

## CHAPTER 5

# Through the Eyes of Travellers

CBSE · History · Class 12

### WHAT THIS CHAPTER DOES

Boards prep that builds confidence, not anxiety.

**TODAY'S MISSION**

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# Today's Mission

**WHY THIS MATTERS**

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# Why Travellers Matter as a Source

TOPIC

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# What You Should Already Know

TOPIC

**A**

# Part A — Al- Biruni (11th century)

**TOPIC**

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# Al-Biruni: The Man and the Book

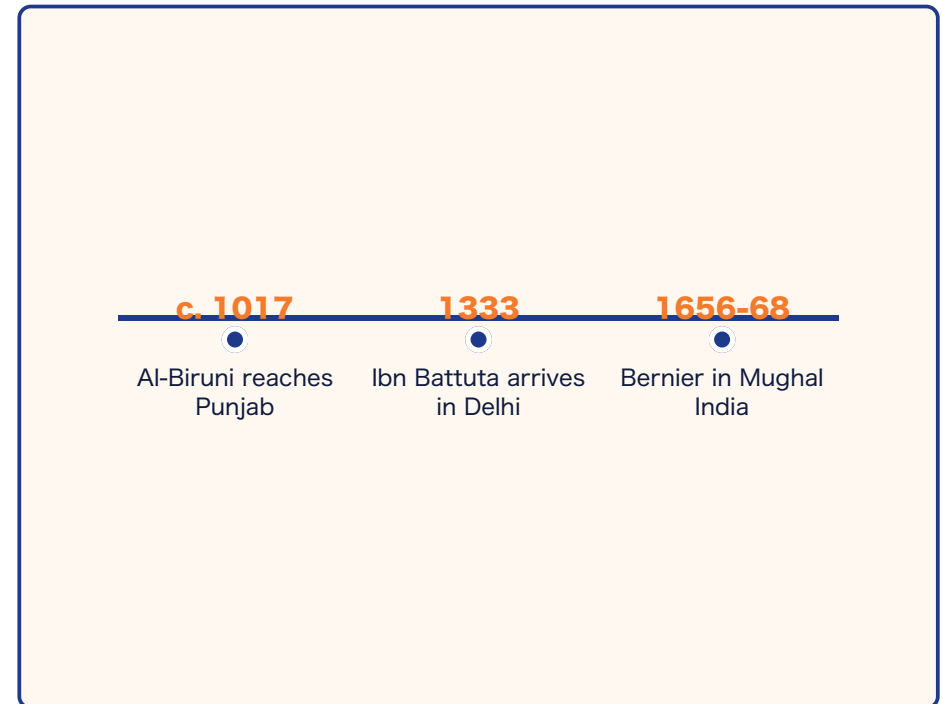
POINT 1

POINT 2

## WORKED EXAMPLE

# Al-Biruni's Comparative Method — How It Worked

- 1 {'step': '1. Technique', 'detail': 'He is **COMPARING** — placing an Indian idea next to a Sufi (Islamic) one.'}
- 2 {'step': '2. Purpose', 'detail': 'A **TRANSLATION TOOL** — a Muslim reader knows Sufism, so Sufism becomes the bridge to Vedanta.'}
- 3 {'step': '3. Enables', 'detail': 'Al-Biruni can describe Indian thought **NEUTRALLY** rather than as alien — remarkable for the 11th century.'}
- 4 {'step': '4. Limit', 'detail': 'Comparison can **DISTORT** — Vedanta is not Sufism. Al-Biruni sometimes misses the gap.'}



**TRY IT · SOLVE BEFORE YOU PEEK**

## 30-Second Check

Al-Biruni's Kitab-ul-Hind has how many chapters, and was written in which language?

**SOLUTION**

**ANSWER** 1

TOPIC

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# The Three Travellers at a Glance

TOPIC

# Al-Biruni's Three Barriers

POINT 1

POINT 2

POINT 3

TOPIC

**B**

# Part B — Ibn Battuta (14th century)

## WORKED EXAMPLE

# Ibn Battuta in the Tughlaq Court

- 1 {'step': "1. Sultan's policy", 'detail': 'Muhammad bin Tughlaq RECRUITED foreign Muslim scholars — they brought prestige and were politically neutral (no clan ties).'}

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- 2 {'step': '2. Qualifications', 'detail': 'Ibn Battuta was a trained Maliki jurist; the Sultan needed qazis to administer Sharia in Delhi.'}

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- 3 {'step': '3. Hospitality', 'detail': 'He received lavish gifts — slaves, horses, large salary — itself a historical observation about Tughlaq court culture.'}

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- 4 {'step': '4. Rupture', 'detail': 'Later the Sultan grew suspicious (over a Sufi connection); Ibn Battuta was placed under house arrest until pardoned.'}

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**TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK**

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# Model 5-Mark — Ibn Battuta on Coconut and Paan

**TOPIC**

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# Ibn Battuta's Postal System

POINT 1

POINT 2

TRY IT · SOLVE BEFORE YOU PEEK

## 30-Second Check

Which is correct about Ibn Battuta's Rihla?

