

Tipu's Diary

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[At a time when Tipu Sultan is under attack from saffronites, it is worth recalling his mission to the Ottoman court.]

If history is an enterprise of knowledge, Prof Mohibbul Hasan was one of the top ranking entrepreneurs of historical knowledge. His contribution to the medieval Indian history is invaluable. He was not only the biographer of Tipu Sultan; his writings brew a new range of information on Hyder-Tipu era of Mysore history.

The *book under review was first published by Prof Hasan in 1968, some thirty-eight years ago. Preserved in the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. *Maraqai-i-Monazil-Rum* is in fact the diary of Tipu Sultan's mission to the Ottoman court. It is also known as the Diary of Ghulam Ali Khan who was the leader of the mission. It was presumably written by Khwaja Abdul Qadir who was the secretary to the mission and whose signature is found at two places (pp. 4 & 7) of the manuscript.

The present reprint carries two introductions, an original one that forms chapter I (pp. 1-5) of the book and the other (that appears first on pp. ix-xiii) written by Prof Irfan Habib. Prof Habib's scholarly note not only delineates the main objective of the embassy but also the valuable information one gathers from this work.

'Historical Background to the Embassy' (chapter 2, pp.6-24) displays the politico-diplomatic circumstances prevailing in India, particularly South India, which exhorted Tipu to send his embassy to Constantinople. Tipu's commercial activities in the Persian Gulf and the state of affairs of the significant port towns like those of Masqat, Basra, Bandar Abbas, Bandar Rig and Abu Shahr are well gleaned in this chapter. Chapter 3—Summary of the Waqat (pp.25-60) forms nucleus of the work. Along with other details of the port towns what one finds very significant and useful is the price-list of articles sold in Masqat, Basra and Abu Shahr in the second half of the eighteenth century. Different quarters of the markets of Basra like *suq ul-qazzazah* (market for silk and embroidery materials), *svq ul-bazazah* (market for white and other clothes) *svq ul-himarah* (market for animals), *suq ul-hidaratiyya* (market for metal and iron works), *sul uz-zahab* (market for fish, poultry, vegetables and greens) and some others give an insight of the commercial dynamism of the port life in the Persian Gulf.

Indian merchants were settled in good number in the ports of Persian Gulf and their residential area was known as *suq ul-Hindi*. One finds the names of some Indian merchants and brokers like Maoji Seth, Kishore Das and Saleh Chelebi who traded there.

The *Waqat* also notes the currencies like *Masqati mahmudi Qurs rum* and *Hun hudari* that were in circulation in the ports of the Persian Gulf.

The original Persian text of the *Waqat* (pp. 1-168) is more interesting in detail and vivid information it provides in context of social composition and religious practices

prevalent in the port towns around the Persian Gulf. Food, dresses of women and men, religious relics and other such description about socio-cultural history is also found in the work. The work has maintained chronology in narrating the events.

Appendix A completes the work by providing details how and when the Tpu's mission reached Constantinople that is not described in the *Waqat* but known from Factory Records of Persia and the Persian Gulf preserved in the India Office, London. Appendix B on 'Notes on Persons and place-names occurring in the Persian text' and Appendix C on 'Notes on Non-Persian and Technical words occurring in the text' are exhaustive and useful for further research on the subject.

Maps showing the town-plan of Masqat and Basra respectively and the maritime route from India to Constantinople via Masqat and Abu Shahr and back to India via Alexandria, Jeddah and Aden are relevant and useful.

Printing, cover-page and get-up are fine. A few typological mistakes are ignorable.

Instead of summary the entire text of the *Waqat* is now needed to be produced in English with an index since the work is a rare manual of maritime history of the eighteenth century Persian Gulf ports. ❄❄❄❄

**Maraqai-i-Manazil-i-Rum : Tipu Sultan's Mission to Constantinople*

edited by : Mohibbul Hasan

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