

Reciprocity between Archaeology and History: A Case Study of Asar-us-Sanadeed

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ABSTRACT

History and Archaeology are sister subjects and complement each other though both sciences have different methodology. Archaeology mainly relies on fieldwork for collection of data whereas history is based on the study of documents. Archaeology provides historians concrete facts in the form of material remains to verify their assumptions. The findings of archaeologists help Historians to build narratives to designate people their due place in history by highlighting their contribution. Today the emphasis on interdisciplinary approach in social sciences is considered a remarkable advancement. History provides many examples where two or more sciences had been combined and masterpieces were produced. Asar-us-Sanadeed is one such glaring example where the author combined the methodology of History and Archaeology and produced a remarkable scholarly work. It is a description of the buildings and monuments of Delhi. This work is valuable as it can

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contribute to the decolonization of the historical tradition in south Asia rectifying the assumptions of the orientalist of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan deserves the credit and appreciation for such research. This paper attempts to highlight the reciprocal relationship of both sciences and how Sir Syed Ahmad Khan consciously or unconsciously used the methodology of both sciences to contribute an original work. This paper evaluates the research methodology Sir Syed employed in writing this book.

Introduction

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was a dynamic personality and prolific writer of the nineteenth century British India. Though lacking in formal education yet had passion for learning and writing. His personality and contribution in every field of life has been extensively researched however new dimensions appear with every glance at this marvellous historical figure. His earliest work *Asar-us-Sanadeed* has been constantly analysed and appreciated by the historians throughout the world. Christian Trollin an article "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: Asar Al Sanadid"¹ differentiates between the two editions of the book published in 1847 and 1854. The author identifies the first edition with the Persian tradition and subsequent edition with the modern historical tradition. He compares both and elaborates the differences.

C. M. Naim on the other hand, considers it two books with the same title in his article "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid".² It is an extensive study which compares the authorship, purpose of writing, the style, and the response of the audience on both books. Iqtadar Hussain Siddiqi compares Sir Syed's works written before

1 Christian W. Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: Asar Al Sanadid," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 2 (1972):137-143.

2 C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," *Modern Asian Studies*(2010): 669-708.

and after the incident of 1857 including *Asar-us-Sanadeed* in his article "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing"³ in an edited book *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Centenary Tribute*.⁴ Nazir Ahmad's article in the same book titled "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Works on Archaeology Entitled *Athar-us-Sanadid*: A Study"⁵ focuses on the archaeological significance of the book and provides additional information on various archaeological sites referred in the book. Fatima Quraishi offers analysis on the same book in her article "Asar-ul-Sanadeed: a nineteenth-century history of Delhi"⁶ through translating some parts of the book. Lubna Irfan also focuses Syed Ahmad Khan's contribution in the field of both sciences in her article "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: The first Historical Archaeologist".⁷

Scholars disagree on Syed Ahmad's inspiration to write such a masterpiece. Troll considers it was inspired by the earlier historical, biographical and topographical writings in Persian.⁸ Irfan Habib contends that there was no earlier tradition in Persian literature about the old buildings and their inscriptions.⁹ Naim speculates that Syed Ahmad Khan's interaction with the British officers and European tourists inspired him to write *Asar-I* to be recognized as a historian among his superiors.¹⁰

3 Iqtadar Hussain Siddiqi, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing," in *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Centenary Tribute*, ed., Asloob A. Ansari (Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2001), 106-127.

4 Ansari, ed., *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*.

5 Nazir Ahmad, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Works on Archaeology Entitled *Athar-us-Sanadid*: A Study," in *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Centenary Tribute*, ed., Asloob A. Ansari (Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2001), 128-153.

6 Fatima Quraishi, "Asar-ul-Sanadid: A Nineteenth-Century History of Delhi," *Journal of Art History*, no. 6, (June, 2012).

7 Lubna Irfan, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: The First Historical Archaeologist," *The International Journal of history and social sciences* 10, no. 1, (Jan.-June, 2019): 53-68.

8 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 142.

9 Irfan Habib, "Sar Sayyad Ahmad Khan aur Tarikh-Nawisi," *Fikr-o-Agahi* (Delhi), Aligarh Number (2000), 123 cited in Naim, 683.

