

Chapter 2 -

POLITICAL HISTORY OF WESTERN INDIA AND WEST ASIA

The polity of Western Indian and West Asia, especially between the 3rd to the 10th centuries A.D. have had a major role to play in the mutual contact and trade between the two regions and at the same time its historical events had been affected from this mutual contact. This chapter elucidates the political as well as social changes within this time-period considering the role of both regions in the Indian Ocean trade sphere.

2.1. Political History of Western India from the 3rd to 10th centuries A.D.

The Political history of western India suggests complex vicissitudes, and changes from centralisation to decentralisation, and vice versa. The timeline of the research has been delimited from the 3rd century A.D. to the 10th century A.D. which shows a cultural exchange with West Asia along the overseas route. Within this timeline, many major and minor empires/polities exercised control over the regions of western India (for posterity; current region encompassing the modern Indian states of Gujarat and Maharashtra).

2.1.1. Precursor to 3rd century A.D.

It is crucial to understand the events that led to the growth of bigger communities and urbanisation in 'early historic' and 'early medieval' western India and its impact on societies. The settlements, which go back to the earliest antiquity within early historic Gujarat are Hathab (IAR 2002-03; Pramanik 2004), Vadnagar (Rawat 2011), Nagara (Mehta and Shah 1968), Somnath (Nanavati *et al.* 1971), Dwarka (Ansari and Mate 1966) and from Maharashtra are Prakash (Thapar 1967), Kaundinyapura (Nath 1998), Adam (IAR 1988-89: 56; Nath 2016) where the archaeological evidence dates back to circa 600 B.C. Settlements such as Sopara, Nagardhan (Sontakke *et al.* 2016), Kaundinyapura (Nath 1998) and Pauni (Nath 1998) (IAR 1988-89: 56; 1991-92:63-68, Nath 1992, Nath 2016) have Mauryan levels.

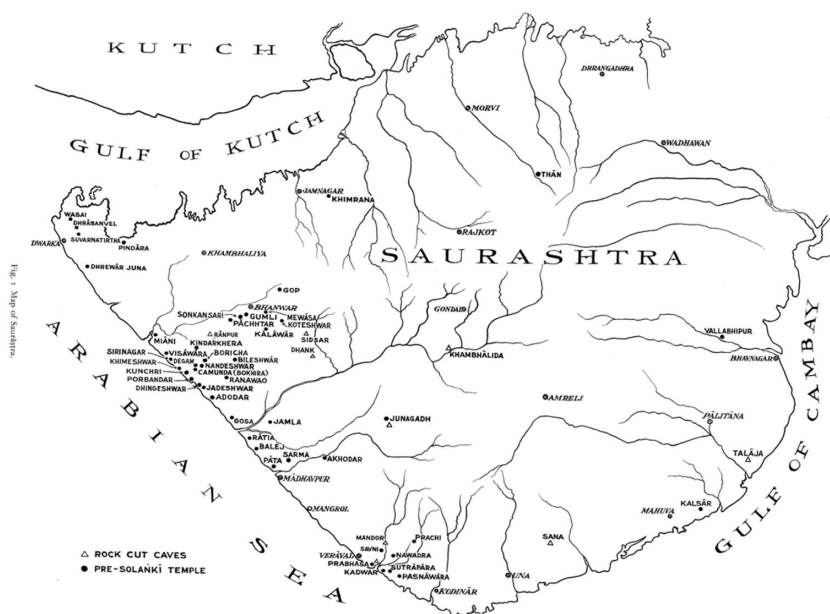
In Gujarat, after the fall of the Mauryans, the rule of the Indo-Greeks began. Within Maharashtra a powerful kingdom came to existence; the Satavahanas, who were also very active in the 'Indo-Roman trade' or overseas trade. The emergence of the Kushanas later also gave rise to the Western Kshatrapas, who ruled a large part of

Gujarat. The Kshatrapas were at loggerheads with the Satavahanas, especially in the south- Gujarat region. Nahapana (the Kshatrapa monarch) and Gautamiputra Satkarni (the Satavahan ruler), battled and re-struck their coins, which are clear indicators of their political rivalry. They were mostly fighting for Bharucha due to its lucrative trade. The precursor to the 3rd century A.D. was a period of two major empires striving for power namely, the Kshatrapas and Satavahanas. The Kshatrapas were defeated eventually by the Guptas in western India.

