

# Romano-Persian Rivalry For the East-West Trade!

## *Trade Relations Between Iran and India from Prehistoric Times as a Contributing Factor to the Parsi Pilgrims Settling in India*

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There is no reliable information about how and why the ancestors of the Parsis, of all places, migrated by sea to the coast Gryarat, the only place they survived outside of Iran – and of course in much more numbers than in Iran itself. The only text dealing with their migration *Qisse-ye Sanjan*. was written almost 700 years after they had settled in Goarat, by Mobed Bahman Kekobad Sanjana — too long after the real facts about their migration could possibly have been known to him in those insecure tumultuous days. As Alan Williams puts it, *Qisse-ye Sanjan* has great religious and racial significance “as an enduring myth and charter of Parsi identity” but has little historical value. “Reading it” with the sole purpose of finding a historically satisfactory chronology of the Zoroastrians down to 1599 is rather like going to see a performance of Hamlet only for the purpose of learning a lesson in Danish history.” It is not surprising therefore that he uses the word ‘myth’ in the very title of his book on this subject - *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora: Text. Translation and Analysis of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Qesse-ye Sanjan ‘the Story of Sanjan,’* Brill, Leiden, 2009. As a psychologist, *Qisse-ye Sanjan* appears to me as a psych-social-spiritual quest into one’s roots and history in order to keep it alive for the present and future generations and boost their self-esteem and religious consciousness for ensuring their unique identity, a task in which it has succeeded so admirably. As pointed out by Williams, some verses used by the author of *Qisse-ye Sanjan* are too similar to Ferdowsi’s to pass off as history. Rather it reflects the author’s own times and literary notions. But myth it is, and so how do we get to know the real facts? Alas the facts are long lost to us. But my detailed study of regular and constant trade relations between Iran and India since prehistoric times, a topic so far little known to us, suggests that trade with India must have been the catalyst for the Parsi Pilgrims becoming quite familiar with Gujarat and its ever-so tolerant residents, having by then witnessed severe religious intolerance in their native country. This is not to suggest, however that they settled in Gujarat solely for trade, though some of the migrants may have initially continued trading with Iran. Some of the sailors

may still have remained Zoroastrian immediately after the Arab conquest but not for too long after that in view of the rapid proselytizing going on then and that too would have stopped all trading with Zoroastrians, whose very touch was regarded as Nazdis -impure- by the recent converts. However, the intense trading in pre-Islamic times must have led to the formation of small Parsi colonies in trading ports such as Div, Khambhat, Bharuch, Surat, Sanjan and Kalyan. Indeed the archaeological findings of Dr. Rukshanaranji suggests the possibility of such a colony existing in Sanjan even BEFORE the Arab conquest of Iran.

Many authors doubt that Sanjan was the only port the Parsi Pilgrims first landed. There are different priestly divisions amongst the Parsis in the past as well as today. Moreover, Navsari (New Sari) is generally acknowledged to have been named after a town called Sari in Iran.

Navsari, Surat, and Bharuch seem to have had Parsi population long before the fall of Sanjan to Sultan Mahmud, and their priestly sects were distinct from each other, which would hardly be the case if all of them had originated from Sanjan. And why would they migrate north, if it was increasingly coming under the Muslim rule? Moreover, the land routes were infested with tigers, snakes, and wild beasts for easy migration. Sometimes I wonder if the Parsis came to know of each others' whereabouts or existence until they came into contact with the English.

It seems the vast trade between Iran and India provided an opportunity to the Parsi Pilgrims to become familiar with Gujarat coastline in more ways than one – familiar means of travel, familiarity with its mild-mannered, tolerant population with a ready disposition for trading, possibility of trading what wares they had with a piece of land, etc., absence of the very concept of conversion in Hindu culture, as well as in most non-monotheistic faiths (as expounded by recent literature on this subject), mutual respect for fire, etc. in both cultures, availability of interpreters in view of the long history of trade, etc. One thing, however, that puzzles me, is these Parsi pilgrims were not from Pars as is commonly believed, but were from further east – from Khorasan. Even today the Ashirwas (Benediction) for the Parsi wedding ceremony mentions dowry to be paid in Nishapuri currency, Nishapur being city in Khorasan. There could be at least two interpretations for it. Khorasan traders look active part in the trade on the Silk Route and perhaps traded with India too by marine routes or more probably got interested in it when the Romans began to compete with the Sasanians for the Silk Route trade. Alternatively, they tended to be too good and staunch Zoroastrian to take the easy route of converting to Islam and their trading relations with India facilitated their migration to Gujarat to escape Islam. It seems quite plausible that though Parsis seem to have migrated to different coastal areas in Gujarat, oddly enough, they all bear a Khorasani vintage. My labor in highlighting the