10 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*," 608 & 705.

The literature available on *Asar-us-Sanadeed* offers comprehensive analysis on the content of the book but the research methodology employed by Syed Ahmad Khan in writing this book has not been sufficiently focused. The present paper evaluates the research methodology used in *Asar-us-Sanadeed* by Syed Ahmad Khan in the context of reciprocity of the two disciplines History and Archaeology. This work is a glaring example to refute the orientalist argument of East's ignorance and incapability to modern scholarship. The paper is divided into three parts. Part I discusses the reciprocal relationship of History and Archaeology. Part II describes and examines the two editions of *Asar-us-Sanadeed*. Part III concludes with the evaluation of methodologies of Archaeology and History employed by Syed Ahmad Khan to estimate the worth of the book on current standards of research methodology.

Reciprocal Relationship of Archaeology and History

Both History and Archaeology study human past. Their methodology is based on scientific principles. Archaeology focuses deep past. It collects data through scientific excavation of the remains of man, then, classify and interpret it. History depends on documents. Archaeology discovers and interprets the material from which history can be reconstructed of the era where documents cannot be found. Therefore, Archaeology cannot do without history and history cannot do without Archaeology.¹¹ Both sciences have intimate relationship and are interdependent.

Archaeology has increased the range and amount of data to fill in the gaps in the history of civilizations. Historian knows only one percent of man's existence in the past. Archaeologists explore the remaining 99%. They discovered Indus, Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Thus, archaeology provides comprehensive information about man's past. Archaeologists work like detectives and use

11 Richard B. Woodbury and Williams A. Longrace, "Archaeology" *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropedia*, 15th ed., Vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1976), 1078.

things as clues to the lives of people, who made and used them. It also provides information about the religious beliefs of the people, their form of government and how they were destroyed or vanished from the earth. Archaeologists search for answers through meaningful interpretations of their data. Consequently, this social science is fundamental to the scientific understanding of man.¹²

Traditionally, it is believed that history is narrated on the basis of written records called documents. With time this concept transformed particularly with the establishment of Archaeology as a scientific discipline in the twentieth century. We have no other reliable means to extend our knowledge of deep past. A renowned South Asian historian Romila Thapar points out that “the significant new evidence on early periods of history is likely to come from archaeological data than from literary sources. This makes the close collaboration between the historian and the archaeologist imperative.”¹³ The historian must be familiarized with archaeological data and methodology. On the other hand, the archaeologist should be aware of historian’s need of evidence. Except difference in data-collection method, all stages of research methodology overlap in both disciplines. Thus, the development of common models will contribute towards their mutual advancement.¹⁴ J. B. Bury considers archaeology a “branch of historical research [with] a distinct name and distinct place” because the “investigation of the historical records with which it deals requires a special training of faculties of observation not called into play in the study of documents”.¹⁵ Thus, “the special historian whom we call an archaeologist needs general training in history and grasp of

12 Philip W. Goetz, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropedia*, 15th ed., Vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1987), 525.

13 Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, 2nd ed., (New Delhi: Orient, Black Swan, 1984), 173.

14 Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*, 173.

15 Fritz Stern, *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1961), 222.

historical perspective as much as any other historical specialist".¹⁶ Both sciences have operated quite independently, in most of their specific investigations. They cooperate closely combining data from their separate approaches partially offsetting each other's limitations. Historians can formulate theories of cultural evolution on facts not speculation on beginning of writing, and urbanization on the basis of archaeological data.

Archaeology provides material to other disciplines that are also useful in writing accurate history. Epigraphy studies the written records of man in the form of inscription on stone, clay, metal, wood, and papyrus etc to reconstruct, translate and date the inscription.¹⁷ It helps the historian to collect information about arts, culture, religion, language, customs and ways of life of the people of ancient civilizations. These inscriptions are primary sources particularly inscriptions on stone are more significant as these are imperishable. Inscriptions of Buddha in Swat Valley are important source on Buddhist religion in this region. Asoka's Edicts spread in south Asia is ample evidence on the role of Buddhism and Asoka's policies in this region. These are 'the oldest surviving Indian written documents of historical significance'.¹⁸ The Rosetta Stone helped in deciphering Egyptian writing hieroglyphics. The Thebes Tablets are a significant clue to Greek culture. Similarly, Copper Tablets provide social, cultural and economic information on the Indus Civilization of second millennium B.C.