2.1.2. Period from 3rd to 7th centuries A.D.

The Gupta rise in the east and consequent power struggles were felt all the way till Gujarat and Maharashtra. Gupta inscriptions of Skandagupta (455 - 467 A.D.) at Girnar in Junagadh in Saurashtra is one of the few rare inscriptions that show Gupta political control over Gujarat, where it mentions the appointment of Parnadatta to lay control over Saurashtra (Bhandarkar *et al.* 1981) and fleeting mention of the Western Kshatrapas (Majumdar 1960b: 108). Majumdar (1960a: 128) compiled a list of silver coins and gold coins which shows the coinage of the kings Kumaragupta, Skandagupta, and Samudragupta within Gujarat. The capture of these coastal areas of Gujarat and peninsular Saurashtra must have opened new avenues of trade for the Guptas with the administrative capital of Gujarat being erstwhile Junagadh. The rule of the Guptas brought erstwhile Gujarat more within the pan Indian political sphere. It can be noted that this solidifying of the territory under one rule, eventually helped the Maitrakas who in many ways modelled their rule according to the Guptas, patronising different religions and establishing a centre (ancient University) at Vallabhipur akin to the developments in Nalanda and Telhara in Eastern India. The Vakatakas developed their empire in Maharashtra after the fall of the Satavahanas and were under the suzerainty of the Guptas. The Vakatakas were branched into two; the Pravarapura-Nandivardhan branch and the Vatsagulma branch. The former branch ruled majorly from central and eastern Maharashtra, where they had capitals at Mansar, Nandivardhan (Nagardhan), and Pravarapura (Paunar) near Nagpur whereas the Vatsagulma branch ruled from present day Washim, in Maharashtra (Mahajan 1960: 590-591). The Vakatakas were connoisseurs of art and that is seen from the Ajanta paintings, which are masterpieces of ancient art which are also teeming with evidence of foreigners within the painted spaces.

Around the middle of 5th c. A.D., the Hunas attacked India and Skandagupta (Junagarh Inscription – 458 A.D.) drove them back and continued to hold the provinces of Gujarat and Saurashtra, which is also mentioned in the Bhitari Inscription (Majumdar 1981: 73). Bhataraka, a Gupta general and devout Shiva worshipper (Gadre 1943: 10) was sent to Vallabhi, situated in Saurashtra, and soon its effects were seen in the political history of Gujarat with the rise of the Maitrakas. By 470 A.D, the Gupta hold over Gujarat was lost to the Maitrakas, Bhataraka's successors were Dharasena I, and Dronasimha (who assumed the title of Maharaja under the Gupta suzerainty) (Dandekar 1941:146-147) The capital of Saurashtra was shifted to Vallabhi from Girnar (Junagadh) due to constant danger of the Girnar lake bursting which was mentioned by the Kshatrapas and also the Guptas in their inscriptions at Girnar (see Map 2.1). By the 6th century A.D., the Maitrakas of Vallabhi were the most powerful kingdom in western India. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsung also mentions Dhruvasena II and Vallabhipur in 640 A.D. with its university, library, and commercial activity by many merchants (Majumdar 1960b: 133-134). This was also the period in Gujarat's history when the most interaction with West Asians happened, and it was a notably entrepreneurial period that featured trading with the Sasanians (see Chapter 4 Results). But this contact is not explicitly mentioned in the inscriptions of the Maitrakas, who were particularly exclusive in their inscriptions, and there is also no mention of the complex silk exchanges which had Persia (under the Sasanians) on one side dominating, and Byzantines along with their allies such as the east Africans vying for a larger share and/or monopoly (MacCourt 2019: 182-184). But MacCourt (2019: 184-188), stresses the importance of the 'merchant' in the 'socio-economic' sphere of the Maitrakas where privileges, and auxiliary land grants were made to the merchants. Thus, merchants would have certainly played a large role within the society, especially keeping the complex trade and exchange in place, bringing further riches and commodities to the Maitrakas of Vallabhi (Map 2.2).

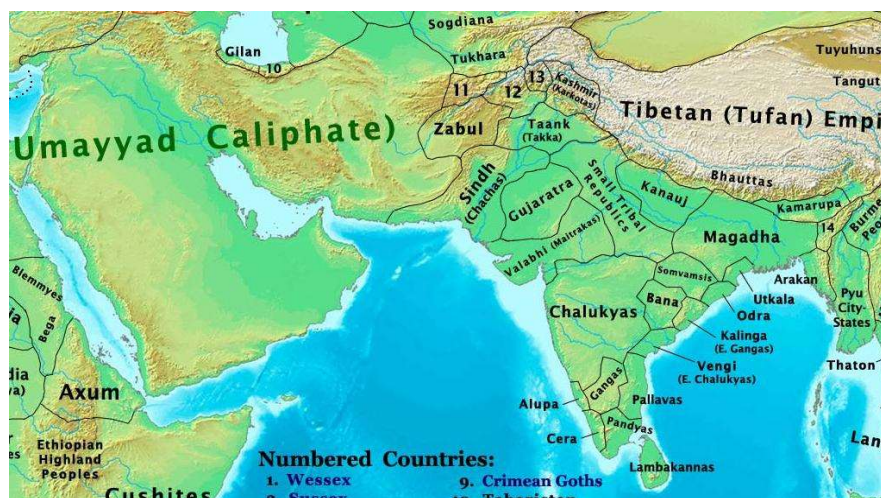


Map 2.1: Map of Temples built by the Maitrakas and Saindhavas in Saurashtra.
(Courtesy: Nanavati and Dhaky 1969: Fig.1)

Apart from the Buddhist institutions set up, many Brahmanical temples were also built by the Maitrakas of Vallabhi mostly in Saurashtra (Nanavati and Dhaky 1969, also see Map 2.1). Siladitya III (662-684 A.D.) was a powerful ruler who granted lands in Bharucha, having temporarily conquered the Gurjaras. Vallabhi was first invaded by Arabs around 725-735 A.D. and later it was weakened by the advance of the Chalukyas and later the Pratiharas, and Rashtrakutas, and around the rule of Siladitya VII, the second Arab attack took place in 776 A.D., with which the rule of the Maitrakas ended (Majumdar 1960b: 134).

