

Presence of Persian Merchants in Gujarat: Some Inscriptional Evidences

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Abstract

Gujarat was well connected with West Asia through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Iran, particularly the Persian Gulf route, was of crucial importance with their nodal port towns of Basra and Hormuz. This article attempts to underline the close cultural contacts established between Iran and Gujarat during the pre-Sultanate period (11-15th centuries) as a result of the trading activities. The article attempts to highlight: a) the presence of Iranian settlements in Gujarat in the 11-15th centuries; b) Irani merchants' permanent settlements in Gujarat; c) level of religious freedom they enjoyed; d) the type of state protection and assurance for the freedom of worship received by them; e) in case of atrocities, what type of protection they received from the state; f) prevalence of religious freedom across communities under the Chalukyan and Vaghela and later under the tutelage of the Delhi Sultans; g) prevalence of communal harmony and an atmosphere of mutual trust in matters of individual worship.

Keywords: Gujarat, Iran, India, Persian Gulf, Trade

Introduction

Gujarat was well connected with West Asia through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Iran, particularly the Persian Gulf route, was of crucial importance with their nodal port towns of Basra and Hormuz. However, prior to the 13th century, it was

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the adjacent entrepot Qays which was of greater importance and where one finds the dominant presence of settlements of Gujarati Bohra community. There were brisk trading activities in the Indian Ocean through these ports to the ports of the Gujarat Sultanate. When Marco Polo visited around 1295, he found it the main center of horse exports to Gujarat (Marco Polo: 1921: 83-84). Abdur Razzaq, who visited Hormuz, speaks aloud about the presence of Gujarati merchants there (Major, 1857: 5-7). The most important entrepot was on the Gujarat coast Cambay with its extended outlets, Gandhar and Ghoga. Visiting in the first half of the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta records that ‘majority of its [i.e., of Cambay] inhabitants are foreign merchants, who continually build there beautiful houses and wonderful mosques – an achievement in which they endeavor to surpass each other (Hussain, 1976 [1953]: 172). No wonder Muhammad bin Tughlaq appointed a foreigner *Malik-ut Tujjar*, the governor of Cambay.

Here, my prime focus is not to quantify the Gujarat-Persian Gulf trading activities instead to underline the close cultural contacts established between Iran and Gujarat during the pre-Sultanate period (11-15th centuries) as a result of the trading activities.

The article attempts to highlight: a) the presence of Iranian settlements in Gujarat in the 11-15th centuries; b) Irani merchants’ permanent settlements in Gujarat; c) level of religious freedom they enjoyed; d) the type of state protection and assurance for the freedom of worship received by them; e) in case of atrocities, what type of protection they received from the state; f) prevalence of religious freedom across communities under the Chalukyan and Vaghela and later under the tutelage of the Delhi Sultans; g) prevalence of communal harmony and an atmosphere of mutual trust in matters of individual worship.

Almost all inscriptions discussed below are in Arabic. These inscriptions of Persian merchants from Cambay appear to have been uprooted from a 'single' place, which could be guessed as the common graveyard for the immigrant merchant community. It is difficult to identify their original specific locations, for these inscriptions are largely not *in situ* instead were uprooted and placed within the walls of the tombs of local Pir Parvar Shah/Parwaz Shah and at a little away, within the same complex, in the tomb wall of Pir Tajuddin.

Inscription 1

The first inscription pertains to a settlement of Kirmani merchants from Bamm (a fortress town in the Kirman province):

Line 3: 'He who builds for Allah a mosque, even if it be like the nest of a sand-grouse. Allah builds for him a house in Paradise'. This is (the result) of what Allah has guided

Line 4: and helped him with, in the construction of this Jami mosque and its buildings *in toto* and in entirety, from his personal wealth

Line 5: granted to him by Allah through His benevolence and generosity, purely for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, (by) the creature, expectant of the mercy of Allah, may He be exalted and glorified.

Line 6: Said, son of Abu Sharaf, son of Ali, son of Shapur al-Bammi, may Allah pardon him and his parents. And this (construction) took place

Line 7: on the date in the month of Allah, Muharram, (of the) year six hundred and fifteen (April 1218 AD). And may Allah's blessings be upon Muhammad and all his progeny.