Numismatics studies metal pieces of currency with historical significance called coins.¹⁹ It helps in tracing facts to verify continuity in history. For example, it elaborated chronology of the Sultans of Bengal. Coins also provide information about the marriages, relationships and deaths of Emperors. The

16 Stern, *The Varieties of History*, 222.

17 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropedia*, Vol. 6, 915.

18 A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India* (India: Rupa & Co., 1997), 53.

19 *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 3 (London: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1996), 392.

picture of Noor Jahan with Emperor Jahangir on coins clearly indicates Queens's influence and power during that period. Coins also confirm the boundaries of the Empire, the prosperity of the age, achievements of Kings during war and peace, and technical skills and aesthetic sense of the people hinting to the progress of civilization in ancient times.²⁰

Diplomaticsdeciphers the genuineness or fabrication of historical documents. Lorenzo Valla's deciphering the forgery of Donation of Constantinewas its first major achievement.²¹ Palaeography focuses ancient and medieval handwriting²²to read the document correctly and date it to its time. Its sub-branch Philologystudies development and evolution of written language of historical sources focusing language, vocabulary, and grammar used at a given time or place to discern ancient or more recent forgeries from authentic documents whileother sub-branch Graphology examines the character, ideology, prestige and place of a writer in the society.²³

Asar-us-Sanadeed: Comparison of Two Editions

Syed Ahmad had passion for writing. He had extensively written throughout his life on variety of subjects through various mediums. During his posting in Agra, he wrote three books. First was *Jam-i-Jam*,²⁴ a chronological table of the rulers of Delhi from Tamerlane to Bahadur Shah II including the pathan rulers, in Persian language published in 1840 under the name of Munshi Syed Ahmad Khan. Naim informs that it was written on the order of his senior officer Robert N. C. Hamilton.²⁵ At the end of the book, heprovided a list of

20 Sadiq Ali Gill, *Fun-i-Tarikh Nawisi: Hommer se Toynbee Tak* (Lahore: Emporium, 1998), 233.

21 *Diplomatics The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropedia*, Vol. 5 (1976), 808.

22 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropedia*, Vol. 13, 911

23 Gill, *Fun-i-Tarikh Nawisi*, 244.

24 'Jamshed's Cup' in Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid,"670.

25 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid,"670.

nineteen sources, several anonymous manuscripts and people consulted during his research.²⁶ His second book was a *procedural manual for the revenue office at Agra* to streamline the land settlement programme.²⁷ His next book was a compilation of civil laws. Syed Ahmad also authored three books during his posting at Fatehpur Sikri including one on Prophet's life, a translation of Shah Abdul Aziz's critique of Shi'i beliefs and translation of a Perso-Arabic treatise on mechanical devices for lifting heavy objects.²⁸

Syed Ahmad was transferred to Delhi in 1846. His remarkable work *Asar-us-Sanadeed* was published from Sayyid al-Akhbar Press Delhi in 1847.²⁹ He shared Delhi city as a lived experience with its history and people. Besides quoting facts and figures, he narrates some fantasies.³⁰ It is organized on the principle of space³¹ and dedicated to Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe (1795-1853); a British Resident in Delhi.³²

26 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 670.

27 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 670.