The Traikutakas (originally from *Aparanta*) reign in south Gujarat was eclipsed by the arrival of the Vakataka monarch Harisena approximately 475-500 A.D., and the Kalachuris took over sections of Gujarat, the north Konkan, and Maharashtra (Majumdar 1960b: 124) and parts of the western Deccan and probably had their capital at Mahishmati (Maheshwar) on the Narmada River. Three members of the family—Krishnaraja, Shankaragana, and Buddharaja—are known from epigraphs and coins distributed over a wide area. The political might of the Maitrakas and the Gurjaras-

Chalukyas restricted the growth of the early Kalachuris. In the meanwhile, the Gurjaras ruled over Bharucha (*Bharukachha*) and dominated the territory until attacks by Vallabhi, Chalukyas of Badami, in the 7th century A.D., Arab invasions in the 8th century A.D., and finally, Rashtrakuta ruler Govinda III captured it in the 9th century A.D. (Majumdar 1960b).



Map 2.2: Map of India and West Asia during the rule of the Maitrakas of Vallabhi.
(Courtesy: worldhistorymaps.info)

2.1.3. Period from 8th to 10th centuries A.D.

According to the Navsari copper plates of Avajinasraya Pulakesin, the Chalukya ruler of Gujarat, the invading Arab army had disrupted the kingdoms of Saindhavas, Kacchella, Saurashtra, Cavotaka, Maurya, Gurjara, and others, but the Arab army was routed at Navsari when attempting to enter Maharashtra (Majumdar 1960b: 193-194). As a result, the era after the Maitraka collapse in Gujarat is characterised by rapid decentralisation and resulted in the formation of smaller kingdoms. The Saindhavas and Chavdas ruled over areas of Gujarat that were divided. The Saindhavas (735-920 A.D.) ruled from their capital at Ghumli (ancient *Bhutambilika*) in Saurashtra (Altekar 1941-42: 185). The Saindhavas who were forced out of their original homeland 'Sindh' later settled in the region of Saurashtra, made Ghumli their capital. They were also prodigious temple builders as seen from the *Sonkansari* group of temples at their capital at Ghumli, Barda hills in Jamnagar. They followed the Gujarat style of architecture which was

curated by the Maitrakas initially and continued by the Saindhavas in the later part of the first millennium A.D. Along with the Saindhavas, the Garulakas were also under the control of the Maitrakas. The Saindhavas, called themselves ‘Masters of the Western Ocean’, and boasted of their naval prowess, which is mentioned in five of their famous 12 charters found at Ghumli (Altekar 1941-1942: 190). After the death of Jaika I (849 A.D.), the empire was divided into three houses, though it was still being ruled from Bhutambilika, the empire transposed into more of a federation, though roughly, the three families had a similar administration system in place (Altekar 1941-42: 193-199). Similarly, the Chapas, were ruling in northern Saurashtra and were at loggerheads with the Saindhavas. As per the copper grants, only the Brahmanas and traders were afforded grants (land and otherwise) which showcases the importance of both within the society of the Saindhavas in the 9th century A.D. (Altekar 1941-1942: 200). But it is debatable whether these traders were indeed participating in foreign or overseas trade, or their trade was within the Indian sub-continent.

In North Gujarat, Vanaraja established the city of Anahilapura Patan and Vanaraja Chavda the founder of the Chavda line (690-942 A.D.) who started ruling around 746 A.D. solidified their rule in north Gujarat. The Rashtrakuta-Pratihara period (745-942 A.D.) was the next major development in the political sphere of western India. The Rashtrakutas (established by Dantidurga 737-757 A.D.) in peninsular India, the Palas (c. 770-810 A.D.) in the east, and the Gurjara-Pratiharas in the west, founded by Nagabhata I, reached its pinnacle during the reigns of Mihira Bhoja (836-885 A.D.) and Mahendrapala (836-885 A.D.) (Majumdar 1960b: 219). Much of northern Gujarat was controlled by the Gurjara-Pratiharas (Majumdar 1977: 366). Dantidurga ruled over much of Maharashtra by the middle of the 8th century A.D. (Majumdar 1960b: 219) and the Rashtrakutas ruled much of south Gujarat, and archaeological evidence of West Asian contact with Sanjan in South Gujarat are plenty in this period (Gupta *et al.* 2004a, Nanji 2011). Gurjara-Pratiharas also invested in Khambhat as a port to rival the port of Bharucha which was under the Rastrakutas (Majumdar 1956: 265).

The region of *Dakshin* Gujarat and Maharashtra was thus under strong centralised powers in this period as opposed to the other regions of Gujarat which showed a more de-centralised picture. *Sulaiman* (851 A.D.), *Al Masudi* (944 A.D.), and *Ibn*

Khurdadba (912 A.D.) attest that the Rashtrakutas were the largest empire in the then contemporary India and Sulaiman further called it one among the four great contemporary empires of the world (Reu 1933: 39–4, Keay 2000: 200; Kamath 2001: 94). According to the travelogues of the Arabs, *Al Masudi*, and *Ibn Khordidbih* of the 10th century, "most of the kings of *Hindustan* turned their faces towards the Rashtrakuta king while they were praying, and they prostrated themselves before his ambassadors. The Rashtrakuta king was known as the "King of Kings" (*Rajadhiraja*) who possessed the mightiest of armies and whose domains extended from Konkan to Sind. This acceptance seems to have been based on religious tolerance though it had definite economic motives for both parties. The Rashtrakutas had balanced the political invasions from the Arab polity with their economic policy with the Arabs masterfully. Some of the products that were exported by the Rashtrakutas were teak and included textiles (Gopal 1989: 150). In return, India imported from the Arabs; incense, metals (copper, lead), dates, horses, and interestingly even petroleum from Persia which is referred to as thick oil (c. f. Gopal 1989: 151-153). Alternatively, this material which is referred to be 'petroleum' could also be 'bitumen', which was indeed thick and highly viscous. Bitumen may have been used as a leak proofing agent on overseas ships.

