can be separated from the individuals or groups or societies that produced them, and from the researchers who have supposedly uncovered them.
- 3) The person who experiences a particular object should be like a clean slate who is influenced only by the object he/she experiences. His/her earlier experiences and ideological orientation are not important. In terms of history-writing, it means that the historian or the collector of facts should be influenced only by those facts that he /she has collected and not by previously held ideology or beliefs.
- 4) The nature of the world can be derived only through inductive generalisation. All such generalisations, however, should be verified through experiments and can be displaced or corrected by further or different experiences.

5) All knowledge consists of facts derived through experiences and experiences alone. Therefore, any claimed knowledge of transcendental world or any metaphysical speculations have no basis in reality. The historians, according to the Empiricists, should repose their trust in the evidences about the past that are presented for us by the contemporaries through their sense impressions and if historians look at these sources closely, they can present a true picture of the past.

### **RANKEAN TRADITION**

Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), the nineteenth-century German historian, is generally considered as the founding father of the Empirical historiography. It was with him that a completely new tradition of history-writing started which is still the predominant mode of historiography today. It is true that before Ranke, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) had established the modern historical scholarship with his monumental book, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published between 1776 and 1788. He based his book on available sources and evidences. However, his work, along with those of others, such as Voltaire, Hume, etc., who wrote historical pieces in the 18th century, was seriously wanting in many respects. These deficiencies were mostly due to the nature of historical researching the 18th-century Europe. Those problems may be listed as follows: 1) The first was their concern for establishing the universal principles of human and social behaviour. Moreover, they could not analyse the patterns of change and development in society and polity.

Except Gibbon, most of the 18th-century historians were not seriously concerned with providing empirical details. There was also a lack of critical acumen among many of the practitioners of history with regard to their sources. Most of them relied completely on the sources and took their accuracy and truth for granted.

2) There was also the problem of the non-availability of primary sources and documents. Most of the archives were not open to the scholars. Moreover, most of the rulers practised censorship and did not allow publication of books and accounts which did not agree with their views.

In addition, the Catholic Church was still powerful and was able to enforce its own censorship prohibiting the books critical of the Church.

3) Another associated problem was the lack of formal teaching of history at the university level. Because of this, the historians often worked as individuals and never as a team. This led to an absence of mutual checks and informed criticism. By the early 19th century, mostly due to the French Revolution and many political reforms introduced in its wake, it became possible to overcome many of the problems discussed above. This great revolution changed many ideas and concepts about the human nature and society. Now people started to think about change and development in social and individual behaviour. Sources and documents were now more carefully and critically evaluated before deciding on their veracity. The Danish scholar Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831) is generally considered as the pioneer of this new critical method and the source-based historical research. He used the advanced method of linguistic studies and textual analysis for the study of the sources and writing of his book, *History of Rome*, which was published in 1811-12. Niebuhr had worked in Prussia since 1806 and was appointed in the recently founded University of Berlin.

In his lectures on Roman history, he critically examined the sources, especially the work of the classical writer Livy (59 BCE — 17 CE). For this, he used the most advanced philological methods and exposed several weaknesses in Livy's work. Niebuhr thought that such method would bring out the bias in the contemporary sources and would enable the historians to present true state of things. He believed that 'In laying down the pen, we must be able to say in the sight of God, "I have not knowingly nor without earnest investigation written anything which is not true."

Although Niebuhr was a crucial figure in developing method of history-writing, it was Ranke who must be credited with the beginning of the modern historiography. In 1824, he published his first book, *The History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*. In the Preface of the book, as the statement of his purpose, he wrote the passage which became the foremost justification of empirical historiography:

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‘To history has been assigned the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of the future ages. To such lofty functions this work does not aspire. Its aim is merely to show how it really was. ‘The Rankean approach to history-writing can be summarised as follows:1)As is clear from the above-quoted statement, Ranke believed that the past should be understood in its own terms and not those of the present. The attitudes and behaviour

of the people of the past ages should be discerned by the incisive study of that particular period and should not be viewed by the parameters of the historian ‘s own age. In Ranke’s opinion, the historian should avoid the present-centric concerns while studying the past and should try to understand what issues were important to the people of the age he/she was studying. This idea of Ranke and the Empirical school introduced the notion of historicity. It meant that past has its own nature which was different from the present. It is the duty of the historian to uncover the spirit of a particular age.

2)Ranke was an Empiricist who believed that the knowledge is derived only through the sense experience. And the knowledge of the past can come from the sources which are the objective embodiments of the experiences of the people of that particular period. Thus the historian should rely only on the material available in the sources. The historian should not take recourse to imagination or intuition. Any statement to be made about the past should find reference among the sources.

3) But Ranke was also critical towards the sources and did not have blind faith in them. He knew that all sources were not of equal value. He, therefore, advocated the hierarchy of the sources. He gave priority to the sources which were contemporary with the events. These are known as the primary sources. Among these, the records produced by the participants or direct observers should be given preference to those written by others in the same period. Then there are the other sources produced by people later on. These are known as the secondary sources and should be accorded lesser credence than the primary sources while studying the events. Thus the precise dating of all sources became a matter of prime concern.

4) Ranke also emphasised the importance of providing references. This way all the assertions and statements could be supported by giving full details of sources from which they were derived. Here he further refined and elaborated the technique already followed by Gibbon and other historians before him. This practice was important because it provided the opportunity to cross-check the evidences cited by the historians. This would lead to corrections and modifications of the views and interpretations of historians.

5) Ranke differentiated between facts and interpretations. He emphasised on the primacy of facts which were supported by the evidences based on the sources. The historians' job is to first establish facts and then interpret them. Thus, in Ranke's opinion, the historian should not look into the sources to confirm his/her hypotheses, but, instead, build his/her hypotheses on the basis of the facts found in the sources. Ranke's own output was enormous. He wrote several multi-volume books, the best-known among them are : *The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, *The Popes of Rome, their Church and State, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* and *History of Reformation in Germany*. Through his books Ranke tried to set the example for the future historians. Ranke and his followers not only established the methodology for professional history but also helped in developing the institutions to support it. Ranke started graduate seminars in the University of Berlin in 1833 where young researchers were systematically trained. It created a group of scholars in Germany in the 1840s who were devoted and who were involved in writing professional history. Even before that, in 1823, the Prussian government had started the publication of *Monumental Germane Historica* which strove to publish all important sources for German medieval history for the historians. By now, more than 360 volumes have appeared conceptualised history as a rigorous science which should abstain from metaphysical speculations and value judgments. He further emphasised that the historians must put the sources to philological criticism in order to determine their veracity.

In contrast to the Comtean positivism, Ranke stressed the uniqueness of the events and not their universality. For him, it was important to look

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for the exact details and not for the general laws. By 1848, all German-speaking universities had adopted the Rankean method for writing history. And after 1870, in most European countries, the United States and Japan, the Rankean model was adopted for historical studies. Journals began to be published in several languages to promote scientific history. Thus the journal *Historische Zeitschrift* began publication in German in 1859. It was a trend-setter. It was followed by *Revue Historique* in French in 1876, *Rivista Storica Italiana* in Italian in 1884, the *English Historical Review* in 1886, the *American Historical Review* in 1895 and several similar journals in many languages and countries.

### **POSITIVIST /EMPIRICIST VIEW OF HISTORY**

Despite their differences, what all these traditions shared became crucial for the development of historiography. Firstly, they all maintained that history (along with sociology, politics and economics) was a science and similar methods of research and investigation might be applied in both areas. Secondly, history dealt with reality and facts which existed outside and independent of the perception of the historians. Thirdly, history moved in more or less linear sequence in which events followed the earlier ones in linear chronological time. Some of the hard-core Positivist historians were Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges and Hippolyte Taine in France and Henry Thomas Buckle in England. Coulanges asserted that what could not be perceived did not exist. Hippolyte Taine, in his book *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (1874-93), attempted to explain history as 'geometry of forces'. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation in England* (1857-61), tried to explain English history in terms of such factors such as climate, geography and innate psychology. The contribution of such historians to the mainstream historical tradition has been rather limited. It is the Rankean and Empiricist traditions which have proved crucial to the development of historiography.

Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903), the great German historian was a follower of Ranke. He became famous for his classic *Roman History* written in 3 volumes. This book was a prime example of his meticulous scholarship. He wrote about the history of Roman republic from its

inception to its fall by using numismatic, philological and epigraphic sources. His other writings were *Provinces of the Roman Empire* from Caesar to Diocletian, and the *Roman Public Law* and he edited the *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions*.

Lord Acton (1834-1902) was another major figure in this tradition. His most lasting contribution was the editorship of the first edition of the *Cambridge Modern History*. Acton believed that in near future when all the facts would be accessible it was possible to write 'ultimate history'. He instructed the contributors to volume to 'meet the demand for completeness and certainty'. He wrote to them : 'Contributors will understand that our Waterloo must be one that satisfies French and English, German and Dutch alike; that nobody can tell, without examining the list of authors, where the Bishop of Oxford laid down the pen and whether Fairburn or Gasquet, Libermann or Harrison took it up.'

J.B.Bury (1861-1927) was another important English historian in this tradition. He also firmly believed in the scientific status of history and exhorted the historians to be accurate, erudite and exact in their search and presentation of facts. He maintained that although history may provide material for writing literature or philosophy, it was different from both these because it was a science. He wrote many important historical works including the *History of Greece* and *A History of the Later Roman Empire*.

This view of history was summarised by an immensely influential textbook entitled *Introduction to the Study of History* written by C.V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, published in 1898. The authors declared that the objective of history-writing was 'not to please, nor to give practical maxims of conduct, nor to arouse emotions, but knowledge pure and simple'. Even though there were many critics of this view, this tradition dominated in the 19th century and even in the 20th century most of the professional history followed this trend. Most historians believe in its central premises that facts have a separate and independent existence and that most of our knowledge of the physical world ultimately derives from sense impressions.

### CRITIQUES

There has been widespread criticism of the positivist and empiricist views of history. Right since the Rankean era there have been historians who criticised this trend of history-writing. Johan Gustav Droysen (1808-1884), professor of History at Berlin from 1859 to 1884, described the objective approach of Ranke as 'the objectivity of a eunuch'. The work of Jacob Burckhardt (1818-97), Professor of History at Basle from 1845, provided an alternative approach to that of Ranke. He was a disciple of Ranke, but reacted against his method of history-writing and followed the approach of Augustin Thierry (1795-1856) and Jules Michelet (1798-1874). Thierry and Michelet criticised the straightforward empiricism and gave rise to ideas which are associated with the school of 'historical romanticism'. This trend of historiography stressed the points which the Rankean and Positivist schools had rejected. The historians associated with this trend emphasised the importance of historian's intervention in the writing of history.

They believed that the historian should be passionate and committed rather than detached. They also emphasised the moral side of history-writing in opposition to rational approach. The local and the particular were given more importance as against universal and general. The history of the community as a whole was emphasised as against the approach which gave prominence to the leaders. As Thierry said that his aim in writing history was to 'envisage the destiny of peoples and not of certain famous men, to present the adventures of social life and not those of the individual'. This school believed in the importance of literary skills in the writing of history and stressed that history was as much art as it was science. They criticised empiricism for its cult of sources and its emphasis on neutral interpretation. They, in its place, stressed the role of sentiments and feelings in history-writing.

Although there were many historians even before 1914 who seriously questioned the possibility of a scientific, neutral and value-free history, the events of the First World War and their aftermath severely jolted the belief that historical accounts could be produced which would satisfy persons of all nationalities. In fact, the historians of many countries



wrote histories which contradicted the ones written by those in other countries. They interpreted events which justified their respective nations. Even though there were exceptions to this rule, the overall tendency was to write nationalist histories rather than 'scientific' histories. In fact, the nationalist histories were flaunted as scientific histories. The Rankean and Positivist ideals of producing 'scientific' and 'objective' history came under severe strain. The Positivists believed in the methods and 'truths' of the natural sciences. They wanted to apply these methods to the study of society as well. Hence, they designated these disciplines as social sciences. They believed that, by the use of inductive methods, it was possible to predict about the future of society as in the natural sciences.

But in the 20th century, the nature of the natural sciences also changed at theoretical level. Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, propounded in 1913, changed the very nature of research in natural sciences. The thinking about history was also influenced by these developments. The Positivist certainty and Rankean objectivity now seemed a thing of the past. Many thinkers now emphasised the relativistic nature of history. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) in Germany, Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) in Italy and R.G. Collingwood (1889-1943) in England were among the more influential thinkers in this regard. Croce declared that 'All history is contemporary history' which meant that history is written always in the light of the present concern and is shaped by the ideological tool available to the historian in his/her own era.

The American historian, Carl Becker, denied the existence of facts at all by saying that 'the facts of history do not exist for any historian till he creates them'. Collingwood went even further by provocatively stating that 'all history is the history of thought'. What these thinkers were challenging was the usual distinction between fact and interpretation which most of the pre-First World War historians were prone to do. Their views received wide acceptance among historians. The role of the historian now acquired huge prominence, as the role of sources had early on. The work of interpretation was always considered the prerogative of the historian. But now even the decision about what

should be considered as facts was thought to be the privilege of the historian. As E.H.Carr states that 'the necessity to establish these basic facts rests not on any quality of the facts themselves, but on a priori decision of the historian'. The facts no longer spoke for themselves, as was the case with the empiricists; they now have to be made to speak in the diction of the historian.

To quote E.H.Carr again : 'The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context.... a fact is like a sack — it won't stand up till you've put something in it.' E.H.Carr presents these views as the Collingwood view of history. He himself adopts a more cautious approach which gives equal weightage to facts and historians. Most of the working historians generally adopt this approach.

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### 10.3 WHIGS THEORY

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This important strand in British historiography derives its name from one of the two main political parties in parliament in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the other party were known as Tories. Whigs tended to stress the importance of parliament, as a counterbalance to the Crown and of the Church of England; Tories were much more deeply attached to the power and authority of Crown and Church.

#### **History of England**

The Whig view of history grew out of the unprecedented strength and prosperity of mid-nineteenth century Britain, which led the world in scientific and technological development and ruled an empire which stretched from Canada to South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand and the Caribbean. It is little wonder that the Victorians saw themselves as the heirs to the Romans, but with one important difference: instead of an autocratic emperor, the British had a limited, parliamentary monarchy which, they believed, placed Britain on a higher moral plane; as a result the Victorians tended to revere institutions such as parliament, the Church of England, the legal system, the universities and the monarchy, as components of a perfectly balanced constitution, a model for other

countries to follow. When the Victorians asked themselves how they had come to live in such an apparently perfect society, they looked for an explanation to the history of England.

In the Whig view, English history was the story of a struggle for the recovery of political and religious liberty which, they held, had been lost at the time of the Norman Conquest. It should be noted, incidentally, that this version of Anglo-Saxon history was entirely fanciful but still strongly believed in. They saw heroic figures, like Hereward the Wake, who led a resistance movement against the Normans from the fens of East Anglia, or the medieval barons who forced King John to accept Magna Carta, trying to propel England forward towards that state of liberty the Victorians enjoyed; their opponents, by definition, were trying to pull England back. These 'villains' included despotic kings, like King John, and the Catholicism, which the Victorians regarded as superstitious and autocratic.

Central to the Whig interpretation of history was the long conflict between Crown and Parliament that dominated the seventeenth century. While they regretted the bloodshed of the Civil War and the execution of King Charles I, the Whigs saw the defeat of the Crown and its subjugation to Parliament as essential to the establishment of a free society. However, in 1660 the Stuart monarchy returned. King Charles II, and especially his Catholic brother, James II, seemed to pose a formidable threat to the supremacy of parliament and appeared to be trying to establish Catholic autocratic rule in England. How, in the crucial year 1688, parliament was able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat and lay the foundations for the prosperity of Victorian Britain was the story that the Whig writer and administrator Thomas Babington Macaulay set out to tell in his History of England.

Macaulay was a firm believer in the superiority and moral integrity of Britain's institutions. As a member of the government of British India he had dismantled the previous education system by which British administrators learned about the history, languages and culture of India, in favour of an entirely western curriculum, declaring scornfully that there was more value in a shelf of western authors than in the whole

literary culture of the east. He applied much the same bumptious self-confidence to his reading of English history, which he sought to relate in an engaging style that, he hoped, would make his book as popular a read as the latest novel. In that aim he certainly succeeded.

### Check your progress –

1. Who was Macaulay?

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2. What is central part of Whig's theory?

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## 10.4 LETS SUM UP

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In this Unit we have attempted to familiarise you with the Positivist tradition of history-writing. This tradition is, in fact, constituted by three different traditions of thought — the Positivist philosophy enunciated by August Comte, the tradition of history-writing started by Leopold von Ranke and the Empiricist tradition predominant in Britain. The interaction of these three traditions tried to put the practice of history on a scientific basis. This tradition claimed that the sources were all-important, that the facts existed independent of the historian, that neutrality is a desired goal, that total objectivity is possible in the writing of history and that history can be considered as science. This view of history was criticised even during the 19th century by historians like Burckhardt and philosophers like Wilhelm Dilthey. However, more serious challenge came in the beginning of the 20th century. Thinkers like Croce, Carl Becker and Collingwood questioned the very foundations of such an approach of scientific, neutrality and objectivity. They denied the existence of facts independent of the historian and gave overwhelming importance to interpretation in history-writing. Such views of total relativism were also not helpful to most practicing

historians who tried to adopt a more balanced view which accorded even importance both to the facts and the historians.

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## 10.5 KEYWORDS

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**Discourse:** A term sometimes used in the cultural approach to refer to a set of beliefs or images that has crystallized into a fairly coherent set of powerful ideas. This term can be roughly synonymous with the concept of ideology.

**Essentialize:** To essentialize is to make a specific kind of overgeneralization. It refers to assuming the existence of some kind of inner “essence” shared by a group that is in reality diverse. For instance, “The Estonian national character prevents happiness” is an essentialist statement, because it assumes that a single Estonian character or essence exists and that all people who live in Estonia share it.

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## 10.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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- 1) What are the differences and similarities between Positivism and Empiricism?
- 2) Who was Leopold von Ranke? Discuss his views on history.
- 3) Discuss the positive and negative points of Rankean view of history.

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## 10.7 SUGGESTED READINGSE

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.H.Carr, What is History? (Harmondsworth, New York, Penguin, 1977 (1961)

)C.Behan McCullagh, The Truth of History (London, New York, Routledge, 1998)

C.Behan McCullagh, The Logic of History (London, New York, Routledge, 2004)

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Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (New York, Palgrave, 1989 (1970))

Stephen Davies, *Empiricism and History* (New York, Palgrave, 2003)

Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought– 1* (London, New York, Penguin, 1965)

Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason* (Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins Press, 1971)

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## **10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Hint - 10.3

2. Hint – 10.3

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# UNIT-11 MARXIST TRADITION

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## STRUCTURE

11.0 Objective

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Marxist Tradition

11.3 Lets Sum Up

11.4 Keywords

11.5 Questions For Review

11.6 Suggested Readings

11.7 Answers to check your progress

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## 11.0 OBJECTIVE

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To learn about the Marxism tradition in history

To learn about Marxism impact on economy

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous Unit you read about the Positivist / Empiricist view of history. Its main protagonists in history-writing were Ranke and Mommsen in Germany, Acton, Bury and Huckle in England and Coulanges and Taine in France, besides many others all over the world. It was the most influential school of historiography in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, its focus on political and administrative history was too narrow for later historians who wanted to explore other areas of human existence. Moreover, the historians in the twentieth century also visualised the past differently than what the Empiricist historians had done. This led to the adoption of Marxist view of history by a large number of historians. In fact, the Marxist approach to history became the most important in the twentieth-century historiography. In this Unit we will discuss the establishment of this

tradition by looking at the works of Karl Marx himself apart from some others immediately following that tradition.

Karl Marx (1818-83) is famous for good many reasons. He is recognised as the founder of scientific socialism or communism. This is associated with his distinct philosophical position, which could yield an innovative understanding of history in terms of ceaseless interaction between the economic and non-economic forces of human social living and consciousness. Marx argued how the simultaneous action of all this would open up the probability of achieving a classless human society. Becoming free from all exploitation of man by man, a communist society ensures the elimination of all social causes accounting for alienation and human degradation.

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## 11.2 MARXISM TRADITIONS

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The socialist ideal has a longer tradition than what we have from Marx and Engels. The bourgeois revolutions in history had often aligned a mass following of working peasants and labourers who looked beyond the abolition of feudal order to a transformation not limited by the capitalist seizure of power and property. To cite one or two examples, we may remember the role of John Lilburne and his followers in the English Revolution of 1647. They were known as the Levellers consisting of small Yeoman farmers, shopkeepers, the less wealthy tradesmen, artisans and apprentices who stood for equality along with the plea for a broad-based democracy. Another group known as ‘Diggers’ and led by Gerrard Winstanley struggled not for political rights alone and were unrelenting in their demand for common ownership of land.

Again, during the French Revolution of 1789, there was the example of Babouvism led by Gracchus Babeuf (1760-97) as an effort to reach a republic of equals for improving the condition of the working people. Indeed, the goal of common land ownership featured as an ideal in the programmes of peasant uprisings even during the feudal period of Europe’s history. The great peasant war (1515) in Germany found a leader like Thomas Munzer (1470-1525) who urged the rebels to establish “God’s Kingdom” on earth, meaning thereby a classless society free of private projects and without any government.



Thomas More (1478-1535) wrote a book by the name *Utopia* in 1516 during the reign of Henry VIII in England. Perhaps, till the end of the eighteenth century, it remained the most important writing on socialist thought. The Greek word 'Utopia' means non-existent or no place. More chose this to emphasise a still unattained social ideal thriving on communism, universal education and religious tolerance. While the image of an ideal human society had been well presented in More's narrative, the ways and means of realising such an ideal were left, in the main, to the working of a noble prince. *Utopia* is then unhistorical and could happen only as a miracle.

Thus, the very word 'Utopia' acquired the meaning of an imaginary society which was never attainable. Along with the development of capitalism, utopian socialist ideas rising in opposition appeared in various forms and complexities. Among such thinkers were Saint – Simon (1760-1825), Fourier (1772-1837), Proudhon (1809-1865) of France, Sismondi(1773-1842), a German Swiss of French descent, who was familiar with the economic conditions in England, Italy and France, Robert Owen (1771-1859) of England, Wilhelm Weitling (1808-1871) of Germany. Despite their differences, a common socialist bias was evident in the emphasis on the need for a social approach as distinguished from the pursuit of individual self-interest to achieve social well-being. Further, most of them shared some kind of distrust in politics and favoured different alternatives to ensure just and proper management of human affairs.