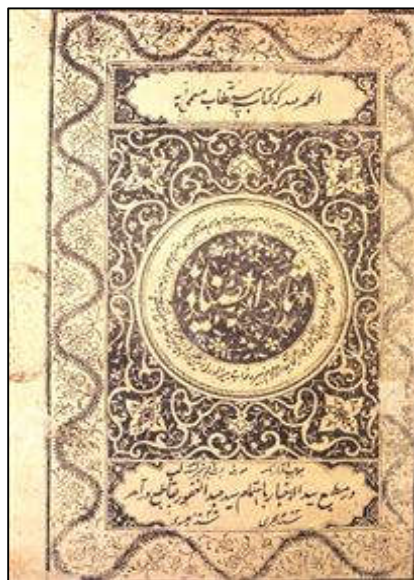
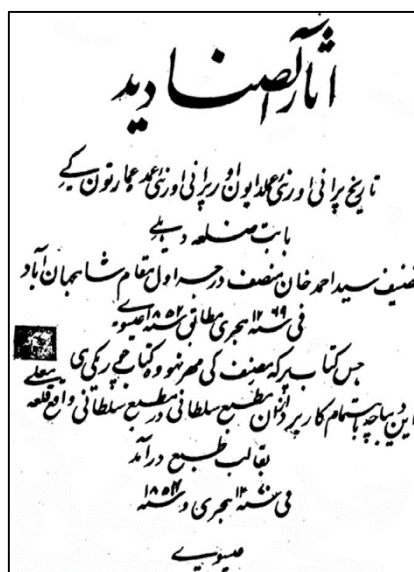
28 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 671.

29 Hali mentioned in his book that writing and publication of *Asar* took eighteen months.

30 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 706.

31 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 706.

32 Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asar-ul-Sanadeed*, 1st ed., (Delhi: Sayyid al-Akbar Press, 1847); <https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks>.

First Edition 1847³³Image of Cover of 2nd Edition³⁴

The book is divided into four chapters. First chapter describes one hundred and thirty (130) Hindu and Muslim buildings outside the town. Second chapter describes thirty-two (32) buildings within the Delhi Fort. Third chapter describes seventy (70) architectural sites of Shahjahanabad. Fourth describes Delhi city and its people. In addition, it reports on the climate and language of Delhi.³⁵ It also cherishes contribution of one hundred and seventeen (117) personalities under the categories of *masheiks* (sufis), *majazib* (men of ecstasy), *hukama* (physicians) *ulama* (religious scholars) *alims*, *qura* and *hafiz* (recite and preserver of Quran), *bulbulnawayan* (poets), *Khush-nawisan* (calligraphers), *musawwiran* (painters) and *arbab-i-musiqi* (musicians). Syed Ahmad acknowledges each one of them highlighting their distinctions in their profession with samples of their writings.³⁶ An outstanding feature is Faiz Ali Khan and Mirza Shahrukh Beg's more than hundred and

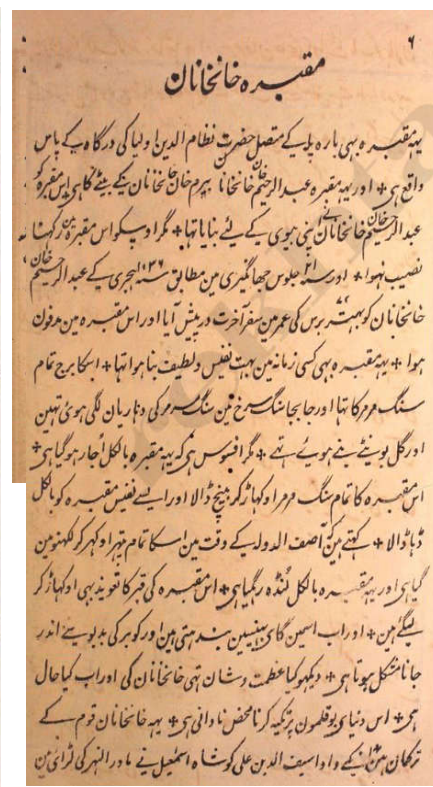
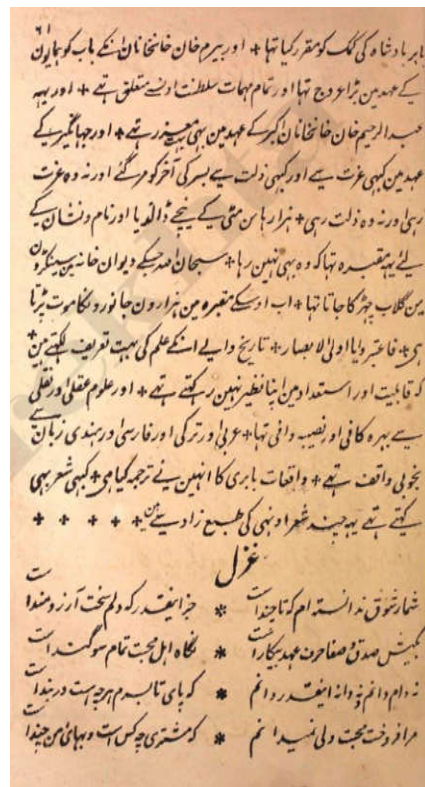
33 Khan, *Aasarul-Sanadeed*.