This is also the phase where possibly first emigrants from Persia probably moved to the western India as mentioned in the quasi-historical text of *Kisse-i-Sanjan*, this group was later called the Parsis (Hinnels and Williams 2007). Altekar (1934: 415) believes, 'the friendly policy followed towards the 'Islamic' traders was, in a great measure, necessitated by the dependence on Arabia for the supply of horses to the army. The Chinchani Copper Plates given an interesting account of the varied demography of the region around Sanjan; it mentions the Rashtrakuta king Indra (926 A.D.) gives administrative control of the region to *Madhumati* (*Mahamad*) of the Tajik race including all ports. Parsis and Tajiks are mentioned in this inscription (IAR 2006-07: 53) The later dates for the settlement of the Iranian emigrants in India are also evidenced at inscriptions found in Kanheri caves (Cave 90). The first inscription gives the names of 17 men, and the second, of 10 men including 4 of the first; and these are dated respectively in 1009 and 1021 A.D. The script as well as the language of both is Middle Persian and the personal names are without exception, purely Persian. (West 1880)

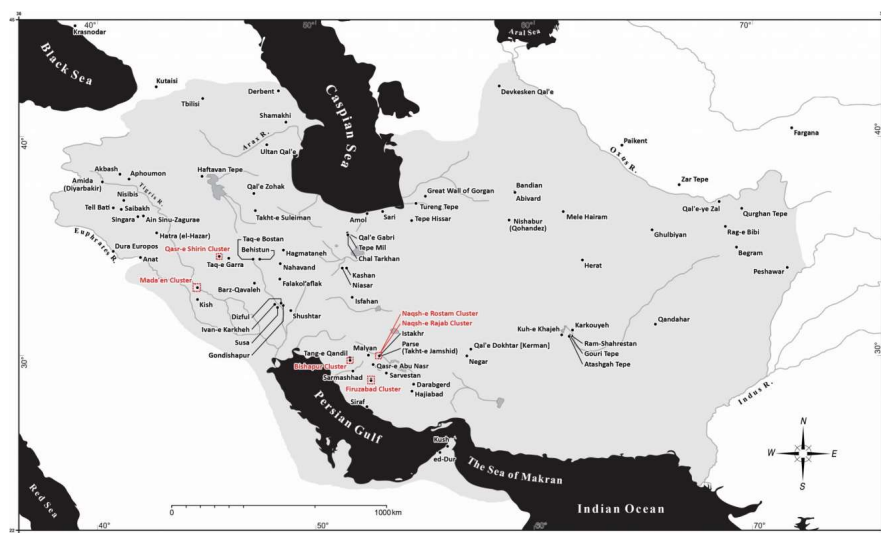
2.2. Political History of West Asia from the 3rd to 10th centuries A.D.

2.2.1. The Sasanian Empire (3rd to 7th centuries A.D.)

The Sasanians arose to power in the 3rd century A.D., when their first imperial monarch Ardashir I defeated the last Arsacid ruler, Artaban (Artabanus IV) at plain of *Hormozgan* (Daryae 2009: 2, Figure 2.1). The Sasanians were revivalists of the Zoroastrian faith, a religion which was propagated by the Iranian reformer Zarathustra and one of the major gods was Ahura Mazda amongst others such as Anahita, a Goddess. Stunning rock reliefs were commissioned by Ardashir I out of which the most outstanding one is at *Naqs-e-Rustam* in Fars (see Map 2.2). The huge rock-relief displays his victory over Artabanus and him being given the symbol of sovereignty to Ardashir, thus legitimising his rule over the territory (Daryae 2009: 5). Shapur I (240-270 A.D.) was known for his closeness to Kerdir, his reliefs at *Naqs-e-Rustam* stand testament to his victories where he is shown subjugating the two Roman emperors. He captured eastern Mesopotamia, Syria and brought in administrative changes such as viceroys, governors, royal guards, scribes, treasurers, judges to the fore (Daryae 2009: 8-10, see Figure 2.4).

Due to Shapur II (309-379 A.D.) –and his campaigns, some of the Arabs were pushed into the heartland of Arabia and the Persian Gulf region remained in the hands of the Sasanian Empire. He famously used Elephants in battle (Indian elephants) against Romans defeating Valerian (Daryae 2016: 38). The next important ruler was Kavad I (498 - 531 A.D.) during whose rule the Sasanian empire was going through issues on the economic and political front, and in this phase, he was influenced by Mazdak (a pro-egalitarian priest) and used this to break the power of the nobility (Daryae 2009: 26). He was noted for dividing the empire administratively, into four chanceries called *diwan* which probably corresponded with the military division of the empire under the rule of four generals which was done so as to keep the ever-increasing empire safe. The survey

of agricultural lands and reorganisation of the tax system also began during his rule (Daryaei 2009: 27).



