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Alberuni's India



Synopsis

It was in 1017 AD, at the behest of Sultan Muhmud of Persia, Alberuni, aka Al-Biruni, travelled to India to learn about the Hindus, and to discuss with them questions of religion, science, and literature, and the very basis of their civilisation. He remained in India for 13 years, studying and exploring. Alberuni's scholarly work has not been given the due recognition it deserves. Not for nearly 800 years would any other writer match Alberuni's profound understanding of almost all aspects of Indian life. Brief Deatails of the amazing life of Alberuni. Birth: 5 September 973 Death: 13 December 1048 Ethnicity: Persian Main interests: Anthropology, astrology, astronomy, chemistry, comparative sociology, geodesy, geology, history, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, pharmacology, physics, psychology, science Notable ideas: Father of anthropology, geodesy and Indology. Founder of experimental mechanics and experimental astronomy. Pioneer of experimental psychology. Contributed to many other fields of knowledge. Works: Ta'rikh al-Hind, The Mas'udi Canon, Understanding Astrology, and many other books Influences: Aristotle, Ptolemy, Aryabhata, Muhammad, Brahmagupta, Rhazes, al-Sijzi, Abu Nasr Mansur, Avicenna Influenced: Al-Sijzi, Avicenna, Omar Khayyam, al-Khazini, Zakariya al-Qazwini, Maragha observatory, Islamic science, Islamic philosophy Biruni was a polymath with an interest in various practical and scholarly fields that relate to what nowadays is described as physics, anthropology, comparative sociology, astronomy, astrology, chemistry, history, geography, mathematics, medicine, psychology, philosophy, and theology. He was the first Muslim scholar to study India and the Brahminical tradition, and has been described as the founder of Indology, and "the first anthropologist". He was also one of the earliest leading exponents of the experimental scientific method, and was responsible for introducing the experimental method into mechanics and mineralogy, developed comparative sociology and experimentation in psychology, and the first to conduct elaborate experiments related to astronomical phenomena. Biruni has for example been described as "one of the very greatest scientists of Islam, and, all considered, one of the greatest of all times.", or as "one of the great scientific minds in all history." The crater Al-Biruni on the Moon is named after him. Tashkent Technical University (formerly Tashkent Polytechnic Institute) is also named after Abu Rayhan al-Biruni and a university founded by Ahmad Shah Massoud in Kapisa is named after him.

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Edward C. Sachau was a professor in the Royal University of Berlin and the Principal of the Seminary for Oriental Languages.

Fascinating book! Chocked full of insights on everything imaginable in medieval India from an outside perspective. Alberuni is a Persian intellectual who has a outsiders cool, detached view of the Indian and his culture.

If you are a scholar of Indian history and anthropology, this book may be just what you're looking for. It was a major break-through when it was written 1,000 years ago by a Central Asian polymath Alberuni. It is chock full of an outsider's view of Hinduism, Sanskrit, Indian mathematics and calendrical science. Laws, customs, religion, holidays, all are discussed in what has been described as the world's first anthropological study. Everything is there for this to be a smashing book. Everything except readability. If you aren't a scholar of Indian history, how much do you really want to know about the Indian science of calendars? Believe me, however much that is, this book has it and then some, and therein lies the problem. "Too much information," as my son likes to say. It's seldom I complain that a book is too thorough in its examination of a subject, but this one qualifies. Here is a partial list of chapters, to indicate what I mean: On the Veda, the Puranas and other kinds of their national literature Their grammatical and metrical literature Hindu literature in other sciences-Astronomy, Astrology, etc. Notes on Hindu metrology, intended to facilitate the understanding of all kinds of measurements which occur in this book Notes on the writing of the Hindus, on their arithmetic and related subjects, and on certain strange manners and customs of theirs On Hindu sciences which prey on the ignorance of people Various notes on their country, their rivers, and their ocean--itineraries of the distances between their several kingdoms and between the

boundaries of their country On the names of the planets, the signs of the Zodiac, the lunar stations, and related subjects There is no doubt this was a vital, ground-breaking work in its day: for one thing, it introduced the concept of the number zero to the Muslims, thereby giving rise to the so-called "Arabic numerals" that transformed arithmetic and mathematics. But it is not a book designed for modern readers, who like their information boiled down, summarized and presented in an easy to read, flowing manner. I had great hopes for this book, but in the end, I was disappointed.

Excellent

Longing to get this unique book. This book has given me an insight in to Hindus and their belief that existed 1000 of years.

Amazing, the insights are valid even today.

I bought this book at Salim's book store on Janpath, New Delhi on the last day of a recent trip to India. Salim never fails to amaze us when we ask for not so popular books. The book is very resourceful and factual. Perhaps a bit heavy if you have not been introduced to Hinduism before.

This is a fascinating book on Hinduism, by a 10th Centruy Muslim scholar, one of the first serious books ever published on comparative religion. AlBeruni is remarkable for his modern, objective approach to the subject and the depth of his scholarship. All the more remarkable because he wrote it whilst an effective prisoner of Mahmud of Ghazni (a Muslim). The translation is over 100 years old, but readable and still the only one available.

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