immense trading between Iran and India from times immemorial would prove worthwhile if it opens a new vista in the study of Parsi and migrations to India and leads to rethinking and readdressing the issue. However, it should not in any way be construed as proving that the Parsis settled in Gujarat for the purpose of trading since trading relations in the past merely facilitated their plan to migrate there. In pre-Islamic times they imported products from India and exported western products to India, which came to an abrupt halt once they settled permanently in India. Moreover the fact that they went out of their way to secure their *Alat* (religious implements) etc., by land route through Afghanistan or Baluchistan, for Iranshah, and to re-introduce such intricate ceremonies as Yajnasne, Vendidad, Nirangdin, Naavar, Martal, etc. etc. belies the fact that they migrated to India only for the sake of trading. The fact speaks for themselves: the religious zeal rather than trading as the primary reason behind their migration is quiet evident, overly clear. Unfortunately it is so lacking today amongst us but that proves the point.

If the vast scale and scope of the sea trade between Iran and India is brought out in detail, one would have little reason to doubt that it inspired and facilitated the Parsi Pilgrims decision to settle on the western coast of India. Let us then look at this trade.

## **Romano-Persian Rivalry For the East-West Trade!**

The trade between Mesopotamia and India was carried on by sea millennia before the Christian era, and the natives of the Harappan civilization in (undivided) India were related to the Elamites. Thus, the trade between ancient Persia and India may very likely be regarded as the oldest trade relations between the two nations. It is not surprising therefore that their claim for conquering the world also aspired them to win the world trade routes for economic mastery. Besides silk and silk products, many other items such as precious copper or bronze animal figures, spices, incense, buffaloes, wild beasts, and enslaved Indian eunuchs were imported by the Romans from the East, and had to be declared. Big animals were already carried by ship. An anonymous Latin author writing about the Persians in the fourth-century observed that “they are said to have everything in abundance; for the nations neighboring their territory are given the opportunity to engage in trade and therefore they themselves also seem to have plenty of everything.” (See Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in late antiquity: neighbours and rivals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 195). Until late in the third century, goods were transported from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean ports via the river Euphrates. Isidorus of Chaxax, a geographer who lived during the period of Augustus provides us an extensive chart of this trade route and the merchandise it carried. This trade was not affected when some of its trade routes were captured by the Romans and the Persian

merchants carried on this trade themselves with few competitors vying with them. After the fall of Hatra in 273, however, this trade was carried on via the river Tigris, which grew in importance significantly thence. Nisibis, the capital city of Roman Mesopotamia too gained importance as a new trade center, but as the Tigris was not navigable at certain points in its course, unlike the caravan cities it could not provide a continuous network of traffic by land to the Mediterranean region. In the treaty of 298 Diocletian insisted on requiring Nisibis as the only place in Mesopotamia where the east-west trade could be carried out, and requiring the Persian traders to pay high custom duties if they wanted to sell their wares to its inhabitants, thereby hoping to break the Persian monopoly on the east-west trade. However, it failed to adversely affect the revenue of the Sasanian state, as it could continue to charge its usual custom duties to the merchants importing goods in Persia, or selling them there. When Nisibis was captured by the Sasanians in 363, the Romans built its counter part nearby Nisibis to continue trading with the East. Chinese silk was so highly prized by the Romans that even the Emperor Antoninus, (circa 219), found it beneath his dignity to wear any Roman or Greek robe, “because, he claimed it was made out of wool, which is a cheap material. Only Chinese silk was good enough for him.” (See David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180-395*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 153).

