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## The Hindu Shahi of Chronicles: The Evolution of a Historical Identity in South Asia

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**Abstract**
This paper gives a critical overview of the historical underpinning of the so-called Hindu Shahi dynasty by examining the well-known related chronicles and their consumption in its development. Hindu Shahi, a dynasty, historically known for their battles with the Ghaznavids invasions of India in early 11th Century, leading to their decline. According to Al-Biruni, a Muslim scholar of Indology (circa 1030 CE), they governed regions including the modern Kabul Valley and the Vale of Peshawar. He recorded them as "Indian Shahi". According to a mid-12th-century account by Kalhana of Kashmir in Rajatarangini, they are referred to as the "Shahis of Udhabanda", modern town of Hund on the Indus River in the Vale of Peshawar. There does not seem any rigorous scrutiny ever employed to the overall interpretation issues and their understanding in the this regard. These are the very concerns that could have been developed under the then theoretical concepts of archaeology and potentially needs realignment in the present understanding of the period.
**Keywords:** Hindu Shahi, Ghaznavid, Odi Shahi, Turki Shahi, History of Pakistan, Hund, Kalhana, Rajatarangini, Al-Biruni

## Introduction
The Hindu Shahi dynasty, in its loose sense, in the modern scholarship, was first appreciated in mid-19th century when British antiquarian reported the coins of a "decidedly Hindu" (Prinsep, 1834, p. 315) origin with bull and horseman device. The bull supposedly being Nandi, the mount of Hindu god Shiva was probably at play in this concept. Following translations of Al-Biruni's work, they were recorded as "Hindu Kings of Kabul" (Longpérier, 1845, p. 220; Reinaud, 1845, p. 153) , with two names in his account, Samanta Deva and Bhima Deva, matching those on the coin legends. The provenance of these coins is mostly unknown to researchers. In the late 1960s, Pakistani archaeologist Ahmad Hassan Dani attributed significant defensive architectural remains discovered around the mountain passes in the northern Vale of Peshawar to the Hindu Shahis (Dani, 1968, p. 27) . Concurrently, during the excavation of the Damkot site near modern Chakdara, Professor Abdur Rahman (1968, p. 110) identified the uppermost excavation levels, 'Period 5', as belonging to the Hindu Shahi. This identification became prominent after Rahman published a detailed research work titled *The Last Two Dynasties of the Shahis* (Rahman, 1979) . His synthesis underscores a detailed historical panorama of the region before the 9th Century, when he proposes the emergence of the Shahi took place. Hindu temples located in the Salt Range of the Potohar Plateau along the eastern bank

of the Indus have also been identified as Hindu Shahi structures (Meister, 2010, p. 9) . Notably for their fortified enclosures, pointing towards defensive architectural needs. The consensus among archaeologists studying the Kabul and Peshawar regions lends significant support to the construct of Hindu Shahi as a distinct "archaeological culture". Since 2000, numerous additional archaeological sites have been identified without substantial challenge to this conceptualisation (Ali, 1999, 2003; Ali & Jan, 2005; Ali & Qazi, 2008a; Ali & Rahman, 2005; Ali, Rahman et al., 2010; Ali et al., 2011; Ali, Shah et al., 2010). However, the discovery of sites in regions like the Kaghan Valley, near Kashmir, coupled with their notable absence in the expected Potohar Plateau, presents significant geographical discrepancies. These discrepancies raise concerns about the methodologies employed in the present understanding of the Hindu Shahi.

Archaeological research in Pakistan and Afghanistan has established the Hindu Shahi as a distinctive archaeological culture, marked by consistent characteristics across various regions as highlighted above (*e.g.* Ali & Qazi, 2008b; Ali & Rahman, 2005; Ali, Rahman et al., 2010; Ali et al., 2011; Ali, Shah et al., 2010; Ali et al., 2005 ). This culture, as closely linked to the Hindu Shahi dynasty, historically connected to the Brahmans (see Al-Biruni, circa 1030, Sachau, 1888, pp. 12) and hence deeply embedded in Hindu religious traditions. The dynasty is credited with restoring order in the early 9th century after the destructive Hun invasions of the late fifth century or any other reason. These accounts collectively challenge the prevailing historical narrative of an autonomous Hindu Shahi dynasty centred at Kabul, Hund, and later in Salt ranges, replacing it with one in which the dynasty had extensive control over the Swat, Salt Range, and Bannu areas. Recent findings suggest a more fragmented and contested political landscape than previously acknowledged, calling into question the singular dominance of the Hindu Shahi in this historical context. The dominant historical narrative has largely remained unchallenged. Nonetheless, this affords an opportunity to develop a fresh understanding of the archaeological heritage of this period.