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 6-7

The above inscription is presently emplaced in the western wall of the prayer chamber above the pulpit on a modern Jami mosque in Salwa mohallah, Cambay. The inscription is dated AH 615/1218 CE. Like all the early Muslim inscriptions, it also was deeply impacted by the Sanskrit style of writing inscriptions, and thus it was incised and not engraved as was the case with later Arabic and Persian inscriptions. This is the earliest Muslim inscription to be found in Gujarat. The inscription belongs to the Chalukyan period when the Chalukyan ruler Bhimadeva II (1178-1242) was the ruler of Gujarat.

Interestingly, when the author of *Jawami-ul Hikaya*, Muhammad Awfi, visited Gujarat, he also saw this Jami mosque and referred to its building by Sa'id on the ruins of the existing mosque. Elliot (Elliot, 1868: 164) mentions the name of the builder as Sa'id Sharaf Tamin. However, the inscriptional reading suggests that the mosque was constructed by Said, son of Abu Sharaf al-Bammi. The use of the *nisbah* al-Bammi confirms his association with Kirman.

Nonetheless, Awfi's account is of great interest to understand the Irani merchants' presence in the region as well as the history of the construction of the Jami mosque. The history of the construction of the Jami mosque appears to date back to pre-Siddharaja Jayasimha (1092-1142). Awfi records that during the reign of Siddharaja Jaysimha on account of the instigation of Mughhs (*muqaddams*)¹.

¹ Mugh is often used for Zoroastrians. Elliot (1868, Vol. II, p.163) has used the word in this sense. He calls them fire-worshippers. S.H. Hodiwala (Studies in Indo-Muslim History, Bombay, 1939,

They destroyed the minaret of the mosque and burnt it; the scuffle resulted in the killing of eighty Muslims. The *khatib* (one who reads the Friday sermons) of the mosque Ali escaped and reported the matter to King Siddharaja, who personally enquired the truth of the case.

Once confirmed of the oppression of the Muslims, he not only punished the leaders of the community (Brahmins, Parsas, Mahan [Mahatan], Nawala [Borala?], Seoda and Mughhs [*muqaddams*]¹) but also gave Ali four parasols and one lakh Balohas to get the damages repaired. Awfi informs that when he visited the mosque, he saw the parasols (*chhatr*) lying in the mosque and were available for viewing only on special occasions. Awfi's account is of great value, and interest for it connects the thread of the construction of the mosque vis-à-vis the liberal atmosphere of tolerance and accommodation prevailed in Gujarat in general and under the Chalukyas in particular.

The mosque was intact till a few years when Awfi visited, which was again destroyed by the Malwa king's invasion of Gujarat, and then it was rebuilt. The present inscription speaks of the building of the mosque the second time. Awfi's account suggests the presence of the mosque even prior to Siddharaja Jaysimha's (1092-1142) reign, also indicates the presence of the Muslim/Iranian settlements in Cambay even dates back prior to the tenth century CE. This time Said again rebuilt the structure out of his own expenses. Awfi informs that he erected four minarets with golden cupolas.

pp. 172-173) believes them to be Jains. However, Z.A. Desai argues that in the Bankipur manuscript of Awfi the word is *muqaddam* not *Mugh* which appears to be a correct reading looking at the people received punishments.

¹ Elliot (1868, Vol. II, p. 164), however, does not furnish the names of the leaders which are provided with by Z.A. Desai, 'Arabic Inscriptions of the Rajput Period from Gujarat', *Epigraphia Indica* (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961, p. 164.

Inscription 2

It appears that al-Bammi extended family mentioned in the above inscription had their permanent settlements in Cambay. Another inscription dated 1249 CE from Cambay belongs to Abu Sharaf al-Bammi:

Line 4: This is the grave of the weak creature, the drowned one ,

Line 5: the martyr, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted,

Line 6: Sharafud-Din Abu Sharaf, son of Abi Shams, son of Abi Sharaf

Line 7: al-Bammi, may Allah pardon him, his parents and all the Muslims.