The Romans were quite conscious of the fact that the most lucrative east-west trade passed through the Persian territory and was monopolized by the Persians for centuries. Therefore, they planned to establish new trade routes through Iberia (present Georgia in eastern Europe) and forced Narseh to acknowledge Iberia as the Roman protectorate. The Persian supremacy over the sea in general and over the Persian Gulf in particular induced the Romans to seek new land routes of their own and many historians assert that this commercial motive played a significant part in expanding their territory eastward during the Parthian dynasty in the third century at first and thereafter until the sixth century. A dramatic and bold move by Ardashir I (224-40) in capturing Spasinu Charax on the Shatto al-Arab soon after establishing the Sasanian dynasty in 224 resulted in adversely affecting the Roman trade routes centered around Palmyra. The Romans were so very concerned about losing out in the east-west trade to the Sasanians that they appointed special officials called *Comes Commerciorum* as the only person who can buy and sell raw silk from the Persians, assess import and export duties, and supervise the export of banned goods such as iron, arms, gold, oil, and wine, thereby ensuring Diocletian’s goal of linking trade with military success and security. Roman officials on the border areas tried to prevent smugglers of goods as well as Roman citizens trying to escape to the Persian territory to pass on special information to the Persians. The military treaties between the two empires since 298 continued to include agreements regarding trade and commerce: however, the rivalry for trade continued unabated despite such peace treaties. It

seems linking national security with foreign trade, although a major development in our own times, is so unique in the annals of antiquity. Nevertheless, the Byzantine historian, Procopius, reports, humanity prevailed over government bureaucracy and regulations, and the people on either side of the Armanian border near Chorzane lived in fear of government officials and shared farm products, held markets together for their daily needs run their farms together and often enough intermarried. Common heritage, past history customs, language, religion, and way of life, ensured that the channels of communication would remain open among them for the most part.

## **The Role of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf in the East-West Trade**

The Indian Ocean is one of the least studied ocean in the world from the point of view of trade and migrations. As the leading researcher on the subject, D.T. Potts admitted “ as late as 1997 that his research in this area” could not have been written twenty, even ten years ago” and much remains to be discovered. See ‘Roman Relationship with the Persians Sinus (Persian Gulf), in *The Early Roman Empire in the East*, edited by Susan E. Alcock, Oxbow Monograph 95, pp. 89-

107'. However, the publication of “The Indian Ocean in Antiquity” (edited by Julian Reade, Kagan Paul International, London 1996, 524 pages) has filled in many gaps in our knowledge about this subject and I will try to make use of it albeit very succinctly to illustrate the wide scope and intensity of trade between the East and the West. As I have mentioned earlier, so far the earliest trade activity in the Persian Gulf began at Dilmun, which is the modern-day Bahrain area as illustrated by D.T. Potts. The evidence for the existence of Indian buffalo in Mesopotamia in the late third millennium B.C. (as opposed to their recorded introduction 3000 years later) implies that heavy animals were already imported by ship, as were elephants later on by the Greeks. Moreover, a spice of Indonesian origin identified as belonging to the second millennium B.C. was found in a Mesopotamian town. (p. 19). The Harappan weight system of the Indus valley was adopted by the traders in Dilmun and later became known as the “standard of Dilun” throughout Mesopotamia. Many Harapan objects have been discovered in the Oman peninsula such as carnelian, combs, Indus “unicorn” type seal impressions, shell and shell objects, metal and metal objects, agate beads, earthenware, and pottery objects. Harappan graffiti on the Indus earthenware, stamp seals, etc. Etched beads have been found as far west as Crimea and the Caucasus, (p. 383). Oman too could have been for a while an economic filter for harappan maritime trade before the virtually Harapan “standard of Dilmun” prevailed throughout Mesopotamia. Harrapan commercial interests in Oman, however, were not the same as in Dilmun (Bahrain). The sea trade between Oman and the Indus Valley was direct and

was conducted from the Makran coast and “there is hardly any reason to deny the presence of Harappans (themselves) in Oman.” Equally possible is the presence of Elamites in the Indus valley, as indicated by the Dravidian language, Brahui, being an off-shoot of the ancient Elamite language. – (See Nicholas Ostler, *The Last Lingua Franca*, New York: Walker and Co., 2010). Oman witnessed the Harappan impact as early as the third millennium BC. (pp. 111-132). A Sumerian Motif is found in late Indus seals by the well known Assyriologist, Asko Parpola. (pp. 227-33). Conversely, “exquisite Indian ivory figures were found buried under the ash of Pompeii.” (p. 369).

Persia and India traded with Ethiopia regularly. Ethiopian ivory was exported directly by sea to Persia. Ethiopians are represented at Persepolis as presenting a tusk, a vase and a giraffe to King Darius. Certain blue-green glazed wares, known as gulf wares or as Sasanian-Islamic, is very likely a result of overseas trade. The Periplus provides as very important details about what items Ethiopia and India traded in. Iron and steel, belts, cloth, and colored lac were imported “from the inner arts of Ariake,” “or the Bombay district.”