This research extensively reviews chronicles written in Chinese, Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit from the period between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE. This review aimed to layout and re-evaluate existing hypotheses about the Hindu Shahis. Notable contributions from Arabic and Sanskrit scholars, such as Al-Biruni (circa 1030 CE) and Kalhana (circa 1149 CE), have been pivotal in understanding the dynasty, with Al-Biruni's *Fi Tehqiq ma lil-Hind* (Sachau, 1888) and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (Stein, 1900), offering detailed references to the Shahis at Udabbanda.

## Al-Biruni's Shahis
Al-Biruni, a renowned Muslim scholar during the Hindu Shahi period, conducted extensive explorations in the early 11th century, making substantial contributions to the historical and geographical knowledge of both South Asia and Central Asia of the era (e.g. Elliot & Dowson, 1869, pp. 1–20; Sachau, 1888a). His meticulous observations and analyses encompassed a wide range of historical and scientific aspects, yielding significant impacts on the fields of science and anthropology, particularly with regards to India. Al-Biruni's influence as an esteemed author shedding light on the Ghaznavid invasion of India cannot be overstated. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the prevailing historiographical trends wherein historians often accord considerable weight to the perspectives put forth

by influential figures or recognised "authorities", while rarely questioning their interpretations.

Al-Biruni's discussions on the Shahi dynasty are relatively brief, amounting to a mere three pages summarising the information he managed to gather (Sachau, 1888b, pp. 10–13) . Noteworthy among his findings is the assertion that the earlier Shahi dynasty originated as Turks and subsequently transformed into the "Hindu" or "Indian" Shahis after sixty generations. Al-Biruni mentions that this new Shahi dynasty emerged when a Brahman minister seized power (Al-Birūnī, 1908, pp. 348–351). This interpretation has become a foundational pillar in the widely accepted understanding among researchers working in the region. The persistent identification of the later 'Brahmanical' dynasty as the Hindu Shahi is primarily based on the references found in Al-Biruni's writings.

Al-Biruni's works on India possess significant historical value as sources from the 11th century. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that they should not be regarded as comprehensive and contemporary anthropological studies. While these writings offer invaluable insights into the history of India during that era, it is important to recognise their limitations in terms of providing a fully developed and reliable analysis of Indian society according to modern standards.

Scholars have also overlooked certain complexities in the translation process, particularly regarding the interpretation of al-Biruni's introductory statement in this regard: "وقد كان لهم ملوك بكابل اتراك قيل فى اصلهم انهم كانوامن التبت" (Al-Biruni c. 1030). This translates as, "*Indians* had their Turkish kings in Kabul, said to be of Tibetan origion". One notable translation is that of Sachau (1888b, p. 10), which renders the statement as follows: "The *Hindus* had kings residing in Kabul, Turks who were said to be of Tibetan origin" (Sachau, 1888, p. 10). It is important to note that in the name "Hindu Shahiya" by Sachau (1888, p. 13) the inclusion of the term "Hindu" lacks any corresponding indication in the original text. In the original text, the dynasty in question is referred to as "Shahiyas of Kabul", with the founder being a Brahman minister who usurps the 60th Shahiya, namely Lagaturman. The subsequent discussion involves the new monarchy and a list of kings. In this context, a line is added indicating the absence of any remaining members from this dynasty, "وانقضت الشاهية الهندية ولم يبق من اهل ذلك اليت" (Al-Biruni, Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, c. 1030, p. 351). Sachau (1888, p. 13) translating it as "This Hindu Shahiya dynasty is now extinct", which appears somewhat detached from the context of the term "*al Hindiyyah الهنديه*" which means "*Indian*" and for it to be "*Hindu*", the Arabic should be "*Al-Hindusiyyah, الهندوسيه*". During that period, many Arab scholars also referred to India as "*al-Hind*" in their chronicles (e.g. Al-Athir, Abi Hassan ibn Abi al-Karam; Al-Athir, Abi Hassan ibn Abi al-Karam & Khan, Muhammad, Abdul Ghafur, 1901; Khan, Muhammad, Abdul Ghafur, 1901; (Isṭaḵrī, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-, 1193/10th Cent.; Isṭaḵrī, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al- & Balkhī, Śaikh abī Zaid Ahmad bin Sahl al-, 1927; Muqaddasī & Collins, 1994; Ranking & Azoo, 1897) . Therefore, "*Al-Hindiyyah*" signifies "*Indian*", and consequently, " الشاهيه الهنديه *Ash-Shaiyah Al-Hindiyyah*" denotes the "Shahis of India". This nomenclature of the later Shahiyas was also regarded as inapt by Rahman (2002, pp. 41–42), one of the leading archaeologists on the Hindu Shahi. He proposed a new name based on the argument that the current one is derived from a religion, which he deems inaccurate, i.e. Oḍi Shahi (Bailey, 1980, p. 21; Rahman, 2018, p. 114; Rahman, 2002, p. 41; Shah, 2008, p. 119). However, the translations are not yet