34 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 693.

35 Khan, *Aasarul-Sanadeed*.

36 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 674-75.

thirty(130) illustrations and sketches of buildings provided in the fourth chapter.³⁷ Naim considers it “the first lithographically produced book of illustrations in India, [exhibiting] how readily Delhi craftsmen of the time took up new techniques and soon excelled in them”.³⁸ Following is a sample entry of a tomb and its sketch in *Asar-us-Sanadeed*.³⁹



The book introduces its subject through the eyes of a tourist visiting the city. “Starting from the south of Shahjanabad,

37 Khan, *Aasarul-Sanadeed*; Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 675.

38 Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 675.

39 Khan, *Aasarul-Sanadeed*, 60-63.

moving closer to the city; upon reaching its wall, going round it and describes the few notable structures north of the city; then enters the walled city where he first visits the Red Fort to offer his respects.⁴⁰ The author describes the canal ran through much of the walled city and then turns to the Jama Masjid to explore the city through its three separate gates as starting points. He ventures out from one gate, describes historical buildings in that direction, and then returns to the mosque to start out from another gate. His narrates three excursions and a few diversions.⁴¹ Amazingly, Syed Ahmad informs about exact number of steps leading down from gate and shares his imagination as *Dilli-wala* about human activities that distinguish one gate from another. The south gate is distinct due to its trinket-seller (*Bisati*), *faluda* makers, *kabab*-sellers and poultry dealers. At East gate, cloth-hawkers and bird-sellers are visible. While at North-gate, story-tellers and jugglers are found. In the fourth chapter, he lists several cities of Delhi ending with Shahjahanabad describing its environment. He appreciates its climate and the physical beauty of the people.⁴² Syed Ahmad was conscious of the impact of geography on human activities and refers to this dynamic relationship. While appreciating the people, he tried to be objective and justifies his words.⁴³

Maulvi Imam Bakhsh Sahbai head of the Persian Department of Delhi College and a friend of Syed Ahmad Khan helped him in the field work deciphering inscriptions and measuring buildings and referring Persian prose and verses.⁴⁴ This teamwork was misconstrued by Altaf Hussain Hali who mentioned in *Hayat-i-Jawed* that Sahbai inscribed

40 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid,".

41 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid,".

42 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid,".

43 Syed Ahmad does not include the Emperor, whose poetic name was Zafar among the notable poets of Delhi in chapter 4. He places Shaikh Ibrahim Zauq; mentor of Zafar in poetry at the sixteenth place in his list of seventeen poets, putting a few lesser known poets ahead of him. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 702.

44 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 135-136.

Asar-us-Sanadeed and Syed Ahmad revised the ornamented prose to natural style.⁴⁵ Naim infers that Shabai composed “most of the preface, including the panegyrics and much of the fourth chapter on the people of Delhi ...the middle chapters, however, contain plenty of internal evidence—personal references, anecdotes and asides... substantially drafted by Syed Ahmad himself... the language of the descriptive chapters is not too different what later ... known as Syed Ahmad’s trademark’ plain and simple’ style...”⁴⁶ Thus, he concludes that “much of *Asar-i* emerged out of a collaborative effort and was not composed by Sahbai alone.”⁴⁷

The book was appreciated for its subject. Delhi College principal Dr. Aloys Sprenger commented in the journal *Qiran-al-Sadain* that “this book is excellent and is of great importance to the society that has been founded at Delhi for the furtherance of researches into the old buildings of the past.”⁴⁸ Henry M. Elliot referred to *Asar-i* that “the author [of *Jam-i-Jam*] Munshi Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Munsif of Delhi... has also written and lithographed at Delhi a very good description of the remarkable buildings of that capital, accompanied with lithographed representation of them.”⁴⁹