Line 8: (He died) on the date, (viz.) the night of Monday, the 26th

Line 9: of Dhil-Hijja, year (A.H.) six hundred and forty-six (11th April 1249 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 10

The inscription belongs to Vaghela king Vishaldeva (1245-1261). The deceased Abu Sharaf al-Bammi does not appear to be the father of Said of the above inscription (1) for the father of Abu Sharaf mentioned here is Abi Shams, not Ali as mentioned in the above inscription. Interestingly, this inscription is found in the same compound of the tomb of Pir Tajuddin (discussed in the following inscription). It suggests that it was probably uprooted from the common graveyard of Irani merchants, where also buried merchants of al-Qazwin (see Inscription 4). Desai believes that since the word *al-ghariq ash shahid* is used for

him, he appears to have drowned during one of the trading voyages (Desai, 1961:9).

Inscription 3

This is the third tombstone dated 1300 CE that belonged to al-Bammi extended family. The reference of another member Kamaluddin Sulaiman, from another epitaph (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1959-60, Epigraph No. 118) from Cambay, suggests that the al-Bammi family had longstanding ties with Cambay and involved in trade for long and the family was settled at Cambay permanently. The inscription reads:

Line 3: This is the grave of the weak creature, the stranger (or emigrant), the one who is called unto Allah's mercy and pardoned,

Line 4: the sinful, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted, Kamaluddin

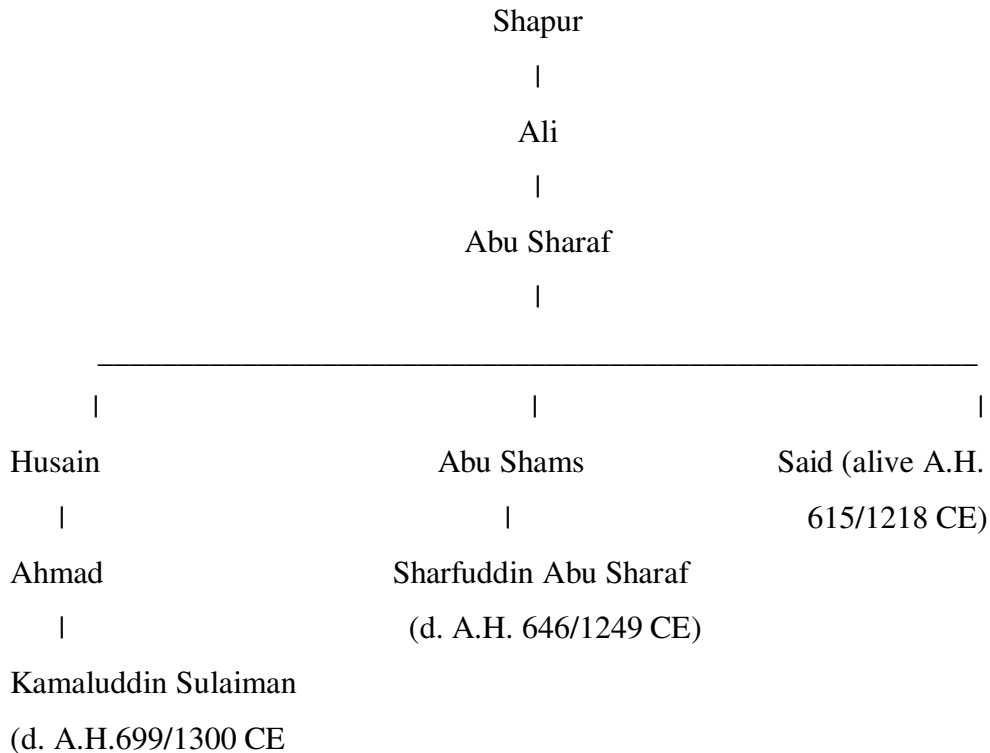
Line 5: Sulaiman, son of Ahmad, son of Husain, son of Abi Sharaf al-Bammi (lit. of Bamm), may Allah cover him

Line 6: with (His) mercy and pleasure and settle him in the abode of Paradise. He died on Mon

Line 7: day, the last day of (the month of) Jumada the First (of the) year (A.H.) nine and ninety and six hundred (the last day i.e. 30th Jumada I 699=22 February 1300).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971 : 7

Z. A. Desai (Desai, 1971:5) has traced the family tree of this al-Bammi family:



However, unlike the first two, Kamaluddin Sulaiman does not seem to be the permanent settler at Cambay. The word ‘stranger’ (*al-gharib*; emigrant, foreigner) suggests that he probably was a permanent settler of Iran and visited Cambay on a trading voyage and accidentally died there. Nonetheless, his extended family was very much settled there through whom they might have conducted business at Cambay. In all likelihood, they had a partnership in trade between Iran and Gujarat. Though it is difficult to discern their *modus operandi*, it clearly suggests that as early as the thirteenth century, trading networks/partnerships of the extended family were very much in extant, which served as connecting link in

supplying/selling commodities from one place to another, perhaps similar the type of network which was operating among the Multani merchants through the overland route during this period.