brought into question.
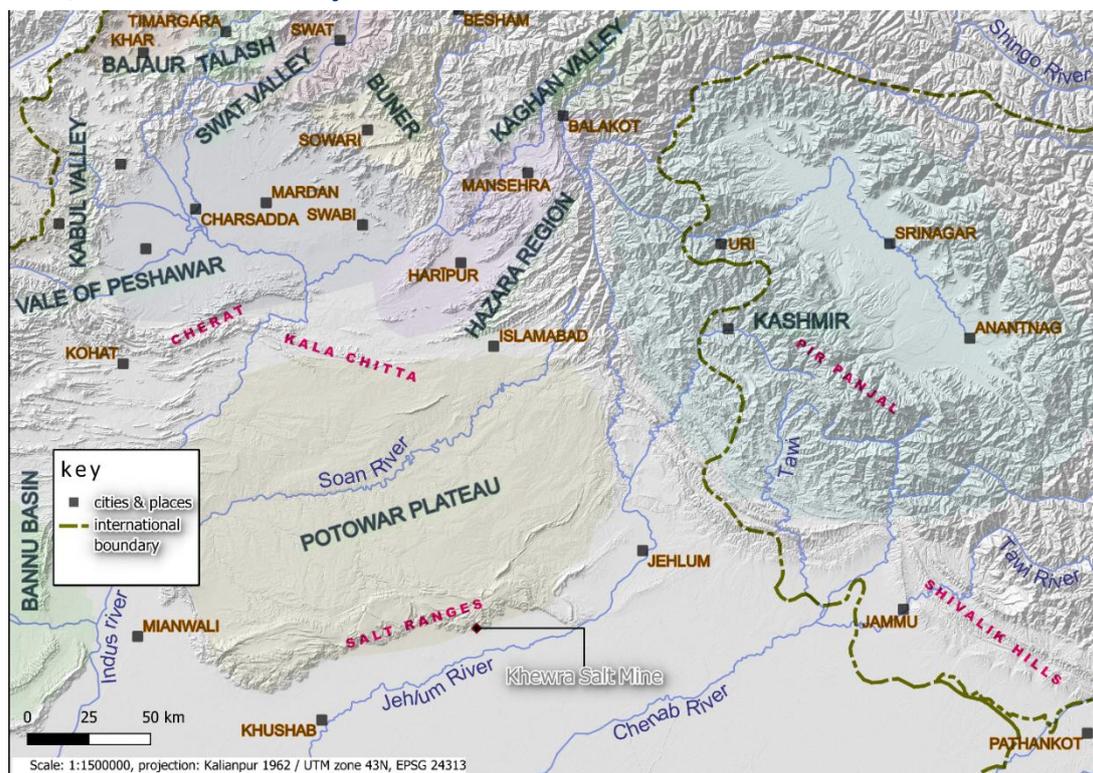
**Kashmir and the Shahis**