Their ideas about the nature of institutions for the conduct of such management were different. The Fourierists and the Owenites thought of covering the earth with a network of local communities, while the followers of Saint-Simon propagated for the transformation of nation-states into large productive corporations where scientists and technical experts should have effective power to do things for the widest social benefit.

Wilhelm Weitling was a very popular figure among German exiles in places like London, Paris and Brussels. No less significant was his influence over German workers in their own land. He wrote a booklet by

name Mankind as it is and as it ought to be. Weitling had no trust in intellectuals and depended, in the main, on poor-friendly homilies and adventurist anti-statism for his ideas of achieving socialism. Weitling had a preacher's style and his addresses to mass meetings were in quasi-religious terms.

Around 1845-46, when their manuscript of *The German Ideology* had been nearing completion, Marx and Engels took initiative for setting up a Communist Correspondence Committee to act as the coordinator of various communist theories and practices which were then being evident in the European capitals. At a time when Marx was engaged in his understanding of history as passing through stages related to the interaction of productive forces and production relations, the other expressions of socialist thought like that of Weitling would appear to be extremely puerile formulations of an ignorant mind.

Their differences were sharply manifest at a meeting in Marx's Brussels residence where he stayed with his family during 1846-47. P.V. Annenkow, a Russian tourist, who was present at the meeting on Marx's invitation, gave an account of its proceedings. (*The Extraordinary Decade*, Ann Arbor, 1968). In his opening statement, Engels emphasised the need for a common doctrine to act as a banner for all those devoted to improving the condition of the working people. It was laws of historical movement and changes. Some such discovery was essential for placing the socialist ideal on a scientific basis. We know how strongly the point was emphasised by Marx in his argument with Weitling. We should sift and explain the principal ideas of the subsequent texts by Marx and Engels to have an understanding of classical Marxism.

### **MARX'S DEVELOPING IDEAS**

The century spanning the years 1760-1860 is known as the period of industrial revolution in England. It was distinguished by far-reaching cumulative changes in the technicians of production and marked a peak point of Britain's capitalist transformation. The pace of capitalist development largely varied between the countries of Europe. To cite a few examples, the course of change was rapid in Holland and even more radical than that of England; while the French monarchy faced its doom

in 1789, capitalist economic growth and political order did not come to have a sustainable pattern before the last quarter of the 19th century; prior to the unification of German territories in 1871, the course of capitalism in that land was subject to numerous obstacles and eventually its bourgeois transformation was mixed up with feudal residues and political autocracy, an experience which Marx described in his preface to the first volume of *Capital*. 'Alongside of modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms.

We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead, *Le mort saisit le vif!* (The dead holds the living in its grasp!)' Born in 1818 in Trier, a prominent town in the Rhine province of Prussia, Karl Marx grew up amidst practically the last phase of capitalist transition in Europe. In the previous section of this study, we have taken note of the various socialist ideas and perspectives invoking mass support for the bourgeois struggle to supersede the feudal order, and later shaping into good many doctrines to defend the working people against the onslaught of capitalism in power. Along with the triumph and consolidation of capital's wealth and power in any country, its labouring people were inevitably ousted from any holding of their own means of production and had to seek their subsistence as wage-labour of capitalist entrepreneurs / employers. While elaborating the nature and conditions of capital and labour in his *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx indicated three aspects of labour's alienation, viz. (1) that from the material, objective product of his work, (2) that from the labourer's work activity itself, and (3) that from other fellow human beings. Considering the date of the *Paris Manuscripts*, it appears that Marx did not consider the effects of capital-labour production relation (the term production relation not used in *Paris Manuscripts*), only in terms of the sphere of production. He pointed to its envelopment of the entire framework of capitalist social relationship (i.e. alienation of human beings from one another).

Thus, capitalism brings about a kind of alienation that violates the very nature of man as a species-being. For Marx, all this had to be

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comprehended not merely as an image of capitalist evils. He was bent on arriving at a theoretical understanding which would clarify the reality of capitalism as a historical stage subject to its own contradictions. Such contradictions have to be appropriately resolved for any transition to socialism. The historical course towards socialism would depend on discerning the nature of those contradictions and their bearing upon the negation of capitalism. There arises the need for a theory which can account for the experience of history passing through its various stages in terms of the relative weights of the actors and the factors influencing the pace, pattern and content of the changes. Our knowledge of how the present has emerged out of its past should enable us to recognise the incumbencies of acting for the future in an unceasing historical process. The truth of such knowledge can be constantly verify in reference to the ever-growing evidence of men and women in society, their class positions and activities. Moreover, such knowledge can often gain in precision with more and more inputs from practical social experience.

History is no independent metaphysical entity. It is purposeful activity of human beings. They make history on a creative understanding of circumstances surrounding them in real social life. We have just noted the broad purport of Marx's view of history. It helps us to see the relevance of Marx's emphasis on scientific knowledge in his argument with Weitling. He places a large premium on the general character, universality, necessity, and objective truth – all this considered to be attributes of scientific knowledge – in the pursuit of historical reality. Before entering into further details of the Marxian theory, we may note the major influences of Europe's intellectual tradition (viz. German classical philosophy, especially of the Hegelian system, materialism of the Enlightenment philosophers, English classical political economy and the various versions of utopian socialism as already noted in the previous section of this study), which had their roles in the development of Marx's thought. Indeed, many of the components of Marx's theory can be best understood in the light of his acceptance/rejection of the ideas articulated by his forerunners/contemporaries about Europe's capitalist transition and the subsequent agenda of moving towards socialism.

During his student days at the Bonn and Berlin universities, particularly at the latter, Marx was largely influenced by the method and range of Hegelian philosophy. He joined the 'Young Hegelians' whose interpretation of Hegelian philosophy and criticism of Christian thought presented a kind of bourgeois democratic thought and political interest. Friedrich Engels (1820-95) met Marx in 1844 and they became life-long friends and collaborators. Both of them were critical of the idealist philosophical position of the 'Young Hegelians' and emphasised the need for investigating material social relations at the roots of the spiritual life of society. Earlier, Ludwig Feuerbach (1807-72) had pointed to the idealist weakness of the 'Young Hegelian' position. In his important book *The Essence of Christianity*. (First German edition in 1846, English translation in 1854), the formulation of human beings creating god in their own image was a significant step forward in materialist prevalence over idealist thought.

*The Holy Family or the Critique of Critical Critique* (1845), jointly written by Marx and Engels, launched a piercing attack on philosophical idealism. The 'Young Hegelians' were facetiously named the 'Holy Family'. The book upheld the position of the Enlightenment philosophers for their emphasis on empirical test of truth. At the same time, the dialectical method was rigorously applied to arrive at an adequate idea of changing social relations and also that of recognising the proletariat as the gravedigger of capitalism. Capitalist private property necessarily creates its own antagonist in the proletariat. And as private property grows, the proletariat develops as its negation, a dehumanised force becoming the precondition of a synthesis to do away with both capital and wage labour in opposition to each other.

*The German Ideology* was the next joint work of Marx and Engels. Though written in 1845, the book could not be published in their lifetime. It appeared for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1932. In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx referred to *The German Ideology* (still unpublished) as an effort to settle accounts with their previous philosophical conscience. In addition to their critique of idealism, Marx and Engels exposed the contemplative nature of Feuerbach's materialism which failed to consider really

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existing active men as they live and work in the midst of any particular socio-economic formation. The German Ideology provided for the first time the ideas of historical stages in relation to class struggle and social consciousness to help our comprehension of movements in history.

Marx's Theses on Feuerbach (written in 1845) was found in his notebook and was first published as an appendix to Engel's Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy (1888). Later it was also an appendix to The German Ideology when the latter had been released as a book. Altogether we have eleven theses commenting, step by step, on the limitations of idealism and earlier versions of materialism (that of Feuerbach included) for not properly understanding the kind of dialectical interaction between human social beings and their surrounding circumstances. The position of idealism is caught up in abstractions without appropriate cognisance of the realities of human social living. On the other hand, earlier materialism could regard human beings only as creatures of their circumstances, failing to recognise the role of human sensuous activity in the making of circumstances. Marx's position was memorably expressed in his eleventh thesis, which was as well the last aphorism of the series, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it.' We have already mentioned the Communist Correspondence Committee set up by Marx and Engels in 1845-46. Such committees started work in other places like London and Paris. A preliminary conference of those committees held in the summer of 1847 in London took the decision to unite in a body. A second meeting held in November-December, in London, named the united body as the Communist League and commissioned Karl Marx to prepare a manifesto of the Communist Party.

It would then be published by the League. The Communist Manifesto (1848) appeared to be jointly authored by Marx and Engels from the two names on its title page. Later, Engels pointed out that the basic thought belonged solely and exclusively to Marx and the actual writing was done by Marx. It has four sections. The first section, (viz. Bourgeois and Proletarians), gives a history of society as a succession of class societies and struggle. The laws of social development are manifest

in the replacement of one mode of production by another. The second section, (viz. Proletarian and Communists), turns on the supersession of capitalism in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat led by the communists. The communists differ from other working class groups. But they are not opposed to such groups. The communists are distinguished for their being international and fully conscious of the role of the proletarian movement.

Rejecting the bourgeois objections to communism, this chapter gives an outline of the measures to be adopted by the victorious proletariat after seizing power and mentions and need and relevance of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The third chapter, (viz. Socialist and Communist literature), contains an extended criticism of the doctrines of socialism. The reactionary, bourgeois types are merely examples of feudal atavism and bourgeois and petty bourgeois manoeuvres masquerading behind some pretensions of socialism. Some utopian socialists may be sincere in their moral sentiments and disapproval of capitalism. But they are misleading in their search for a way out of the realities of capitalist exploitation. The fourth chapter, (viz. attitude of the communists towards the various opposition parties) sets forth the communist tactics in their dealing with the various opposition parties. This would certainly depend on the position of a party in regard to the stage of development of its particular country and society. The Manifesto concluded with the slogan- 'Workingmen of all countries, unite!' The distinction of Marx's thought is clear from the contrast in the tenor of this slogan from that of the motto— 'All men are brother'— used by Fraternal Democrats, and earlier international society including Chartists and European political exiles in London. Marx wrote *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) in French.

The book was directed against Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65), a French political figure, philosopher, sociologist, and economist, who considered the history of society as the struggle of ideas and believed in achieving 'just exchanges' between capitalist commodity producers through the device of an ideal organisation. The book gave a definite impression of Marx's unrelenting effort to have a fuller understanding of the capitalist mode of production. He was engaged in looking for a

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theoretical result that would combine the structural observations of classical political economy with dialectical comprehension of a society changing under the pressure of its contradictions in the process of history.

Among many other assignments and responsibilities including the day-to-day work of the Communist League to organise the working people of Europe, Marx never neglected his project for the critique of political economy. He could see its necessity for bearing out the rationale for scientific socialism. This is where the seven notebooks written by Marx in 1857-58, now known as *Grundrisse* (*Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*) — first English edition in Pelican Marx Library, Harmondsworth, England, in 1973, trs. Martin Nicolaus — bring out the precious point that the question of historical transition from capitalism to socialism can be answered in all fitness by formulating Ricardo's ideas of political economy with Hegelian language and Hegel's ideas of historical movement with Ricardian language. (Martin Nicolaus, 'The Unknown Marx' in Robin Blackburn ed. *Ideology in Social Science*, Suffolk 1972, p. 331). In his analysis of capitalist economic development Ricardo discovered 'the disharmonious' tendencies in the processes. But for him, capitalism was an immutable natural system, which could not be changed under any circumstances. On the other hand, Hegelian dialectics had a dynamic view of society, but could not discern the real core of contradiction in the material life of society.

Marx combined Hegelian dialectics with his critical study of political economy and arrived at an understanding of historical supersession of capitalism by socialism. For Marx, such a fusion of economic and philosophical thoughts started with the Paris Manuscripts of 1844. In *Grundrisse*, it reached the point of articulating that the politico-economic interpretation of capitalism is fulfilled in the proletarian praxis of revolutionary transformation. In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx made an elaborate statement of his creative theoretical comprehension of historical movement and social change. It was not very long, but immensely significant, as the following excerpt will bear out: 'My investigation led to the result that legal relations such as forms of state are to be grasped neither from



themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combines under the name of “civil society”, that however the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy.....The general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a guiding thread for my studies, can be briefly formulated as follows:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or –what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work before.

From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense super structure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained

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rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production.

No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and, new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the task itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines, we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois modes of production as so many progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism.

Following the point of arrival in his articulation of historical materialism, Marx's immediate concern was to interpret the contradiction of the capitalist social formation. No doubt, the veracity of a new theory of social change is closely linked to the evidence of the present as history. The economics of the capitalist mode of production is the subject matter of Marx's *Capital*, which Marx considered to be his lifework. Its first volume was published in 1867; the second and the third volumes were posthumously published in 1885 and 1894 respectively, under the editorial supervision of Engels. The first volume gives us a logical elaboration of capital-labour relationship at a level of abstraction and in analytical forms that can best crystallise the most significant structural characteristic and dynamic tendencies of the capitalist system.

The second and the third volumes deal with the realities of capitalism on a much lesser level of abstraction and in terms of concrete things and happenings. Their areas are circulation of capital (vol. 2) and then the process of capitalist production as a whole (vol. 3). The Theories of

Surplus Value (1862-63) (often mentioned as the fourth volume of Capital) turned upon the historical substantiation of Marx's theory in the light of other earlier and contemporary writings on Political Economy. Marx points to the source of profits in a competitive capitalist economy. The value of a commodity is determined by socially necessary labour time necessary to produce it.

Labour power is a commodity as well as exchanged for wages. The value of labour power (i.e. wages) is equal to the value of what is needed for the subsistence and maintenance of a worker and his family. The peculiarity of labour power as a commodity is that it can create more value than what is paid in wages as its value. This difference between the values produced by labour power and its wages is surplus value. Surplus value accrues to the capitalist employer and here lies the source of profits. Larger and larger accumulation out of these profits is the main aim of capitalist production. More and more accumulation results in the advance of productive forces and increased productivity. It also leads to centralisation of capital.

In Marx's words, 'one capitalist always kills many'. Many capitalists are knocked out by the working of competition. All this is associated with cumulative increase of misery, oppression, slavery and degradation. The conditions become rife for the revolt of the working-class. The advance of productive forces can no longer be compatible with the insatiable urge of capital to maximise profits at the expense of the proletariat. The tendencies towards a falling rate of profit and also that of overproduction (i.e. inadequate market demand for what is produced) appear as symptoms of capitalist crisis. The issues relating to profit rate and overproduction are analysed in some details in the third volume of Capital.

### **MARX AND CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

Marx was not merely a theoretical philosopher. He was engaged in the foundation of the Communist League in 1847 and then in writing the Communist Manifesto (1848). Again, Marx was the most active and influential member of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) established in 1864. Around the 1850s, the countries

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of Europe were in different stages of reaching the capitalist system, indicated by Marx in the Communist Manifesto. In his numerous appraisals of such historical situations, Marx put emphasis on the relative strength and weakness of a country's bourgeoisie. There were circumstances in which he had called upon the working people to help in the achievement of a bourgeois democratic revolution, since that would take a society nearer to the socialist transition.

Marx also encountered historical situations where the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class was not yet prepared to seize political command. The complex plurality of classes in such circumstances was the subject of Marx's incisive analysis in his essay on 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' – the instance of French history when Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, assumed the position of an emperor as Napoleon III after his coup d'etat in 1851. Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune in 1871 is important in many respects. A large number of manual workers were among its elected members. Most of them were also members of the International. It was not a revolution that would fit in with the Marxian theory of historical change actuated by the advance of productive forces outpacing some existing production relations in a society. Still Marx underlined its significance and highly appreciated its democratic and decentred exercise of political power.

Marx's comments on not-European countries (e.g. North America, China, India) were for the most part influenced by his thoughts on Europe's historical experience of passing from feudalism to capitalism and then, as Marx saw it, to socialism achieved by a class-conscious proletarian revolution. His ideas about the Asiatic mode of production were largely derived from ideologues of British empire. They were often emphatic in their portrayal of India as a static, barbaric society whose only means of redemption obtained in submission to the 'civilising' rule of imperial Britain. Marx considered that the forced inception of capitalism in India would act as an unconscious tool of history for bringing the country up to the path of its capitalist transformation. Despite all the sordid consequences of all this, the conditions would open up the perspective of a socialist transformation in the subject country. Its probability must have a necessary connection

with socialist transformation of the ruling country. For China also Marx wrote of the need for the assertion of western civilization by force. (Introduction and notes by DonaTorr, Marx on China 1853-1860, London, 1851).

In the last decade of his life, Marx appeared to go for newer investigations, perhaps with a view to further probing into the issues of non-European countries and their paths of social change in history. We shall come to that point at a later stage of this presentation. As regards America, Marx interpreted the civil war (1861-65) as a struggle between two social systems – slavery versus free labour. All his support was for the north and betrayed no concern for the popular element in the resistance of the southern smallholders. No doubt, the favourable attitude of the English ruling classes towards the southern slave owners and efforts to cast the same ideological influence on their own workers as well had influenced Marx's position in the matter.

### **CLASSICAL MARXISM AND ITS TRADITION**

By now, we should have formed an idea of the content of Marx's thought. Admittedly, it has been a summary presentation avoiding some complexities of the theory and practice of Marxism, which have been a part of the historical experience over nearly two centuries. For our present purpose classical Marxism consists of ideas received directly from the writings of Marx and Engels. The point of any divergence between Marx and Engels are set aside for the present. It is well-known that Marx and Engels worked in close collaboration for a long period and often engaged in jointly writing such important texts like The Communist Manifesto. Let us make a point by point resume of the content of classical Marxism. Marx adopted the logic of Hegelian dialectics as his method for understanding the dynamics of social change and transformation in history. He did not go by Hegel's philosophy of idealism. Marx held that in the relationship of being and thought, the former is the subject and the latter the predicate. Hegel inverted this relation to its opposite, setting thought as the subject and being its predicate.

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The materialist philosophical position taken by Marx was however different in a very important sense from the mechanistic materialism of the Enlightenment and other earlier types. It focused on the reality of mind and consciousness and did not consider human action as being a passive product of material circumstances. Economic structure and activity are to be understood in terms of its conditions, productive forces and production relations. The conditions of production are set by a society's geographical location, its climate and demographic features like the size and composition of its population. Productive forces comprise tools, machinery, technology and skills. Production relations refer to the nature of property in a particular society and its forms of social existence of labour which, in their interaction, conduct what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce, thereby deciding upon the items and quantities of production, technology deployed, and the distribution of final output.

All this goes to constitute the economic structure of a society, its mode of production. Marx considered the legal, religious, aesthetic, philosophic and other ideological elements as being rooted in the economic structure of society. So is the state and the political disposition of a society. Class conflict is a common feature of all social stages (excepting the primitive communist formations) indicated by Marx in regard to the history of Europe. Such stages are ancient slavery (Greece and Rome), the feudal order and capitalism. Class conflicts and struggles result from the social division between those who own the means of production and those who do not. There is the key to the contradictions within a mode of production and for that matter the thrust for changes from one mode to another. A mode of production can be sustained as long as its relations of production are compatible with the advance of corresponding productive forces. In course of time, a mode of production may reach the stage when further advance of productive forces is no longer workable within the existing relations of production.

Thus, the property systems allied with the particular pattern of production relations and enjoying the legal sanction of the state in power, become a fetter on the growth of productive forces. This, in Marx's words, marks the beginning of an epoch of social revolution where by a

new class, which can act as the protagonist of newer production force, comes to achieve its social hegemony and political command. Equally posed against any utopian leap or shoddy conformism, Marx put some decisive emphasis on the sufficiency of material conditions for the transformation of a socio-economic order :‘No order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed, and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured, in the womb other old society itself’

In Marx’s comprehension, the revolutionary triumph of the proletariat leads to the beginning of a classless society free from alienation of man from man. As a property less class (i.e. proletariat) brings about the abolition of capitalism, society no longer harbours private property of any kind. The root cause of alienation is removed. The success of the proletarian revolution liberates all men/women from alienation and absence of real freedom. As already noted, this study has taken the theories, ideas and comments found in the works of Marx and Engels as classical Marxism. It marks a departure from the usual sense of the word ‘Marxist’ to comprise thoughts and practices supposedly derived from the ideas of Marx. The ideas which can be directly found in the works of Marx and Engels are then earmarked as ‘Marxian’. Such a distinction was evident even during Marx’s own lifetime.

We may recall what Engels wrote to Bernstein, a leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party, in a letter of 3November, 1982, ‘The self-styled “Marxism” in France is certainly a quite special product to such an extent that Marx said to Laforgue “This much is certain, I am nota Marxist.” ‘There are reason for our present decision to treat only the body of thought developed by Marx and Engels as classical Marxism. It should better enable us to discern the subsequent influences of a tradition set forth by classical Marxism with its combination of historical materialism and proletarian class struggle for abolition of capitalism. On account of the very methods of classical Marxism, it could never endorse an absolute submission to the set of all its original propositions in their entirety. We must be ready to face the hard fact that a sound inference and direction valid for one particular historical context, may lose its

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veracity in a different situation, although in both cases, the phenomena of class struggle, capitalist contradiction and the need for cohesive oppositional move towards socialism remain quite pertinent. Let us then look at some directions of classical Marxism, as we have indicated its position, and the issues coming up during the late nineteenth and the entire twentieth centuries, in respect of policies and praxis of socialist movement (e.g., the strategy and tactics of a socialist revolution, the maturity of conditions for a socialist revolution, the kind of party necessary for the movement of the proletariat, nature and working of imperialism) In the wake of the defeat of the Paris communards in 1871, the workers movement in Europe was subject to confusing pushes and pulls from a number of ultra-left sects and anarchists. This was the background of the move to shift the headquarters of the International to New York. It was eventually dissolved in 1876.

The statement regarding the dissolution contained, among other comments, the following remark, 'Let us give our fellow workers in Europe a little time to strengthen their national affairs, and they will surely be in a position to remove the barriers between themselves and the workingmen of other parts the world.' During the period between 1848 and 1876, there were many twists and turns of the European history. All said and done, the main feature of this complicated process appeared in various instances of consolidation of capitalist power, in some countries even by forging alliance with feudal elements, against the forces of toilers' revolt having the perspective of moving to the goal of socialism. Marx died in 1883. Six years later the Second International opened in Paris in July 1889. Bringing together 391 delegates from 20 countries, it was still then the largest international gathering in the world labour history. Almost as a parallel event, there was another international labour conference in Paris at the same time.