Map 2.3: Map of important archaeological sites of the Sasanian empire (Courtesy: sasanika.org)

The next important monarch in Sasanian history was Khusro I (531-579 A.D.) During his rule, there was a Sasanian revival and its effect was that Georgia as well as parts of inner Arabia and Oman came under the control of the Persians (Wilkinson 1975: 98-99). Khusro is credited to have built the Gorgan Wall (The Red Snake) which was a masterful display of Sasanian military defensive strategy along in the north-eastern part of Iran near the Caspian Sea. The Gorgan wall now stands at around 2–5 meters high and about 10 meters in width. On the outer (northern) side of sections of the wall there runs a 3 meter deep, (30 meter wide) ditch. The wall is constructed using both unfired mudbricks ($50 \times 50 \times 10$ centimetres) and kiln bricks ($40 \times 40 \times 10$ cms). (Nokandeh *et al.* 2006; Omrani Rekavandi *et al.* 2007, see Map 2.2). The Sasanians and the Indian rulers had a common enemy i.e., the Huns (Hunas) who were invaders into their respective territories. The 200 km wall and its 30 odd forts along it were testament to the military genius of the Sasanians who wanted to keep away the White Huns (Hephthalites).

On the economic front, Persians had settled in Central Asia and the traders had ventured east towards India, China and as far away as Indonesia (Schafer 1951), archaeological evidence of Torpedo Jars is seen as far east as in Thailand from the Samut

Sakhon Shipwreck. (Conan *et al.* 2020). The merchants and traders were more interested in business and wanted to control the trade in spices and silk, motivated by economic gain, rather than as a state sponsored activity (Daryaee 2009: 28) which signifies a free market economy with possibly minimal state intervention. There appears to have been an intellectual opening of ties and ideas with other people, especially India and Rome. From India, books on medicine, astronomy, mirrors for princes, fables and tales, and chess manuals were brought and translated (Daryaee 2001).

Khusro, the second, oversaw the empire at its greatest stretches. He captured parts of Armenia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Anatolia and also led invasions into Jerusalem which led to violent repercussions for the Sasanian empire. He was dethroned in 628 A.D. by the nobility and the priests, and conquered territories were finally given back to the Roman empire by c.630 A.D. (Daryaee 2009: 33-34, see Map 2.2). His sons/successors were greatly interlocked in a game of thrones and Kavad II came to power. But he was also murdered eventually (see Figure 2.2). In 630 A.D., the coming in of Ardashir III (son of Kavad II) prompted a violent reaction by Kavad's general, Shahrwaraz who stormed the capital and took over. He was also murdered shortly (Daryaee 2009: 35). Buran, daughter of Khusro II started ruling around 630 A.D., she was responsible for a brief revival of the empire and its consolidation but it only lasted two years, she was also dethroned by a Sasanian general who was followed by Queen Azarmigduxt (Daryaee 2009: 36, see Figure 2.2).

From the various coins from the period around this unrest, it appears that Hormizd V, Khusro III, Peroz II and Khusro IV ruled different areas of the empire simultaneously from the end of 631 A.D. to 637 A.D., when Yazdgerd III had already been on the throne for some years. (Daryaee 2009: 36) Yazdegerd III, was constantly on the move, due to which, the Arabs slowly started capturing areas in the Sasanian realm such as Ctesiphon (the Sasanian capital), Khuzestan between 636 to 642 A.D., and eventually the heart of the empire at Persis by 650 A.D. Because of this, he was forced to flee eastwards eventually to be killed at the hands of a local miller at Merv (Daryaee 2009: 37), thus ending the stupendous Sasanian empire (see Figure 2.2).

SĀSĀNID KINGS OF IRAN AND UN-IRAN
(*Šābān šāb Ērān ud Anērān*)

The Sāsānid Dynasty governed greater Persia (Iran) from 224 to 652 and presided over the last of the great pre-Islamic empires in the Middle East. Native Persian, Greco-Roman, and later Muslim sources preserve a wealth of information about the royal family, but the details are sometimes contradicted in different accounts. The most probable options are given here.