Inscription 4

The present inscription is engraved in the compound of the tomb of Pir Tajuddin Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini at Cambay. The tombstone embedded in the wall enclosure of Tajuddin's tomb belongs to Aminuddin Abul Mahasin, son of Ardashir al-Ahwi:

Line 5: This is the grave of the weak and the sinful creature,

Line 6: the supplicant, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted,

Line 7: Aminuddin Abul Mahasin, son of Ardashir

Line 8: al-Ahwi, (who) died on Wednesday, the 10th of

Line 9: the month of Muharram, year (A.H.) thirty and six hundred (27th October 1232 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 7

The inscription is dated 1232 CE and belonged to the reign of Chalukya king Bhimadeva II. Z.A. Desai rates it the second earliest Muslim inscription of Gujarat (Desai, 1961:4). Interestingly, the script is Kufi which is otherwise used only in a few inscriptions. The *nisbah* al-Ahwi suggests his association with Ahwaz (Iran).

Inscription 5

The present inscription at Cambay is engraved on the tombstone of a Qazwini merchant Tajuddin Muhamad, son of Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini dated 1301 CE. This four-walled enclosure possesses three tombs. The middle grave belongs to Pir Tajuddin. Besides the epitaph of Tajuddin, there are four more headstones in the walled enclosure, two of which I have already discussed above. The tomb is presently revered as the tomb of Pir Tajuddin at Cambay:

Line 3: This is the grave of the weak creature, hopeful of the mercy of Allah,

Line 4: the Exalted, Tajuddin Muhammad son of Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini (lit. of Qazwin)

Line 5: may Allah cover him with (His) mercy and pleasure and settle him in the abode of Paradise.

Line 6: And he died on Monday, the ninth of the month of Jumada the Second (of the) year (A.H.) 700 (9 Jumada II 700=19 February, 1301).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 8

The *nisbah* al-Qazwini confirms his lineage to Persia. He was an Irani migrant merchant who probably migrated to Cambay and settled there. How he assumed the position of a *pir* (saint) from a merchant cannot be stated clearly nonetheless probably on account of his deeds and spirituality sometime later, his tomb assumed the status of a *pir* for in the epitaph, he is simply mentioned as Tajuddin Muhammad.

Nonetheless, it does suggest the prominent position of Tajuddin in the then Gujarati society of Cambay. Even the inscription is inscribed on marble and written in arch shape indicates his special position in the then society [till Akbar's period use of marble was mainly confined to religious places or Sufi shrines]. A foreigner and that too a merchant acquiring the status of a *pir* suggests the prominence of Persians as well as their acceptance and assimilation in the Gujarat society.

Inscription 6

The present inscription at Cambay must have engraved initially on the tombstone of a Qazwini merchant Tajuddin Iwaz, son of Abdul Aziz al-Qazwini, dated 1329 CE. However, it's not *in situ* now. Presently the epitaph is embedded within the north wall of the tomb of Bahlul Shahid in the Tin Limdi (Chhipwal) locality of the town.:

Line 4: This is the grave of the creature taken into (Allah's) mercy and pardoned, Tajuddin Iwad, son of

Line 5: Abdul Aziz Qazwini (i.e. of Qazwin), may Allah cover him with His mercy and pardon and settle him in the centre

Line 6: of His Paradise. He died on Monday, the seventh (of the) month of Muharram (of the) year (A.H.) thirty and seven hundred (7 Muharram 730=31 December 1329).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 27

The genealogies of the deceased given in inscriptions 5&6 are so brief to discern any connection between the two. Nonetheless, it confirms the presence of Qazwini merchants in Cambay in considerable numbers.