Kalhana, in his historical account, *Rajatarangini*, documented the military expeditions conducted by Śaṁkaravaman, the king of Kashmir during his reign from 883 to 902 CE (Stein, 1900b, 206, Book 4, 152-55) . Based on Kalhana's narrative, this monarch liberated the 'Takkaregion' from 'Alakhana' or 'Ali Khan' (Shahpuriya, 1912, p. 439, 460; see Stein, 1900b, p. 205) , the ruler of Gurjara, and reinstated its rightful claimant who was already in his service. The Takka or Takadesha is presumably Jhelum and Potohar. Goetz (1969, p. 11) places it near Lahore, Gujranwala and Gujrat while Kuwayama (2006, p. 122) from the west of Hindu Kush to Punjab. Kalhana reports that these events of Lalliya Shahi's alignment with Alakhana greatly angered Śaṁkaravaman. As a result, due to Śaṁkaravaman's intention to remove Lalliya Shahi from authority, he did not accept Lalliya's allegence (Shahpuriya, 1912, p. 439) . The chronicler, Kalhana, seemingly puts his revering and empathetic stance toward Lalliya. i.e. "As a result, Lalliya Shahi encountered a formidable dilemma, trapped between the rulers of 'Dard' and 'Turuṣka', despite the historical refuge that his capital, Udhabanda, had previously provided for troubled monarchs". In another section of the account, Kalhana documented the Shahis as a monarchy centered in Udhabanda (Hund). During the reign of Gopalaverman, the son of Śaṁkaravaman, under the regency of Queen Sugandha, the treasurer of the Kashmir kingdom subdued the realm at 'Udabhāṇḍapura' and placed Lalliya's son, Toramana, on the throne with the title of Kamaluka (Stein, 1900, p. 217). Scholars perceive this action by Kashmir as corresponding with the event later described by Al-Biruni, where Lagaturman's Brahman minister, Kallar seized power (e.g. Longpérier 1845, p. 226; Elliot, Dowson 1869, p. 421; Cunningham 1894, p. 55; MacDowall 1968; Rahman 1979, pp. 51, 57, 90). It is noticeable that during this period, Chinese references became scarce, and the chronicles of Kashmir by Kalhana and the accounts of Muslim authors such as Al-Biruni, become our primary sources. The biases inherent in each author's perspective can influence their portrayal of Kashmir, as in the case of Kalhana or the depiction of the emerging Muslim influence in the region as perceived by Muslim authors which can potentially lead to partial viewpoints (see Map 1).

***Map 1. Map of Kashmir, Potohar Plateau and the Vale of Peshawar highlighting the physical features***

During the regency for her son Abimanyo (958-972 CE), Queen Diddā of Kashmir (who was the granddaughter of Bhīma Shahi of Udabhanda) experienced intense anger upon discovering the capture of a ruler named 'Thakkana' by certain Kashmirian force, who was believed to be affiliated with the 'Shahi dynasty'. This capture took place during a military expedition led by the Kashmiri commander-in-chief. Notably, the commander-in-chief, Yosodhra, accepted payment to allow this king to remain on his throne and Diddā was apparently not informed about this event, resulting in a situation. Accordingly, this escalated into a conspiracy when she requested the removal of the commander, who subsequently rebelled against her. Ultimately, Diddā managed to resolve the situation and assumed control (see Stein 1900b, p. 20; 1900b, pp. 105, 249; Goetz 1969, p. 69; Khan, Rahman 2020, p.11). The historical record does not provide sufficient clarity regarding the identity of the Shahi ruler, nor does it offer any indication of the specific country involved. Nevertheless, this incident sheds light on the challenging geographical landscape of the subject region, which posed difficulties in terms of accessibility. The absence of clear information on the direction in this respect, further complicates the identification of the country in question.

The *Rajatarangini* contains a significant reference regarding the support provided by Kashmir to the Shahis of Udabhanda. King Saṁgrāmarāja (r. 1003-1028) responded to a plea for assistance from 'Shahi Trilocanpāla' by dispatching his minister, Tunga, along with an army. This event is documented by Kalhana (Stein, 1900b, pp. 170–171), who also identifies Mahmud's Army as the Turuṣka army, against which Kashmir attempted to support Shahis in the region of the Touṣī (Tohi?) river (see Stein, 1900, p. 273). Although the endeavour was not successful, Kalhana commended Trilocanpāla for his unwavering resilience and

determination despite his kingdom's diminished status. Additionally, Kalhana reported the quick resolution of the Shahis' situation (Stein, 1900, p. 273, Book VII, 66-69).

