General readings: intended to provide students with references that serve as the basis for specialized reading (listed below) and navigate the search for further reading

Habib, Medieval India. The Study of a Civilization; Chandra, History of Medieval India, 2007; Jackson, The Delhi Sultanate; idem, ‘Muslim India: the Delhi Sultanate’, New Cambridge History of Islam (NCHI), 3, pp. 100-127*; Richards, The Mughal Empire; Dale, ‘India under Mughal Rule’, NCHI, 3, pp. 266-314*; Streusand, Formation of the Mughal Empire; Schimmel, Empire of the Great Mughals; Moosvi, Episodes in the Life of Akbar; Banarasidas, Ardhakathanak, text and tr. Rohini Chowdhury

1. Definition, Sources, Apparatus: ruling classes; system of governance; state and economy

Definition of state; textual and documentary sources; population and territory; Arab polity in Sind; imperial polities in medieval India (Turkish, Afghan & Mughal); composition of nobility & changes; structure of administration: iqta, mansab, jagir; taxation & distribution of the agrarian surplus; lower bureaucracy & language of administration; law & local administration; local ruling classes (chieftains, zamindars and village oligarchies): allies in sharing resources, adversaries in times of crisis (decline of the Mughal Empire); state & economy


2. Kingship: theories, rituals, images

Theories of kingship: king as protector of social order (Barani); Turko-Mongol traditions; social contract & king as vicegerent of God (Abul Fazl); court culture and ceremonies: jharoka darshan; tuladan; nauroz; images of the ruler

Readings: Ahmad, ‘Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India’*; Habib, ‘Two Indian Theorists of the State: Barani and Abul Fazl’, Mind over Matter, eds. Vanina & Jha; Richards,

3. Historiography

Oriental and Asiatic Despotism (Bernier, Marx), segmentary state (Burton Stein); patrimonial-bureaucratic empire (Blake); polity of local urban groups (Bayly, Hasan); Medieval Indian state, centralized, not feudal (Aligarh School); processual approach (Subrahmanyam, Kumar, Aquil); counter-perspectives on Mughal polity (Talbot, Pauwels, Busch)


4. Ideology and Political rule

Elements of political ideology: juristic & Sufi Islam; statecraft; absolute peace (sulh i kul); ‘intellectual’ projects: histories & translations; political norms & state; Chachnama as a book of political theory; power, piety & Indo-Islamic architecture; state, caste and social conflicts

Readings: Rizvi, Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar’s Reign; Ali, Mughal India (Chs. 11, 14, 16, 17, 21) N. Hasan, Religion, State and Society in Medieval India (chapters 6, 7, 8); Darling, “Do Justice, Do Justice, For That is Paradise”*; Alam, ‘Sharia, Akhlaq and Governance’, Languages of Political Islam in India; Khan, ‘Tracing Sources of Principles of Mughal Governance: A Critique of Recent Historiography’*; Haider, ‘Justice and Political Authority in Medieval Indian Islam’*; ‘Translating Texts and Straddling Worlds. Intercultural Communication in Mughal India’*; Arjomand, ‘Legitimacy and political organisation’, NCHI, vol. 4, pp. 268-73*; Eaton (ed.), India’s Islamic Traditions (Introduction); Mukhia, Mughals of India (Ch. 1); Khan, ‘Economic Theories of Medieval India’*; Truschke, Culture of Encounters, pp. 1-25, 101-165; idem, Aurangzeb; Asif, Book of Conquest (Ch. 3); Review of Asif’s book by Habib, Studies in People’s History, 2017, 105-9*; Lefevre, ‘State Building and management of diversity’, MHJ 2013*; Flood, Objects of Translation

Note: Most articles/assigned portions of books are available with Shubho Photostat in the form of a Reader. References can also be consulted in the Central Library & the CHS Library. Articles marked with asterisk (*) are available in soft copies through JNU Library’s search engine. You can also send a mail on snajafhaider@gmail.com for soft copies. Some readings can be downloaded from https://an-in.academia.edu/NajafHaider. Please note that more readings will be recommended as we go.
Contact Hours: Monday (1-3 PM) & Wednesday (11 AM-1 PM) Room 319. For out of hours meetings call 9871575587/26741286