Inscription 7

Another epitaph found from Cambay dated 1284 is found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period. The epitaph does not originally belong to the present tomb. The Arabic inscription reads:

Line 3: This is the grave of the fortunate, the martyr, of lofty rank and lineage, the one who departed from the house of transitoriness (i.e. the world)

Line 4: to the house of permanence (i.e. the next world), hopeful of the mercy of the Lord and His pleasure, Sharfuddin Murtada,

Line 5: son of Muhammad, son of al-Hasanal-Musawi al-Husaini of Astrabad, may Allah cover him with His pleasure and lodge him in

Line 6: the parlour of Truth in His paradise. The departure took place in the early hours of Thursday of the month of

Line 9: Rabi-ul Akhar, year six hundred and eighty-three of the Hijra (June-July 1284 A.D.). May salutations and peace be on the chief of the mortals, Muhammad and upon his chosen excellent descendants.

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 18

Though by the epitaph, nothing much can be discerned about the identity of Sharfuddin Murtaza, whether he was a merchant or a Sufi. The *nisbah* Astrabad (modern Gorgan, Iran) suggests that he had Persian descent. Nonetheless, three things suggest his noble lineage and Sufistic/noble life. Firstly, the epitaph is

incised in marble, which was often, as mentioned earlier, was often associated with people of noble lineage, or could be a *darvesh*. In all likelihood, he appears to be a wealthy merchant who got settled at Cambay. Secondly, the word used for him is martyr, which again suggests his noble personality.

Inscription 8

Another epitaph found from Cambay is dated 1287, is again found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period. Interestingly, the inscription is partly inscribed in Arabic and contains verses in Persian. Poetry appears to be that of the deceased who wrote with the nickname 'Salari'. The inscription is also important in the sense that it provides the earliest specimen of Persian poetry in Gujarat. Its long inscription contains 13 lines reads:

Line 12: This is the grave of the great chief (*sadr*), one who unto Allah's mercy, Sultanul Muhaqqiqin (lit., ornament of the religious fraternity, Truth and Religion),

Line 13: Ali, son of Salar, son of Ali al-Yazdi (i.e.) of Yazd who died on Sunday, the 23rd Dhil Hijja year (A.H.) six hundred and eighty-five (9th February 1287 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 22

The high-sounding title of religious nature suggests that Zainuddin Ali Salari was not only a prominent personality of the time but also a man of piety and greatly revered too in society. He also appears to be a Persian poet of repute that even his own verses (*ghazal* and *rubai*) were inscribed over his tombstone. It also reflects the impact of the Persian renaissance that can be felt as early as the 13th

century in Western India, in spite of the Arab dominance in the region. One can also conjecture why the tomb complex of Parwaz Shahid was known as *pir's dargah*. All four inscriptions (Nos.2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) indicate the deceased as men of piety.

Inscription 9

Another epitaph from Cambay, dated 1291, is again found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period (c.1274-1296). The inscription reads:

(B) Line 1: the pardoned, the magnificent chief, the great and glorious master, king,

Line 2: of merchants and prince of shipmasters, Izzudd-Dunya wad-Din, Nasir

Line 3: ul-Islam wal-Mualimin (lit. glory of the State and the Religion, helper of Islam and the Muslims), al-Haji Ibrahim, son of Muhammad, son of Ali Al-Irbili,

Line 4: commonly known as Fatolia, may Allah cover him with (His) mercy and pleasure and grant him abode in the centre of

Line 5: the paradise. He died on the day of Friday, middle of Junada II, year (A.H.) six hundred and ninety (15 June 1291 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 24

Haji Ibrahim originally belonged to Irbil, near Mosul, Iraq. Again the inscription confirms the presence of prominent Persian merchants at Cambay. Haji Ibrahim appears to be an extremely rich and famous Persian merchant. He seems to have extended family settled in Cambay and enjoyed extreme prominence to the extent that the family was commonly known by the local nickname Fatolia. Two other inscriptions carrying the same nickname Fatolia survive from Cambay: one is of 1336. It reads Shamsuddin Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr Irbili (with the name Fatolia) died A.H. 736=1336; another was the tombstone of Haji Abu Bakr, son of Ali, son of Abu Bakr Irbili (d. A.H. 710=1310) (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1959-60:122-123).

