

STUDY OF AMENDMENTS IN DATA COLLECTION SOURCES FOR POLITICAL HISTORY WRITINGS

¹SANA SHAFI, ²ABDUL QADIR MUSHTAQ, ³RAMEEZ RIAZ

Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan
E-mail: sanashafi2017@gmail.com

Abstract - Without records and evidences, history cannot sustain for a long period. To write an authentic history, it is very important to use good and most relevant data collection sources. Factors like language, culture, access, finance, boarder, technology, etc. effect the selection of data sources. With the passage of time, choice of data collection sources changes. In this paper we studied, compared and contrasted the different sources used by the historians to record the historical events. We also studied the impact of different sources with regard to authenticity and availability. We opt for political history of last one hundred years of Indian Subcontinent as our case study.

Keywords - History, Data Sources, Authenticity

I. INTRODUCTION

History is knowledge of past, human affairs, and activities. It is a continuous procedure of infinite dialogue between the present and past. It is a continuous procedure of interaction between historian and his evidences [1]. By historical knowledge a man and a civilization improved their living style, and invented different styles to better their lives [2]. Past civilizations give a great lesson for the present and future. All knowledge and subjects are destitute without history. Different historian used different types of criteria about its significance. Here we shortly discuss some sources used by historians to write history.

A. Sources

Sources are artifacts that have been left by the past. They exist either as “relics” or “remains” or as “testimonies” of witnesses to the past. The first kind of sources relics or remains invite the historian to indicate about the past simply by worthy of their existence. Testimonies are the oral or written reports describe past events, such as the record of property exchange, speeches, and commentaries are testimonies. Gottschalk [3] defines a primary data sources as “The testimony of any eyewitness, or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the Dictaphone that is of one who.... Was

present at the events of which he tells. A primary source must thus have been produced by contemporary of the events it narrates”. Sources have two types, direct sources and indirect sources. Direct (primary) sources are original evidence that have not been alternate in any way. It is also called original or primary sources. sources may have Artifacts, documents, recording, maps, tablets, visual material, autobiographies, official record, poetry, drama, novels, art, furniture, clothing and buildings. “Primary sources are first-hand accounts of an event or time in history that has yet to be interpreted by another person” [4]. “Secondary sources are documents written after an event has occurred, providing secondhand accounts of that event, person, or topic. Unlike primary sources, which provide first-hand accounts, secondary sources offer different perspectives, analysis, and conclusions of those accounts” [4]. The procedure of searching for historical data should be pre-planned. The historian should know which information he needs. He identifies the important sources, evidences and documents those provide a direction to his search. It is not possible for the researcher to examine all the material available [5]. Selecting the best sources of data is important in a historical study. The data of historical evidences is base on two types of evaluation.

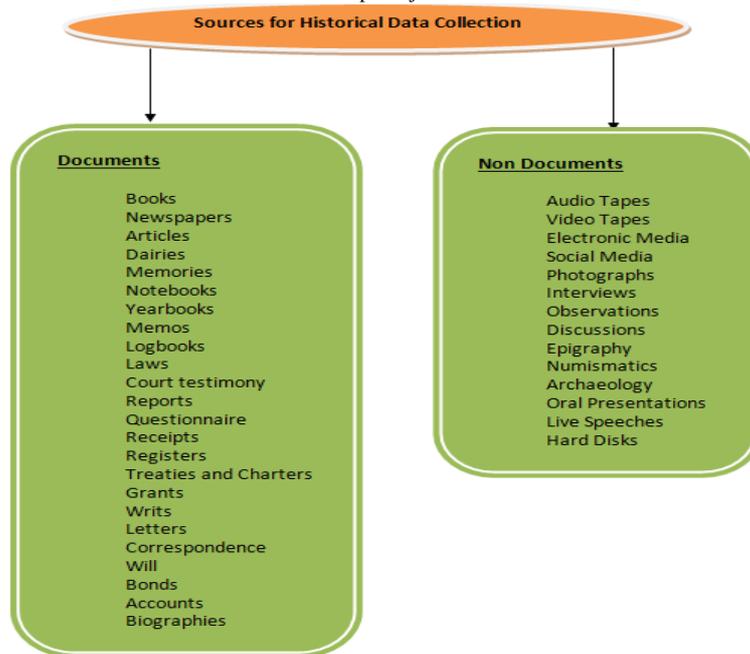


Figure 1: Sources of Historical Information

B. External Criticism

This is known as lower criticism of data, the main object of external criticism is establishment of historical truth. External criticism answering the questions about the nature of the historical sources such as who wrote it? When? Where? And Which circumstances, is it original? Is it genuine? [6].