While Kalhana primarily focuses on Tunga, the Kashmiri minister, and highlights his misconduct and corruption, this recorded event supports the accounts provided by other historians. Importantly, it confirms that Udabhanda and its shahi are indeed the same Hindu Shahi dynasty which Kashmir came to help. Scholars, including Shahpuriya (1912, p. 594), speculate that Bimbā, reported as Tunga's 'Shahi daughter-in-law' and who participated in the *Satti* ritual by entering the fire with Tunga, could potentially be the daughter of Trilocanpāla Shahi. This association provides a plausible explanation for Tunga's loyalty to the Shahi cause against Ghaznavids. It can be speculated here that Kalhana himself was opposed to this action taken by Tunga.

The *Rajatarangini* serves as a valuable source documenting the high regard and reverence accorded to the Shahis in Kashmir following their loss of the kingdom. Throughout the text, there are multiple references highlighting the significance of the Shahi lineage. In a momentous occurrence, this Kashmiri minister, Tunga, and his son met their demise as they fell victim to a conspiracy masterminded by the monarch himself. Similarly, Kalhana's historical records offer further insights into the reign of King Ananta (r. 1028-1063CE), who displayed significant favouritism towards the Shahi princes Rudrapāla, Diddāpāla, and Anangapāla. Nonetheless, these princes were regarded unfavourably by Kalhana, who perceived them lowly and troublesome due to their exorbitant remunerations. Moreover, Kalhana laments upon the certain 'Shahi princes' in Kashmir court. For instance, he noted that Rudrapāla, a 'Shahi' prince who established a matrimonial relation with the king, extended his support to individuals belonging to lower social strata, including thieves and bandits. These references require further study on the motives and the agency of these 'Shahis' in the court of Kashmir.

Kalhana indirectly attributes the responsibility for a conflict with a Brahmarāja to Rudrapāla (Shahi), who, due to his antagonistic relationship with the Brahmarāja, instigated the latter's rebellion. The Brahmarāja formed an alliance with some influential figures in Kashmiri political spheres, such as the Damaras (*Mleccha* princes) and, notably, the Dard raja. However, Rudrapāla managed to overcome this confederacy, gaining prominence in the eyes of the king (Stein, 1900, pp. 279–282). Another of the king's favoured 'Shahi princes', Anangapāla, entertained the idea of plundering temple statues to acquire their valuable gold. Kalhana mentions that most of these Shahi princes met untimely deaths, possibly due to their unpopularity among the locals, or through the collusions of certain factions within the power hierarchies of Kashmir state. It is important to note that Kalhana's references do not provide sufficient evidence to substantiate any potential animosity on [Shahi's] part towards Kashmir. Ironically, after detailing the sudden demise of these Shahi princes, Kalhana reports the presence of another group of Shahis during the reign of the succeeding king, Kalaśa (r. 1063-1089), namely Bijja, Pittharāja, and Pāja (Stein, 1900, p. 291). In another notable incident, a Shahi queen, Vasanthalekhā of King Harṣa (r. 1089-1101) and other Shahi princesses chose self-immolation as their fate, i.e. *satti*, after a royal conspiracy caused a crisis and the king was ousted (Stein, 1900, 388, Book 7, verse 1550).

These references place a huge agency of these Shahi princes in Kashmir.

However, with current state of the studies on the Kalhan's work and these references, a deconstructive approach will consider these instances minimal, less reliable to be considered as the same identity as of the 'Shahis of Udabanda'. Other instances of the Kashmiri court need to be factored before this identification can be made. Also important is to highlight that these events shed light on a certain 'Shahis' in Kashmir but nothing more than a bird's-eye view of a neighbouring state. Its perspective and emphasis are not going to be any more than the Kashmiri view.

## Historians and the Shahis

The lack of significant references to this dynasty in the period after the 12th Century in historical records of the region suggests that it was almost forgotten. This is despite the fact that several historians explored the same geographical area in their accounts. It was Kalhana's chronicles, written in the 1140s CE, which serve as the principal testimony of this dynasty's existence. Historical accounts, such as those written by Muhammad Kasim Ferishta (d. 1620 CE), have documented the battles of the Ghaznavids with the Shahi dynasty, yet it lacks a clear title for later. Ferishta referred to them as either "Hindoos" or "Brahmin *Rajas*" (Briggs, 1829, pp. 15–16; Farishta & Khawaja, 1612/2008, p. 52). The term 'Hindu' was used largely indistinctly by various Muslim authors from the 9th century onward to describe all the inhabitants of India.