Inscription 10

The present epitaph found on the eastern wall of the grave of Parwaz Shahid from Cambay dated 1310. This is the second epitaph belonging to a member of the Irbili family of Persia settled at Cambay. The inscription reads:

Line 5: ...Haji Abu Bakr, son of Ali, son of Abu Bakr

Line 6: Irbili (i.e. of Irbil, near Mosul), May Allah illumine his
grave with His ample pardon. He died on
Wednesday,

Line 7: the twenty-fifth of (the month of) Muharram (of the)
year (A.H.) ten and seven hundred (25th Muharram
710=24 June 1310).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 15

Inscription 11

This inscription again belongs to the Irbili family that comes from Cambay dated 1336 is again found on the eastern wall of the grave of Parwaz Shahid. The inscription reads:

Lines 3&4: ...This is the grave of the [creature?]

Line 5: Shamsuddin Muhammad, son of the one who is received into (Allah's) mercy, namely Abu Bakr,

Line 6: Irbili (i.e. of Irbil), *alias* Fatolia, May Allah pardon him. (He died) on

Line 7: the date twenty-fifth (of the month of) Dhul-Qada (of the) year (A.H.) six and thirty and seven hundred (25 Dhul-Qada 736= 5 July 1336).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 47-48

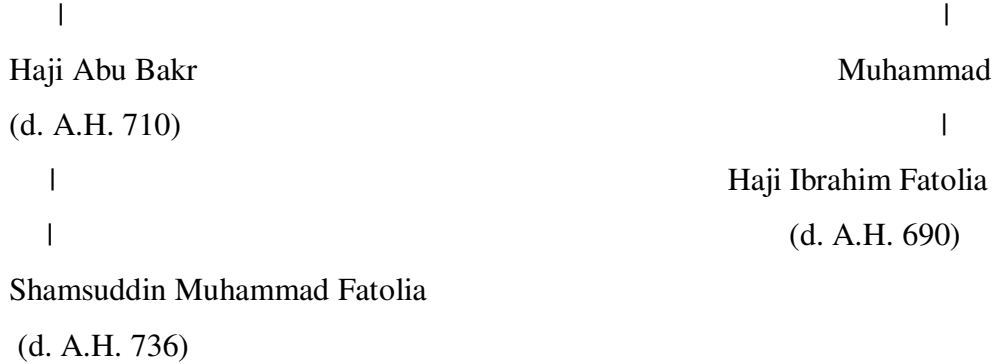
The above three inscriptions (9-11) that belong to the Irbili family from Mosul are of great importance. They throw light on the prominence of the family not only as prominent merchants (in inscription 9, the high-sounding titles were attributed to al-Haji Ibrahim – the magnificent chief, the great and glorious master, king of merchants and prince of shipmasters, Izzudd-Dunya wad-Din, Nasir ul-Islam wal-Mualimin (lit. glory of the State and the Religion, helper of Islam and the Muslims) but also the family appears to have enjoyed high status within the society that people gave them the title *Fatolia* and the family was commonly known by that cognomen. The following genealogy is traced by Z.A. Desai (Desai, 1971: 13) about the *Fatolia* family:

Abu Bakr

|

Ali

|



The above family tree and the sobriquet *Fatolia* enjoyed by the family not only suggest theirs being the prominent merchant family in Cambay but also their long settlements and the influence in the region.

Inscription 12

Inscription from Prabhas Patan, commonly known as Somnath/Patan/Somnath Patan/Deopattan, is extremely fascinating and important.¹ It is a bilingual Arabic/Sanskrit inscription, speaks of a constuction of a mosque at Sikottari Mahayanpal in the outskirts of Somnath. Its Sanskrit version is more elaborate than its Arabic version. It is a very long inscription of twenty eight lines. Its

¹ Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 12-15. Its Sanskrit version is given and translated by E.Hultzsch, 'A Grant of Arjunadeva of Gujarat, dated 1264 A.D.', Indian Antiquary, Vol. XI (1882), pp. 241-245; Sarkar, D.C., Epigraphia Indica, vol. XXXIV, part IV, pp. 141-150.