C. Internal Criticism

Internal criticism based on written material. It is also known as higher criticism of data. It conducts answering questions such as what does it mean? What did the historian want to say? What message was the historian trying to convey? What does the decision of a court mean? Is there any evidence of deception? Internal criticism should also be dealing the credibility of the historian, was he able to remember accurately? [7].

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recordings, proofs, evidences, links, etc. are the items those explain the authenticity of the history. Recoding tools and techniques change from generation to generation, from centuries to centuries and from millenniums to millenniums. With the passage of time new inventions and innovations force a historian to adopt newly available recording tools and techniques (sources)

for data collection. During the last 100 years how historian shifts from old data collection sources to new data collection sources is a topic to investigate. Further this study raises the question that “does innovation in data collection sources effects the impact, availability and authenticity of the historical data and events?” [8]. Without answering this question it is difficult for the historians to select a

better and effective data collection source for their writings. This paper investigates that how priority of different data sources [9] change over the last 100 years as well as what new data sources are invented during this period of time. Moreover what barriers are removed by the new invented data sources is also part of this paper.

III. METHODOLOGY

To conduct this search first step was to identify the sources used by various historians during the last 100 years. For this purpose first of all we limit our scope to political history of Indian sub-continent and reviewed almost all the popular books and articles written by the historians of this part of the world. The history books we reviewed are divided into two parts based on the authors of the books. All the local authors (citizens of Indian subcontinents) are placed in one group while the authors of other nationalities are put in the second group. The reason of having two groups is to consider the language issues, cultural issues, financial issues, availability of resources etc. While reading a historical article or book, our focus was not on the topic of the book but on the sources used by the author to collect evidences and facts. Furthermore, after reading a specific article or book we started to search criticism on that particular article or book. The purpose of finding the criticism is to guess the authenticity and effect of that writing. There were many historical writings for those we remain unable to find any criticism so in order to cover this loophole we conducted interviews of currently well known historians of Pakistan. In the interviews all questions were focused on the authenticity and the sources used by most of the historians of last century. The last step is to get

opinion from students and professors of history from different universities of Pakistan. For this task we developed a questionnaire and ask the relevant public to fill that questionnaire. Questionnaires are prepared very carefully and once again focus of the questionnaire was to enquire about the authenticity and use of different sources used by the historians of last century. To review a book or article we first read the book critically in order to identify the sources used by the author to collect evidences and facts. After identifying the list of sources we rank that list on the basis of use and priority of each sources inside that book. After making that list we started to search criticism on that book. For this purpose we adopted multiple methods. First method was to search and study the books those were written by the same author on similar topic. The purpose of this study is to identify any existing conflict between the two writings of the same author and to find out that is there any self criticism that exists about the last book of the same author? After that we searched books of the other authors those used that particular book or article as a reference. Reason of studying this book is to find out opinion of other writers, of same specialized area, about the quality and authenticity of the mentioned facts. Furthermore we also searched about the success, availability and acceptance of the reviewed book. This factor helped us to conclude that whether the sources used by the author, are appreciated or not. Internet based intensive search is conducted for further verifications of our findings. Impact of journals, conferences or publishers were also kept in focus while checking the success of a particular writing. After using these techniques we assigned a particular number to the sources list that we prepared after reviewing the book. This number was indicating that whether that particular list of sources used in that particular priority order results in success or not. After extensively reviewing many

dozen of books and articles we end up with many lists of sources used in each book [10]. After that we divided those lists into three categories, Success list, failure list, and average list. Next, inside the success lists and average list common sources along with order of priorities are listed as successful sources, while inside the failure list and average list common sources are treated as weak sources for that particular era. Once we have a list of strong and weak sources of a particular era, we consulted the currently well known historians of Pakistan. We discussed our methodology and asked them to comment on our results. Their feedback is once again analyzed and based on the most common and rational comments we made small updates in our lists [11]. Last step was to have a public poll on the methodology and results. For this purpose we prepared a close ended questionnaire and distributed it to the professors and students of history in various universities of the Pakistan. All the feedbacks are analyzed and matched with our results in order to find any major conflicts. No major conflict is found while some minor issues needed reinvestigation. For this purpose we again consulted the popular historians and based on their feedback we finalized our results [12].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section we will present our results. To obtain the results we divided the last century into three time groups: 1920- 1970, 1971-1999, and 2000-2018. For all these three eras we obtained list of sources those were very popular and used by most of the historians as well sources those are seldom used by historians and resulted in failure. Table 1 consists of the important sources those were mostly used by the historians in that particular era. These entries in the table 1 are ranked on the basis of use of each source.