There is only scant evidence for the east-west trade during the Achaemenid period. A brief remark by Herodotus about a thirty-month exploratory sailing by Scylax of Caryanda at the behest of Darius I from the Indus Valley to the Gulf of Suez is a clear indication of the Achaemenid maritime interest for commercial and military purposes. Darius wanted to find out where the Indus meets the sea. (Herodotus IV, p.44. Loeb edition). In the famous Suez stela Darius declares that he opened the canal to the Red Sea. He ordered twenty-four ships to sail from Suez to Persia. The Achaemenids may have wanted to replace the caravan land route well attested in the records Neo-Assyrian kings or to promote the trade of aromatics, spices, etc., from Jerusalem, the capital of perfumery in Judea, by establishing a direct sea access for it to southern Arabian ports. This is supported by the fact that the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho also tried to connect the Nile with the Red Sea earlier in the seventh century BC evidently for commercial purposes as the trade in aromatics was exclusively a royal privilege. This may explain the legendary rich countries of Punt or Ophir already having Indian products such as cinnamon, cassia, or the priceless nard, which did not grow anywhere in Africa then, but originated in China and South-East Asia, from where they were imported to Ceylon where the Indian traders arranged to ship them over to the distant markets in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. The Sanskrit origin of the island of Socotra, which played a vital role in this trade confirms this. The trade seems to have continued under the Achaemenids rule as it was during the Neo-Assyrian rule and eastern products continued to arrive to the ports in the Persian Gulf - soft stone and copper from Oman, precious wood and black wood (referred to as the wood of Send’), precious stones, pearls, parrots, etc., from the Makran coast and India. “There is not a simple valid argument to assume that all these products”

came from East Africa by sea.

After Scylex's exploration, Darius "subdued the Indians and opened their sea to his ships" (Herodotus IV. 44), which may indicate that Darius may have broken the monopoly of the Indian traders in the Persian Gulf. Both the shores of the Gulf historically belonged to the Achaemenids and Periplus (S33) confirms it. Ivory and wood in Persepolis came from India and Gandhara and Ctesias, the Greek physician at the court of Darius refers to iron from India. The allusion to the cotton-trees by Herodotus (III. 106) and the common assumption that the Indian tributaries are depicted as carrying cotton at Persepolis shows that cotton was already imported by Persia (S39). Greeks knew about Indian pearls as early as in the fifth century BC, and tasted Indian peppers in the fourth century. Several historians note that the Persians excelled in perfumery (Pliny XIII.3), and imported aromatics and spices from Asia. At least some frankincense came from nearby Baluchistan, since Alexander's troops ran into myrrh-trees there, "which were taller than anywhere else" and albeit avidly collected them. These may perhaps have been carried along a land route. However, this territory is not amenable to it, as Alexander himself found it hard to come out alive from it and as the evidence the Persepolis Fortification Tablets and the Periphus supports it.

The Seleucids and the Ptolemies also found it lucrative to promote the sea trade for expanding the state revenue from commerce as well as for military purposes such as importing Indian iron and elephants for war. There is no sound basis for the widely accepted scholarly opinion that Indian sailors or merchants were not allowed to enter the Red Sea since two ostraca in the Tamil-Brahmi language, circa first century AD - - - are found there at al-Qusair and Eudoxus of Cyzicus mentions an Indian shipwreck on the coast of the Red Sea. (pp. 251-267).

## **Sea Trade During the Parthian Period**

We have it on the authority of D.T. Potts whose publications on this subject are regarded by scholars as the masterpiece (*The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, two volumes, Oxford, 1990) by scholars in this field that there was substantial Parthian presence in the Arabian Gulf: pp. 269-85. Although in 1885 Theodore Noldeke doubted that the Parthians had even controlled the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf, in 1890 Edward Glaser, relying on the Periplus not only proved him wrong but also asserted that the Parthians controlled all of Onian and its deep interior region. Nevertheless, few scholars agreed with Glaser as late as in 1987. Potts, however, fully reinforced Glaser's assertion, and holds that a commercial relations between eastern Arabia and Parthia were quite constant, and were a replica and manifestation of a very ancient practice which outlived the Parthian rule itself. Noldeke himself stresses the fact of cross-gulf or intra-gulf interactions in his edition of Tabari's work on the history of the Arabs and