This was a gathering of those trade unionists and legal Marxists who believed in achieving socialism through some alteration of the bourgeois legal framework. Any coalescence of such forces was opposed by Engels, even though there were proposals for such a merger in both the conferences. In any case, the merger was effected in 1891 at the Brussels conference.



Following the historical twists and turns we have already mentioned, the growth of capitalism resulted in increasing number of wage labourers in more and more countries of Europe. Similar trends were seen in North America and later by the end of the century in Japan. Correlatively, a big expansion of the trade union movement occurred throughout the capitalist countries. Moreover, in the more advanced capitalist countries, especially in Britain, the rise in productivity and also the gains appropriated from imperialist exploitation prompted a new kind of manoeuvre among the bourgeoisie to differentiate a part of the workers from the rest of the proletariat through payment of higher wages and some other concession. Reflecting on this tendency, Engels wrote in a letter of 7th October, 1858 to Marx, ‘.....the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois.....For a nation which exploits the whole world, this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.

’The Communist Manifesto declared the path of realising its aim by a forcible overthrow of the whole obsolete social order. Armed struggle may not be a necessary element of forcible overthrow. Marx held the view that in countries like Britain and Holland where the working people constituted the majority of the population and capitalist transformation was associated with the inception of democracy, the attainment of universal adult franchise might provide a sufficient measure for having political power to achieve socialism. In the Principles of Communism, Engels commented that the abolition of private property by peaceful methods is extremely desirable. Communists always avoid conspiratorial methods. However, if the oppressed proletariat is goaded into a revolution, communists will immediately rush to their support. In his preface to the 1895 edition of Marx’s Class Struggles in France, Engels remarked that the new techniques of military operations put up larger obstacles to the ways of barricade fighting in the traditional manner of people’s revolutionary action.

This was a note of caution against adventurist actions, and not an advice to abjure armed insurgency in all circumstances. But in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Engels’ formulation was time and again used by a section of the leadership in support of gradual, peaceful, and parliamentary tactics for achieving socialist objectives. Eduard

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Bernstein (1850-1932) was a leading proponent of peaceful methods. He rejected the classical Marxist position regarding armed revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Also, Bernstein disagreed with the classical Marxist views on industrial concentration, inevitability of economic crises and increasing working class misery. He was inclined to upholding the cause of socialism on ethical grounds.

As a social democratic member of the Reichstag, he voted against war credits during the First world war and called for peace settlement. Another important leader of the German Social Democratic Party and a leading figure of the Second International was Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), whose understanding of historical materialism was cast along the lines of a natural evolutionary scheme of things analogous to Darwin's theory of biological evolution and natural selection. Accordingly, he believed that capitalism would collapse for its own inability to make efficient use of the growing productive forces. The rationale and feasibility of a proletarian revolution was therefore ruled out, since by its decrees and violence no dictatorship of the proletariat could prevail over the objective economic laws. Bernstein and Kautsky, though having differences among themselves, were branded as 'revisionists', implying their alleged departure from classical Marxist position of class struggle and revolution.

Kautsky viewed the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia as an event not in keeping with classical Marxism. This was connected with the antecedent circumstances of insufficient capitalist development in Russia. Kautsky raised the point emphasised by historical materialism as regards the maturing of economic conditions sufficient for the collapse of a mode of production ('No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed.'). Vladimir Ilych Lenin (1870-1924), on his part, had analysed the development of capitalism in Russia in a well-documented analysis (*Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1899). He did not deny its backwardness. Indeed, the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie was among the factors eventually obliging the Bolshevik seizure of state power.

Expressed in simple words, though perhaps a little bizarre, the bourgeoisie appeared to be incapable of defending their own position against Tsarist autocracy, thereby making it incumbent on the leadership of the proletariat to thrust for socialist command of the state. As Lenin observed, 'It has been Russia's lot very plainly to witness, and most keenly and painfully to experience one of the abruptest of abrupt twists of history as it turns from imperialism towards the Communist revolution. In the space of a few days we destroyed one of the oldest, most powerful, barbarous and brutal monarchies. In the space of a few months we passed through a number of stages, stages of compromise with the bourgeoisie and stages of shaking off petty-bourgeois illusions, for which other countries have required decades.' (V.I. Lenin, Selected Works Vol. II, Moscow, 1947, p.308). Lenin mentions Russian imperialism in the foregoing excerpt. A very important feature of capitalism was analysed by Lenin in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916). In the first volume of *Capital* Marx indicated the inevitable direction of competitive capitalism towards more and more centralisation of capital and emergence of monopolies.

This was the process which, Marx argued, would swell the masses of the proletariat and bring about the doom of capitalism. Such a classical Marxist position was extended by Lenin to the discovery of links between monopoly capitalism and imperialism bent on international division and domination of the world. The subordinate territories are the targets for export of capital to make use of cheap labour and raw materials. The first world war was an imperialist war of such aspirations and conflicts. Indeed, Tsarist Russia and its not so developed capitalism was the weakest link in this imperialist nexus. Lenin cited this factor as one of the reasons for hastening the course of Russian revolution in 1917 to the socialist supersession of capitalism. It was likely to contribute to the international collapse of capitalism in the face of a world revolution.

Kautsky's analysis of imperialism was different. He argues that the imperialist era is free from conflicts between the advanced capitalist countries. There would be conflict only between the advanced and the underdeveloped countries of the world. The process of exploitation of the underdeveloped countries was not necessarily through capital exports

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from the imperial rich to the colonial poor and surplus appropriation in an economic context of cheaper labour and raw materials. It could happen as well through the terms of exchange between the commodities of the more or less capital intensive production. Indeed, after the Second World War, the components of Kautsky's analysis have in a way influenced the formulations of the dependency theory focusing on the imperialist domination over backward countries and that in ahistorical context where the United States stood supreme among the capitalist nations of the world.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the final decade of the last century, the scope of such supremacy has been even more strengthened and, at any rate, there are no historical laws either in classical Marxism or its later development to obstruct the co-existence of profits from both production and circulation on an international scale. Marx and Engels stressed the need for organising a political party without which 'the working class cannot act as a class'. During the years of the Communist League and the First International they were mostly engaged in the presentation and clarification of the Marxist perspective of history, class struggle and abolition of capitalism.

The Second International had the experience of national Social Democratic Parties coming to operate in the different capitalist countries of Europe. Before entering into some details of the principles in question concerning the period of the Second International, it should be noted that the Paris Commune, however short-lived, was a major event happening during the phase of the First International. In its measures of decentred, democratic treatment, the Paris Commune was estimated by Marx as setting a sound example of the ways and means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There lies the question of mediation by the party of the proletariat both in its leading the revolution to victory and then in its revolutionary governance.

Despite their many critical differences, Lenin and Kautsky agreed on the point that political consciousness had to be brought to the proletariat from outside. It would not mechanically follow from their economic hardship and struggle, which was limited to the scope of trade union

consciousness. Earlier, in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels referred to the role of bourgeois ideologists who had achieved a theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole. They would have the role of endowing the working class with revolutionary consciousness. No doubt such a process of building up consciousness adds to the complication of mediation and of the kind of party which could fulfil the commitment.

Considering the condition of illegality and autocracy then prevailing in several countries of Europe, especially in Russia, Lenin thought it proper to build a narrow, hierarchically organised party of professional revolutionaries (*What is to be done?*, 1902). After the Russian Revolution of 1905, he favoured broadening the organisation into an amass party, but with strict provisions for democratic centralism. The division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in Russia started on the issue of centralism. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) did not support centralism. Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) of the German Social Democratic Party was against Lenin's idea of tightly centralised vanguard party. She strove to uphold the workers' own initiative and self-activity and had immense faith in the capacity of the working class to learn from its own experience.

The experience of the communist movement all over the world through the twentieth century, of its triumphs and failures, of Lenin's own apprehensions at his death bed about bureaucratic excesses within the party, and finally of the collapse of Soviet Communism in the last decade of the last century, cannot but raise questions regarding the appropriate principles of organisation for the party of the proletariat. It should be relevant to note that the historical role attributed by classical Marxism to the proletariat 'was assigned by an invisible intelligentsia, by an intelligentsia that never made an appearance in its own theory, and whose existence and nature are therefore, never systematically, known even to itself.' (*The Two Marxisms*, in Alvin Gouldner, *For Sociology*, Pelican Books, 1975, p.419.) Classical Marxism conceived of capitalism as a world system with all its nexuses of trade, capital exports and imperialist domination. In real history, the conquest of capital, its universal role, results in a differential impact on pre-capitalist structures.

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The differences are manifesting many types of amalgam of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. Such formations make room for capitalist surplus extraction, even though the former productive systems and power institutions remain largely unchanged. In those circumstance, classical Marxist position regarding the sequence of stages has to reckon with newer possibilities of historical transition. It is no longer enough to move from feudalism to capitalism. Indeed, no such movement can have much meaning in terms of progress when capitalism and pre-capitalism are historically interlocked in their modes of exploitation and power.

Marx and Engels did not lack in their clarification of historical conjunctures characterised by a compounding of the old and the new in the emergent complexes of exploitation and power. This situation has appeared time and again in the countries outside Western Europe and North America. It may well happen that the course of bourgeois democratic revolution cannot be pushed ahead by a weak and timid bourgeoisie. The task then falls to the proletariat and they have to proceed immediately from abolition of the feudal order to a struggle aimed at eliminating the bourgeoisie. Such a revolutionary reality was named as 'permanent revolution' and the idea was presented by Trotsky. The expression was first used by Marx and Engels in their Address of the General Council to the Communist League in 1850. We have not yet given any clue to what happened to the expected solidarity of the international(universal?) working class revolution against capitalism.

After 1917 this vital action parameter of Marx's theoretical scheme of history has never articulated in any historical change of decisive significance for transition to socialism. The Bolshevik leaders believed that the October revolution in Russia would open an era of international proletarian revolution. Defeated in the world war of four years duration, crisis-torn Germany was expected to be the first among the advanced capitalist countries to go for its socialist revolution. The facts of history were different. Bolshevik Russia had to bear the burden of building socialism in one country, an agenda which could receive little help from the classical Marxist tradition. The twentieth century witnessed another major socialist transition in china where the peasantry acted as the principal motive force of revolution. Its course of development after the

communist seizure of power presents many questions that have no direct answer in classical Marxist tradition. The instances of Cuba, Chile, and Vietnam are also in the nature of exceptions to the classical Marxist views on the historical perspective of socio political transformation. Significantly, in the last decade of his life, Marx was involved in some critical study of the pre-capitalist village communes in Russia. This was in response to questions put to him by Russian Narodnik leaders like Vera Zasulich, Danielson and others regarding the potential of those communes to act as mass agencies for socialist transformation, even though the country had no maturity in capitalist development and growth of the proletariat.

Marx made it clear that his theoretical position in Capital was valid only for the experience of western Europe, especially that of Britain's capitalist development, and it would be utterly wrong to apply those formulations for understanding situations in a different context. As for the realisation of socialist potential of Russian communes, Marx emphasised the need for abolition of Tsarist monarchy and on the probability of being correlated to socialist revolutions in countries of west Europe. Marx distinguished the two historical tendencies inherent in the communes, viz. the private ownership principle eroding the communes and the collective principle rendering viability to the commune and making it suitable for socialist transformation. Marx elaborated these ideas in three drafts of a letter to VeraZasulich.

During 1880-82, Marx took to studying a large amount of literature on pre-capitalist communal land ownership. It appears that Marx read in them 'an index that modern man was not without an archaic communal component, which includes a democratic and equalitarian formation, in his social being.' (Lawrence Krader, Introduction to The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx, Lawrence Krader (ed.), Amsterdam,1974, p.4).13.6

**Check your progress**

1. Which ideology Marxism created?
2. Who was Karl Marx?

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## 11.3 LETS SUM UP

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As things have turned out, the record of Marxism from its beginning to the end of the twentieth century has been replete with many twists and turns, contradictions even within its own following and subject to numerous interpretations and developments in response to the variations of capitalist strategies from one country to another as well as in different stages of capitalism. Marx had his own awareness about challenges to be faced by his premises and method of historical comprehension. It was manifest in the wide diversity of his analytical subjects ranging from the wonderful reflections on *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), relating to an awful stalemate of bourgeois transition in France, to the ethnological notebooks written in the penultimate years of his life, searching for the characteristics of pre-capitalist Asian villages.

Thus the historiographic implications of classical Marxism are immense. Nothing is arbitrary or dogmatic about the premises of historical materialism. The future of historical changes envisaged by classical Marxism may not have been fully borne out by the subsequent course of events. But the clues to such points of departure can also be found in classical Marxism, its ways of exploring historical experience in all its relations of social, economic and cultural dimensions. An intense sensibility for those manifold dimensions is evident in the major historical writings of Marx and Engles.

Moreover, historical materialism points to the relevance of the parts and the totality of any phenomenon, since a proper understanding of their relationship sets the key of the dialectical method. Indeed, the *Annales* school of France, perhaps the most innovative of the new types of history-writing that emerged through the last century, shows a kind of concern for micro-studies reminding us of the attention for both forms and fragments in Marxist historiography.

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## 11.4 KEYWORDS

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Bourgeoise - Bourgeoisie is a polysemous French term that can mean: a sociologically-defined social class, especially in contemporary times, referring to people with a certain cultural and financial capital

Proletariat - working-class people regarded collectively (often used with reference to Marxism).

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## 11.5 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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Discuss the differences between pre-Marxist socialist thought and Marxism.

2) Write a note on the historical and other ideas of Marx's immediate successors.

3) How did Marx's ideas develop over time? Discuss with examples.

4) What is your evaluation of Marxist theory of history?

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## 11.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Tom Bottomore, et al (ed.), A Dictionary of Marxist Thought (Blackwell Reference, Oxford, 1983) (see entries Karl Marx, Marx, Engels and Contemporary Politics Parties, Rosa Luxemburg, V.I. Lenin, Capital, Leon Trotsky, Karl Kautsky, Historiography, Historical Materialism).

David Riazanov, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1973).

Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. 1. (Oxford University Press, 1978). T.Z.

Lavine, From Socrates to Marx : The Philosophic Quest (Bantam Books, New York/London, 1984, Parts Four and Five).

P.N. Fedoeyev et al, Karl Marx A Biography (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973), Chapter 15. G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought : The Forerunners 1789-1850 (Macmillan, London, 1955). For the writings of Marx and Engels mentioned in the notes vide Early Writings, The Revolutions of 1848, Surveys from Exile, Grundrisse, The First

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International and After (all in the Pelican Marx Library) and Karl Marx, Selected Works Vol. 1, (Moscow, 1946).

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## 11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Hint – 11.2
2. Hint – 11.2

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## **UNIT 12 ANNALES SCHOOL**

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### **STRUCTURE**

12.0 Objective

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Annales School

12.3 Lets Sum Up

12.4 Keywords

12.5 Questions For Review

12.6 Suggested Readings

12.7 Answers To Check Your Progress

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### **12. 0 OBJECTIVE**

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To know about the Annales school of tradition in history.

To know about its impact in historiography.

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### **12.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Since the 1950s French historiography has been dominated by the “Annales” school, a research trend brought into being by the journal of that name. Its main aim was to give history a clearly scientific status through a re-definition of the object of the historian’s interest and the use of objective analytical methods borrowed from the social sciences. The “Annales” school focused on economic and social questions and presented them in quantitative formulations. It denied the role of events in historical processes and rejected the traditional political history. It introduced the concept of total history which combined ecology with economy in order to explain long-term phenomena which shape mankind’s history. Structures and trends were recognized as the main subject of historical research. The *longue durée* category worked out by Fernand Braudel has become the visiting card of the school. The historians who followed the guidelines of the “Annales” school stressed

the importance of interdisciplinary studies, sought inspiration in sociology, economics and geography and repudiated all links with philosophy and literature. Beside Marxism and the American modernization theory, the “Annales” school became one of the three great historiographic schools which explained history by means of socio-economic categories. It turned out to be the most vital of them owing, first and foremost, to its exceptional adaptation capability. This was borne out by the changes introduced in the “Annales” school under the influence of the events of 1968. The younger way. The school’s renewed programme was outlined in three volumes of methodological studies entitled *Faire de l’histoire* which appeared in 1974 and was later named “new history”, in line with the title of the famous book-manifesto of 1978. The main change was the introduction of new research subjects borrowed from structural anthropology, such as carnality, table manners, sex life, rites and myths.

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## 12.2 ANNALES SCHOOL

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The old interest in man’s “objective” condition merged with an analysis of the “subjective” features of human existence, producing as a result a history of material culture and a history of mentalities. The chronological framework of research changed, near-static phenomena replacing evolutions and long-term transformations. Syntheses and the idea of total history were gradually abandoned. In place of the previous unified criteria, diverse explanatory systems began to be applied. According to “new history” almost everything could be a subject of historical research and the methodologies of all social sciences could be used for this purpose. That the new road was the correct one, was soon confirmed by the appearance of several books which were recognized as spectacular scientific achievements, and by the enormous, unprecedented popularity of historical works on the publishing market in France and other countries. The first critical voices questioning the world success of the “Annales” school were raised at the turn of the 1970s.

The two most important texts, those by the Englishman Lawrence Stone and the Italian Carlo Ginzburg, appeared in 1979 and in the following

year were published in a French translation in the prestigious journal “Le Débat”. Both texts referred to the “Annales” school’s conception of the scientific character of history, a question of fundamental significance for the school. According to Lawrence Stone, the socio-economic methods of explaining history, the French model as well as Marxism and American cliometrics, have turned out to be inefficient. History should return to narration, organize the material chronologically, and explanatory models should give way to an analysis of historical changes. In place of the quantitative approach Stone proposed studies on individual cases, and instead of alliances with sociology, economics and demography, he proposed a return to anthropology and psychology. He did not want the historian to be a scientist, a model promoted by the “Annales” school, but a man of letters<sup>4</sup>. Carlo Ginzburg’s text was a kind of manifesto of the nascent Italian microhistory.

Ginzburg questioned the sense of including history in the Galilean model of science, a model typical of the natural sciences which are experimental and cumulative. In his view, historiography should use the opposite “indicatory” paradigm, for historical reality can be decoded only by an analysis of the traces and indications it has left. Contrary to the principles of the repetitive Galilean model, history, in his opinion, is inseparably linked with individualization. Historical knowledge is indirect and hypothetical, it is by its very nature qualitative not quantitative. This kind of knowledge requires the arrangement of facts in narrative sequences and is acquired in the very act of historical creation, the historian’s cognitive strategy remaining fully individualistic.

In France, too, it soon began to be asserted that historiography was in crisis. Suppositions were at first put forward that “New history” did not owe its hegemony to its scientific quality but to a skilful strategy of gaining intellectual and institutional authority in scientific institutes, at universities, in publishing houses and the media. The sharpest criticism was launched by François Dosse in his book *L’Histoire en miettes* published in 1987. In his opinion “New history” betrayed the ideals of the “Annales” school, and the direction it mapped out did not correspond to the challenges of contemporary times. It was a mistake to reject the idea of total history for this led to the fragmentation of historical research

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(to the history in crumbs as the title says). Having been divided into many specialistic sections closely linked with the social sciences, with their methods and subjects, historiography has lost its identity. Dosse expected that researchers who clung to the globalizing approach would renew the historical science, provided they rejected the annalistic concept of immovable time.

In his view, history annihilates itself by becoming ethnology for it undercuts its own foundations: duration and changes in it. In Dosse's opinion significance should be restored to what the "Annales" school had rejected since its foundation, namely, to the historical event. Dosse did not, of course, mean a return to 19th century scientific standards. He thought that "significant" events linked with the structures which made them possible would become the subject of historical research. He also drew attention to the necessity of preserving the causality of events in order to avoid descriptions of isolated cases and theories detached from reality. Slightly different measures aimed at overcoming the crisis in the social sciences, including history, were proposed by Marcel Gauchet in "Le Débat" in 1988.

In his opinion attention should be focused on the individual and not on social groups as the "Annales" school advised. This proposal was in keeping with the new trends present in French sociology in the 1980s, trends which were developing under the influence of Pierre Bourdieu. Gauchet also asserted that it was necessary to return to research into politics for this was the most general level of the organization of societies. Another study which had a strong impact in France was the book *Demystifying Mentalities* by Geoffrey Lloyd, a British historian specializing in ancient times. The book was published in 1990 and three years later was translated into French under the significant title *Pour en finir avec les mentalités*. With great erudition the author undermined the sense and usefulness of the concept of mentality. He pointed out that to ascribe ways of thinking to groups was an excessive generalization for it is individuals who think, not social groups. Moreover, in Lloyd's opinion scholars engaged in research on mentality concentrated on permanent structural phenomena and ignored changes in these structures, a question which was of fundamental importance from the historical point of view.

Lloyd also stressed that historians defined mentality too freely; the result was that it was impossible to make a reliable comparison of the results of their research. Lloyd's matter-of-fact criticism won acclaim but, as Roger Chartier pointed out in a review published in "Le Monde", it was rather pointless, for French historiography had not worked out such a clear and full idea of the concept of mentality as the British researcher thought it had.

From the 1980s on, the globalization of the social and humanistic sciences, including history, progressed ever more rapidly. Even French historians began to pay attention to what was happening in other countries. The "Annales" school was faced with a challenge from the Italian microstoria, the German Alltagsgeschichte and, above all, the American linguistic turn, which gave birth to postmodernism in history. Let us point out that a whole series of paradoxes and misunderstandings had a bearing on the relationship between Anglo-American postmodernism and France, "this most modernistic country in the world".

To begin with, the postmodernist theory evolved on the basis of opinions of some respected French intellectuals, such as Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. The problem is that in France they are usually not regarded as representatives of a common, coherent trend. As a matter of fact their contribution to the theory of postmodernism is due to a selective adaptation and elaboration of their views by some university circles in the USA.

From the French point of view this means that the Anglo-American postmodernists are inconsistent and use ambiguous criteria; this is why they have been sometimes accused of dilettantism. It may be regarded as a paradox that in its criticism of the "Annales" school postmodernism frequently refers to the authority of Michel Foucault, even though his influence shaped the face of "Annales" in the 1970s. One of Europe's most prominent theoreticians of postmodernist historiography, Franklin Ankersmit, regards classic annalistic studies in the history of mentality, such as *Montaillou, village occitan* by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (Paris

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1975) and *Le Dimanche de Bouvines: 27 juillet 1214* by Georges Du by (Paris 1973) as works typical of postmodernist historiography<sup>14</sup>. From the point of view of postmodernism, the “Annales” school’s idea of history is unauthorized and fundamentally wrong. The conflict stems mainly from the “Annales” school’s aspiration to impart a scientific, or rather scientific, character to history and other social sciences. But postmodernists doubt whether objective knowledge can exist at all, especially in the social sciences. In their view, scientific theories are dependent on the ideology imposed by a system of power.