Driven by an intense curiosity, European colonial scholars of the 19th century sought to unravel the complexities of South Asian history. This zeal often propelled them to transcend traditional academic boundaries, attempting to elucidate the identities of historical figures cited in diverse written records. An exemplar of this scholarly pursuit is found in Price's (1811, p. 454) examination of Arab texts, where he endeavoured to identify a 'Shahi' or 'Ratbil king -رتبل' (also Rutbil, see also, Section 3.5). He speculatively referred to him as "Reteil-رتيل" or "Retpeil- رتپيل" in the texts. Accordingly, these names, suggesting Tartar or "Hindu" (Sanskrit) origins, can possibly be corresponded with a possible Indian name "Raja Vittel- وتل". The transliteration of this name from Arabic into Sanskrit is also noted across historical narratives. Another example being "Zumbil-زنبل" (Marquart, 1901, p. 38, 1901, p. 38; Minorsky, 1970, p. 345; Smith, 1994, p. 76) , which is proposed by various historians and is also well-known among archaeologists  (e.g. Ball et al., 2019, p. 350; Petrie, 2021, p. 82 ). Subsequently, in 1841, Wilson highlighted that Ferdowsi's Persian tale portrayed 'Rustam' as 'Indian', suggesting the ruler of Kabul (known as "Retna-pala") could also have Indian ancestry. Wilson (1841, p. 133) supported this claim by citing Ibn-e-Haukal, noting the presence of idol-worshers in Kabul even while under Muslim rule. These works collectively reflect the historical and philosophical perspectives prevalent during their times.

This association underscores the significance of these titles and their historical context within the broader discourse on Hindu Shahi and their predecessors' rule. The reliability of Balādhurī's account is further supported by corroborative references from other 9th century historians like Al-Ya'qubi (d. 897CE) (Gordon et al., 2018; Yaqubi, Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb, Arabic/1861) and Tabari (d. 923CE) (Juynboll, 1989, p. 149; Rahman, 1979, ix) . In due course, Wilson  (1841, p. 133)  emphasised that Ferdowsi's Persian folk tale depicted 'Rustam' as 'Indian', suggesting that the ruler of Kabul referred to as "Retna-

pala" could also have Indian ancestry. Wilson cites Ibn-e-Haukal to support this argument, highlighting that while Muslim forces held power in Kabul, a significant number of idol-worshipers still inhabited the area. It is noteworthy that these works were shaped by the prevailing historical and philosophical views of their time, potentially reflecting the inherent biases.

## Discussions

The significance of the historical records in the present definition of Hindu Shahi is considerable, and they have shaped and reshaped identification as the interpretations became available (*c.f.* Thomas, 1847; Tod, 1832), and consistently influenced research into the Hindu Shahi period. Historical texts, particularly Al-Biruni's descriptions, have been instrumental in defining the coins of the Hindu Shahi from the start of the mid-ninetieth century. His accounts need a little unpacking. It is a narrative, based on the potentially original distinctions between the Turki Shahis and Hindu Shahis. However, he himself highlight the complexities of understanding regional histories and the currently available interpretations also have issues which need deconstruction.

Al-Biruni mentions the "Shahis of Kabul" and "Indian Shahi" rather than a distinct "Turki" or "Hindu" group, indicating a potential misinterpretation in later translations that emphasised a religious or ethnic difference where there might have been none. There is also lack of consideration among the interpreters that Al-Biruni calls both of the groups "Indian Shahis" from the start, which is consistent in different versions of the original manuscript (*c.f.* Bibliothèque Nationale de France). The translation of terms from Al-Biruni's original, particularly by Sachau (1888), has had lasting impacts on the perception of the Hindu Shahis. The shift from "Indian Shahi" to "Hindu Shahi" in translations may have influenced subsequent historical and archaeological interpretations, aligning them more with a religious identity rather than a broader cultural or regional one. The potential biases introduced by historical narratives, rooted in the interpretations and their translations, continue to challenge scholars in drawing accurate conclusions about the period. Notably, the main proponents of the identity, such as Dani (1968, p. 27) and Rahman (1979, viii, xiii) also recognise the lack of ample corroboration. However there seems no consideration on questioning the existing interpretations in their works.