**SOLUTION**

**ANSWER 1**

TOPIC

**C**

# Part C — Francois Bernier (17th century)

**TOPIC**

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# Bernier: The Man and the Mission

POINT 1

POINT 2

## WORKED EXAMPLE

# Bernier's Land-System Critique

- 1 {'step': '1. What he saw', 'detail': "He saw JAGIRS — revenue assignments granted to nobles for service and REVOKED at the emperor's pleasure. To him this looked like no ownership at all."}
- 2 {'step': '2. What he missed', 'detail': 'ZAMINDARI rights were HEREDITARY; PEASANTS held customary occupancy; MILK/INAM grants were essentially private land.'}
- 3 {'step': '3. Why he overstated', 'detail': 'His audience was the French court — he needed to argue European private property was superior, so an extreme claim served that argument.'}
- 4 {'step': '4. Legacy', 'detail': "His 'no private property' image was picked up by Montesquieu (1748) and Marx (1853) — a 17th-c. Frenchman's argument shaped European theory for 200 years."}

**TOPIC**

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# Bernier on Society — What Else He Saw

POINT 1

POINT 2

TOPIC

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# Rapid Recap — Before the Wedge Slides

## MARKS DISTRIBUTION

# Sub-topic Weight on the Board

## PYQ PATTERNS

# The Five Patterns You Will See

TOPIC

# Al-Biruni was a Muslim invader

## TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Al-Biruni came as part of Mahmud's army to convert Hindus.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Al-Biruni was a SCHOLAR — astronomer, mathematician, linguist — born in Khwarizm. Brought to Ghazni as a hostage-scholar; accompanied the army NOT as soldier but to study. Learned Sanskrit, read the Vedas, wrote Kitab-ul-Hind as a sober ethnography.

TOPIC

# Rihla is a diary

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Ibn Battuta wrote the Rihla as a personal travel diary.

✓ **CORRECT** The Rihla was DICTATED — Ibn Battuta narrated his travels years later, in Morocco, to scribe Ibn Juzayy. It is a RECOLLECTION shaped for a royal audience, NOT a daily journal.

## TOPIC

# Bernier was a tourist

### TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Bernier was a Frenchman who wandered India out of curiosity.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Bernier was a TRAINED PHYSICIAN. He attached to Prince Dara Shukoh and a Mughal noble. His Travels was DEDICATED TO LOUIS XIV and shaped to influence European debates.

TOPIC

# No private land in Mughal India

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Bernier was right — no private land ownership existed in Mughal India.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Bernier OVERSTATED this. Khalisa was crown land, but PEASANTS held hereditary cultivation rights, ZAMINDARS held intermediary rights, MILK/inam grants existed. His claim served his argument that Europe's private property was superior.

TOPIC

# Ibn Battuta and Al-Biruni met

## TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** They were contemporaries who exchanged letters.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Al-Biruni was in India c. 1017-1031; Ibn Battuta arrived 1333 — three centuries later. Bernier came in the 17th c. The chapter spans roughly 600 YEARS.

## TOPIC

# Travellers saw all of India

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Each traveller surveyed the whole subcontinent.

✓ **CORRECT** Each covered a LIMITED ZONE — Al-Biruni largely Punjab/north-west; Ibn Battuta Sindh-Delhi-Daulatabad-Malabar; Bernier Delhi-Agra-Bengal-Kashmir via the court. Accounts are PARTIAL.

## TOPIC

# Travellers' accounts are objective

### TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Foreign accounts are objective because outsiders have no bias.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Outsider DOES NOT equal objective. Each carried his frame — Al-Biruni→Persia/Greece, Ibn Battuta→Maghrib, Bernier→France. Audiences shaped what they emphasised. Historians read them ALONG with indigenous sources.

## TOPIC

# Kitab-ul-Hind is a history book

### TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Kitab-ul-Hind narrates political history.

✓ **CORRECT** It is an ETHNOGRAPHY — religion, philosophy, law, customs, sciences, astronomy, caste. Rarely names kings. Goal was COMPARATIVE — to help Muslims understand Indian thought.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

# Describe Al-Biruni's methods and the barriers he identified. (8 marks)

- 1 INTRO**  
1 m Al-Biruni (973-1048), a Khwarizmi scholar brought to India by Mahmud of Ghazni, wrote Kitab-ul-Hind in Arabic as a comparative ethnography.
- 2 METHOD 1 — COMPARATIVE**  
1 m PRIMARY method was COMPARATIVE — he juxtaposed Indian thought with Greek philosophy, Sufi ideas and Persian science to make Indian concepts intelligible to a Muslim reader.
- 3 METHOD 2 — TEXTUAL**  
1 m He learned SANSKRIT and read the Vedas, Puranas, Patanjali and Bhagavad Gita; he met Brahmin scholars, valuing TEXTUAL sources over hearsay.
- 4 METHOD 3 — STRUCTURED**  
1 m Kitab-ul-Hind is in EIGHTY CHAPTERS, each on one theme — religion, weights, customs, astronomy — an encyclopaedic structure.
- 5 BARRIER 1 — LANGUAGE**  
1 m LANGUAGE — Sanskrit was difficult and many concepts had no Arabic equivalent.
- 6 BARRIER 2 — RELIGION**  
1 m RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE — Hindu philosophy and Islamic theology were hard to translate without distortion.
- 7**  
SELF-ABSORPTION — Al-Biruni felt Indians were proud and reluctant to share knowledge with outsiders.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