According to them, science is an element of a regime’s “intellectual economy”; moreover, the cognitive methods of science are in their opinion fallacious for every scientist is socially, ideologically and sexually determined. Consequently, knowledge is constructed socially and the stress put on the objectivity of scientific facts is aimed at masking the scientist’s active role in the selection and grouping of facts. The postmodernist criticism of historiography concerns mainly three questions, namely:

1. The epistemological status of the object of research. On the basis of Jacques Derrida’s linguistic theories and the reflections of Roland Barthes, postmodernism regards it as a certainty that no reality can transcend the discourse in which it is expressed. The historian has therefore no access to past facts, only to texts. What is more, what the historian regards as a reconstruction of the past is the text constructed by him.
2. Historiography is therefore not so much a search for historical truth as a way in which the historian creates a convincing discourse which is in keeping with the standards adopted by his milieu. The quasi-empirical methodology. Following in the footsteps of social sciences (especially economics and sociology), the historiography promoted by the “Annales” school assumed that the use of the same research questionnaire and the same methods in the examination of various segments of the past would lay the foundations for reliable comparisons and ensure a cumulative growth of our knowledge (as in the natural sciences).



Special value was therefore attached to “objective” data, especially to figures. Postmodernism denied their cognitive value and called into question scientist methodology, proposing hermeneutics as the basic instrument for working on a text.

3. The status of historical writing. The undermining of historiography’s claim on reconstruction of the past and of the scientific methods used by it made it necessary to think over the role of historical works. Postmodernism denied that there was opposition between history and literature, between fact and fiction. It inscribed on its banners the theory of Hayden White, according to whom historical writing is a literary artefact. The historian fictionalizes events, presenting them as a story of an artistic rather than a scientific character. The only difference between his work and literary work is that the historian “discovers” stories while a man of letters “invents” them. The stress laid on the rhetorical character of historical writing, backed by analyses of its poetics, dealt a blow to the “Annales” school’s conviction that it was possible to employ a fully formalized, narration-free scientific discourse in historiography. French historiography had to answer the challenge of postmodernism if it was to retain its world importance. It did this rather unwillingly, if only because of the above-mentioned intellectual misunderstandings between the two coasts of the Atlantic. The American adherents of postmodernism aroused little interest in France. For instance, Hayden White’s views were practically unknown in France until the end of the 1980s, none of his texts having been translated into French. The name “postmodernism” is practically never used in France in reference to history, the rather imprecise term “linguistic turn” being employed. This does not mean that French historiography has not come across problems raised by postmodernism. But the discussion on these problems has never been so heated in France as in America and Britain. The criticism to which the “Annales” school was subjected at the end of the 1980s showed that the dominance of the journal had become not only irritating but also groundless, for the explosion of French historiography in the 1970s blew it up from the inside.

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The aspirations to a synthesis turned out to be illusions doomed to failure, the scientist claims were undermined by the return of subjectivism which placed history and literature on the same footing, and the concept of total history supported by other social sciences put its identity in crisis. Many historians began therefore to call for a critical self-reflection. “Annales”, whose strength lay in its susceptibility to new trends, took up the challenge, even though the journal had long before renounced any claim to leadership and even asserted that there was no such thing as an “Annales” school, though there were many successive paradigms.

A new language and a new approach to the problems of history could be noticed in the first issue of “Annales” of 1988, an issue dedicated to the question of historical modelling. A short preface by Bernard Le Petit, secretary of the editorial board, drew attention to the growing dissatisfaction with the use of quantitative methods in historiography, it noticed a return to narration and hermeneutics and approved criticism of descriptive statistics, contrasting it with simulation by means of hypothetical models, which made it possible to throw a bridge between theoretical language and empirical data.

The decisive step was taken in a short editorial entitled *Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique?*, published in the next issue of the journal. “A time of uncertainty seems to have come”, admitted the editorial board in its diagnosis of changes in the scientific landscape. In the editors’ opinion, the great paradigms, such as Marxism and structuralism, had lost their importance and the dispersal of research trends had made it impossible to produce an agreed interpretation of reality in the social sciences. The crisis had, to some extent, also affected history, which had lost its way in a disorderly multiplication of the subjects of its research. Therefore “Annales” set itself the task of defining a few landmarks for a meticulous but innovatory historical research in this new scientific reality. It opened its columns to reflections and discussions, pointing out at the same time which problems should be discussed.

The journal mentioned first and foremost methodological questions, such as the scale of analyses. Referring to the experiences of microhistory, the editorial board of “Annales” stated that there was an interdependence

between the dimension of the researched object, the way of observing it and the research questionnaire used. It also asked whether generalizations and comparisons were possible when objects of various dimensions were observed, from individuals to society, from a local community to global phenomena. According to “Annales”, historical writing was another important methodological question. Admitting that some rhetorical conventions were applied in both the literary and the quantitative variant of history, the editorial board wondered whether nonclassic forms of argumentation, especially narrative ones, should be admitted. How can one control and verify their use so that they should retain a scientific character? The editorial also raised the question of history’s scientific alliances. It pointed out that it was necessary to take a new look at the history of art and the history of science and that there were new territories for expansion: retrospective econometrics, literary criticism, sociolinguistics and political philosophy. But the editorial board also wanted to make the understanding of the concept of interdisciplinary studies a subject for historians’ reflection. In their summing up the editors expressed the conviction that they were participating not so much in a crisis of historiography as in its still uncrystallized transformation which they called “a critical turn”.

Having started a discussion, the journal presented its results in its sixth issue of 1989. The texts by various authors were preceded by a preface signed “Annales” and entitled *Tentons l'expérience*. In the preface the editorial board stated clearly that its aim was neither ossification nor a scattering of efforts, that it had no ambition to establish a school or become a letter box. It wanted the journal to be an area open to experiments where new research questionnaires and new workshop methods would clash and crystallize, laying the foundations for a renewal of history’s dialogue with the social sciences. The editorial board wanted above all to solve the question of the specific character of history.

What was it that made history different from economics, anthropology and sociology in their past-investigating variants? The “Annales” school’s concentration on long-term, nearly static, phenomena deprived

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history of what was specific to it: reflection on the mechanism of changes in time. In its manifesto the editorial board rather distanced itself from that approach. Of course, this did not mean a return to linear, positivist, cause-and-effect history in a chronicler's style. The reason for this new approach should rather be sought in the countless shifts in forms, structures and functioning. Such changes are of a purely historical character, that is, they are irreversible, unpredictable and predetermined.

Societies are in a constant process of self-construction and it is in this process that one should look for the ways of breaking both with a banal description of events (a sin of positivist history) and a tautological analysis through the prism of predefined categories (a trait of the "Annales" school). The authors of the manifesto then criticized thoughtless historical quantification which reifies research categories and attributes excessive significance to some phenomena only because they are countable. They also opposed the treatment of culture as a phenomenon secondary to the socio-economic background.

According to the authors, the way historians understand society should be re-evaluated. One should not forget that society is a collection of individuals and not a unit that can only be examined from the point of view of its function and structure. The up-to-date currents in social sciences have laid stress on strategies, negotiations and social play but this is still something alien to historians. It is the internal dynamism of societies that should become the proper subject for historical research. Of fundamental importance was the editors' remark that the development of history as a science does not consist in our learning more about past events. On the one hand the historical process is reflected in many existential, individual, irreducible experiences, on the other hand, historiography is only a commentary on the past, a proposal of how to understand it.

But they were against opposing the microhistorically approach to the macro historical one for they are complementary — a different scale of analysis reveals different conditions. The fact that an explanatory measure tried out on one echelon of the scale is not confirmed on another is not an obstacle, according to the authors. They were in favour of

establishing complex historical models, for the diversity of the real world cannot be described by reducing it to a few hypothetical simple principles. The editors also returned to the re-definition of interdisciplinarity in historical research. They stressed they had no intention of breaking with tradition, which had shaped the journal's image for 60 years, contributing to its worldwide success. But they pointed out that the outburst of history, caused, to a great extent, by the adoption of the methods of other social sciences, was fraught with grave dangers. First with a boundless multiplication of individual research paths. The methodology of every historian, in particular his way of throwing a bridge in his research between various disciplines of science, becomes his private affair, his own personal experience.

This leads to an increase in the number of studies which are in no way comparable and whose contribution to the development of history is therefore doubtful. Another danger is that this situation is regarded as normal: the mere circulation of concepts and methods is thought to be sufficient for the development of historiography. While not negating the need for interdisciplinary research, the editorial board of "Annales" came out in favour of retaining the specific character of each social science, for the diversification of the methods and measures used by them encourages comparisons and shows that every scientific analysis of society is hypothetical and experimental. On the other hand, the interdisciplinary approach is purposeful only if there are marked differences between the individual sciences. It then expands scientific perspective and leads to the adoption of a critical attitude to the way in which reality is described by a given scientific discipline. The sixth issue (1989) of "Annales", preceded by this introduction, contained texts on diverse matters. On the whole they complied with the general principles governing the new organization of the journal but testified to a far-reaching individualization of research paths.

For instance, the issue included a reflection on biographical research, penned by Giovanni Levi, one of the most prominent Italian microhistorians, as well as a proposal by the economist Robert Boyer that historians should adopt some methods of modern economics. Gérard Noiriel discussed the links between history and sociology. He

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stressed that knowledge of society should not be confined to countable categories but pointed out that sociology could be useful for history in other ways. His first proposal was sociology of historical cognition, that is the adaptation of scientific methods in research on the influence which the historians' social conditions exert on the historical knowledge created by them.

This would mean an alliance with the sociology of science which had been made famous by Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions. The second proposal concerned the use of the "subjectivist paradigm" in historical research. According to the author, this means that an historical analysis should be applied to all questions which cannot be examined by a quantitative analysis, for instance to unique experiences of individuals. This approach would make it possible to examine such questions as interiorization, an extremely important question for verifying Norbert Elias's model. The subjectivist paradigm made it possible to undertake a profound reflection on the dynamism of societies and the cumulative aspect of human history, for mankind's history is not only a history of technology and economy but also a history of emotional behaviour and of emotional ties between people.

However, the most representative of the "critical turn" were three studies written by Jean-Yves Grenier and Bernard Lepetit, Alain Boureau, and Roger Chartier. The first study, signed by two most active organizers of the "critical turn", sought inspiration in the origins of French economic history, in the early works of Camille-Emest Labrousse. Grenier and Lepetit argued that Labrousse, accused of "flat positivism", had derived his methodology from principles which were opposed to positivism and that a return to these principles might exert an inspiring influence on research into socio-economic history.

Alain Boureau tried to restrain the concept of mentality, which was harshly criticized by the opponents of the "Annales" school. In his view the concept should be used only with reference to collective categories on the basis of regularities observed in the elementary units of a discourse, such as verbal, iconic or ritual expressions. Of all the texts

included in this issue of “Annales” it was Roger Chartier’s study *Le Monde comme représentation* that had the greatest repercussions. Chartier presented his own vision of historical research which would reconstruct old societies through the prism of their own representations. In his opinion it was impossible to qualify cultural motives, objects and practices in sociological categories for their distribution and application did not necessarily correspond to an “objective” social division. Cultural differences were a result of dynamic processes and this, in his view, rehabilitated the role of the individual, his choices and actions in historiography.

In a way this text attempted to throw a bridge between the historiographic tradition of the “Annales” school and the American new history of culture with which the author had collaborated for some time. The theoretical discussion continued in the successive issues of the journal. The next issue brought an article by André Burguière *Delà compréhension en histoire*. The author glorified the achievements of the “Annales” school and argued that it was still an inspiring and up-to-date current. At the same time the journal explored new methodological proposals. N° 3 of 1990 published an article by Daniel S. Milo on experimental history (see below) and the next yearbook included a theoretical text by Jacques Guilhaumou who summed up research on the history of discourse, a research which though very popular with historians of the Revolution, was treated with reservation by “Annales”.

It was probably the article *Des catégories aux liens individuels: l’analyse de l’espace social* by Maurizio Grubaud and Alain Blum that came closest to the principles of the critical turn. On the basis of their research into 19th century records of registry offices, the authors took a critical look at strict divisions into statistical groups. They showed that it was possible to create a model for a quantitative analysis by considering microsocial determinant mechanisms, that is, to base research on individual life courses really followed by people instead of referring to a hypothetical solidarity and group movements.

The editors of “Annales” once again frankly expressed their opinion of the critical turn in the text *L’Expérimentation contre l’arbitraire* signed

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by Bernard Lepetit and Jacques Revel. This was the editorial board's reply to the sharp criticism of changes in the journal, levelled by a Russian medievalist, Yuri Bessmertny, who regarded them as a betrayal of annalistic ideals and a promotion of relativism in scientific history. The editors tried to explain that, although they considered an historical study only as an interpretative model, this did not mean that strict procedures for the verification of the material and the coherence of its hypotheses did not exist. They stressed once again that the idea of total history should be abandoned and declared that they did not regard the microhistorically approach as more correct.

But in our times it was, in their view, the most effective in deepening our historical knowledge. The transformations in "Annales" were sealed by the change of the journal's subtitle from No. 1 of 1994. The traditional "Economies Sociétés Civilisations" was replaced by "Histoire Sciences Sociales". What is significant is that the name "history" finally appeared in the subtitle of the most important historical journal of the 20th century. The editors explained that the change was necessary to maintain the identity of scientific history and its basic research methods. They wanted to emphasize the diachronic sense of history and the journal's ambition to examine historicity in its inner differentiation. Let us add that changes were introduced in the organization of the editorial board. Bernard Lepetit joined the publishing committee and his post of secretary of the editorial board was taken by Jean-Yves Grenier. To sum up, the critical turn made by "Annales" consisted primarily in overcoming the model of social history which had for decades been associated with the journal and in freeing the school from the history of mentality, elaborated in the 1970s.

This was reflected in the criticism of quantitative methods and in a departure from the concept of *longue durée*. But although "Annales" rejected the objectivist techniques borrowed from the social sciences, declaring them ineffective, this did not mean that it accepted the "rhetorical history" model promoted by postmodernists, a model based on narrative techniques and asserting that historical cognition was relative. The positive programme of the critical turn, though still rather diffuse, proclaimed the severance of ties with Marxism, functionalism



and structuralism. The school planned to turn towards social constructivism and attach more significance to human actions. It declared that social realities should be analyzed as historical constructions of individual and collective actors, not as natural, fixed constructions, drawing attention to links with other social sciences, especially with ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, the theory of action and Clifford Geertz's anthropology.

But some critics pointed out that the methodological changes brought about in "Annales" by the critical turn resulted from the immediate needs of the milieu rather than from the inner logic of the school's evolution. Christian Delacroix, who depicted the history of the critical turn as early as 1995, pointed out that at first the turn looked rather like an "ad hoc modification" forced through by the identity crisis of the group linked with the journal. The undermining of the leading role of "Annales" in French historiography coincided with the breakdown of the scientific paradigm used by the school.

The "Annales" milieu did not want to admit failure and tried to continue to use its paradigm in a polemic version, which laid stress on loyalty to the group and condemned betrayal. The editors applied the method of an "escape forwards", declaring that they were the vanguard of changes in French historiography

But "Annales" did not enter into discussion with the most vehement critics of the school, such as François Dosse and Lawrence Stone, and rejected proposals for a return to narrative, event- fraught or political history. After a short period of philosophical discussion on complex epistemological questions, the proponents of the critical turn adopted a realistic, pragmatic attitude, concentrating on inscribing history in the latest trends in social sciences as "an empirical, interpretative science" The critical turn was also sharply criticized by Gérard Noiriel and Antoine Prost for the use of scientific parlance which frequently covered up emptiness and for the construction of learned arguments which could be attractive for some historians but were completely devoid of social significance.

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The top achievement of the critical turn was the collection of studies entitled *Les formes de l'expérience*. Une autre histoire sociale published in 1995 under Bernard Lepetit's editorship. In an extensive introduction the editor presented his own vision of the development of French historiography in the 1990s. In his view one of its fundamental ideas was the rejection of unified methods in social sciences, a rejection which was supported by the new interdisciplinary plan promoted for the last few years in "Annales". Another principle was the profound understanding of historical explanations which should be reduced neither to a reconstruction of reality nor to a linguistic construction.

The aim was, of course, knowledge of the past, which could be achieved by testing explanatory models. Thus historical explanation would at the same time be a discourse and a research technique, a narration and a use of critical procedures. Historical science should therefore abandon the mechanical use of theoretical schemes and pay more attention to the identity of researched objects and really existing social links. Lepetit called this approach a pragmatic paradigm. The volume included studies which differed from the chronological and methodological points of view but, in the editor's opinion, they formed the nucleus of a new unity of historical research, consisting in the deepening of empirical and theoretical research, in the introduction of questions concerning social ties, norms and individual experiences, and also in the use of the short-term category combined with other chronological structures worked out by historiography. The authors of the studies included in the volume, though they realized that scientific objectivity may distort the picture of the researched reality, did not become relativists and looked for a remedy against relativism in their methodological experience.

The studies in the volume cannot however be regarded as an implementation of some concrete scientific paradigm. It seems that the authors simply continued the research that interested them formerly and that the main reason why they contributed their studies was that they wanted to participate. Thus Alain Boureau in his study on the genesis of the *ius primae noctis* referred to Chartier's concept of representation, Jacques Revel presented the prospects of a microhistorical analysis of institutions, and Jean-Yves Grenier deconstructed the concept of

empirical series in order to deepen statistical methods in research into economic history.

The volume also included articles by Jocelyne Dakhli, Éric Brian, Alain Dewerpe, Simona Cerutti, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Nancy L. Green, Maurizio Gribaudi and André Burguière. What united all these texts was that the authors did not assign any logical rules to the evolution of the social processes described by them. They presented them as discontinuous, kaleidoscopic, undefined, multidirectional processes. Maurizio Gribaudi went farthest in this respect. The pattern of the determinants of social stratification which he presented on the basis of a meticulous research into the 19th century records of French registry offices was close to the theory of chaos.

Had they continued their team work, the supporters of the critical turn might have worked out a joint research formula, but the development of their current was halted in 1995 by the sudden death of Bernard Lepetit who played a key role in that milieu. The editorial board of “Annales” began to distance itself gradually from the achievements of its former secretary. In 1998 the journal published a critical review of *Les Formes d’expérience*, written by the English historian Gareth Stedman Jones who blamed the authors of the texts in the volume for presenting an incomplete methodological vision and for ignoring questions which were important for Anglo-American postmodernist historiography, such as the significance of discourse and textual analysis of history. He also pointed out that references to interactionist sociology were pointless for interactionist sociology could be used only in descriptions of Western societies.

The editorial board of “Annales” only brought itself to explain that *Les Formes d’expérience* did not constitute the creed of the journal’s new intellectual line and was not even a book of “Annales” but a collection of studies written in the aftermath of a CNRS colloquium. It also pointed out that contrary to the reviewer’s assumption “Annales” had not fully rejected economic determinism. Yet in N° 3/1997 of “Annales” Jacques Le Goff, presenting selected studies on laughter, stated that this subject, even though it belonged to the category of long-term structures and

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global history, could also inspire researchers associated with the critical turn. However, the first issue of “Annales” in the new millennium without any excuse reverted to explaining history on a global scale and contained such essays as e.g. the one on Braudelian regions in China.

As early as 1999, Antoine de B a e c q u e , a historian specializing in the 18th century and editor of “Cahiers du cinéma”, asked in an article published in “Le Débat”: Où est passé le “tournant critique”? He emphasized that his generation which began adult scientific life at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s believed that the “critical tu rn ” would bring new ways of understanding history and would open French science to world influences and bold interpretative hypotheses.

After Bernard Lepetit’s death the older generation of historians succeeded in stifling the innovatory spirit and marginalizing the idea of the critical turn. Its rejection meant a withdrawal from reflection on discourse and representations in the name of a hypothetical “social reality”, it was tantamount to depriving the researched societies of their right to autonomous reflection, tantamount to binding history with an epistemological concept which was reductionist and reactionary. It was also a nostalgic attempt to return to the world hegemony of “Annales”, an attempt that was doomed to failure.

The volume of Bernard L e p e t i t’s diverse studies published by his friends posthumously in 1999 under the title *Carnet de croquis* can therefore be regarded as a monument to, and also a tombstone of, the critical turn.

What else has remained of this current? The only source book written by its leader, *Les Villes dans la France moderne, 1740-1840* (Paris 1988), several books in which his closest collaborators developed their own research plans which in a way were part of the critical current and several works by authors who declared their access to the movement, though their methodology was not quite convergent with that of the movement. The EHESS milieu continues to work on ideas inspired by the critical turn but these studies are rather a margin of its work and they depart more and more from history, while researchers interested in a

more profound methodological reflection pin their hopes on the proposal for a history of culture which is in opposition to the “Annales” milieu.

The experimental history current was linked with the critical turn by social and intellectual ties but it worked out its own methodology and ideology which many researchers regarded as a symptom of decadence. From the end of the 1980s the members of the “Annales” circle spoke ever more frequently about restoring the experimental dimension to history. Jean-Yves Grenier and Bernard Le petit searched it in the early works of Camille-Ernest Labrousse, creator of French quantitative history, and Jacques Revel looked for it in Italian microhistory. It may seem preposterous to regard history as an experimental science for it is impossible to carry out experiments on the past. However, the “Annales” school was based on the assumption that the past is not directly accessible to the historian.

Passive observation is fruitless in this case. A historian not only defines his research problems but also constructs the objects of his research, chooses the way of reaching them, selects and elaborates devices and finds sources which correspond to his questionnaire. Therefore in history experimentation does not consist in manipulating the past but in manipulating the instruments which make it possible to know it. It was a group of researchers rallied round Daniel S. Milo and Alain B o u r e a u that went farthest in reflection on the experimental dimension of history. They found an ally in Bernard Lepetit who agreed to publish Milo’s manifesto *Pour une histoire expérimentale, ou la gaie histoire* in “Annales”. This was the most radical and also the most interesting plan for renovating history in France in the 1990s.

What is more, the plan was carried out. The following year saw the publication of a volume of studies entitled *Alter histoire. Essais d’histoire expérimentale* (Paris 1991), which included an improved version of the manifesto and essays by several authors who applied its principles in their research. The theoretical principles of experimental history presented by Daniel S. Milo referred to classic 19th century theories applied in the natural sciences, according to which experimentation consists in the use of simple or compound procedures

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aimed at modifying natural phenomena in such a way that they should appear in circumstances or states in which they do not occur in nature. An experiment is therefore in fact a provoked observation and consists in violating the object of research by submitting it to a research procedure.