Sanskrit version was uprooted and taken out from its original place at somepoint of time to temple of Harasiddha Mata at Veraval. The present Arabic inscription is at Qazi mosque façade in Qazi Mohallah. However, the inscription of the mosque's central *mehrab* reads that the mosque was built by Mahmud, son of Usman suggests that even the Arabic version of the inscription does not originally belong to the present mosque and must have placed sometime at a later date. Though both Sanskrit and Arabic versions tally in spirit, the Sanskrit version is better preserved as well as more detailed, particularly in terms of the details provided for the maintenance of the mosque; Arabic version speaks only briefly about that.

The present inscription mentions the construction of a mosque dated 27th Ramazan 662 AH/23rd July, 1264 CE in the outskirts of Somnath by a wealthy merchant and a ship-owner Nuruddin Piroz, son of Khwaja Abu Ibrahim, son of Muhammad al-Iraqi of Hormuz. Nuruddin had business ties at Somnath and appeared to be an influential merchant working closely with the local Hindu merchants.

The inscription speaks of his close ties with the leading man of the town, Rajakula Sri Chhada, who sold his piece of land to him in the presence of Thakkur Sri Palugideva, Ranak Sri Somesvaradeva, Thakkur Sri Ramdeva, Thakkur Sri Bhimsila and others. Piruz not only bought the land for the construction of the mosque but also ensured the recurring expenses of the mosque: for the expenses of oil for lamps, water, for the maintenance of *Imam*, *muazzim* (one who gives *azan*; caller of prayers), monthly reader of the *Quran*, expenses of festivals, annual whitewash, repairs etc., and the surplus was to be sent to Mecca and Medina. To ensure the regular income, he allotted one

palladika, one *danapala* (belonging to one oil mill); and two shops in front of the mosque which he bought from Kilhandeva, Lunasiha, Asadhar, and others.

The Arabic version also does not mention the reigning Vaghela king of Gujarat, Arjunadeva. However, high-sounding titles attributed to Nuruddin Piroz and his father are missing from the Sanskrit inscription. Like other early Gujarat Arabic inscriptions, this is also not in relief but incised in tune with the Sanskrit inscriptions of the time.

Inscription conveys much more than the presence of Persian merchants. Somnath, where the mosque was constructed, was and still is one of the most revered places of the Hindus and was their chief temple town.

In such a place, a grant of permission not only to buy land for the mosque's construction but also ensure its long-term maintenance by Arjunadeva, the Vaghela king, suggests the presence of an extreme level of cordiality and an atmosphere of communal harmony. The land sold belonged to a Hindu, and all those who held the surety were Hindus.

Piruz was not only a very prominent Persian merchant who settled there but probably possessed property in the region and had close working relations and friendship with the then prominent person of the city, Rajakula Sri Chhada, who himself had sold the land and granted permission to construct the mosque over his land.

Inscription 13

The present inscription pertains to Pattan, also known as Anhilwara, Nahrwara. It was the capital of the Chalukyan kings of Gujarat. The inscription is again on the tombstone, records the death of a Persian merchant:

Line 2-3:This is the grave of

Line 4: the needy creature, hopeful of his Gracious Lord,

Line 5: Fakhruddin Ibrahim, son of Abdul Malik, son of Siddiq,
the merchant,

Line 6: of Shahrzur, may Allah the Exalted cover him with His
Mercy.

Line 9: He died in (the month of) Muharram, year six hundred and
eighty-one (of the Hijra) (April-May, 1282 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 16

The epitaph presently incised in the wall of a mosque in Kali Bazar in Pattan suggests that it was perhaps later placed into the wall of the mosque and didn't belong originally to the mosque. The inscription belongs to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's (c.1274-1296) period. The deceased appears to be originally from Shahrzur, near Babylon, Iraq.

The present inscription not only speaks about the widespread presence of Persian merchants but also attests to the first inscriptional reference to the presence of Muslims in the Chalukyan capital town Pattan.