# Analyse Bernier's critique of the Mughal land system and his Europe comparison. (8 marks)

- 1 INTRO**  
1 m  
Francois Bernier, a French physician attached to Dara Shukoh, wrote Travels in the Mogul Empire (1670) dedicated to Louis XIV.
- 2 CENTRAL CLAIM**  
1 m  
He argued there was NO PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF LAND — the Emperor owned all, granted jagirs in return for service, resumed them at will.
- 3 CONSEQUENCE**  
1 m  
This DESTROYED INVESTMENT — no zamindar improved land, peasants stayed poor, cities flourished only as camps.
- 4 EUROPE COMPARISON**  
1 m  
He CONTRASTED with EUROPE — private ownership produced wealthier peasants, prosperous towns, stable middle stratum — arguing European superiority.
- 5 CRITIQUE 1**  
1 m  
Historians find this OVERSTATED — khalisa was state land but ZAMINDARI rights were hereditary, peasants held customary occupancy, milk/inam grants gave private holdings.
- 6 CRITIQUE 2**  
1 m  
His 'oriental despot' image served a POLITICAL argument back home — it influenced Montesquieu and Marx on 'Asiatic despotism'.
- 7 VERDICT**  
1 m  
His observations on jagir mobility hold a CORE of truth, but his sweeping denial reflects his European frame more than Mughal reality.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

# Discuss Ibn Battuta's account of the postal system and city life. (5 marks)

- 1 INTRO**  
1 m  
Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan jurist who reached Delhi in 1333 and served Muhammad bin Tughlaq as qazi, recorded his travels in the Rihla.
- 2 POSTAL SYSTEM**  
1 m  
TWO kinds of state post: ULUQ — horse-post with stations every 4 miles — and DAWA — foot-post, runners with bells every one-third mile, relay style, faster over short distances.
- 3 EVALUATION**  
1 m  
He marvelled that fresh fruit from Khurasan and DRINKING WATER reached the Sultan via this network — a sign of imperial reach unmatched in the Maghrib.
- 4 CITY LIFE**  
1 m  
He described DELHI as 'the largest city in the eastern Islamic world'; DAULATABAD as a planned twin-city; CAMBAY and CALICUT as cosmopolitan ports.
- 5 CONCLUSION**  
1 m  
His account portrays 14th-century India as URBAN, connected and prosperous — a corrective to the agrarian-only picture.

**PYQ PATTERNS**



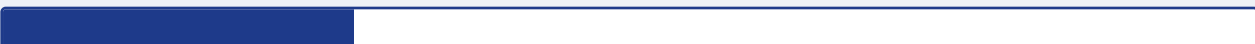


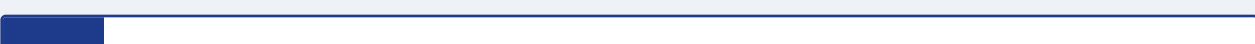
# Top PYQ patterns to drill

<b>#1</b>	Describe Al-Biruni's methods and the barriers he identified to understanding India. (5-8 marks)	2018, 2020, 2023
<b>#2</b>	Source-based passage: extract from Bernier's Travels on the land system OR on sati	answer 3 sub-questions. (5-8 marks) — Annual (2019, 2020, 2022, 2024)
<b>#3</b>	Discuss Ibn Battuta's account of the postal system / Indian cities / the court of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. (5-8 marks)	2019, 2021, 2023
<b>#4</b>	Analyse Bernier's critique of Mughal land ownership	was he accurate? Compare with European feudalism. (8 marks) — 2018, 2022, 2024

## MARKS DISTRIBUTION

# 10-year marks distribution

### 10-YEAR PYQ MARKS DISTRIBUTION

Al-Biruni — Kitab-ul-Hind, comparative method, barriers		<b>22%</b>
Ibn Battuta — Rihla, Tughlaq court, postal system, coconuts/paan		<b>24%</b>
Bernier — land system critique, comparison with Europe, sati		<b>28%</b>
Source-based passage from Bernier OR Ibn Battuta		<b>20%</b>
Caste, urban centres, women — what the travellers saw		<b>12%</b>
Methodology — using travellers' accounts as historical sources		<b>8%</b>

**RECAP · MEMORISE THESE**

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# Chapter 5 in Six Lines

WHAT'S NEXT

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# Next Class



# Lock It In

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