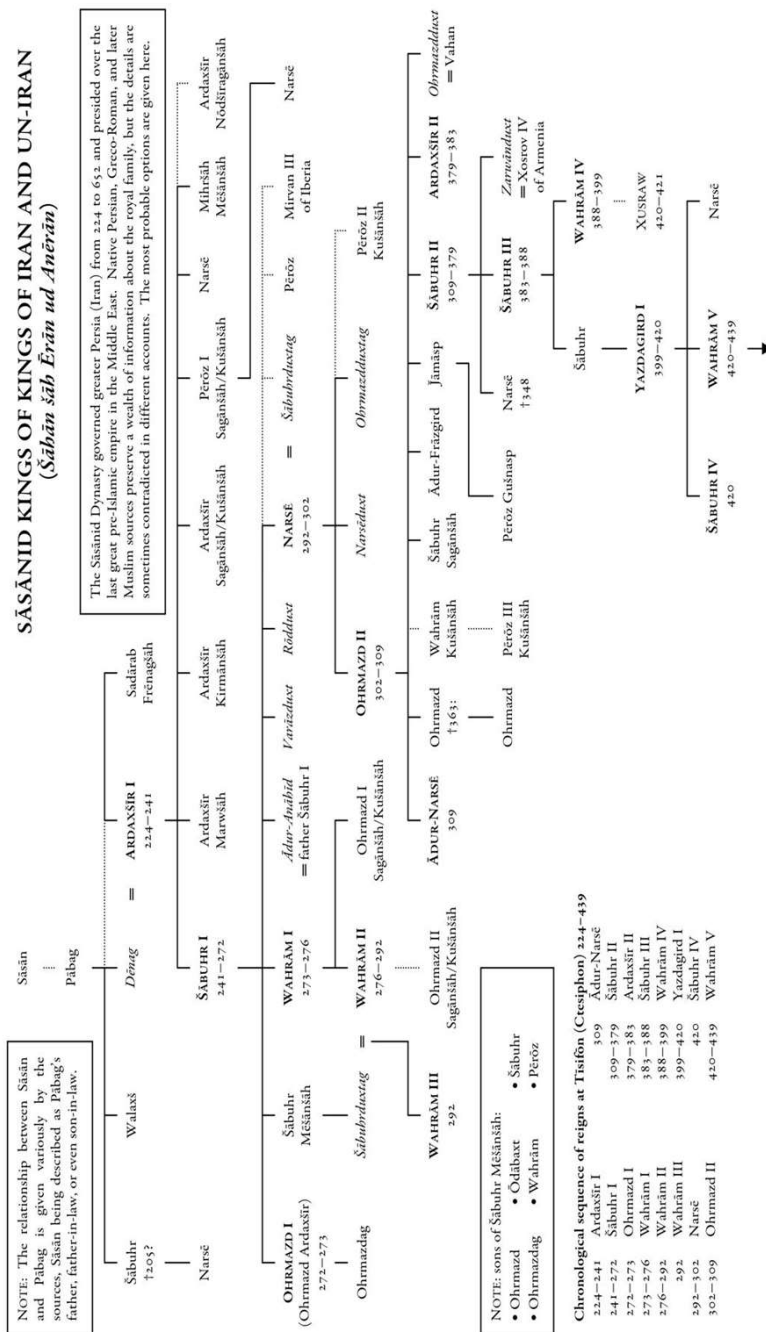
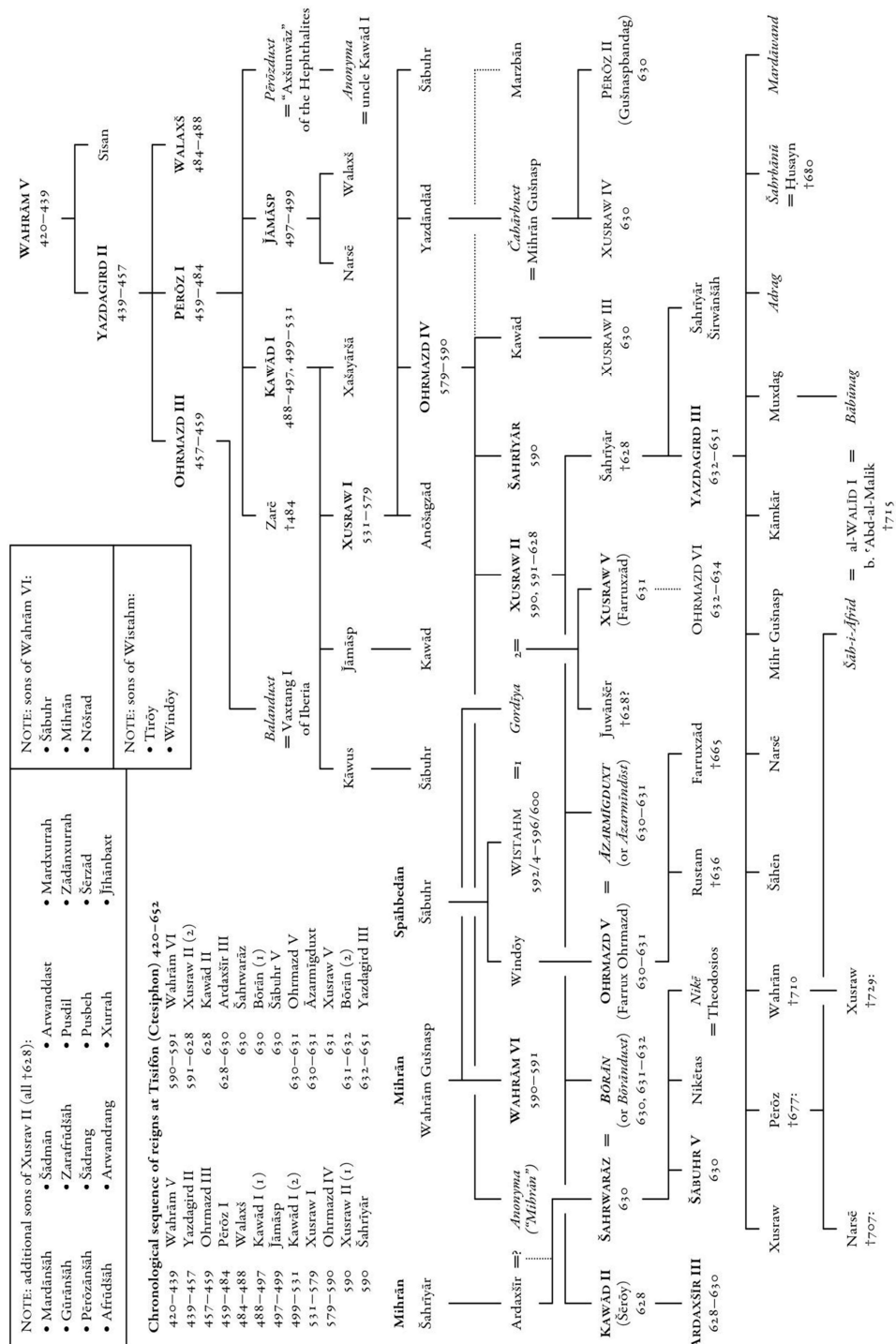