The following methods are archetypal experimental methods: injection (that is, the adding of an alien element to the object of research), separation (that is, a separation from the object of an element which is part of it), transfer of the object beyond its natural environment, change of scale (taking the object through successive echelons of observation), the combining of objects which do not occur jointly, denomination (presentation of the object in categories not usually applied to it). It seems that in the case of history, the above list of possible experimental procedures can be applied only to “what-would- happen-if” reflections, which are usually groundless from the scientific point of view.

Of course there are exceptions, e.g. Robert Fogel’s work *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History* (Baltimore 1964), a work quoted by Daniel S. Milo, which denies that the development of railways contributed to the economic growth of the United States in the 19th century. But as I have pointed out, the aim was to experiment not with the past but with the methods which make it possible to know it. Instead of submitting to the established patterns of world perception, an experimental historian should find them himself. Referring to the most prominent contemporary French sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron and Jean-Claude Chamboredon, Daniel S. Milo defined experiment in social sciences as “the imagination’s challenge to facts and their representations, both the naive and the learned ones”.

According to him, an experiment involved both the object and the researcher whose role goes far beyond a simple observation of the course of the experiment. Daniel S. Milo mentioned several experimental measures which could be applied in history. As far as approach to sources is concerned, he mentioned: — the analysis of the peripheries of the discourse, that is realization of what the source conveys unconsciously and unintentionally; this is similar to the methods used by

a psychoanalyst in reconstructing a patient's childhood; — the use of non-verbal and immaterial sources, in line with the principle that everything can be decoded, the only thing that is necessary is to ask questions (this is the approach offered by semiotics); — manipulation of sources, the best example of which is provided by quantitative history which transforms sources into unified series of figures.

As regards analysis, it is the comparative method which is experimental. Daniel S. Milo criticized the principle that only comparable things could be compared for their choice by historians was completely arbitrary anyhow. The experimental comparative method did not require the existence of any links or a plane of comparison between the things compared. Its aim was to understand a phenomenon better through the prism of another phenomenon. The criterion of choosing things for comparison was therefore purely pragmatic. Another method which is par excellence experimental is quantification.

A historian's arbitrariness plays a fundamental role at every stage, from the standardization of source data, through structurization and formalization to modelling. Daniel S. Milo came out in favour of quantitative methods even with respect to phenomena regarded as uncountable, for instance high culture. But he emphasized that historians who apply the quantitative approach faced the danger of automation, for a thoughtless use of research patterns killed the experiment by turning the instruments used in it into the subject of research. The drawing of conclusions from the absence of a fact is also regarded by Daniel S. Milo as a useful experimental method. He recalled the fruitful research on the absence of neoclassicism in German art in the last decade of the 18th century, and the absence of eagles in the imperial emblems of the 8th-10th centuries.

Another proposal for experimental studies was a conscious use of anachronism. For instance, it is an anachronism to treat Jerom Bosch's painting as precursory to surrealism.

According to Milo, it would be an interesting experience to rewrite great historiographic works, e.g. Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée*. It would be an equivalent of the repetition of an experiment in the natural

sciences, where this is a standard procedure for validating a conclusion. But since the rewriting of books is not profitable from the scientific point of view, Milo proposed that famous works should be equipped with critical remarks and commentaries. Thus, the methodological plan for experimental history, though it did not discover new research methods, it selected and assembled those that already existed and were used. But it reformed their theoretical grounding, submitting it to the vision of history as an experimental science, and exposed the historians' groundless claims that their methods, especially the quantitative and comparative ones, were objective. Since the choices made by each historian in the course of his work were arbitrary, postmodernism denied that history was a science and put it on the level of literature.

But experimental history seems to be a fully scientific and positive proposal, for can there be a better defence of the scientific status of history than an honest disclosure of its weak points, its departures from scientific objectivity, followed by an explanation of why this happens? Paradoxically, when explaining the grounds for the arbitrary stance of some historians, the plan for experimental history referred to the positivist model of the experimental sciences, showing that a certain, quite large extent of arbitrariness in historical research was compatible with strict scientific procedures. Historians should not therefore be accused of creating literary artefacts.

The plan for experimental history contained not only some methodological solutions but also a no less important deontological, even an ethical reflection, on the historian's role. Daniel S. Milo has repeatedly stressed in his manifesto that an historical experiment should consist not so much in the historian violating the object of his research as in his violating himself. Milo referred to some currents of 20th century avant-garde art which claimed they were of an experimental character.

This of course limits an artist's aesthetic sensitivity. He must therefore apply a whole series of deautomating techniques. The danger of automatism also hangs over the historian. It consists not only in an unconscious use of contemporary categories in his research on the past. For history has created some ideas of the past which the historian



perceives through recognition, e.g. Renaissance, the Franciscan order, the medieval autumn, and the like. The historian should therefore, like an artist, use deautomating techniques.

Milo proposed a classic method which he called *ostranieniye* (from Russian) or defamiliarization. What he means is that it is necessary to restore to a well-known object its strangeness, its oddity. In this way a historian may protect himself from the danger of observing the object through recognition.

This is a method frequently used in literary narration, to mention only Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* or Grass's *Tin Drum*, in which a well-known reality is described by a hypothetically alien hero. In scientific history the creator should apply this method to himself, which undoubtedly requires a well-developed sense of self-consciousness. Defamiliarization is therefore most reminiscent of a game practised by the Polish poet, Miron Białoszewski who tried to see the world through the eyes of the Marsians. Decontextualization offers the researcher a new approach to his object, an approach which is different from the way one usually thinks of this object.

This is why according to Daniel S. Milo experimentation in history is an act of violence against the researcher, his habits and his way of thinking. But the effort which a researcher puts into carrying out his experiment should by no means be of a tragic character. On the contrary, the very title of the manifesto referred to Friedrich Nietzsche and his *gaija scienza*. The practising of experimental history should be unselfish and be a result of the researcher's love of knowledge.

The fact that experimental history is interesting and gives joy to the researcher is enough to regard it as purposeful. Experimental history is by its very nature of a carnival, rather marginal character for it needs the existence of normal (positivist?) history to feed on and play with. This brings the experimental historian close to the archetypal Dadaist, always ready to start a joyful experiment, even in those fields where experimenting is out of the question. Even if the experiment yields no scientific results, the joy the researcher feels will compensate him for the failure. According to Milo, historical experiments can be restrained only

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by an immanent respect for people of the past. Milo emphasizes the ludic aspect of historical experimentation, for every experiment is both a game and an amusement. The spirit of an experimenter is a mixture of scientific precision and relativism for, as J. Huizinga has stated, the concept of game contains the best synthesis of belief and disbelief.

When one plays one can, of course, lose, but a loss also provides some knowledge. This is why a Utopian periodical dedicated to experimental history should have a regular column called false paths (*fausses pistes*). But the volume *Alter histoire* included not only a theoretical part but also a presentation of attempts to use the experimental method. They were made by Daniel S. Milo, Alain Bourreau, Hervé Le Bras, Paul-André Rosental, Aline Rouselle, Christian Jouhaud, Min Soo Kang, Mario Biggioni and Tamara Kondratieva. The first part of the book deals with the pleasure which a historian finds in a good metaphor.

It contains, among other essays, a study by the demographer Hervé Le Bras on the sources of geological metaphors used in descriptions of maps of electoral preferences, and Christian Jouhaud's reflections on the ways in which the links between the anomalies in Cardinal Richelieu's skull and the prerogatives granted him by the king have been explained. The authors of the other studies in this part of the book follow Daniel S. Milo's proposal and equip other historians' works with their own free commentaries. This is what Alain Boureaudoes with Emst H. Kantorowicz's book *The King's Two Bodies* and Paul-André Rosental with the most famous work of the "Annales" school, Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée*.

The second part of the volume is a record of a practical experiment in the defamiliarization method aimed at deautomating the historian. A group of researchers was asked to reflect on one of two sources: a diary of a German Jewess, Glückel von Hammeln (1645-1719) or an early biography of St. Ignatius Loyola. Each of these texts, ignored by French historiography, was completely alien and uncommon to the person who chose to consider it. The results of the experiment varied in quality. Some studies were brilliant, others were very weak. This was, of course,

in keeping with the following principle of experimental history: On s'engage — et on voit et si on ne voit rien, on s'engage ailleurs.

It seems however that the quality of the obtained result depended mainly on the class of the examiner. The idea of experimental history remained a single intellectual attempt because its methodological principles were too radical. But its adherents have enriched the scope of French historiography. The experimental approach exerted the greatest influence on the critical turn. Bernard Lepetit adapted many of its elements in his proposal but he invested them with a greater scientific discipline, thus making them palatable to historians brought up in the scientific tradition of the “Annales” school.

Alain Boureau became one of the most active promoters of the critical turn, though he mainly developed his own research ideas. The scientific work conducted by Hervé Le Bras, Christian Jouhaud and Paul-André Rosental also brought them close to the critical current. In 1999 Rosental published an extensive source work on migration in 19th century France in which he used the technique of change in the observation scale and closely followed the principles of experimental history, but what was missing in his work was the joy of experimentation.

Daniel S. Milo won acclaim by his intriguing study *Trahir le temps* in which he deconstructed our periodization of history by means of experimental models and argued that there was no reason why the use of chronological contexts for *histoemes* [i.e. the smallest, indivisible units of time-space) should be more privileged than other, e.g. metaphorical contexts. Later he set up a one-man *Nouvel Institut d'Ingénierie Ethique* (abbreviated to N.I.E.T, which means “no” in Russian) and made himself known by his erudite but eccentric essays which he published at his own cost in a small number of copies.

The intellectual ferment which engulfed the “Annales” milieu at the beginning of the 1990s is over. Internal discussion within the school seems to have died out. But practical results of the theoretical deliberations held ten years ago may not emerge until a few years later for to be solid, a research inspired by them must take several years. Moreover, the disciples of the reformers of the “Annales” school, for

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whom the critical turn was an integrating generational experience, are only now starting an active scientific life. However, irrespective of how the “Annales” milieu may develop in the future, it should be stressed that its animated theoretical discussion held in the last decade of the 20th century has led to a few important changes in French historiography.

To begin with, the paradigm of the “Annales” school has been decomposed. The version which was the target of the postmodernists’ attacks has been thrown into the dustbin, but it is not yet known if the new annalistic way of practising history has been accepted. Secondly, the “Annales” milieu has finally renounced the claim to be “the only correct” historical school in France. Thirdly, French historiography has opened up to foreign, mainly Anglo-American and Italian, influences, to a lesser extent also to German influence. It is surprising that the transformations introduced by the “Annales” school in the 1990s aroused so little interest in Poland, a country in which this school enjoyed (and still enjoys) great respect and popularity. It would be futile to look for information on this subject in the specialized periodical “Historyka” dedicated to questions concerning methodology and historiography.

But Wrzosek ends his analysis in 1992. In his view, after turning towards “historical anthropology” the “Annales” school is blooming and enjoying world-wide respect and intellectual stability. Wrzosek devotes but two sentences to the critical turn which was then in progress: “It is to the credit of the “Annales” school that it has created non-classic historiography which already lives an independent life, irrespective of whether the school exists or does not exist. The dispute over its existence or non-existence, animated by various anniversaries, seems to be waning”. In a footnote Wrzosek then refers to the fundamental programmatic texts of the critical turn, which were published in “Annales” at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

The only text in which the methodological discussions held in the “Annales” milieu in the 1990s have been examined in Poland is probably the article by the Russian historian, Yuri Bessmertny, published in English in the book commemorating the 70th birthday of Jerzy Topolski. But Bessmertny’s analysis covers only the years 1994-1997 and

the author himself was involved in the disputes held in Paris (see above). It seems therefore that after the long domination of French methodology, a radical shift of interest towards Anglo-Saxon, mainly American, science took place in the theoretical reflections of Polish historians.

French theoretical thought was tacitly adjudged to be uninteresting and fixed once and for all in the *nouvelle histoire* project of the 1970s. This is an alarming phenomenon for it would strengthen Polish historiography if it managed to keep an equal distance from the American and the French school (and also from the German and Italian schools). For each of these schools is conditioned by the specific problems of national culture, by local historiographic tradition and even by current political relations. This is the reason for the frequently paradoxical misunderstandings between them. Polish historians could therefore take advantage of the lack of cultural encumbrances and critically accept what is best in world historiographic schools, playing the role of mediators between them.

**Check your progress –**

1. Name the French historians of Annales school.

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2. Name the German historians of Annales school.

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## **12.3 LETS SUM UP**

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As we have learnt from the foregoing discussion that the Annales School established one of the most important historiographic traditions in the twentieth century. Historians such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel, Georges Duby, Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, Robert Mandrou, Jacques Le Goff, and many others redefined the historical practice time and again by constantly innovating in themes and methods.

History of economic structures, of long-term developments, of mentalities, micro-history and cultural history have all benefited by significant contribution from the historians of this School.

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### **12.4 KEYWORDS**

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Annales school - The Annales school is a group of historians associated with a style of historiography developed by French historians in the 20th century to stress long-term social history

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### **12.5 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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1) Discuss the context which led to the establishment of the Annales School.

2) Who are considered as the founders of this School of historiography? Discuss their works.

3) What are the thematic innovations made by the historians of the Annales School over the years? Discuss with examples

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### **12.6 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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Peter Burke (ed.), *Economy and Society in Early Medieval Europe: Essays for Annales* (London, 1972).

Georg G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography* (Middletown, 1975).

T. Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm* (Ithaca, 1977).

M. Harsgor, 'Total History: The Annales School', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.13, 1978.

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### **12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Hint – 12.2

1. Hint – 12.2

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# UNIT 13 - PARADIGMS

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## STRUCTURE

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Paradigms

13.3 Lets Sum Up

13.4 Keywords

13.5 Questions For Review

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## 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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To learn about the Paradigm shift in historiography

To learn about the definition

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## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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A paradigm shift, a concept identified by the American physicist and philosopher Thomas Kuhn, is a fundamental change in the basic concepts and experimental practices of a scientific discipline. Kuhn presented his notion of a paradigm shift in his influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

Kuhn contrasts paradigm shifts, which characterize a scientific revolution, to the activity of normal science, which he describes as scientific work done within a prevailing framework or paradigm. Paradigm shifts arise when the dominant paradigm under which normal science operates is rendered incompatible with new phenomena, facilitating the adoption of a new theory or paradigm

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## 13.2 PARADIGMS

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Thomas Kuhn, the well-known physicist, philosopher and historian of science, went on to become an important and broad-ranging thinker, and one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century.

Kuhn's 1962 book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, transformed the philosophy of science and changed the way many scientists think about their work. But his influence extended well beyond the academy: The book was widely read — and seeped into popular culture. One measure of his influence is the widespread use of the term "paradigm shift," which he introduced in articulating his views about how science changes over time.

Inspired, in part, by the theories of psychologist Jean Piaget, who saw children's development as a series of discrete stages marked by periods of transition, Kuhn posited two kinds of scientific change: incremental developments in the course of what he called "normal science," and scientific revolutions that punctuate these more stable periods. He suggested that scientific revolutions are not a matter of incremental advance; they involve "paradigm shifts."

Talk of paradigms and paradigm shifts has since become commonplace — not only in science, but also in business, social movements and beyond. In a column at *The Globe and Mail*, Robert Fulford describes paradigm as "a crossover hit: It moved nimbly from science to culture to sports to business."

But what, exactly, is a paradigm shift? Or, for that matter, a paradigm?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary offers the following:

Simple Definition of paradigm:

- : a model or pattern for something that may be copied
- : a theory or a group of ideas about how something should be done, made, or thought about



Accordingly, a paradigm shift is defined as "an important change that happens when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way."

More than 50 years after Kuhn's famous book, these definitions may seem intuitive rather than technical. But do they capture what Kuhn actually had in mind in developing an account of scientific change?

It turns out this question is hard to answer — not because paradigm has an especially technical or obscure definition, but because it has many. In a paper published in 1970, Margaret Masterson presented a careful reading of Kuhn's 1962 book. She identified 21 distinct senses in which Kuhn used the term paradigm. (That's right: 21.) Consider a few examples.

First, a paradigm could refer to a special kind of achievement. Masterson quotes Kuhn, who introduces a paradigm as a textbook or classic example that is "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity," but that is simultaneously "sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve." Writes Kuhn: "Achievements that share these two characteristics I shall henceforth refer to as 'paradigms.' "

But in other parts of the text, paradigms cover more ground. Paradigms can offer general epistemological viewpoints, like the "philosophical paradigm initiated by Descartes," or define a broad sweep of reality, as when "Paradigms determine large areas of experience at the same time."

Given this bounty of related uses, Masterson asks a provocative question:

Is there, philosophically speaking, anything definite or general about the notion of a paradigm which Kuhn is trying to make clear? Or is he just a historian-poet describing different happenings which have occurred in the course of the history of science, and referring to them all by using the same word "paradigm"?

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In the end, Masterson distills Kuhn's 21 senses of paradigm into a more respectable three, and she identifies what she sees as both novel and important aspects of Kuhn's "paradigm view" of science. But for our purposes, Masterson's analysis sheds light on two questions that turn out to be related: what Kuhn meant by paradigm in the first place, and how a single word managed to assume such a broad and expansive set of meanings after being unleashed by Kuhn's book.

Of course, Kuhn can't be blamed single-handedly for the way paradigm — and its shiftier cousin — have propagated in popular culture. What he did do was provide some classic examples of the term that were sufficiently unprecedented to attract adherents away from more mundane alternatives, but sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of possibilities for others to explore. And that, I suppose, is an achievement.

Until the 1950s, the hegemony of logical empiricism reached to its highest level-by the representatives of the logistic approach such as R. B. Braithwaite, Rudolf Carnap, Herbert Feigl, Carl G. Hempel, and Hans Reichenbach. Prior to Kuhn's SSR, historians and philosophers of science considered the scientific enterprise to be a rational endeavour in which progress and knowledge are achieved through the steady, daily, rigorous accumulation of experimental data accredited facts and new discoveries. But SSR served as an unparalleled source of inspiration to philosophers with a historical bent (Salmon, 1990). Kuhn referred to this traditional approach as normal science, and he used the then-obscure word paradigm to refer to the shared ideas and concepts that guide the members of a given scientific field (Goldstein, 2012).

Therefore, it could be said that Kuhn's SSR had been a sort of key document in both producing and preserving a deep division between the logical empiricists and those who adopt the historical approach. After the 1960s and 70s, following Kuhn's historiography, and philosophers such as Paul Feyerabend, Imre Lakatos, Larry Laudan and Michael Polanyi have greatly contributed to the creation of an anti-positivistic philosophy of science as a new tradition. History of science after Kuhn has frequently taken a more consciously externalist line,

in looking outside science for the causes of the content of science (Bird, 2012: 876). Yet the book had more enemies than friends after it was published and even its friends, fellow historicists such as Imre Lakatos and Larry Laudan have almost invariantly tried to change or reformulate Kuhn's view (De Langhe, 2012: 12-13; Firinci Orman, 2016).

When we look at Kuhn's central claim in SSR it is that a careful study of the history of science reveals that development in any scientific field happens via a series of phases. The first he named normal science this phase, a community of researchers who share a common intellectual framework engage in solving puzzles thrown up by discrepancies (anomalies) between what the paradigm predicts and what is revealed by observation or experiment. Most of the time, the anomalies are resolved either by incremental changes to the paradigm or by uncovering the observational or experimental error. And Kuhn suggested major changes come about in scientific fields and conjectures that they probably do not evolve gradually from patient and orderly inquiry by established investigators in the field. Rather, he suggests, revolutions in science come about as the result of breakdowns in intellectual systems, breakdowns that occur when old methods won't solve new problems. He calls the change in theory that underlies this kind of revolution a paradigm shift (Hairstone, 1982).

But Kuhn was never deeply engaged by the wider effects of his claims, the philosophical and historical critiques led him to specify more carefully just what he meant by paradigm and normal science. Even today the term paradigm is very controversial and Kuhn himself revised its meaning and tried to answer his critiques' questions. Yet, the effect of a paradigm term, as a central concept in Kuhn's thought has been very wide and strengthened the anti-positivistic philosophy tradition it belongs.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyze the term paradigm in Kuhn's thought, especially with the stress on its meaning within the sociology of science. To this end, firstly Kuhn's sociological

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perspective of how science develops is tried to be revealed in order to see Kuhn's position among the existing models of scientific development. Eventually, the paradigm term is analyzed stressing on two different senses of paradigm –disciplinary matrix and exemplar. It is also showed why the process of a paradigm shift, for Kuhn, leads to a scientific revolution and the revolutionary stages of such shift are explained.

Finally, Kuhn's argument on incommensurability of competing paradigms and the problem of objectivity are also discussed in order to show the problematic aspects of the concept. Undoubtedly, that it is important to mention that the reaction formation towards Kuhn's thoughts and his historiography immediately came from the scientists, science philosophers, and science historians. However, after the 1990s, the same science philosophers who had heavily criticized Kuhn used Kuhn's thoughts as their gun against the then scientists who they waged a battle with (Serdar, 2001). Moreover, anthropologists seeing the sociologists using Kuhn's terminology of normal science and following this trend have created a discourse that the scientific phenomenon is not completely discovered and that every phenomenon conveys a sociological basis.

Not only anthropology but also economics and political sciences developed their own discourses on paradigms (Güneş, 2003). This trend in social sciences let the post-colonial scientific research to become popular due to the view that culturally western history of science could be revised by giving space to its eastern paradigms (Serdar, 2001: 68). Thus, the importance of the paradigm term with the reference to its wide affect in social sciences makes way for new investigations on its updated meanings by considering its questionable and ambiguous position.

### **2.Scientific Development and Normal Science**

Before Kuhn, our view of science was dominated by philosophical ideas about the scientific method. According to Samian (1994:126), the assumption of the positivists is that a scientific change is necessarily progressive. Additionally, the path of change

iscumulative, objective, nomological and linear. The scientific progress was seen as the addition of new truths to the stock of old truths, or the increasing approximation of theories to the truth, or at least the correction of past errors. In other words, as Naughton (2012) points, we had what amounted to the Whig interpretation of scientific history, in which past researchers, theorists, and experimenters had engaged in a long march, if not towards truth, then at least towards greater and greater understanding of the natural world. While the Whig version refers to the steady, cumulative progress, Kuhn saw discontinuities –a set of alternating normal and revolutionary phases of the developmental periods. These revolutionary phases –for example, the transition from Newtonian mechanics to quantum physics –correspond to great conceptual breakthroughs and lay the basis for a succeeding phase of business as usual. Kuhn based his model on the classic paradigm shifts in physics. He gave examples from the history including the Copernican, Newtonian and Einsteinian revolutions, the development of quantum mechanics, which replaced classical mechanics at the subatomic level, and the accidental discovery of X-rays by Roentgen, one of the great unanticipated anomalies in the history of science.