After A.A. Roberts (1818-1868) was elected Vice-President of the Society in June 1852; Syed Ahmad was elected a member of the Archaeological Society of Delhi through balloting in the next meeting. Since then Syed Ahmad actively participated in all the proceedings of the society.⁵⁰ In one such meeting, when he presented two bricks of different ages to determine the ages of the towns through comparing

45 Altaf Hussain Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed* (Lahore: Urdu Academy Pakistan, 2020).

46 Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 676.

47 Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 676.

48 Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 682.

49 Henry M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, Vol. 8 (London: Trubner & Co., 1877), 431.

50 Troll, “A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,” 142.

different kinds of bricks, his observations were ordered to be translated and printed. Toll infers that J. Cargill, the then principal of Delhi College and secretary of the Society translated Syed Ahmad's brief paper "On the Bricks employed in building in different ages in India" as he appreciates Sir Syed in footnote that "in genuine ability few Mohammedans are equal to the munsiff, or to Nawab Zeaood-deen, both members of the Society".⁵¹

Comparing a contemporary work *Sair-al-Manazil* of Mirza Sangin Beg with *Asar-us-Sanadeed*, Naim asserts "Beside, superficial similarities in organization, quality and quantity of historical information and personally observed measurements and details..... latter book far superior. The originality of Asar-I becomes more evident ...[with] frequent remarks about the provenance of some architectural detail, or the attention he pays to epigraphy in every instance."⁵²

Asar-us-Sanadeed's second edition published in 1854 is distinctive in many ways. The title page is simple and plain with no "curlicues and arabesque".⁵³ Its back cover contains a second title page, with a brief preface and a short essay in English. Its abridged, factual description indicates author's intention for translation. The book is organized chronologically. Asar-I was revised on the advice of Arthur Austin Roberts for translation purpose. Second edition rarely exhibit any digression. The second edition narrates factual data avoiding any personal excitement and discovery. In fact, the author seems self-assured in second edition that might have nurtured from the study of English books and journals and intellectual growth through interaction with western scholars and visitors. His realization of "God-given ability to use all his faculties to 'discover things that totally amaze'" might have contributed to his confidence.⁵⁴

51 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 142.

52 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 690.

53 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 693.

54 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 706.

The Preface proves Syed Ahmad's transformation as a scholar. "Praise be to God, who blessed Man with such gifts as eyes and ears and intelligence and speech, so that man could act after hearing all seeing all and after full consideration of the matter. And thus enabled by God man discovers things that are totally amazing."⁵⁵ The author mentions the additions in preface.⁵⁶ Syed Ahmad asserts that this book is different as it is a *tarikh* (history) and not *ahwal* (account). It is a history of new and old governments or authorities (*amaldari*). The spatial boundaries of the history are defined in the administrative idiom 'the district of Delhi'.⁵⁷

The first chapter is an addition which provides tables of rulers of Delhi in chronological order since mythological times to the contemporary period. In the chronological listing of monuments of Delhi, referring to the reigning king, Syed Ahmad excludes the Mughals after 1803. For example, both "skinner's Church" built during the reign of George IV and Bahadur Shah Zafar's "Zafar Mahal" are referred to the reign of Queen Victoria.⁵⁸ The second edition includes more buildings and copies of original inscription as appendix. Methodology has been improved through providing titles of thirty-nine (39) consulted books in the margin including two English journals; *the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and *the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. In addition to the numbering of described items, Syed Ahmad has presented the necessary information about each building in tabular form.⁵⁹

In sharp contrast to first edition written in Urdu enriched with Persian verses, the second edition is "sober, factual, and

55 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 695.

56 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 137.

57 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 694.

58 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 695.