Sasanians. Potts asserts that the discovery of imported glazed Parthian pottery on the Arabian coast offer us “the most abundant of evidence of contact between the Gulf region” and Persia and he provides illustrations of the typical Parthian pottery found on the Arabian coast. Parthian rule over the Oman region is clearly indicated by the Periplus. Saracenes (Characenes) who had allied themselves with the Romans lost their autonomy after Trajan’s retreat from Babylon in 116, and a Parthian prince, Meredat, was appointed as their ruler – perhaps by his uncle, the Parthian king Khosroes I. Meredat was a very successful ruler but he was driven out by the Parthian king of kings Vologases IV, presumably because “Vologases may have been jealous of the considerable revenues which no doubt passed into his treasury as a result of the lucrative sea trade with India and the caravan trade with Palmyra.” (p. 280) Be that as it may, Vologases IV is the only Parthian king whose coinage has been found in eastern Arabia. The fact that Ardashir defeated a Parthian king/prince in eastern Arabia suggests that the Parthians exercised authority over the region, which, in turn, prompted Ardashir to put an end to his rule and proclaim his ultimate suzerainty over the Parthians, even though this region seemed to pose no political or military challenge to his rule. Tabari and later writers mention the fact that Ardashir defeated a Parthian ruler in eastern Arabia even near the end of his reign. Thus, he seems to have felt compelled to leave no vestiges of the Parthian power for his posterity. Potts concludes: “The Parthian presence in the Gulf, less widely acknowledged perhaps than either the earlier Seleucid or the later Sasanian one, was nevertheless a reality.” (p. 282).

## **East-West Trade During the Ptolemaic and Roman Period**

Although commercial interactions existed between the Mediterranean basin and the Red Sea and Indian Ocean areas at best as early as the Old Kingdom era of Egypt (circa third millennium BC), Ptolemaic, and Roman period provide as the best evidence for it, especially from about 300 BC to 200AD. when caravan routes included sea routes as well as overland-tracks, for example, via Petra or Palmyra. Steven E. Sidebotham provides details about the sea routes linking the Mediterranean basin with Arabia and India via ports in the northern Red Sea. (pp. 485-513) Parthians and Sasanians controlled the overland caravan routes which were “at their mercy”. Although the overland trade could not apparently be completely supplanted by the sea trade, the trade by maritime routes grew substantially as it proved to be much less expensive than the land route. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BC) encouraged trade with India for importing gold and elephants for military purposes and constructed various ports on the Red Sea and even further south. However, the Ptolemys could not become a commercial super power even if they wanted to as there were others to compete with, such as the Seleucids and Nabataen

Arabs. But the Romans were more successful than the Greeks in exploiting these trade routes for commercial and political purposes as they became a super-power and did not need war elephants or gold for paying mercenary troops and military expenses.

The “Suez” canal built by Darius I was in use at least till the ninth century according to an Arab writer Al-Maqrizi and some of its remains are still extant. A Roman writer, Lucian (circa 170 AD) claims it was so easy to board an India-bound ship at Clysmia on the Red Sea and French excavations have proved it to be of Ptolemaic origin. Despite being affected by the unfavorable northern winds, Clysmia continued to be used as a port in late antiquity.

The Periplus Mari Erythraei, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, Indian poems, and Kautilya’s Arthashastra often refer to this commerce, they say little about the East-West trade, which is better attested by archaeological evidence. Papyri, coins, pottery, ostraca, glass, inscriptions, writings on jars, and archaeological remains “reveal an elaborate apparatus for the acquisition and transportation of products to and from the Mediterranean world.” Most of the eastern products desired by the Ptolemies and Romans came from India and Arabia and to a rather limited extent from China. In addition to items of every day consumption such as millet, cotton, frankincense and myrrh they coveted, luxury products such as pearls, gems, ivory, ebony, teakwood, dyed textiles, silk, nard, cinnamon, cassia, tortoise shells, tigers, lions, and other exotica, and slaves. In exchange the Romans exported silver and gold bullion as well as coinage, glass, barley, wheat, sesame oil, cloth, and wine. Pliny states that the Indians went crazy over the red coral from the Mediterranean basin and they used it for apotropaic purposes. Ancient sources mention many more items involved in this trade. Pottery, lamps, coins, glass, etc., found around the ports in India and Sri Lanka serve as evidence of this trade. Archaeologists have discovered Arikamedu as a Roman trade station in India along with other such locations along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. Similarly, Leukos Limen in the Red Sea bears the evidence of Indian mercantile presence in the Roman world. Indian graffiti scripted in the Tamil-Brahmi language circa 100 AD has been discovered there. Prieulx has shown that there were Indian embassies to Rome from the reign of Claudius to the death of Justinian - See *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, 1863, pp. 269-312. This trade, however, declined rapidly after 300 AD when Rome was embroiled in its own military, political and economic problems and it came to a complete halt when Khushro II captured Egypt and soon thereafter with the Arab conquest.