For example, *The Copernican Revolution, Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought*, to give its complete title, Thomas Kuhn's first book, may be the second bestselling book ever written on the history of science (Swerdlow, 2004: 64). In this book, Kuhn notes "each new scientific theory preserves a hard core of the knowledge provided by its predecessor and adds to it. Science progresses by replacing old theories with new," and the history of Copernican theory, as of any scientific theory, can illustrate the processes by which scientific concepts evolve and replace their predecessors (Swerdlow, 2004: 76-78). In order to understand the place of the Kuhnian approach on scientific development in a historical scene, it is important to mention M. J. Mulkey's well-known article namely *Three Models of Scientific Development*. Mulkey (2010) proposed three models of scientific development in a sociological context, which he conceptualized as the model of openness, the model of closure, and

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the model of branching. The main claim of the openness model which Merton has systematically explained is that science develops in open societies surrounded by democratic norms. The closure model in which Kuhn takes place refers to scientific orthodoxies and the scientific development is just like the revolution reached by overthrowing an oppressive regime. Kuhn's main claim is that; a cumulative progress of a scientific knowledge is not stemming from the openness of their practitioners but paradoxically from their intellectual closure. That is to say, a normal science is directed by the paradigm –by a series of connected assumptions. In addition, the last model of branching claims that regularly new problem areas are created and they are being connected to a preestablished social networks. Thus, any evolution visible in one of the networks noteworthy is believed to be connected to the developments in other neighboring areas. As seen a discovery of a new scientific field often formed as a result of a scientific migration process. It can be said that Kuhn accepts the scientific progress as a reality. Accused of being a relativist he does not share this accusation and refers to the problem-solving skills criteria within the existing paradigms, appreciating that most discoveries occur during periods of normal science (Buchwald and Smith, 1997:366; Goldstein, 2012).

In his SSR, Kuhn argues that science evolves when there is a consensus among scientists about basic ontological commitments, explanatory principles, general methodology, research priorities, and guidelines which should be followed, in other words, when scientists share a paradigm. Scientists' sharing a paradigm is in the stage of normal science. Elements in the paradigm include the scientists' tacit knowledge. As a result, scientists cannot articulate what they believe nor can they easily envision alternative ways of doing science (Samian, 1994: 127). Yet, Kuhn's (1962) great insight was to realize that real progress did not result from the puzzle-solving of normal science. Instead, he argued that true breakthroughs arise in a totally different way -when the discovery of anomalies leads scientists to question the paradigm, and this, in turn, leads to a scientific revolution that he termed paradigm shift. In other words, Kuhn argues that a

science does not progress as a linear accumulation of new knowledge, but undergoes periodic revolutions called paradigm shifts.

For Kuhn, scientific progress/development follows 1. Pre-paradigmatic stage, 2. The emergence of normal science, 3. The emergence of anomaly and crisis, and 4. Scientific revolution as a result of the birth and assimilation of a new paradigm. As could be seen a scientific discipline goes through several distinct types of stages as it develops. Thus, to simply show the development of scientific ideas, is an alternation of . . . Normal Science->Revolution->NS->R->NS Kuhn (1963: 362) thinks that “rather than resembling exploration, normal research seems like the effort to assemble a Chinese cube whose finished outline is known from the start.” Normal science is characterized not only by a shared paradigm but also by disciplinary matrix “‘disciplinary’ because it refers to the common possessions of the practitioners of a particular discipline; matrix because it is composed of elements of various sorts” (Kuhn 1970, 182). Kuhn’s disciplinary matrix refers to shared elements in a social group which include values (Kuhn, 1970: 184).

Other elements of normal science are examples which are established achievements serving as guides to solving new puzzles. Puzzles are problems arising in a paradigm within the terms set by the paradigm (Samian, 1994: 127). Kuhn (1962) suggested that normal science can enable us to solve a puzzle for whose very existence the validity of the paradigm must be assumed. So in short, he thought that work within a paradigm (qua disciplinary matrix) is possible only if that paradigm is taken for granted. The paradigm functions very well until scientists in their collaborative efforts have a puzzle that does not fit. This is where an anomaly occurs.

A crisis is what is needed. Scientists begin to question their basic assumptions and different paradigms emerged. This is followed by a clash of conflicting, incommensurable paradigms, with a final victory of a single paradigm. Thus, a scientific revolution has occurred and scientists experience a gestalt switch. Following the revolution is

again the normal science stage. Kuhn maintains that this cyclical process goes on continuously.

**3. Paradigm as a Disciplinary Matrix and/or an Exemplar** Kuhn's use of the term paradigm and definitions made by several other researchers seems to have determined its current major meaning. Kuhn attempts at explaining his use of the word paradigm in the first pages of his book (1962). He first describes two characteristics of specific achievements: being "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity" and being "sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve." Then he states the following (1970: 10): "Achievements that share these two characteristics I shall henceforth refer to as 'paradigms', a term that relates closely to 'normal science'. By choosing it, I mean to suggest that some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research.... Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice.

"In SSR, Kuhn focuses on the normal science, characterized as puzzle-solving, is practiced according to a paradigm, the examples of science and practice, theories and procedures, of a community of scientists, which may be large or small depending upon the subject of research. Thus, the paradigm is described within the normal science and the process of scientific activity based on the existing "strong network of commitments—conceptual, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological" (Kuhn, 1970: 42). One paradigm merely is chosen in order to direct normal science as it is seen more successful than its competitors in solving some problems which the scientific community accepted them as crucially important. Moreover, Kuhn (1970: 38) asserts that "if it is to classify as a puzzle, a problem must be characterized by more than an assured solution.

There must also be rules that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are to be obtained". Kuhn



(1970: 39) notes that a rule can be seen as an established viewpoint or preconceptions that they associate better in showing a set of puzzle characteristic. Despite the fact that any success having similar features as set above could be considered as paradigms, Kuhn was heavily criticized because of his differing paradigm definitions in SSR. As depicted earlier, within the explanations of paradigm in a scientific activity Kuhn discussed its relation to a puzzle solving activity and to the existing rules of a normal science. Margret Masterman, however, in her article namely *The Nature of a Paradigm* (1970), identified no fewer than 21 possible meanings for a paradigm in the book. Masterman (1970) argued, they can be compressed into three encompassing categories, which she termed the metaphysical (meta-paradigm), the sociological, and the artefactual. According to Masterman, only the third seemed to her to capture what Kuhn had in mind (Buchwald and Smith, 1997: 367). To Masterman, existing multiple definitions of paradigm in SSR is really problematic. However, if one asks what a paradigm does, it becomes clearer at once, assuming always the existence of normal science which refers to the artefactual sense of paradigm. Again, Masterman (1970: 70) debates that puzzles cannot be solved only by an artefact and points out that the paradigm concept is tightly bound to an exemplary problems.

In his paper namely *Second Thoughts on Paradigms* (1974) presented at a philosophy symposium and in the Postscript to the second edition of SSR (1970), Kuhn conceded that he had used paradigm too broadly. As he remarked a few years later in the Preface to *The Essential Tension* (1977). Thus, in his Proscript Kuhn (1970: 175) acknowledges having used the term paradigm in two different meanings. In the first one, paradigm designates what the members of a certain scientific community have in common, that is to say, the whole of techniques, patents, and values shared by the members of the community. In SSR, Kuhn begins to use the term paradigm to refer to the entire cluster of problems, methods, theoretical principles, metaphysical assumptions, concepts, and evaluative standards that are present to some degree or other in the concrete, definitive scientific achievement. Kuhn (1970) in his Postscript to

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SSR refers to such a cluster as a disciplinary matrix. A disciplinary matrix is an entire theoretical, methodological, and evaluative framework within which scientists conduct their research. This framework constitutes the basic assumptions of the discipline about how research in that discipline should be conducted as well as what constitutes a good scientific explanation. Kuhn (1970: 182) referring to paradigm sets that:

“For present purposes, I suggest ‘disciplinary matrix’: ‘disciplinary’ because it refers to the common possession of the practitioners of a particular discipline; ‘matrix’ because it is composed of ordered elements of various sorts, each requiring further specification. All or most of the objects of group commitment that my original texts make paradigms, parts of paradigms, or paradigmatic are constituents of the disciplinary matrix, and as such, they form a whole and function together”. In the second sense, the paradigm is a single element of a whole, say for instance Newton’s *Principia*, which, acting as a common model or an example, paradigm means simply an example, as you know, stands for the explicit rules, and thus defines a coherent tradition of investigation.

Thus, the question is for Kuhn to investigate by means of the paradigm what makes possible the constitution of what he calls a normal science. That is to say, the science which can decide if a certain problem will be considered scientific or not. Normal science does not mean at all a science guided by a coherent system of rules, on the contrary, the rules can be derived from the paradigms, but the paradigms can guide the investigation also in the absence of rules. This is precisely the second meaning of the term paradigm, which Kuhn considered the newest and profound, though it is in truth the oldest.

The paradigm is in this sense, just an example, a single phenomenon, a singularity, which can be repeated and thus acquires the capability of tacitly modeling the behavior and the practice of scientists. Kuhn (1970: 187) in his postscript to SSR, refers to an achievement of this sort as an exemplar: “I shall here substitute ‘exemplars.’ By it I mean, initially, the concrete problem-solutions

that students encounter from the start of their scientific education, whether in laboratories, on examinations, or at the ends of chapters in science texts. To these shared examples should, however, be added at least some of the technical problem-solutions found in the periodical literature that scientists encounter during their post-educational research careers and that also show them by example how their job is to be done.

”Among the numerous examples of paradigms Kuhn,gives are Newton's mechanics and theory of gravitation, Franklin's theory of electricity, and Copernicus' treatise on his heliocentric theory of the solar system. These works outlined a unified and comprehensive approach to a wide-ranging set of problems in their respective disciplines. As such, they were definitive in thatdisciplines. Agamben (2002), in his analysis on how science can decide if a certain problem will be considered scientific or not, stress on the importance of exemplar as they (paradigms) can guide the investigation also in the absence of rules.A paradigm, in this sense is just an example, a single phenomenon, a singularity.

In other words, normal science does not mean at all a science guided by a coherent system of rules; on the contrary, the rules can be derived from the paradigms. Bird (2012:861) similarly comments that normal science is thereby built on and built by the exemplars. A crisis occurs when science modeled on the exemplars fails to answer key puzzles. Accordingly, exemplars are transmitted and inculcated by the training of young scientists. Training with exemplars allows scientists to see the world in a certain way that enables them to solve scientific problems in ways analogous to those in the exemplars. Thus, revolutions come about when exemplars are replaced by new exemplars; such revisions to exemplars will bring about other changes in the disciplinary matrix.

#### **4.Paradigm Shift and Scientific Revolution**

In SSR, Kuhn named an epistemological paradigm shift as a scientific revolution. A scientific revolution occurs, according to Kuhn, when scientists encounter anomalies that cannot be explained by the

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universally accepted paradigm within which scientific progress has thereto been made. The paradigm, in Kuhn's view, is not simply the current theory, but the entire worldview in which it exists, and all of the implications which come with it. As depicted earlier, normal science is an enterprise of puzzle-solving according to Kuhn.

Though the paradigm guarantees that the puzzles it defines have solutions, this is not always the case. Sometimes puzzles cannot admit of solution within the framework (disciplinary matrix) provided by the paradigm. In such case, scientists may become acutely distressed and a sense of crisis may develop within the scientific community. This sense of desperation may lead some scientists to question some of the fundamental assumptions of the disciplinary matrix. Typically, competing groups will develop strategies for solving the problem, which at this point has become an anomaly that congeals into differing conceptual schools of thought much like the competing schools that characterize pre-paradigmatic science. The fundamental assumptions of the paradigm will become subject to widespread doubt, and there may be general agreement that a replacement must be found. One of the competing approaches to solving the anomaly will produce a solution that, because of its generality and promise for future research, gains a large and loyal following in the scientific community.

This solution comes to be regarded by its proponents as a concrete, definitive scientific achievement that defines by example how research in that discipline should subsequently be conducted. And if enough scientists become convinced that the new paradigm works better than the old one, they will accept it as the new norm (Hairstone, 1982). Eventually, a new paradigm is formed, which gains its own new followers, and an intellectual battle takes place between the followers of the new paradigm and the hold-outs of the old paradigm. The pattern of scientific change, Bird (2012) reminds, shows a pattern: normal science, crisis, extraordinary science, a new phase of normal science, etc. The normal science which is characterized as puzzle-solving is conservative, with scientists building on rather than questioning existing science.

For Kuhn, in contrast, extraordinary science is revolutionary. That is, some significant component of the existing tradition (for example, a key theoretical commitment) is jettisoned and replaced in the expectation that the revised practice will solve many of the crisis-precipitating anomalies and provide a fruitful platform for future research. In other words, extraordinary science is expected to generate new puzzles and provide the means of solving them. Kuhn (1970: 12), in *SSR*, wrote, "Successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science." Kuhn's idea was itself revolutionary in its time, as it caused a major change in the way that academics talk about science. Thus, it could be argued that it caused or was itself part of a paradigm shift in the history and sociology of science. However, Kuhn would not recognize such a paradigm shift as in the social sciences, people can still use earlier ideas to discuss the history of science.

On the other hand, in Kuhn's late works such as *The Road Since Structure* (1990), Kuhn reported on a book in progress, a project that would eventually remain unfinished at his death. In this and other fragments of that work, he develops the biological metaphor broached at the end of *SSR*. No longer do we hear of revolutions as paradigm change, certainly not in the sense of large paradigms. In fact, Kuhn preferred to speak of developmental episodes instead of revolutions. However, he does retain something of his original idea of small paradigms, the concrete problem solutions that he had termed exemplars in the Postscript to *SSR*.

Most revolutions, he tells us, are not major discontinuities in which a successor theory overturns and replaces its predecessor. Rather, they are like biological speciation, in which a group of organisms becomes reproductively isolated from the main population.

5. Discussion In *SSR* (1962), Kuhn made the dramatic claim that history of science reveals proponents of competing paradigms failing to make complete contact with each other's views so that they are always talking at least slightly at cross-purposes. Kuhn characterized the collective reasons for these limits to communication as the incommensurability of

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pre-and post-revolutionary scientific traditions. He claims that the Newtonian paradigm is incommensurable with its Cartesian and Aristotelian predecessors in the history of physics, just as Lavoisier's paradigm is incommensurable with that of Priestley's in chemistry (Kuhn,1962, 147–150; Hoyningen-Huene, 2008).

On the other note, Paul Feyerabend first used the term incommensurable in 1962 in *Explanation, Reduction, and Empiricism* to describe the lack of logical relations between the concepts of fundamental theories in his critique of logical empiricists models of explanation and reduction (Feyerabend 1962:74). Kuhn's introduction in SSR of the concept of incommensurability, alongside Feyerabend's use of the concept, was an important moment in intellectual history. Such that incommensurability became the focus of Kuhn's philosophical thinking in his later work. As Kuukkanen (2009: 218) discuss, new concepts emerged and old ones received new definitions during the evolution of Kuhn's thinking. Kuhn later regarded incommensurability as a defining feature of scientific revolutions. In return for this, for many critics, the debate has focused on his notion of the incommensurability of paradigm and normal science (Samian, 1994: 134-135; Irzik and Grünberg, 1998). Kuhn himself states that not only shared criteria but also specific factors such as biography and/or personality of scientists play an important role in their decisions.

One focus of many critics has been Kuhn's insistence to compare scientific revolutions with political or religious revolutions, and with paradigm change as a kind of conversion. A paradigm shift is so much one changing his/her religion. Thus, some questions arise related to the paradigm shift. Firstly, if there is no neutral standpoint from which to evaluate two different paradigms in a given discipline can we still consider science as rational?

According to Kuhn, in deciding between different paradigms, people can give good reasons for favoring one paradigm over another, it is just that those reasons cannot be codified into an algorithmic scientific method, that would decide the point objectively and conclusively. Thus, science is not irrational, just mere competing paradigms

are incommensurable: that is to say, there exists no objective way of assessing their relative merits. To put the objectivity matter concisely, Kuhn argues that different paradigms are incommensurable because they involve different scientific language, they do not acknowledge, address, or perceive the same observational data nor they have the same questions or resolve the same problems, neither they agree on what counts as an adequate, or even legitimate, explanation. Thus, 3 types of incommensurability can be respectively distinguished in Kuhn's thought -semantic, observational and methodological obstacles could be seen in comparing those theories. Incommensurability could be defined more in depth, but rather it will be debated that how substantial its influence is.

It should be stressed that Kuhn's incommensurability thesis presented a challenge to the realistic conception of scientific progress. As debated earlier the positivistic tradition asserts that later science improves on earlier science. A counter view of Kuhn claims that science is not cumulative –we cannot properly say that Einstein's theory is an improvement on Newton's since the key terms (for instance 'mass') in the two theories differ slightly in meaning (Bird, 2007). Therefore, we can note that Kuhn saw incommensurability as precluding the possibility of interpreting scientific development as an approximation to the truth (Kuhn 1970: 206). He rejects such characterizations of scientific progress because he recognized and emphasized that scientific revolutions result in changes in the ontology.

**Check your progress –**

1. What is paradigm shift in context to history?

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2. Relate paradigm shift with scientific revolution.

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### **13.3 LETS SUM UP**

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Thomas Kuhn, the author of SSR, is probably the best-known and most influential historian and philosopher of science of the last century. His concepts of paradigm, paradigm change and incommensurability have changed our thinking about science. As Kuukanen (2009: 217) reveals in his review study named Rereading Kuhn, since mid-1990's Kuhn's thought has been studied with denotations such as a conservative Kuhn, the last logical empiricist Kuhn, the cognitive science Kuhn, the Wittgenstein an Kuhn and sociological Kuhn.

This brief review remarks obviously that Kuhn's thought have been and still is seen as a very important role in the research tradition of philosophy of science. His thoughts on scientific development and scientific revolution could be better understood if his central concept of paradigm is defined in detail. Thus, more specifically, it has been discussed that the meaning and definition of a paradigm, distinguishing between the primary, narrow sense of the term (an exemplar, i.e. a definitive, concrete achievement) and a broader sense of the term (a disciplinary matrix or framework). Merging two of the definitions, the following definition of paradigm could be setlike this: A paradigm is a specific theoretical orientation, based on a particular epistemology and research methodology, reflective of a particular scientific community at a particular time in history. It also frames and directs the nature of the type of research inquiries generated from that theoretical orientation, as well as provides the fundamental basis for evaluating the results of the generated research.

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### **13.4 KEYWORDS**

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design, design thinking, visual art, classification, education, Latvia

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### **13.5 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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1. Define Kuhn's outlook on paradigm shift.



2. What is history of science?

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## 13.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Hint – 13.2

2. Hint – 13.2

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# UNIT 14 APPROACHES TO INDIAN HISTORY

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## STRUCTURE

14.0 Objective

14.1 Introduction

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## 14.0 OBJECTIVE

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To learn about the different approaches of writing Indian history

To learn about orientalism, imperialist, nationalist, Marxist, subaltern approaches

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## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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A strong and robust democracy can thrive in a society that has a rich tradition of multiple historical approaches towards its history. In a maturing democratic nation such as India, social scientists always feel the need to achieve the critical balance between the factual and interpretative perspectives of historical narration. History needs to offer a place to voices from all sections of the society; and it also needs to make a meaningful narrative with a sound theoretical base. An orientation in multiple approaches of understanding the Historical Sociology of the subcontinent would be useful for students, researchers and teachers of all social sciences, especially history and sociology.

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## 14.2 APPROACHES TO INDIAN HISTORY

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### **Orientalist Approach –**

Although Edward Said concentrated mainly on European Orientalism focusing on Arab Middle East, the Saidian approach to Orientalist discourse is thought to be validly applicable to other parts of the non-Western world, and various scholars influenced by Said have expanded his theories to include India [11]. In Orientalism Said himself only occasionally refers to Orientalist discourse on India. For example, he mentions William Jones (1746–1794), the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who, according to Said, with his vast knowledge of Oriental peoples was the undisputed founder of scholarly Orientalism. Jones wanted to know India better than anyone in Europe, and his aim was to rule, learn and compare the Orient with the Occident. Said finds it interesting that many of the early Orientalists concentrating on India were jurists like Jones or doctors of medicine with strong involvement with missionary work. Most Orientalists had a kind of dual purpose of improving the quality of life of Indian peoples and advancing arts and knowledge back in the heart of the Empire. (Ibid., 78–79.) In Said's view, the fact of the Empire was present in nearly every British nineteenth century writer's work concentrating on India. They all had definite views on race and imperialism. For example, John Stuart Mill claimed liberty and representative government could not be applied to India because Indians were civilizationally – if not racially – inferior. (Ibid., 14.) Said also claims that India was never a threat to Europe like Islamic Orient was. India was more vulnerable to European conquest, and, hence, Indian Orient could be treated with "such proprietary hauteur," without the same sense of danger affiliated with the Islamic Orient. (Ibid., 75.) Said also describes Romantic Orientalism that sought to regenerate materialistic and mechanistic Europe by Indian culture, religion and spirituality. Biblical themes were used in the project: the death of cold Europe was imagined, its spiritual rebirth and redemption sought after, but India per se was not as significant as the use of India for modern Europe. The Orientalists

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mastering Oriental languages were seen as spiritual heroes or knight-errants who were giving back to Europe its lost holy mission.