59 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 137.

concise”.⁶⁰ Fourth chapter is omitted in the second edition. Syed Ahmad acknowledges Arthur Roberts; collector and Magistrate of Shahjahanabad who presented the book to Royal Asiatic Society in London.⁶¹ On Colonel Saxon’s advice, Roberts translated it into English with the help of Syed Ahmad Khan. Syed Ahmad referred it in the foreword of *Silsilat-al-Muluk* published in 1852:

When Mr. Arthur Austin Roberts...began to translate the book ...into English and insisted on the utmost correctness of its data, there used to be great ...inconvenience in establishing the correct details because of the contradictions of the historical books and mistakes of the copyists. It proved to be impossible to arrive at a reliable version because no historical table of the rules of kings and rajas had yet been compiled.Asar al Sanadid deals with buildings erected by former kings, amirs and rajas. Therefore, how could one hope to arrive at a reliable version of the book without having first established the correct data relating to these kings and rajas? For this reason I made up a list of the rulers and kings of Delhi comprising the data of the rajas and kings of the last five thousand years. ...this list was examined byRoberts and it found his appreciation. I therefore felt that if properly arranged and put into book form it would be extremely useful and ... would render a service many bigger books do not offer. God Almighty fulfilled my wish ... this list has grown into a book ... Silsat al Muluk. ...it may please the praiseworthy gentleman by whose appreciation and patronage this extraordinary thing was written.⁶²

Edward Thomas a numismatist and a session judge in Delhi might be the other influence to revise his book. Syed Ahmad “considers his duty to offer his gratitude to Mr. Edward Thomas, through whose aid and kindness he has been able to put the work in Type” in the preface of second edition.⁶³ Hali informs that chapter on the people of Delhi was deleted on Thomson’s advice.⁶⁴

60 Troll, “A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,” 137.

61 Hali, *Hayat-i-Javaid*, 65.

62 Troll, “A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,” 139-40.

63 Troll, “A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,” 139.

64 Hali, *Hayat-i-Javaid*, 65.

Syed Ahmad himself lists following improvements in earlier edition. Chapter one was inserted providing information since India came to be populated and a brief description of India's prior and subsequent governments. The second chapter of first edition was revised with a superior description of Shahjahanabad fort with all the forts and cities built at this place since its earliest dwellings. Earlier edition's first and third chapters were combined into third chapter. Few errors of previous edition were also corrected. The *mutafarriq* (disorganized) descriptive accounts of buildings in first edition were meticulously rearranged chronologically. In the first edition, the sources were not referred properly. In second edition, most of the statements were referred in the margin with the titles of the books. In the end, he acknowledges three British officials for their support and encouragement.

Second edition's another remarkable feature is replicated existing description on the ancient buildings in actual form and style.⁶⁵ It omitted dedication and illustrations. Inscriptions are placed as appendix at the end. Delhi is presented as a site of antiquities. The second edition provides the details only for which ancient texts extend evidence. Naim particularly focused the description of a temple *Kalika* in Syed Ahmad's two editions for comparison. It is a proof of evolution in his thought and methodology. He indicates that description about this site is "much abbreviated account in two pages. Asar-I provides the date for temple's construction as 'Sammāt 1821 Fasli'" according to the inscription on a guarding wall. Asar-II provides the same date with historical scholarship as 'Sammāt 1821 Bikramajit, i.e. 1178 Hijri, i.e. 1764 Isawi'.⁶⁶ The legend of Devi is narrated with a reference on the margin. Every statement is objective. All personal and contemporary references about temple in first edition are omitted in second edition. Naim

65 Syed Ahmad Khan, *Aasaru/Sanadeed*, ed., Khalid Naseer Hashmi (Delhi: Central Book Depu, 1965), 19-20. <https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks/aasaarus-sanadeed-sir-syed-ahmad-khan-ebooks>

66 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 705.

concludes that “these omissions ...reflect a desire to be seen ...as an objective historian or antiquarian.”⁶⁷

Asar proved to be an important primary source on the subject referred by many contemporary and ensuing scholars. A.A. Roberts in his article on “The Great Mosque at Khirkee” published in the first number of the *Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi*, quotes from it referring to “SyudUhmud, Moonsiff of Delhi”. Henry Cope the secretary of the Society and H. Lewis in “The Town and Palace of Feerozabad” refers to the *Asar*.⁶⁸ Garcin de Tassy first translated *Asar* into French in 1861 and sent a copy to Syed Ahmad.

