

## METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED BY AL BERUNI IN THE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

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### ABSTRACT

*This scholarly article delves into the comprehensive works of Abu Rayhan Beruni, an eminent encyclopedist whose significant contributions have greatly influenced the evolution of concrete and social sciences. Furthermore, it scrutinizes his extensive research in the realm of religious studies.*

*Beruni's oeuvre reflects his scientific approach towards the analysis of various aspects such as the history, culture, and language of diverse nations. His erudition is evident in his familiarity with a multitude of languages including Jewish, Greek, Persian, Arabic, Sugdian, and Coptic. Moreover, his profound understanding of religions such as Judaism and Christianity is clearly demonstrated through his meticulous study of the Torah and Bible sources.*

*Beruni's works also encompass a thorough examination of the history of Jahiliyyah, a period predating the advent of Islam. He not only meticulously studied this era but also conducted an in-depth analysis of its gradual evolution and its correlations with reality during his exploration of various religions.*

*This article aims to scrutinize Beruni's perspectives on the historical development, formation, and manifestation of religious values. It also seeks to present a comparative analysis of these values as depicted in his works. This article examines Beruni's views on the history, formation, and manifestation of religious values, as well as their comparative analysis.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Abu Rayhan Beruni, Khorezm, Kat, "Beruni's Age", Judaism, Christianity, Islam, "Kitab Al-Hind", "Kitab Al-Athar Al-Baqiyah".*

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### INTRODUCTION

Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad Beruni was an eminent polymath during the Middle Ages, contributing significantly to a diverse range of scientific disciplines. His extensive scientific

contributions underscore his unparalleled intellectual prowess. Esteemed orientalist I. Yu. Krachkovskiy, in assessing Beruni's scientific acumen, stated that it would be simpler to enumerate the scientific disciplines that did not pique Beruni's interest than those that did. Western scholar M. Meyerhoff further emphasized Beruni's prominence, asserting that Beruni should be recognized as the most distinguished among the polymaths who exemplified the scientific advancements in the Muslim world [1:44].

The esteemed American science historian, Sarton, characterizes the 11th century as the "Age of Beruni." This high and justified appraisal is primarily attributable to the unparalleled contributions of this eminent scholar to the advancement of science. It is noteworthy that Beruni demonstrated exceptional impartiality and veracity in his scientific inquiries, as well as in his assessment of historical events and his contemporaries. Despite enduring significant hardship throughout his life and facing challenges towards its end, Beruni remained steadfast in his convictions, reflecting his unwavering commitment to his spiritual ideals.[10:68-73].

Beruni was born in 973 in the city of Kot, the ancient capital of Khorezm (as per Abdulkarim Sam'ani, in a village on the outskirts of the city of Kot). His formative years were spent in his homeland, where he pursued various scientific disciplines and matured as a scholar. The renowned scholar of Beruni's era, Abu Nasr Mansur ibn Iraq, was his mentor. Beruni, in addition to his native language, acquired proficiency in Arabic, Sugdian, Persian, Syriac, Greek, ancient Jewish languages, and subsequently Sanskrit during his time in India. This linguistic expertise enabled Beruni to delve deeply into works written in these languages.

With a corpus of over 160 written works, Beruni made an indelible impact on the evolution of various scientific fields, including Greek philosophy, astronomy, astrology, arithmetic, medicine, pharmacognosy, history, ethnography, philology, and literature.

### **Main Part**

Beruni's philosophical and political ideologies are extensively articulated in his works, including "Kitab al-Hind" and "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries". These works provide evidence of his advocacy for craftsmanship, commerce, the enhancement of international scientific and cultural relationships, and the promotion of science in societal life. Beruni was also a vocal critic of oppression, injustice, and invasion, viewing state governance as a service that rulers provide to society. He believed that the primary responsibility of equitable rulers is to establish justice between the upper and lower classes, as well as between the powerful and the weak. This is evident in "Kitab al-Hind", where he vehemently opposes the caste system in India.

In "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries", Beruni presents comprehensive conclusions that encompass all the above-mentioned disciplines, demonstrating his interdisciplinary approach to knowledge.

"The Mas'udi Law", another notable work by Beruni, is regarded as the most comprehensive book on astronomy and mathematics written prior to his time. Interestingly, Beruni often juxtaposed the teachings in this work with verses from the Qur'an, underscoring the significance of "Kitab al-Hind" and "The Mas'udi Law" for all past religions, particularly Islam. Yaqut al-Hamawi asserted that "The Mas'udi Law" superseded all previous books on mathematics and astronomy.

The Indian scholar Hamid Reza said about Beruni: "None of the authors of the Middle Ages and modern times could achieve the achievements achieved by Beruni in understanding the complex issues of Indian culture in a deep scientific spirit. It consists of his contribution to culture and science".

Indian academic Hamid Reza has lauded Beruni's unparalleled understanding of the intricate aspects of Indian culture, attributing it to his deep scientific approach. Beruni's contributions to culture and science are noteworthy[4:52].

Abu RayhanBeruni is recognized as a foundational theorist in the realm of modern science, alongside scholars such as Muhammad Musa Khorezmi[11:606-615], Ahmad Farghani, Abu Nasr Farabi, and Abu Ali ibn Sina. As a poet, he is celebrated for his lyrical and epic poetry from the Samani period, with his works standing alongside those of Rudaki, Farruhi, ShahidBalkhi, Daqiqi, and Abu Zaroa. In the Western context, Beruni is a prominent scientist, comparable to Shahrastani, Ibn HazmAndalusi, and Abul Hasan Omiri, particularly in the domain of religious studies.