Figure 2.1: Sasanian Lineage part 1. Courtesy Ian Mladjov.



2.2.2. Early Islamic Period (7th to 10th centuries A.D.)

The fall of the Sasanians to the Arabs had a negative impact on the Sasanian bloodline. Around the 7th century A.D., Yazdgird III was assassinated, signalling the end of the Sasanian monarchy. Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Hira, portions of southern Iraq, and eastern Iran had previously been surrendered to the Arabs by the Sasanians. The Rashidun caliphate sprang from the ruins of the Sasanian empire.

2.2.2.1. Rashidun Caliphate (632–661 A.D.)

The Rashidun Caliphate was one of the first attempts to solidify an empire, it was established after the death of Prophet Muhammad who had led a small religious polity in Medina. The famous 'Four Caliphs' Abu-Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali were primarily responsible for the rapid expansion throughout west Asia and other surrounding regions.

Abu Bakr (573-634 A.D.), the first of the Rashidun Caliphs and Prophet Muhammad's father-in-law, was the first of the properly guided Caliphs. He was a Quraysh trader and a member of the Quraysh tribe. Before Prophet Muhammad's death, he was the closest counsellor to him and his successor (against the claims of Ali). He was the first to dispatch or supervise the deployment of 'Islamic' forces into Syria and Iraq, marking the beginning of the first 'Islamic' victories outside of the Arabian Peninsula (Campo 2009: 9-10).

The second caliph was Umar ibn al-Khattab (586-644 A.D.) and he established the Islamic empire's political structure. He was born in Mecca and belonged to the Adu clan of the Quraysh tribe. He was also a trusted adviser to the Prophet throughout his lifetime. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Islamic state as well as the capture of more land in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. His administrative abilities may be seen in the way he controlled conquered countries, forcing them to pay tribute to the treasury rather than assisting his forces. During this era, new governors and capable administrators were elected, as well as fortified cities such as Basra and Kufa. He is famous for setting up a tax system to finance the state and a postal system. (Campo 2009: 685). It was during his rule that the Byzantine-Sasanian alliance was squashed for good.

Uthman ibn Affan (579-656 A.D.) was the third caliph and succeeded Umar. He was a savvy businessman who oversaw boosting the public purse. His actions, however, resulted in his assassination by rebel forces within the realm (Keaney 2011). Ali ibn Abi Talib (601-661 A.D.) who ruled between 656 and 661 A.D., was the fourth of the rightful caliphs. He was also very close to Prophet Muhammad.

2.2.2.2. Umayyad Caliphate (661 - 750 A.D.)

The Umayyads were the caliphate that succeeded the Rashiduns for over a century. In the First Islamic Civil War, the Umayyads defeated the Rashiduns, with the Umayyads establishing a stronghold in Syria and Damascus as their capital, controlled by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan (Bewley 2002). The Marwanid House rose to prominence with the accession of Marwan, the fourth caliph of this empire, in 684 A.D. The period is significant because it prepared the way for western and eastern territorial expansion (including Sindh, Makran, and Balochistan) (Wink 2002: 164). The uprising of the Abbasids, who gained power, brought the dynasty to an end.

2.2.2.3. Abbasid Caliphate (750 - 1258 A.D.)

The Abbasid caliphate was the Islamic world's third. It was named after a dynasty that derived from Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib (Prophet Muhammad's uncle) and ruled from southern Iraq, with Baghdad as the capital for the bulk of the time (Hoiberg 2010: 10). They ascended to power after defeating the Umayyads in a revolution in 750 A.D. The Abbasid dynasty is often regarded as Islam's Golden Age, with its peak of scientific and cultural achievement. The old 'Mawalis' were a major force in the transition from the Umayyads to the Abbasids, making the society considerably more inclusive. Near Baghdad, the first Caliph Abbas as-Saffah fought the last Umayyad monarch Marwan II (Kennedy 2004a). The second caliph Al-Mansur moved to capital of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad. The administrative changes that occurred during the Caliphate foreshadowed the cultural developments. New administrative posts were created, such as the 'vizier,' which played a crucial role in shifting the balance of power. Most of the

viziers and other local rulers were not Arab. Within the Abbasid era, the first part of the Abbasid rule is known as the "Golden Age."