Despite extensive historical research efforts, the original authors of certain chroniclers and their works of the past will remain abstract. Kalhana's chronicle frequently mentions the town of Udabhanda during the period of 883-1028 CE (Stein, 1900a, 206, 217,218, 255, 270-273) , with reference to various Shahi rulers such as Lallya Shahi, Tormana-Kamaluka, Bhima Shahi, and Trilochanapala Shahi. These accounts coincide with mentions in other Persian and Arabic sources, including Al-Biruni's compilations, highlighting their historical importance. However, the connection between the historical Hindu Shahi and the archaeological findings in these regions is still unclear. This disconnect raises concerns about the direct applicability of such historical records to the archaeological understanding of the Hindu Shahi.

Scholars have explored Chinese and Arabic records to validate and expand these genealogies, but the results often reveal more about the historical narratives than the tangible cultural remains and their historical significance. Consequently, the archaeological correlation with the Hindu Shahi culture in these regions remains mysterious and less known. This disconnect raises

concerns about the direct applicability of historical records to the archaeological understanding of the Hindu Shahi period.

It can be difficult and speculative to use historical chronicles for archaeology. For instance, as noted by Al-Biruni himself (Sachau, 1888b, p. 11), that he could not find the pedigree of these kings. This perspective invites a more nuanced exploration of the motives and consequences of such transformations within the historical narrative.

**Conclusion**

In response to the underlying question in this research, i.e. how consistent are the chronicles in their attribution of the time of Hindu Shahis?, this research explored the complexity of interpreting historical narratives from the Hindu Shahi period. These narratives, heavily derived from historical chronicles, merit a nuanced examination due to potential biases shaped by the authors' political, religious, or cultural agendas. Such biases could skew the authenticity and accuracy of the recorded events. The reliance on these chronicles, from diverse origins presents a varied historical tapestry. These sources, while rich, often reflect the perspectives of outsiders, and their accounts potentially lack direct, agentic references to the Hindu Shahi rulers, focusing instead on broader regional dynamics. This has been observed at many places. For instance, Al-Biruni, provides a more direct account of the Hindu Shahi rulers, detailing a succession of kings and political upheavals. However, even Al-Biruni acknowledged limitations in his understanding of the genealogy and history of the Indian Shahis, or the story of 'Brahtakin' for Turki Shahis, which suggests a need for careful interpretation of his writings. Sachau's translations, which shifted the identity of these kings from "Indian Shahiya" to "Hindu Shahiya" highlight the potential for misinterpretations based on translation choices alone. A score later, 'Utbi (circa 1060CE, tr. 1858) also shed light on the Ghaznavids, and particularly after Mahmud but it is important to note that for these court historians including Gardezi, Minhaj us Siraj Juzjani, the "other" remained obscured and less known for probably the reasons that they were not practically involved with the affairs and embellished their version from the court itself. Furthermore, Kalhana's 12th-century work, *Rajatarangini*, offers insights into the interactions between the Shahis and Kashmiri rulers, but again, these accounts must be scrutinised for potential biases (see Chapter 6.1), as they are coloured by the author's background and the political context of his time. Kalhana's use of the term 'Shahi' is quiet broad while he emphasises the 'Shahis of Udhabanda' as potentially a particular group. While this is most direct of his record of a certain 'Shahis' of Udhabanda that can potentially be corresponded with the Al-Biruni's version of 'Indian Shahis'. Yet this assumption is not entirely consistent within Kalhana's text or the later texts such as that of Farishtah. The examination of the Shahis' historical identity presents itself as a persuasive argument; however, the historical sources utilised require cautious interpretation and are seen that they cannot entirely be relied upon. This paper has demonstrated that misinterpretations are prevalent, suggesting that further inaccuracies may be discovered upon closer scrutiny. For instance, the misinterpretation of the 'Indian Shahi' with 'Hindu Shahi' gave the name to this interpretation which is potentially misleading and this is appreciated by the many researchers. The identity at its current position should be relegated to a loose term referring to a historical entity which cannot be clearly pinpointed

though ostensibly sets well with the course of event. This will further warrants contextualisation on the related studies.

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