Beruni's scientific approach was unique, emphasizing observation and experience as the basis for drawing conclusions. He asserted that all innovation is contingent on human effort. This belief led him to the understanding that a nation's progress is tied to the advancement of science, and that individual happiness is linked to education and enlightenment. This aligns with the Islamic call to knowledge.

Beruni's works, "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries" and "Kitab al-Hind," provide extensive insights into the customs, rituals, and calendars specific to various religions of his time and earlier, including Hinduism and Zoroastrianism.

Beruni's approach to religious studies was marked by critical analysis, free from national, religious, and racial biases. His scientific approach to each issue was marked by careful and deep contemplation of each culture. His wide-ranging thought process, thorough conclusions, and the truth, honesty, and neutrality evident in his work are noteworthy[5:69].

Beruni, a renowned scholar, meticulously categorized religious holidays and ceremonies based on the calendar, as depicted in his work "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries". This work is referred to as "Chronology" in Europe due to its systematic organization of religious events. Beruni's comprehensive understanding of these events enabled him to elucidate the similarities and disparities among them.

His profound knowledge is evident in his classification of holidays in the "Introduction to Eastern Christianity", which holds significant relevance even today. Beruni's works have gained more popularity than any other Muslim scholar's due to his ability to disseminate his knowledge to his students, irrespective of their location.

Beruni demonstrated familiarity with both Jewish and Christian texts. He quoted extensively from the Old Testament and the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, even retaining the phrase "Our Father." His works are characterized by an evidence-based approach, as he referred to numerous Biblical episodes for his analyses.

Beruni's reference to the story of "John the Baptist" and his claim of reading at least 3 or 4 Bibles indicate his extensive knowledge of Christian sources. He also demonstrated familiarity with

Christian exegesis by quoting the genealogical trees of Jesus from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

His understanding of episodes such as the cassational account of Jesus' 72 apostles and the divinity of Peter suggests that Beruni studied apostolic works. He demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the interpretation of the prophet Messiah in the Bible and the Qur'an, which was not common among other Muslims.

In his "Chronology", Beruni explored various aspects of Christianity, which is not evident in his work "India". He did not mention the Thomas Christians in "India", but compared the Christian holy trinity with the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. His comparison indicates a deeper understanding of Hinduism than Christianity.

Beruni's work also provides insights into the history of the Melkite faith and the theological issues discussed at the VI World Assembly. Despite his respect for the ethics of Christianity and its spiritual wealth, he considered them impractical, likening Christianity to a noble philosopher that lacks coherence and requires force for explanation.

During that period, Beruni identified two critical issues as he sought to rectify the misconceptions between Christianity and Islam. His objective was to maintain neutrality and gain a comprehensive understanding of Christianity. Had he penned his observations about Christianity, it would have provided significant clarity to his contemporaries. Beruni possessed the necessary capabilities to undertake this task. However, for him, Christianity, akin to other religions, was merely a component of his work "Chronology". He conducted an investigation into Christianity for the purpose of his calendar. He acquired the requisite information, and had he desired to compose an impeccable piece, it would have been a straightforward task for him [6:65].

Beruni's scientific pursuits were characterized by their extensive range and profound depth. His critical analysis was marked by seriousness and precision, and his perspective on religion during that era was remarkably objective [7:72].

In "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries", Beruni provides an extensive description of the calendars, holidays, and notable days of various civilizations known to him, including Greeks, Romanians, Iranians, Sogdians, Khorezmians[9:211-218], Ulinians, Copts, Christians, Jews, pre-Islamic Arabs, and Muslims. The text is rich with historical events, data about diverse nations and religions, profiles of prophets and false prophets, kings, renowned historical figures, and scientists.

Beruni exhibits a significant degree of religious tolerance and maintains an unbiased stance towards individuals of different faiths. His work contains recurrent affirmations of his faith in God and the prophet. However, he refrains from engaging in abstract knowledge, focusing instead on issues directly pertinent to human existence, encompassing both material and spiritual culture. Beruni places emphasis on objective facts that he has personally observed and assessed without prejudice or bias. As he often stated, "Truth does not obey passion" [8:43].

There is no evidence in his work of him condemning other religions or defending Islam. He acknowledges that a significant portion of his work is dedicated to detailing the

conditions of various nations and the customs and rules they have inherited. When articulating religious values, he ensures their delivery is consistent and coherent. In addition to relying on scientific sources, he also employs empirical observations to elucidate the history of each new term that expresses a religious value.

## CONCLUSION

In summation, Beruni is acknowledged as the preeminent medieval scholar who contributed significantly to the field of religious studies. His works, notably "Kitab al-Hind" and "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries", provide comprehensive information about the history, religious practices, and customs of specific regions, based on empirical observations. In "The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries", Beruni elucidates on the request made by a fellow writer to provide insights into the histories of various nations, their origins, chronology, discrepancies among historians and the causes of such discrepancies, notable holidays, and routine practices. The writer also sought information about designated days and rituals unique to certain nations, and implored Beruni to elucidate these in the most comprehensible manner, thereby eliminating the need for the reader to refer to multiple sources or consult the authors of those sources[3:40].

In Abu Rayhan Beruni's scholarly work, "Relics of Ancient Peoples", religious values are elucidated with a logical coherence. The classification system present within the text facilitates an in-depth exploration of the cultural and social foundations of various religious groups, including Christians, Muslims, contemporary Arabs, Iranians, and to a certain extent, Zoroastrians.

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