Although the themes were implicitly Christian, the Romantic project appeared secular in its post-Enlightenment ideology. (Ibid., 105–107.) It is rather obvious that unsatisfying Judeo-Christian thought and the "cold materialism" of Enlightenment made many Europeans seek for a lost spirit in the promised land of India, and, as Clarke describes,

Thus, there was a new twist to Orientalism, a "metaphysical thirst" which for the Romantics replaced the earlier politico-ethical need of Orientalism. Thus India began to be seen as "the realm of Spirit." The nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Orientalism was rather explicitly racist, lauding Indian caste system as protector of racial purity and seeing contemporary Indians as bastardized and hence inferior race to the "original" and "pure" Aryan race. The caste system of Aryan Vedic society seemed to them as a functional hierarchical system which had degenerated in time. However, the same Orientalists who formed these racist theories at the same time looked romanticizingly to the East to criticize the degenerate Europe. (Ibid., 191–205.) Interestingly, David Kopf, a well-known academic adversary of Edward Said, seems to seek justification for Orientalist treatment of India by mentioning how impressed Nehru was about the work of British Orientalists, and that Nehru used their knowledge to build up a nationalistic new India (Kopf 1980, 496). The fact that Orientalism is and has been grist for the mill for nationalism is not, in my view, a sufficient condition for justifying Orientalism, no matter how politically effective the combination is. However, Kopf's statement definitely hints towards the rather interesting question of indigenous Orientalism, that is, the phenomenon where the Orient is sort of recycled or reimported to its source [12]. It is exceedingly interesting to notice how – especially Romantic – Orientalist ideas of Indianness have been adapted to the self-identities of Indians. This seems to be partly due to the British educational system but also to the prestige that British ideas have held among the Indian gentility and academic elite.

Ideas like Vedic times as the golden age, spiritual India, caste-centricity and Hinduism as one religion (or sort of superreligion or poetic universal life-philosophy) were, at least to some extent, Orientalist inventions and more or less as such largely accepted by educated Indians and/or reworked to serve Indian nationalism. (Heehs 2003; Narayan 1993, 478; also cf. Bharati 1970, 273.) When the Indian independence movement gathered momentum, Orientalist texts were used to evoke national self-identity. For example, Bhagavad Gita was respected as the core or uniting holy text of whole India and the Hindu Renaissance used Orientalist literature to form modern Hinduism and – concurrently – India’s nationhood. (Clarke 1997, 205.) According to Breckenridge and van der Veer, the consequent ”internal Orientalism” seems to have been the most problematic issue in postcolonial scholarship of India. The Orientalist habits and categories still have such power that it is exceedingly difficult for either Indians or outsiders to view India without reverting to the outdated discourse. The Orientalist ideas of difference and division from the colonial times have affected – or perhaps, infected – the foundations of public life in India. In the postcolonial era, According to Bhatnagar, Fanon sees this relationship as an Oedipal tyranny in which the colonized people search for identity and continually return to ”the terms of opposition set by the colonial mother.” An impossible pure origin is something the reactionary forces of indigenous revivalism use and long for to obtain meaning for its contemporary being. Bhatnagar claims that this uncritical and politically suspect ideology is especially dangerous in the Indian context where the plural and secular identity has had to give way to a Hindu identity that has its imagined source in the Vedic times. (Bhatnagar 1986, 5.) The essentialism, and the concept of a religiously/spiritually unique India that goes well together with it has become part of Indian nationalistic politics where all group differences are seen as dangerous separatisms. In contemporary India, a political group (e.g. a labor union) is in dire straits to constitute itself on the basis of shared interest without others thinking the interests are only a disguise for religious, caste or sectarian interests. ”This essentialization and somaticization of group differences” claim Breckenridge and van der

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Veer (1994, 12), "is probably the most damaging part of the orientalist bequest to postcolonial politics." Especially the reinforcement of Muslim-Hindu opposition was a significant fundamental contribution of Orientalism in India. In Orientalist knowledge the two groups were essentialized and later institutionalized in nationalist political representations. Orientalists as representatives of an academic discipline have been accused of being intertwined with and even of having supported British colonialism in India. Although there has been lots of debate about the subject or more specifically about intensity of the Orientalists' explicit involvement in and conscious support to colonialism, in my view it is obvious that, in addition to the relationship of Orientalism and colonialism, Indian Brahmanical authority and Indo-Orientalism supported each other. One even could say that Brahmanic hegemonic discourse in a way de-Orientalized Brahmins and Orientalized the non-Brahmanic peoples of India (cf. e.g. Makdisi 2002, 772–773 who describes the same kind of phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire). Brahmanism-informed Orientalist discipline created an unchanged written canon to replace various oral traditions in Hinduism. Also scriptures like Bhagavad Gita became canonized by Orientalism, and spiritual leaders Gandhi made the text a fundamental scripture of Modern Hinduism. Orientalism helped to create the concept of "decline of Hindu society" by emphasizing the Aryan (Western) and Vedic past that was almost destroyed by foreign Muslim invasion.

linguistic, civilizational and racial characteristics of Orientals were an undisputed central theme in Orientalism during the peak of imperialist era of Europe. Modern degeneration of cultures, theories about civilizational progress, belief in the White race's destiny justified colonialism and formed, as Said states, "a peculiar amalgam of science, politics, and culture whose drift, almost without exception, was always to raise [...] European race to dominion over non-European portions of mankind." Darwinism was modified to support the view of contemporary Orientals as being degenerate vestiges of a classical ancient greatness [14]. The white scholar could study ancient Oriental civilizations with his refined reconstructive

scientific techniques and use "a vocabulary of sweeping generalities" to refer to "seemingly objective and agreed-upon distinctions" to describe Orientals. Biological and socio-biological "truths" and Darwinist volumes concurred with the experienced abilities and inabilities of Orientals. Empirical data concerning the origins, development and character of Orientals seemed to give validity to the distinctions.

### **Imperialist**

It will be an error to homogenise of British historical writings as uniformly colonial, since different approaches and interpretative frameworks developed within the colonial school in course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, there were certain characteristics common to most of the works we have surveyed till now. However simplistic it may be, it may be useful to sum up these characteristics:

- An 'Orientalist' representation of India was common, promoting the idea of the superiority of modern Western civilisation; this is a theme recently brought into prominence by Edward Said and others, but the Indian nationalist intelligentsias had identified and criticised this trend in British writings from James Mill onwards.

- The idea that India had no unity until the British unified the country was commonly given prominence in historical narratives; along with this thesis there was a representation of the eighteenth century India as a 'dark century' full of chaos and barbarity until the British came to the rescue.

- Many late nineteenth century British historians adopted Social Darwinist notions about India; this implied that if history is a struggle between various peoples and cultures, akin to the struggle among the species, Britain having come to the top could be ipso facto legitimately considered to be superior and as the fittest to rule.

- India was, in the opinion of many British observers, a stagnant society, arrested at a stage of development; it followed that British rule would show the path of progress to a higher level; hence the idea that India needed Pax Britannica.
- The mythification of heroic empire builders and 'Rulers of India' in historical narratives was a part of

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the rhetoric of imperialism; as Eric Stokes has remarked, in British writings on India the focus was on the British protagonists and the entire country and its people were just a shadowy background.

□ As we would expect, colonial historiography displayed initially a critical stance towards the Indian nationalist movement since it was perceived as a threat to the good work done by the British in India; at a later stage when the movement intensified the attitude became more complex, since some historians showed plain hostility while others were more sophisticated in their denigration of Indian nationalism.

In general, while some of these characteristics and paradigms are commonly to be found in the colonial historians' discourse, it will be unjust to ignore the fact that in course of the first half of the twentieth century historiography out-grew them or, at least, presented more sophisticated versions of them. In essence, colonial historiography was part of an ideological effort to appropriate history as a means of establishing cultural hegemony and legitimising British rule over India.

The basic idea embedded in the tradition of Colonial Historiography was the paradigm of a backward society's progression towards the pattern of modern European civil and political society under the tutelage of imperial power. The guiding hand of the British administrators, education combined with 'filtration' to the lower orders of society, implantation of such institutions and laws as the British thought Indians were fit for, and protection of Pax Britannica from the threat of disorder nationalism posed among the subject people – these were the ingredients needed for a slow progress India must make. Sometimes this agenda was presented as 'the civilizing mission of Britain'. What the intellectual lineages of the colonial ideology were as reflected in historiography? Benthamite or Utilitarian political philosophy represented Britain's role to be that of a guardian with a backward pupil as his ward. It may be said that Jeremy Bentham looked upon all people in that light, European or otherwise. That is partly true. But this attitude could find clearer expression and execution in action in a colony like India.



Another source of inspiration for the colonialist historian was Social Darwinism, as has been mentioned earlier. This gave an appearance of scientific respectability to the notion that many native Indians were below par; it was possible to say that here there were victims of an arrested civilisation and leave it at that as an inevitable outcome of a Darwinian determinism. A third major influence was Herbert Spencer. He put forward an evolutionary scheme for the explication of Europe's ascendancy and his comparative method addressed the differences among countries and cultures in terms of progression towards the higher European form. It was an assumption common among Europeans, that non-European societies would follow that evolutionary pattern, with a bit of assistance from the European imperial powers.

This mindset was not peculiar to the British Indian historians. In the heydays of mid-Victorian imperialism the British gave free expression to these ideas while in later times such statements became more circumspect. In the 1870s Fitzjames Stephen talked of "heathenism and barbarism" versus the British as representatives of a "belligerent civilization". In 1920s David Dodwell's rhetoric is milder, indeed almost in a dejected tone: the Sisyphean task of the British was to raise to a higher level the "great mass of humanity" in India and that mass "always tended to relapse into its old posture ...like a rock you try to lift with levers."

### **Impact of historical writings in colonial India**

The above ideological characterisation applies to the dominant trend in historical thinking in the colonial school. But it will be inaccurate to apply this without discrimination. It is well known that among the British officers of the government of British India, as we all know, there were some like Thomas Munro or Charles Trevelyan who were widely regarded as persons sympathetic to the subject people although as officers they served an alien and exploitative regime; there were British officers and British Missionaries (e.g. C F Andrews, author of *Renaissance in India*, 1925) who sympathized with the National Congress; and there were also those,

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like say Garratt of the Indian Civil Service and later of the Labour Party in England, or George Orwell of the Indian Police Service who were inveterate critics of the empire. It was the same case with the historians.

But the inclinations of lone individuals were insignificant in the face of the dominant tradition among the servants of the British Raj. Official encouragement and sponsorship of a way of representing the past which would uphold and promote imperial might, and the organised or informal peer opinion the dissident individual had to contend with. Our characterisation of the ideology at the root of colonial historiography addresses the dominant trend and may not apply in every respect to every individual historian. Such a qualification is important in a course on Historiography in particular because this is an instance where students of history must exercise their judgement about the range and the limits of generalisation. It must be noted that despite the colonial ideology embedded in historiography in British India, the early British historians of India made some positive contributions. Apart from the obvious fact that the colonial historians laid the foundations of historiography according to methodology developed in modern Europe, their contribution was also substantial in providing in institutions like the Asiatic Society and Archaeological Survey of India opportunity for Indian historians to obtain entry into the profession and into academic research. Further, despite an ethnocentric and statist bias, the data collected by the British colonial historians as well as the practice of archiving documents was and remains an important resource. Most important of all, the teaching of history began from the very inception of the first three universities in India at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (1857-1858). This had several unintended consequences.

### **Nationalist**

Nationalist historiography flourished mainly in dealing with the ancient and medieval periods. It hardly existed for the modern period and came into being mainly after 1947, no school of nationalist historians of modern India having existed before 1947. This was in part because, in

the era of nationalism, to be a nationalist was also to be anti-imperialist, which meant confrontation with the ruling, colonial authorities. And that was not possible for academics because of colonial control over the educational system. It became safe to be anti-imperialist only after 1947.

Consequently, a history of the national movement or of colonial economy did not exist. This is, of course, not a complete explanation of the absence of nationalist historiography before 1947. After all, Indian economists did develop a sharp and brilliant critique of the colonial economy of India and its impact on the people. A detailed and scientific critique of colonialism was developed in the last quarter of the 19th century by non-academic, nationalist economists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. V. Joshi, R. C. Dutt, K. T. Telang, G. K. Gokhale and D. E. Wacha. Several academic economists such as K. T. Shah, V. C. Kale, C. N. Vakil, D. R. Gadgil, Gyan Chand, V.K.R.V. Rao and Wadia and Merchant followed in their footsteps in the first half of the 20th century. Their critique did not find any reflection in history books of the period. That was to happen only after 1947, and that too in the 1960s and after.

This critique, however, formed the core of nationalist agitation in the era of mass movements after 1920. Tilak, Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Subhash Bose, for example, relied heavily upon it. A few historians who referred in passing to the national movement and nationalist historians after 1947 did not see it as an anti-imperialist movement. Similarly, the only history of the national movement that was written was by nationalist leaders such as R.G. Pradhan, A.C. Mazumdar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Patabhi Sitaramayya.

Post-1947 historians accepted the legitimacy of nationalism and the Indian national movement but seldom dealt with its foundation in the economic critique of the colonialism. They also tended to underplay, when not ignoring completely, other streams of the nationalist struggle. Modern historians have also been divided between those, such as Tara Chand, who held that India has been a nation-in-the-

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making since the 19th century and those who argue that India has been a nation since the ancient times. At the same time, to their credit, all of them accept India's diversity, i.e., its multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and therefore multi-cultural character.

Nationalist historians also have ignored or severely underplayed inner contradictions of Indian society based on class and caste or the oppression of and discrimination against women and tribes. They have also ignored the movements against class and caste oppressions. They have seldom made an in-depth analysis of the national movement, and often indulged in its blind glorification. While adopting a secular position and condemning communalism, they do not make a serious analysis of its character or elements, causation, and development. Quite often, it is seen merely as an outcome of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. They give due space to the social reform movements but do not take a critical look at them, and often ignore the movements of the tribal people and the lower castes for their emancipation. As a whole, historians neglected economic, social and cultural history and at the most attached a chapter or two on these without integrating them into the main narrative.

We may make a few additional remarks regarding nationalist historians as a whole. They tended to ignore inner contradictions within Indian society. They suffered from an upper caste and male chauvinist cultural and social bias. Above all they tended to accept the theory of Indian exceptionalism that Indian historical development was entirely different from that of the rest of the world. They missed a historical evaluation of Indian social institutions in an effort to prove India's superiority in historical development. Especially negative and harmful both to the study of India's history and the political development of modern India was their acceptance of James Mill's periodisation of Indian history into Hindu and Muslim periods.

### **R.G.Bhandarkar (1837-1925)**

Indian scholars of the nineteenth century had concentrated mostly on editing the sources, fixing the chronology or discussing the genealogy of the various rulers. They had yet to establish their claim as sober, critical

and creative historians, although one or two like Rajendralkal Mitra and Romesh Chandra Dutt seem to stand out higher. But with Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar Indian historiography enters into a new phase. He was the first Indian historian to apply critical and analytical principles to the writing of history, to utilize different kinds of sources after very scrutiny to deduce logical and scientific conclusions from the data and to adopt an easy and good style. He was a versatile genius whose grasp of Sanskrit and Prakrit was amazing and whose knowledge of philosophy and religion was very profound. He was a thinker in his own right eager to bring about social change and religious reform, as he believed that many of the orthodox customs of his day had no foundation in ancient Hindu religion. He came from a poor Brahmin family of Ratnagiri district, the son of a clerk in the Revenue Department and was educated at Elphinstone Institute in Bombay. His favorite subject was mathematics which he studied under Dadabhai Naroji.

Under the influence of Howard, the Director of Public Instruction, Bhandarkar switched over to the study of Sanskrit and Indian culture in which he gained such proficiency as to be appointed Professor of Sanskrit in the Deccan College, Poona. From 1893 to 1895 he rose to the position of the Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, became a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council in 1903 and was knighted in the Delhi Darbar of 1911. Bhandarkar's writings have a characteristic features of their own namely thoroughness and precision, fullness of knowledge and versatility, with objectivity and frankness. He was the first Indian scholar to apply western techniques and methods to the study of Sanskrit and Indian antiquities, and he was the first to judge the oriental values with Occidental standards. The fame of Bhandarkar as a historian rests on his two books, the Early History of the Deccan (1884) and A Peep into the Early History of India (1900). Bhandarkar was great liberal and in all his writings there is not a single trace of any anti-British feelings. On the other hand he was a fond admirer of Britain and Germany. He appreciated the Western technique of shifting the historical data, and was perhaps the first Indian to apply Ranke's method to Indian problems. Very clearly he says that a historian should

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eschew the tendency to glorify his own race or country, and he should not have as well the negative prejudice of disliking any race or country. Nothing but dry truth should be his object. He should be a judge and not an advocate. Bhandarkar is very fair minded. He likes neither the tone of Vincent Smith, who has an assumed air of superiority for things western nor of those Indian historians who claim needless superiority for things eastern.

Very scrupulously he applied the critical method to sources, and in some respects he was far more critical than many European historians of ancient India. Judging the chronology of the Satavahana fixed by Vincent Smith on the basis of the Puranas, one could easily say that it could hardly stand the test of scrutiny, but on the same subject what Bhandarkar has said has not yet been refuted. Despite his deep religious bent of mind, he never allowed religious views to influence his historical conviction. He never believed in the Divine will as the determining factor in history. He was more interested in describing what happened rather than why it happened. As long as we are not fully aware what had happened, we cannot answer the question why it happened. Bhandarkar is one of the very few historians of India who consciously attempted to be objective and were successful to a great degree. He is certainly the Ranke of India.

### **Hemchandra Raychaudhuri**

Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, belonged to that unique band of scholars of Ancient Indian History who lived their lives immersed in the passion of their scholarship. After a brilliant academic career right from his school days in the then East Bengal and then at University of Calcutta, he embarked on a career of teaching Ancient Indian History after his M.A, first in leading colleges of Calcutta and then in Chittagong in Bangladesh. The legendary Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, the first Indian Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University was quick to spot the extraordinary talent of Hemchandra and offered him a lectureship in the newly founded Post-graduate Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in

1917, which he readily accepted. From then on there was no looking back for Hemchandra. Recognitions, prizes, doctorate and responsibilities followed acknowledging his scholarship, and he became the head of the department of Ancient Indian History and Culture of Calcutta University in 1936. What Prof Hemchandra Raychaudhuri will always be remembered for is his pioneering work "Political History of Ancient India" with its reconstruction of Ancient Indian History; and other works like "The Early History of the Vaishnava Sect" and "Studies in Indian Antiquities". As well as his great love for teaching and the reverence that generations of students had for him, some of whom became luminaries in their own right.

Early Life Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, one of the internationally acknowledged doyens of Ancient Indian History, was born on April 8, 1892, in the village of Ponabalia in the Buckergunge district of Barisal in the erstwhile East Bengal, now Bangladesh. He was the second son of Manoranjan Raychaudhuri, the Zamindar or dominant landlord of Ponabalia, and Tarangini Devi, who had three sons and three daughters. Sri Manoranjan Raychaudhuri was a highly cultured man and an accomplished classical musician, while Tarangini Devi was a lady of immense curiosity with a rare spirit of enquiry, which surely contributed to the indefatigable spirit of research and scholarship that Hemchandra was endowed with and focused on his abiding passion in Ancient Indian History. Hemchandra's early education was at the Brajamohan Institution in Barisal, reputed to be one of the best schools of the time. He passed the Entrance, as the then school leaving examination was called, in 1907, standing first among all the students of the then provinces of East Bengal and Assam. After this he came to study in Calcutta (or Kolkata as it is now called) and studied first in General Assembly's Institution (later Scottish Church College) and then at Presidency College from where he graduated in 1911. He stood first among all the Honours Graduates of Calcutta University that year and got the coveted Eshan Scholarship. Once again he stood first in the M.A (History) examination of Calcutta University in 1913 and subsequently

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became a Griffith Prizeman in 1919, and right from then his interest was in Ancient Indian History.

In 1921, at the comparatively young age of 29 years, he was conferred the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) of Calcutta University, for his brilliant thesis on Ancient Indian History, much of which became the basis for his seminal book –"Political History of Ancient India".

3.3.6.2.Carrier:As a Historian Immediately after getting his M.A. degree, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri joined Bangabashi College, Calcutta, as Lecturer of History and taught there from 1913 to '14. In 1914 he joined the Bengal Education Service and taught History at Presidency College for three years from 1914 to'16. In 1916 he was transferred to the Government College, Chittagong in East Bengal and it was around this time he faced great personal distress and tragedy due to the protracted illness of his first wife and her subsequent untimely death. However, his fate soon took a turn for the better. The legendary, Sir Ashutosh Mookherjee, the first Indian Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, who was adept at spotting extraordinary talent, approached Hemchandra with an offer of a lectureship in the newly created course Ancient Indian History and Culture. Hemchandra readily accepted, resigned from the Bengal Education Service and joined Calcutta University as a lecturer in Ancient Indian History in 1917. So began a lifelong love affair with Ancient Indian History for Hemchandra. A passion that so consumed him that he would research, read and lecture for up to 18 hours a day!

On the one hand, he expanded the frontiers of knowledge in Ancient Indian History right up to the 9th. Century B.C, by reconstructing history beyond the time of Alexander –that was the accepted documented period of Ancient Indian Historians of the time like the acknowledged authority Vincent Smith –and finding documentary evidence through his study of ancient Indian texts. On the other hand, his lectures on Ancient Indian History, became renowned for bringing alive Ancient Indian History to such an extent that generations of students swore by them, and even students of Medieval History would bunk their classes to attend them! His devoted students included names like Hem Chandra Ray, Nanigopal



Mazumdar, Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, Tarak Chandra Das, Nihar Ranjan Ray, Dinesh Chandra Sircar, Sudhakar Chatterjee, Nisith Ranjan Ray, Kali Kinkar Dutta etc., who themselves later became luminaries in Indological studies. Prof. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri was the epitome of the spirit of the Bengal Renaissance which created several milestones in the fields of ancient literature, philosophy, history and science and subsequently led to the growth of Indological consciousness in all parts of India. Raychaudhuri was at the vanguard of this movement through his path breaking studies and teachings of Ancient Indian History.

His career in Calcutta University that began as a lecturer in Ancient Indian History and Culture in 1917, reached its acme when he was appointed the Carmichael Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in 1937 when he succeeded Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar on the latter's retirement, and a position that he held till his own retirement in June 1952. Prof. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri's scholarship was universally recognized, not only in India but internationally as well. His published works were characterized by originality, sound judgment and learning, and he never sacrificed critical caution to novel theories and his name was a guarantee for dependable work. In 1946, he was made a Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and later in 1951, was awarded the Society's B.C. Law gold medal for his contribution to the cause of Ancient Indian History and Culture. In 1941, he presided over a section of the Indian History Congress at Hyderabad and was elected General President of the Congress for its Nagpur Session in 1950. Prof. Raychaudhuri was not a prolific author, and this was because he insisted on quality rather than quantity. He tirelessly served the Calcutta University till his very last days, though towards the end of his tenure he was quite ill. At one time he was the Head of various History and Indological departments of the University, that included his beloved Ancient Indian History and Culture, Sanskrit, Pali, General History and Islamic Studies. Internationally renowned Indologists like Dr. A.L. Basham, the author of the seminal "The Wonder that was India" and even Harold Macmillan, one time Prime Minister of

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England, whose printing house Macmillan and Co. were the publishers of one of his books, made it a point to visit Prof. Raychaudhuri at his South Calcutta residence when in India. When he passed away in 1957, India had lost one of the brightest stars in its Ancient Indian History firmament. Dr. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri was a unique man.