Table 1: Popular Sources Used By Historians In Different Eras

#	1920-1970	1971-1999	2000-2018
1	Observations	Interviews	Books
2	Books	Books	Interviews
3	Articles	Newspapers	Newspapers
4	Newspapers	Articles	Articles
5	Personal Opinion	Official Documents and Reports	Questionnaire
6	Interviews	Observations	Official Documents and Reports

7	Official Documents and Reports	Audio/Video Tapes	Audio/Video Tapes
8	Group Discussion	Photographs	Electronic Media
9	Speeches	Biographies	Biographies

In the table 1 it can be seen that observation was the most popular tool between 1920 to 1970 while this priority changed during 1971 to 1999, while in the 21st century observations are hardly used by any historian. On one side it can be concluded from the above table that the priority of different sources change from time to time and on the other side one can also conclude that newly available sources are also adopted by the historians. During 1970 to 1999 audio video tapes, biographies, photographs are used as sources by many historians while in the 20th century questionnaires and electronic media, takes place among the most popular sources. About a hundred years ago observations was the key source of writing history. With the passage of time researchers started to object on the authenticity of this source, therefore, slowly this source's priority decreased. Books and interviews are the two ever green sources and still most of the historians who write political history stay focused on these two sources. After the emergence of Internet and digital libraries, it becomes very easy to access the books from all over the world and this factor motivates the historian more towards using the books as data source. Communication and telecommunication revolution eliminates the barriers of boarder, language, travel, finance etc. so conducting an interview becomes very easy. Main hurdles in the way of questionnaires were the distribution of questionnaire and lack of analysis tools. In this new communication era, distribution issues are resolved and with the availability of many efficient data analysis tools, it becomes also very easy to analyze huge amount of data. Therefore, questionnaires are now also one of the popular data collection source. Newspaper is another one of the important source for political history writer from last one hundred years. Technological revolution increases the use of audio and video tapes as data source. During the last twenty years, electronic media is also becoming an important data source for historians. Newly available sources also help the historians in many other ways like reducing the cost of writing, saving the time, access to most recent data, etc. Barriers like boarder, language, culture and complexity are also resolved by the newly available data sources. At the same time some new complexities and confusions are also generated due to availability of huge data. In short on one side new sources solved a lot of problems of historians as well as they raised some new issues.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we investigated the sources used by historians during the last century. We used different techniques to find out priority of different sources used by the historians. It is studied that how priority of different sources change over the time and what new sources were generated in each era. Results are mentioned in a table indicating the highest priority sources on top and low priority sources in the bottom. From the results it can easily be concluded that priority of data sources changes over the time. Sources those were the top priorities of historians in one period of time, in the other period of time that source was sometimes completely ignored by the historians. In future similar study can be conducted by enlarging the scope of domain, time and place.

REFERENCES

- [1] Stephen C. Stearns, "The Evolution of Life History Traits: A Critique of the Theory and a Review of the Data", *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematic*, Vol. 8:145-171, 1977
- [2] E. H. Carr, "What Is History?", Cambridge University Press in 1961
- [3] Louis R. Gottschalk, "Understanding history: A Primer of Historical Method", University of Chicago, 1969
- [4] "Primary Sources: A Research Guide", Healey Library, University of Massachusetts Boston.
- [5] Caroline Friendship, "Reconviction: A critique and comparison of two main data sources in England and Wales", *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, Volume6, Issue1, February 2001
- [6] José Cossa, "External Criticism: A Brief Reflection", 2010
- [7] Janet Toland, "An Exploration Of Historical Methods For Information Systems Research", Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems, PACIS 2011.
- [8] Lokman I. Meho, "Impact of data sources on citation counts and rankings of LIS faculty: Web of science versus scopus and google scholar", *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, volume 58, issue 13, 2007.
- [9] Jiang Lia Mark, "Ranking of library and information science researchers: Comparison of data sources for correlating citation data, and expert judgments", *Journal of Informetrics*. Volume 4, Issue 4, October 2010.
- [10] Adrian M. Lister, "Natural history collections as sources of long-term datasets", *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, Volume 26, Issue 4, 2011.
- [11] Clive Seale, "Interviews and Internet Forums: A Comparison of Two Sources of Qualitative Data", *Qualitative Health Research*, 2009.
- [12] Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, "Building Theories from Case Study Research", *Academy of Management Review* Vol. 14, No. 4, 1989.

★★★