Fatimah Quraishi asserts “by surveying Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu monuments alike, in an Indian language ... widely socially accessible, the text was revolutionary.” The *Asar* is quite useful for the contemporary movement of deconstruction of nineteenth century Indian historiography challenging the orientalist’s interpretations and relying on the works of local contemporary scholars to reconstruct the Indian history. It helps to reach closer to the truth rectifying Orientalists’ assumptions about the quality and quantity of local scholarship.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Social sciences have artificial boundaries and are interdependent. Through inter-disciplinary approach, social sciences benefit regarding data and theories, techniques, and methods of each other to off-shoot their shortcomings. This is enriching for the progress of all disciplines. Archaeologists first discover data through fieldwork then interpret and afterwards, compile data for others. On the other hand, historians focus the change and

67 Naim, “Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Asar-al-Sanadid*,” 705.

68 Troll, “A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan,” 141.

69 Fatima Quraishi, “*Asar-ul-Sanadid*: A Nineteenth-Century History of Delhi,” *Journal of Art History*, no. 6 (June, 2012): 4.

evolution in historical progress through the study of documents which help them to build a narrative.

There are many examples in historiography where scholars used multiple techniques of various disciplines to conduct their research. One such glaring example is Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's *Asaar-us-Sanadeed*. Syed Ahmad authored two editions. This study has focused the methodology employed in this book and evolution and growth of Syed Ahmad's thoughts and methodology. Syed Ahmad penned first edition through the lens of a tourist. It was written in the form of a travelogue. He tours the city of Delhi and meticulously observes the sites and narrates everything he finds interesting, concrete and worth-mentioning even narrating legends. He also describes the life and activities of the people of the city. He analyses the impact of geography on the lives of the people of Delhi. He mentions important personalities of the city and divides them into categories providing evidence of their sample writings to prove his point. To elucidate and enrich the readers' imagination, he provides illustrations of those ancient buildings. In writing the first edition, Syed Ahmad took the help of his friend Shabai and graphic experts to make sketches of buildings which express his skill to work as a team.

Syed Ahmad was also conscious of the difference between his first book and revised edition so he referred the first one as *ahawal* (account) and subsequent edition as *tarikh* (history). In the first edition, he is a lively and cheerful "participant observer" whereas in the subsequent edition, he appears "a detached historian".⁷⁰ According to the modern standards, he mentioned spatial limitation of his study referring to it "district of Delhi" and temporal limitations by indicating precisely the last five thousand years of all the rulers of Delhi.⁷¹ He particularly takes care of chronology in his revised edition. He provided genealogical tables of rulers

70 Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called Asar-al-Sanadid," 699.

71 Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 139-40.

of Delhi for clarity and accuracy. He provided original documents and inscriptions in appendix a common practice now a day to provide primary sources to the readers for authenticity of information and inspiration to extend the research. He tabulated numerical data to support his arguments which is appreciable as well as amazing as it is a modern technique. Syed Ahmad toured extensively to collect data through fieldwork, even at times taking the risk of his life. Hali narrates one such incident "Sir Syed found that some of the inscriptions on the Qutb Minar were too high to read. Therefore, in order to obtain an exact copy, he would sit in a basket, which had been suspended between two scaffolds parallel to the inscription. While he was carrying out this operation, his friend, Maulana Sahbai, would grow quite pale from fear."⁷²

Syed Ahmad was open to criticism and welcomed the feedback of other scholars and his seniors to revise and update his work incorporating their suggestions. He was an innovative scholar. He suggested employing the technique of comparative analysis of different kinds of bricks to determine the age of the buildings. He was conscious of the blessings of man's faculties, hearing, seeing, and then processing the observations through pondering over them and discovering new things afterwards. He acknowledged all the people and institutions who contributed in writing and publishing of his book. In his second edition, he meticulously followed research methodology and produced a scholarly work significant not only for contemporary scholars but a reliable primary source for the ensuing generations.

72 Cited in Quraishi, "Asar-ul-Sanadid", 2.