Not only a scholar, researcher and teacher of the highest order but a fantastic human. His scholarship and research attracted admiration and accolades from leading internationally renowned historians; his brilliant lectures made him legendary among generations of students, many of them luminaries in their own right; and his caring, affection, approachability and willingness to give time and attention from the smallest child in his family to his post-graduate students, even when chronically ill as he was quite early in his life, made him unforgettable. A man who looked after over 20 members in his extended family, making no distinction between any, and lit the passion for Ancient Indian History in the hearts of countless students. Prof. Hemchandra Raychaudhuri belonged to a unique breed of academicians. A product of the Bengal Renaissance that was greatly responsible for a revived interest in Indological studies in the country, he was a rare combination of a great scholar, an indefatigable researcher and a spellbinding teacher. However, the greatest contribution he made to Ancient Indian History was his path breaking research that is encapsulated in his magnum opus – Political History of Ancient India – from the Accession of Parikshit to the Extinction of the Gupta Dynasty. Before Raychaudhuri, the only other definitive work on Ancient Indian History was Vincent Smith's Early History of India. Here Smith practically starts with the period beginning with Alexander's invasion of India in 327 – 324 B.C., though he wrote a few pages on the earlier period from 600 B.C. Prof. Raychaudhuri pushed back the commencement of the historical period to the 9th. Century B.C., when the great Kuru King Parikshit flourished according to the chronological scheme proposed by him. This was a daunting task as Prof. Raychaudhuri had to reconstruct the pre-Bimbisara period of Ancient Indian History on the basis of a careful analysis of early

Indian literary traditions, which he showed contained genuine historical elements

But the indefatigable researcher and scholar that he was, he went through the entire Vedic and Epico-Puranic literature and various other Sanskrit and Prakrit works, as well as Buddhist and Jain texts. Prof Raychaudhuri was probably the only Ancient Indian Historian who was capable of utilizing this stupendous mass of material thus collected to carefully reconstruct this hitherto unrecorded period of Ancient Indian History. Centrifugal and Centripetal forces From his research and reconstruction of Ancient Indian History from the 9th Century B.C. to the extinction of the Gupta dynasty, Prof Raychaudhuri arrived at his distinctive and original central theme of how kingdoms in ancient India that transcended provincial limits were subjected to a struggle between what he called the "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces. The centrifugal force, he showed, trying to hold the kingdom together and the centripetal force trying to dissolve the kingdom and leading to its extinction.

Prof Raychaudhuri was a passionate votary of truth and facts and did not allow any external influence like nationalism or a pursuit of novel theories to colour facts in any way, as is seen in the works of many historians. For example, Asoka the third Mauryan emperor has been hailed as the greatest monarch of Ancient India by most historians. But Prof. Raychaudhuri while evaluating the achievements of Asoka in great detail, never fails to criticize Asoka's Dharma Vijay, which in some measure (the centripetal force), Prof. Raychaudhuri showed, brought about the downfall of the once mighty empire. "(Asoka) turned civil administrators into religious propagandists," he wrote, "... (when) India needed men of the caliber of Chandragupta and Puru, she got a dreamer. Magadha after the Kalinga war frittered away her conquering energy in attempting a religious revolution ... the result was politically disastrous." This unique combination of adherence to truth, rapier sharp judgment, clarity of thought and depth of knowledge is what sets Prof Hemchandra Raychaudhuri apart.

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The second famous work of Prof. Raychaudhuri is Materials for the Study of the Early history of the Vaishnava Sect. This is regarded as the most definitive source book for all serious students of Vaishnavism. Prof Raychaudhuri also contributed a number of articles to learned periodicals which were incorporated in his Studies in Indian Antiquities that show the vast range of his scholarship and the clarity of thought. He also contributed chapters to such works as Dhaka University's History of Bengal Vol I. Even when he was bedridden he contributed an important chapter to the Early History of the Deccan edited by G. Yazdani. He wrote the Advanced History of India (for undergraduate students) in collaboration with Prof. R.C. Mazumdar and K.K. Dutta.

### **.Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958)**

Jadunath Sarkar was born on 10 December 1870 in village Karchamaria, under Singra upazila of Natore district. Son of Rajkumar Sarkar, a zamindar of Karchamaria, he graduated with Honours in English and History in 1891 and stood first class first in MA in English in 1892. He got the Premchand Roychand Studentship in 1897, and his essay, India of Aurangzeb was published in 1901. For a period of exceeding thirty years he filled the professional chairs both of history and English literature at different places such as Calcutta, Patna, Benaras and Cuttack. Jadunath is the greatest historian Indian has produced. He occupies an outstanding position not only among the historians of Indian but also of the world. His fame rests on the range of subject he chose for history, the technique and treatment he adopted for his research, and for the copious works he produced over a long and active period of nearly sixty years. He is not a narrow specialist digging himself in one particular area, but a versatile genius whose pen produced remarkable works in biography, topography, art, architecture, religion, economics, statistics, survey, corporates and military science. Whatever he touched, he turned it into a master piece. The treatment he adopted was of Ranke's technique, where he ignored the general histories as useless and went to original documents letters, diaries and other records which were to a great extent a reflection of the reality of the situation, and not a

partisan and prejudiced version of an author's personal views and political ideology. As for a rich harvest of historical crops he created a sensation by contributing over fifty works of great merits.

### **Marxists**

D.D. Kosambi argued that, contrary to Marx's own statements and to those of several Marxists, the Indian society did not witness a similar progression of various modes of production as happened in Europe. He said that the slave mode of production was not to be found in India. He also rejected Marx's own schema of the Asiatic Mode of Production as inapplicable to India. He, however, thought that there was the existence of feudalism in India, even though he conceived it differently. He was aware that the medieval Indian society was quite different from that of Europe. One of the important characteristics of European feudalism, i.e., manorial system, demesne farming and serfdom, were not to be found in India. But he explained it as a result of the non-existence of the slave mode of production in the preceding period. He further differentiated between two types of feudalism in India – 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' : 'Feudalism from above means a state wherein an emperor or powerful king levied tribute from subordinates who still ruled in their own right and did what they liked within their own territories –as long as they paid the paramount ruler.... By feudalism from below is meant the next stage where a class of land-owners developed within the village, between the state and the peasantry, gradually to wield armed power over the local population.

This class was subject to service, hence claimed a direct relationship with the state power, without the intervention of any other stratum.' Kosambi's lead on this issue was followed by R.S. Sharma who made a comprehensive study of feudalism in India in his book entitled *Indian Feudalism* (1965) and in various articles. According to him, there was a decline in trade and increasing numbers of land grants to the state officials in lieu of salary and to the Brahmans as charity or ritual offering in the post-Gupta period. This process led to the subjection of peasantry and made them dependent on the landlords. Almost all

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features of west European feudalism, such as serfdom, manor, self-sufficient economic units, feudalisation of crafts and commerce, decline of long-distance trade and decline of towns, were said to be found in India.

According to R.S Sharma, the most crucial aspects of Indian feudalism was the increasing dependence of the peasantry on the intermediaries who received grants of land from the state and enjoyed juridical rights over them. This development restricted the peasants' mobility and made them subject to increasingly intensive forced labour. The decline of feudalism also took the same course as in west Europe. Revival of long distance trade, rise of towns, flight of peasants and development of monetary economy were considered to be the main processes responsible for the decline of feudalism in India.

In this schema, the process of feudalisation started sometimes in the 4th century and declined in the 12th century. This view of the medieval Indian society and economy has been questioned by several historians who argue that the development of the Indian society did not follow the western model. They further argue that such a model of development cannot be universally applied to all societies. Harbans Mukhia, in a thought-provoking article 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?' (1981), questions these arguments at several levels. He begins by arguing that there is no single, universally accepted definition of feudalism. It is because feudalism was not a world-system. In fact, capitalism was the first world system and, therefore, all societies before that had their own peculiarities and profound differences from each other. Thus feudalism 'was, throughout its history, a non-universal specific form of socio-economic organization –specific to time and region, where specific methods and organization of production obtained'.

Mukhia defines feudalism as 'the structured dependence of the entire peasantry on the lords'. Such a system was specific 'to Western Europe between the fifth or the sixth century and the fifteenth. Feudalism also developed in its classic form in eastern Europe between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century and possibly in Japan during

the Togukawa regime in particular'. He considers feudalism as a 'transitional system' which : 'stood mid-way in the transition of the West European economy from a primarily slave-based system of agricultural production to one dominated by the complementary classes of the capitalist farmers and the landless agricultural wage-earner, but in which the free peasantry also formed a significant element.' On the basis of this definition of feudalism, Mukhia now argues against the concept of feudalism in India. He says that even in Europe the relationship between long-distance trade and the growth or decline of feudalism is not clear. In fact, the trade had differential impact on various European societies. While at some places, as in west Europe, it led to the dissolution of feudal bonds, in east Europe it provided the lords with the power to reinforce and revitalise the feudal ties. In any case, Mukhia argues, it is not sure that there was a very significant decline of trade and towns in early medieval India. Secondly, while in Europe feudalism developed and declined due to changes at the base of society, in Indian case the reason for the emergence of feudalism is seen as the land grants from above.

According to Mukhia, it is difficult to accept that 'such complex social structures can be established through administrative and legal procedures'. About the most crucial aspect of feudalism –the dependence of peasantry on the landlords –Mukhia thinks that there is no evidence to prove it in Indian case. He argues that even though the exploitation of the peasantry might have increased, there is no evidence to prove that there was any 'extraneous control over the peasant's process of production'. He thinks that 'forced labour in India remained, by and large, an incidental manifestation of the ruling class' political and administrative power rather than a part of the process of production'. He concludes that the 'primarily free peasant form of agricultural production gradually evolving from post-Maurya times, thus characterized the agrarian economy of ancient and medieval India'. In such a scenario there was no possibility of a feudal system of production in India. Several of Mukhia's arguments were criticised by Marxist and non-Marxist scholars in this field. Although there was an acknowledgement of the significance of the questions he raised, criticism

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related to his concept of feudalism, his understanding of the west European experience, his interpretation of Indian history and, particularly, his notion of a free peasant production in India. R.S. Sharma, in his response, wrote an essay entitled 'How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism?' (1985). While accepting the fact that feudalism was not a universal phenomenon, he argues that this was not true of all the pre-capitalist formations.

Thus 'tribalism, the stone age, the metal age, and the advent of a food-producing economy are universal phenomena. They do indicate some laws conditioning the process and pattern of change'. He, therefore, thinks that there was feudalism in India, even though its nature was significantly different. According to him, 'Just as there could be enormous variations in tribal society so also there could be enormous variations in the nature of feudal societies'. He questions the very notion of peasant's control over means of production, particularly land. He maintains that there were multiple and hierarchical rights in the land with the peasant almost always possessing the inferior right. In the areas where land grants were given the grantees enjoyed much superior rights : 'On the basis of the land charters we can say that in the donated areas the landed beneficiaries enjoyed general control over production resources. Of course they did not enjoy specific control over every plot of land that the peasant cultivated. But there is nothing to question their control over the plots of lands that were directly donated to them by the king, sometimes along with the sharecroppers and weavers and sometimes along with the cultivators.' He further argues that, contrary to Mukhia's arguments, forced labour was also prevalent in many parts of the country. On the basis of various evidences, he asserts that there was feudalism during the early medieval period in India which 'was characterized by a class of landlords and by a class of subject peasantry, the two living in a predominantly agrarian economy marked by decline of trade and urbanism and by drastic reduction in metal currency'. Irfan Habib introduces another significant element for identifying the predominant mode of production in any social formation. He argues that although the social form of labour defines a particular mode of production, it



cannot be considered as the sole determinant. Thus although 'Wage-labour remains the basic form of labour in socialism, but this does entitle us to identify the capitalist and socialist modes'. Similarly, petty peasant production may be found in several social formations. Therefore, another crucial element should be taken into account and that is 'the form in which the surplus extracted from the producer is distributed'. Although Habib is doubtful about the existence of feudalism in pre-colonial India, he considers Mukhia's arguments a little far-fetched. He thinks that Mukhia's points about the existence of a 'free peasantry' and 'relative stability in India's social and economic history' are untenable. Such conclusions, according to him, 'presume a rather idyllic picture of pre-colonial India ... for which there is little justification'. In his opinion, 'there were just as intense contradictions here as anywhere else; but that these were different in nature and consequence from the contradictions leading to capitalism in Europe'. Moreover, he rejects the idea of 'exceptionalism' in Indian context. It was also a society with deep internal contradictions, a stratified peasantry and class exploitation. Burton Stein praises Mukhia for raising an important question, but he points out several inadequacies in Mukhia's arguments. According to him, only the absence of serfdom may not determine the absence of feudalism in India because several other characteristics existed. With focus on south India, he argues that these characteristics were local control and private legal jurisdiction of various powerful men, the existence of independent warrior groups which claimed tributes and weak state forms. Secondly, he also questions Mukhia's proposition about the 'relative stability' of pre-colonial Indian society and economy. Such a notion about stability assumes that for two thousand years there was no change in the means and relations of production. This worries Stein: 'This is indeed stability, not "relative", but quite absolute, a position which ought to trouble him as an historian; it troubles me!' On the role of the state, he rejects the notion of a centralized and bureaucratic state.

Instead, he forwards the concept of 'segmentary state', a state whose power was limited. So far as the 'free peasantry' is concerned, he puts more emphasis on peasant collectivities having a mastery over

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productive forces. He questions the notion of free 'individual peasants as productive agents'. In this sense of collective peasant production and the segmentary, Stein thinks that the period from the 10th to the 17th centuries may be said to be a single social formation in south India. In his response to these criticisms, Mukhia sticks to his point that capitalism was the first world-system and all the earlier systems were specific to regions and 'did not possess the internal dynamism that would give them the hegemony' over the world. Only most general features such as agrarian economy and surplus appropriation through non-economic coercion could be common about various pre-industrial societies. But it does not take the specificities, such as production process and social organisation of labour, into account. He reemphasises his concept of a 'free peasantry' in pre-colonial India 'whose process of production was free of extraneous control'. We, therefore, encounter a wide variety of interpretations of the medieval Indian society by the Marxist historians who differ quite significantly from each other. In the course of this debate we also come across the rich variety of Marxist interpretations relating to medieval Indian history

### **Post-modernist**

Postmodernism and postmodernity are sometimes used interchangeably. In fact, both terms denote different, though related meanings. While postmodernity has been used to characterise the economic and social conditions of existence in contemporary developed societies, postmodernism denotes the philosophy which has now arisen after and in opposition to the philosophy of modernity. In the following subsections, we will discuss the concepts of postmodernity, the history of the term postmodernism and finally the basic concepts relating to postmodernism.

Postmodernity It has been a belief among some, particularly the postmodernists that we have passed beyond modernity and the age we are now living in is a postmodern one. Keith Jenkins, one of the postmodern theorists of history, declares that 'Today we live within the general condition of postmodernity. We do not have a choice about this. For postmodernity is not an "ideology" or a position we can choose to

subscribe to or not; postmodernity is precisely our condition : it is our fate.' Frederic Jameson, a benevolent critic of postmodernism, also thinks that postmodernism is a cultural process initiated by a radical change in the nature of capitalism. In a famous book, he has characterised postmodernism as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. Basing in this belief about the emergence of a new society, several thinkers have argued that this has led to a change in our knowledge-system. Thus Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French thinker who popularised the term 'postmodernism', states that 'the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and culture enters what is known as postmodern age'. In using the term postmodernity, the emphasis is basically on the social and the economic. It implies the exhaustion of modernity and stresses the rise of new information and communication technologies leading to globalisation and the enormous growth of consumerism. The theorists of this transformation have claimed that just as in the past the agrarian societies based on land were replaced by industrial societies based on manufacturing, in the same way, the industrial societies are now being replaced by a post-industrial world in which the service sector is now the most prominent. It was Daniel Bell who, in his book *The Coming of Postindustrial Society*, seriously wrote about the arrival of a new kind of society representing a break from the earlier industrial society. In his view, the old-style 'factory worker' is now replaced by the new service-sector professional. Simultaneously, the old-style machines are now replaced by new information and communication technologies. The Fordist assembly line is now a thing of the past and there is a decentralisation of production and manufacturing.

**Subaltern**

The Subaltern Studies was proclaimed by its adherents as a new school in the field of Indian history-writing. Some of the historians associated with it declared it to be a sharp break in the tradition of Indian historiography. A group of writers dissatisfied with the convention of Indian history-writing became part of the collective and contributed for the volumes. It, however, also involved historians and other social scientists not formally associated with the subaltern collective. Besides

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the articles published in the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, these writers also wrote for many other journals and edited volumes as well as published monographs which are today associated with subaltern themes and methodology. Starting the venture with the help of those whom Ranajit Guha termed as ‘marginalised academics’, the *Subaltern Studies* soon acquired vast reputation both inside and outside India for the views they professed as well as for intensive research on subaltern themes. Initially planned as a series of three volumes, it has now become an ongoing project with eleven volumes in print till date.

Apart from these volumes, Ranajit Guha has also edited one volume of essays taken from the various earlier volumes for the international audiences. In some of the recent volumes the *Subaltern Studies* has included themes from non-Indian Third World countries also.

The term ‘subaltern’ has a rather long history. It was initially applied to the serfs and peasants in England during the Middle Ages. Later, by 1700, it was used for the subordinate ranks in the military. It, however, gained wide currency in scholarly circles after the works of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader. Gramsci generally used the term in a broader connotation of ‘class’ to avoid the censorship of the prison authorities as he was in jail and his writings were scanned. Gramsci had adopted the term to refer to the subordinate groups in the society. In his opinion, the history of the subaltern groups is almost always related to that of the ruling groups. In addition, this history is generally ‘fragmentary and episodic’. Ranajit Guha, however, in the Preface to *Subaltern Studies I*, did not mention Gramsci’s use of the term, even though he referred to Gramsci as an inspiration.

Instead, he defined it as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*: ‘The word “subaltern” in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, “of inferior rank”. It will be used in these pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. ‘A little later, at the end of his opening essay in the volume, he further clarified this term: ‘The terms

“people” and “subaltern classes” have been used synonymously throughout this note. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite”. The Subaltern historians made a radical departure in the use of the term from that of Gramsci. Even while accepting the subordinated nature of the subaltern groups, they argued their history was autonomous from that of the dominant classes.

**Check your progress-**

1. Who was D D Kosambi?

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2. Who was Jadunath Sarkar?

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### **14.3 LETS SUM UP**

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The historiography of India alludes to the examinations, sources, basic techniques and translations utilized by researchers to build up a past filled with India.

In late decades there have been four primary schools of historiography in how history specialists study India: Cambridge, Nationalist, Marxist, and subaltern. The once regular "Orientalist" approach, with its picture of an erotic, equivocal, and entirely profound India, has ceased to exist in genuine grant.

The "Cambridge School", drove by Anil Seal, Gordon Johnson, Richard Gordon, and David A. Washbrook, makes light of philosophy. In any

case, this school of historiography is censured for western inclination or Eurocentrism.

The Nationalist school has concentrated on Congress, Gandhi, Nehru and elevated level governmental issues. It featured the Mutiny of 1857 as a war of freedom, and Gandhi's 'Quit India' started in 1942, as characterizing verifiable occasions. This school of historiography has gotten analysis for Elitism.

The Marxists have concentrated on investigations of monetary improvement, landownership, and class strife in precolonial India and of deindustrialisation during the frontier time frame. The Marxists depicted Gandhi's development as a gadget of the middle class first class to bridle mainstream, possibly progressive powers for its own closures. Once more, the Marxists are blamed for being "to an extreme" ideologically impacted.

The "subaltern school", was started during the 1980s by Ranajit Guha and Gyan Prakash. It centers consideration away from the elites and government officials to "history from underneath", taking a gander at the workers utilizing old stories, verse, conundrums, sayings, tunes, oral history and techniques propelled by human sciences. It centers around the frontier period before 1947 and regularly accentuates standing and makes light of class, to the irritation of the Marxist school.

All the more as of late, Hindu patriots have made a rendition of history to help their requests for "Hindutva" ("Hinduness") in Indian culture. This way of thinking is still during the time spent development.[11] In March 2012, Diana L. Eck, educator of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, composed in her book "India: A Sacred Geography", that thought of India dates to an a lot prior time than the British or the Mughals and it wasn't only a group of territorial personalities and it wasn't ethnic or racial.

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## 14.4 KEYWORDS

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Social History: History that attempts to describe the experiences of ordinary people, or that attempts to describe relatively objective patterns

in social groups. Social history is often (but not always) history from the bottom-up. Social history is sometimes difficult to distinguish from cultural history, especially because many cultural historians use elements of social history to set up their cultural arguments. One helpful rule of thumb is that social history is primarily concerned with the reality of what life was like for ordinary people. The cultural approach, in contrast, is generally less interested in material conditions and more interested in how people in the past represented reality or constructed identity and emotions. Warning: There are many definitions of social history. Some scholars use the term to refer to any bottom-up history, including scholarship using the cultural approach. For our purposes, however, we will emphasize the more specific definition provided just above.

**Structuralism:** Before turning to structuralism, it's helpful first to figure out what historians mean by the term "structure." A structure refers to some impersonal force or context that shapes or constrains human agency. Structures can be very big, wide-reaching, and long-lasting, or they can be relatively small and transient. Examples of big or deep structures include capitalism, patriarchy, and the concept of the autonomous individual. A small structure might be the furniture arrangement in a classroom; the furniture creates a structure because the arrangement of chairs and desks shapes students' behavior (or students' agency). However, classroom chairs are a small, weak structure, because we could rearrange them more easily than we could bigger, deeper structures. An example of a medium-sized structure could be the two-party system that currently structures U.S. politics. The two-party system probably will not last as long as capitalism, but it will likely last longer than the furniture arrangement in a classroom

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## **14.5 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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1. Discuss about oriental approach
2. Discuss about the Marxist approach.

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## **14.6 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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## Notes

Approaches To History: Essays In Indian Historiography by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography', *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1:1, 2000.

Gyanendra Pandey, 'In Defense of the Fragment', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* (Delhi, OUP, 1998).

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## 14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRES

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1. Hint – 14.2

2. Hint – 14.2