## **Evidence For Roman Interest in the Indian Ocean**

The Ptolemies were mainly interested in maintaining their dominance in the Mediterranean region. Consequently, their interest in the Red Sea was mostly confined to how it could serve or enhance their position in the eastern

Mediterranean. The Seleucids, on the other hand, gained considerably from their hegemony over the Persian Gulf. However, when Octavian annexed Egypt to the Roman Empire, the Romans came for the first time in direct contact with the Red Sea and therefore with the Indian Ocean, albeit through the middlemen Palmyrene and Persia, who were actively engaged in the trade with the East. The arrival of Romans significantly accelerated the extent, volume, nature and intensity of this trade. They were able to establish their hegemony over the western end of this trade which the Ptolemias were never able to do. The discovery in the late second century BC of monsoon winds seeding up the ships, thus shortening their time sailing time, further promoted trade activities. Since the population of the Roman Empire has been estimated between fifty and sixty million by the source in the first century AD versus seven-eight million for the Ptolemic Egypt, a far greater number of merchants from all over the Mediterranean world obviously could now participate in the trade.

Pliny describes cloves in the first century AD. It is the spice trade that facilitated the Indianization of Southeast Asia as well as Islamization there. It also led to Europe's commercial interest in Southeast Asia, culminating in its colonization.

The Greek records of an anonymous Greek author commonly known as the Periplus of Erythrean Sea affords us a glimpse into the trade between Rome and India. He describes an Erythra Thalasa from Zanzibar in Africa to Cape Comorin near Ceylon which roughly corresponds to the Indian Ocean. Pliny also mentions it in the first century AD. Unfortunately, its date has not yet been ascertained because its references to Indian kings are hard to figure out. However, the most significant king it mentions, Manbanos, has been identified as Nahapana whose kingdom included Gujarat. A discovery of his coins along with Greek coins in the name of Appollodotus has further confirmed his identification. (See J.S. Deyell. "Indo-Greek and Kshaharata coins from the Gujarat seacoast," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1984, pp. 115-27.) It also lends support to a statement in the Periplus (S.49) that these Greek coins were then available in the western arts of Nahaana. Coins of the Indo-Parthian kings of Sind have also been discovered. The Periplus mentions contending Parthian princes as Nahapana's neighbors in the Sind, and the "warlike Bactrians," Kushans, as his neighbors in the north. The evidence from various coins indicates that Nahapana's reign must have ended before 78 AD. The excavations in Taxila found four Parthian coins which are apparently overstrikes on Nahapana's coins. Some of Nahapana's coins too are clearly overstrikes on Parthian coins. It seems therefore that the Indian trade with the west flourished during the first half of the first century AD. (pp. 309-319). Ivory, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise-shell were imported from Ethiopia. A few

Ethiopian coins belonging to Aksumite rule have been discovered in India, (pp. 412-4).

Sir Mortimer Wheeler has successfully proved that by using imported Roman ware on the Coromandel coast of southern India one could actually date much of Indian culture. Same has been found to be true at Mantai in the north-east region of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), (pp. 508-9). Recent discoveries have found Christian and Hindu remains in Quanzhou; also known as Zayton, which was world renowned trading port, being a terminus of the “silk route of the sea”. It attracted all kinds of religious cultures – surprisingly enough, even Manichaeans. They all are known to have lived in harmony. The Europeans went there not only for the dissemination of thought but also for trading. Missionaries engaged in trading too. Surprisingly, a carved tombstone depicts in the center “a flying angel wearing a three-pointed hat similar to the Sasanian king’s hat in Persian art. - - - Two lively wings with clearly fully fledged feathers rise from his armpits over his shoulders,” which may not fail to remind one of the winged disc so common in the ancient Persian monuments, (pp. 517-9).