Map 2.4 – Map of the Early Islamic Abbasid circa 850 A.D. (Courtesy: Cattette 2011¹)

Civil conflicts were common during the Abbasid period, with the one at Samarra being particularly brutal. The Abbasids' capital was Samarra (836-892 A.D.) Samarra is a city in Iraq that was founded by the caliph al-Mu'tasim to house his Turkish guards, who were disliked by Baghdad residents (Gordon 2001: 15, 50). The Caliph was swiftly constructing a totally new metropolis, complete with religious, palace, and military areas (Kennedy 2004b: 219). His successors followed in his footsteps. After al-Mutawakkil's assassination, civil strife and turmoil erupted in the new capital, and his successors' attempt to return to Baghdad was thwarted by the advancing Turkish forces (Gordon 2001). After the death of al-Mu'tamid (870-892 A.D.) his successor al-Mu'tadid returned to Baghdad (Northedge 2008: 239 ff). Archaeological surveys and excavations have been carried out at Samarra since the beginning of the 20th century (Northedge 1991, Northedge and Kennet 2015) which have covered some parts of the massive area that is Samarra (see Map 2.3 and 2.4).

¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abbasid_Caliphate_850AD.png as part of license agreement

In the 10th century A.D., the Abbasids lost Iraq to the growing power of local chiefs Magnusson & Goring 1990:2). Persian kings, the Buyids, were the first to emerge in Iran (Grousset 2002), and the Seljuks (a Turkish-Persian kingdom) eventually gained control (Hoiberg 2010: 10). After a brief recovery of power, the Abbasids regained Baghdad from the Seljuks, but they were eventually destroyed by the Mongol invasion in the 13th century A.D., thereby ending the Abbasid Caliphate (Cooper & Yue 2008: 215).

The major implications of the political take-over of West Asia and adjoining regions brought two of the most important overseas gateways of overseas trade of the West namely Red Sea and Persian Gulf under one rule; the Arabs (Hourani 195: 65-55). This gave them unprecedented control over the material being transported from West Asia to China and vice versa. The cultural exchange between the Chinese Tang dynasty and the Arabs in this period is of importance as it also contains obvious influences on the ceramics in West Asia with the kilns at Basra producing imitations of the Chinese wares. Whilst, India and western India (in particular) saw a dwindling trade with China, as India didn't find a place in Song Annals in the countries which were part of the trade around Canton in the late 10th century A.D. (Gopal 1989: 133). But, nonetheless, Chinese material (especially Ceramics which were highly valued) did find its way to Western India, Peninsular India, and Eastern India in this time-period.

Although, Indian merchants were actively trading with West Asians regularly making business trips, and as noted by Gopal (1989: 142-143), the 'western termini' shifted periodically from Basra (south Iraq), then to Siraf, and then to Kish and, Hormuz (see Map 2.3). This indicates a substantial shift from deep within the Persian Gulf to further away just at the entry point of the Gulf at Hormuz.

Table 2.1: Persian and Arab Translations of 'Indian' Works

Original Author	Original Work	Period	Persian-Arab Translation	Translator	Period
Buddhagupta	Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta	628 A.D.	Az-Zīj 'alā Sinī al-'Arab called Sindhind (Kennedy 1956)	Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Habib ibn Samra ibn Jundab al-Fazari	771 A.D. after the annexation of Sindh
			Abū Rayhān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Birunī	<i>Taḥqīq mā li-l-hind min maqūlah maqbūlah fī al-'aql aw mardhūlah</i> (variously translated as "Verifying All That the Indians Recount, the Reasonable and the Unreasonable." ²	1030 A.D. ³ part of infamous Mahmud al Ghazni's troupe
Sushruta	Sushruta Samhita		Manka, court of Harun -al Rashid		
	Medical works		Yahya ibn Khalid al Barmaki ⁴		805 A.D.

2.3. Intellectual Exchanges between West Asia and Western India between 3rd to 10th centuries A.D.

The Sasanians had maintained a healthy exchange of literature and other materials with India. This intellectual exchange continued in the Early Islamic period even though the two regions (West Asia ruled by Arabs at the point and rulers of Western India) were at war at times (Table 2.1). Since post 8th century A.D. in West Asia is recognised as the Islamic Golden Age, there was a definite exchange of works as seen from

³George Saliba. "Al-Bīrūnī". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved Aug 12, 2017. and Khan 1976

⁴Waardenburg 1999: 27

⁵Asimov and Bosworth: 300

Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta by Buddhagupta an astronomical and mathematical work due to which the knowledge of number zero and the Indian numerals went to West Asia which had wide scale repercussions for the centuries to come. Many works were translated and the West Asian curiosity with that of India didn't stop with the advent of Islam and the death of the Sasanian polity.

Evidence from the site of Khambhat from the writings of al-Mas'udi when he visited in 916 A.D., he found a Muslim population of ten thousand, consisting of settlers from places such as Siraf, Oman, Basra, Baghdad amongst others which exported cotton and ginger (Sheikh 2004:47-48). Cotton was chief agricultural produce in Gujarat, along with indigo, oilseeds, hemp, and sugarcane, a noted change is seen in the scenario of trade goods according to Sheikh (2004: 49), where it went from merely luxury to bulk goods such as cotton and leather goods, timber, sugar, dyes, spices, and semi-precious stones (Jain 1990: 12-20, 105-106).