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HISTORICAL METHODS

Hello and welcome everyone.

This video is all about historical methods used by many historians around the world irrespective of the field of study like, Architecture, literature, poetry and others.

All these methods have helped them to research and write histories of the past.

Many of them are still used and some of them are improved with time and new methods have been added as well.

So we will understand and learn those methods to get better interpretation of history by ourselves instead of believing in the rumors or fake stories.

So to know all those methods one by one, follow me to the end of this video, let's start.

Introduction

Historical method is the collection of techniques and guidelines that historians use to research and write histories of the past.

All primary sources, secondary sources and material evidence such as that derived from archaeology may all be drawn or collected all together, and the historian's skill lies in identifying these sources, evaluating their relative authority, and combining their testimony appropriately in order to construct an accurate and reliable picture of past events and environments.

As an academic discipline history emerged in the late nineteenth century, although great historians have reoccurred in Western civilization since the early Greeks.

The Abrahamic religions are essentially historical and encourage the study of history because they believe God has revealed Himself in time.

By contrast history is essentially disregarded by Yogic religions.

Fundamentally history involves a process of interpreting the past based on evidence available in the present.

This entails using accounts inherited from earlier times.

Although each generation re-interprets history in light of contemporary questions, history claims a scientific status through its careful use of sources and the weighing of evidence.

Errors in Historical Methods

The most common mistake made by history students and, occasionally, well established historians is to project views and opinions common in one era back onto an earlier era.

This cannot legitimately be done without strong evidence that those views and opinions were held at the earlier time.

In particular people are prone to project contemporary assumptions onto the past.

Another very common error is to assume that a short passage of time makes little or no difference to the intellectual climate of the time. In fact in political, social and other spheres of life ten years can make a very big difference particularly when dealing with modern history.

The historian cannot assume that something, which was commonly believed by people in England in 1066, was shared with people who lived in 966.

The modern history of Germany shows how difficult it is to generalize about the past. For example the popular book "A History of Germany" Published in 1913 stresses the peaceful and pro-British nature of the Germans who are seen as allies against the cunning French.

The book ends by saying that Germans "know the value of peace, and pray that it may long continue".

But after the Second World War when both countries were fighting against each other it has been very difficult to find an English book which expresses such sentiments.

Role of historian and Techniques used

The task of the historian is to locate and interrogate appropriate sources for the reconstruction of an era.

Therefore, it is important to recognize the different sources used by historians and the value which can be placed upon them.

But, before discussing particular types of source material it must be very clearly recognized that all sources are biased.

Therefore, the historian must recognize the outlook of the source and take it into account when using it as evidence.

The major types of sources recognized by historians can be classified as follows: -

Primary sources:

These are the earliest available accounts of an event which are used by later writers to interpret that event.

They are the raw material used by other writers to provide them with information and data.

In using primary sources it is important to recognize the value judgements made by the people who wrote them and the intent of the author in writing the original document.

There are many types of primary sources:

Original handwritten documents, early copies of original documents, letters, diaries, and book manuscripts;

Printed documents, published books;

Personal documents, private documents, government documents, public documents;

Pictures, photographs and film; Archaeological evidence; statistical data derived from documents; Oral evidence.

Secondary sources:

These are works that discuss a subject either from a great distance or after the event on the basis of second-hand or even more remote information.

Secondary sources provide interpretations and make judgements about primary sources.

When using secondary sources it is important to realize that the account they give, even when it involves lengthy quotations from primary sources, may not be accurate.

Secondary sources can be used to understand primary sources but must not be confused with them.

Several cautions need to be observed when working with secondary sources.

The most important are: -

Secondary sources as primary sources:

Sometimes a secondary source may be used as a primary source for information about the period when the secondary source was written.

For Example, Book by James Mill "History of India, London" is a secondary source for Indian history but a primary source for anyone wanting to understand James Mill's thinking about India.

Another confusion which can arise during selecting a primary or secondary source is regarding the category in which an anthologies lies.

Anthologies are a published collection of poems or other pieces of writing. Such as Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology* contains short extracts from a large number of published primary sources.

As such it is very useful to students but it must be used with great care and not confused with true primary sources.

The problem is that the reader must trust that the editor's selection of material, in this case Gay's, is representative of the subject, i.e. the Enlightenment.

The reader must also accept that wherever translations are used from French or German sources the translations are accurate.

Similarly, books like Coward, Dargyay and Neufeldt's *Readings in Eastern Religions*, introduce students to the feel of primary sources but are not a true primary source.

Here again the question has to be asked whether the editors made really give a representative picture of Eastern religions and whether they use or make accurate translations of the texts cited.

Translations:

Although it is often necessary to work with translated materials translations must always be identified as such a never treated as an original primary source unless the translation itself has acquired a unique status historically such as the Vulgate, Authorized Version of the Bible or Luther's German Bible.