Inscription 14

The present inscription belongs to Junagarh, a town till 1472 that remained a stronghold of the Rajputs when Mahmud Shah I of Gujarat finally occupied and assimilated it into the Gujarat Sultanate and renamed it Mustafabad. The present inscription pertains to mosque construction in 1286-87 suggests that again it was

the time when in Gujarat Vaghela ruler Sarangdev was ruling; while Junagarh was under the tutelage of Chudasama chiefs. The inscription reads:

This auspicious mosque was ordered to be constructed by the generous, magnificent, benevolent, (divinely) supported and respected chief, prince of chiefs and shipmasters, the mainstay of the Hajj (pilgrims) and the holy cities (Mecca and Medina), Afifud-Dunya wad'Din Abul Qasim, son of Ali al-Iraji (of Iraj), in the hope of earning the pleasure of Allah, May Allah accept it from him and his parents, in the (Hijra) year six hundred and eighty-five (1286-1287 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 19

The inscription is of immense importance. It suggests the presence of a sizable Muslim population at Junagarh, for which a need was felt to construct a mosque. Again, it also confirms the presence of an extremely tolerant and harmonious atmosphere among the communities and suggests the presence of complete religious freedom to the extent that even a migrant settler could build a mosque out of his own efforts. Secondly, Abul Qasim again appears to be a wealthy Persian (from Iraj, Fars) merchant who owned a number of ships and, apart from dealing with merchandise, was also quite active in organizing Hajj pilgrims there. That in turn also suggests that even as early as the thirteenth century, Gujarat emerged as a prominent centre of Hajj pilgrim transportation.

Inscription 15

The present inscription is of utmost importance. It belongs to Muhammad bin Tughlaq's period. This suggests the peak of Persian merchants' influence and

dominance in Gujarat in general and Cambay in particular. The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta (Hussain, 1976: 67-68) speaks aloud about him and also records his death. The inscription reads:

Line 6: This is the grave of the weak creature, the fortunate, the martyr, the one taken into Allah's mercy, the pardoned, Malik-i-

Line 7: Muluki'sh-Sharq wal-Wuzara (lit. the prince among the princes of the east and Ministers) one who is celebrated in Arabia and other Islamic countries, Zakiud-Daulat

Line 8: wad-Din (lit. one who is just in the matters of State and Religion), 'Umar son of Ahmad al-Kazaruni entitled Parviz Malik, may the Exalted Allah cover him,

Line 9: with (His) mercy and pardon and settle him in the abode of Paradise, one who returned to the mercy

Line 10: of the Exalted Allah, on Wednesday, the ninth of (the month of) Safar (of the) year (A.H.) four and thirty and seven hundred (9 Safar 734=22 October, 1333).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 43

The inscription is *in situ* and embedded in the tomb housed in the present Jami mosque of the town. Unfortunately, while on his way to Delhi, probably just outside Cambay, Malik-ut Tujjar was killed (that's why in the inscription he is referred to as 'martyr prince') otherwise, as reported by Ibn Battuta, Muhammad bin Tughlaq even promised him the *wizarat* (Ibid) that's the reason why he was addressed as Malik-i-Muluki'sh-Sharq wal-Wuzara in the inscription. Muhammad bin Tughlaq granted him the *iqta* of Cambay and gave the charge of

the city to him. The present inscription epitomizes the peak of the Persian merchant's influence at Cambay.

Along with Malik-ut Tujjar's tombstone, in the same complex, there also survive two more epitaphs on the graves one, of his wife Fatima (dated 1382) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 55-56), and another that of his slave Khwaja (dated 1326) (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy: 1971: 41).

Besides the epitaphs mentioned above, there also survive many more such epitaphs of a number of Persian merchants at Cambay. In fact, Parvaz Shahid's tomb contains many more such inscriptions, though they are not *in situ*. Nonetheless, their displacement to Parvaz Shahid's tomb is a blessing, for they survived to posterity; otherwise, these would have been lost in the ravages of time. Another such epitaph is recovered from the tomb of Parvaz Shahid's southern wall. It is that of Zainuddin Ali, son of Najib, son of Hamid al-Hanjuri (Hanjur, near Al-Laqbah, Syria). The last of the series of the tombstones that survived in the Pir Tajuddin's tomb complex is that of another prominent merchant mentioned as 'chief of merchants, pride among the great' that of Khwaja Asil, son of Umar, son of Saduddin, dated 1395 (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 57-58).

Cambay was such a large settlement of Persian merchants that it accompanied the migration and settlements of religious dignitaries and scholars. One such epitaph is that of Fakhruddin Ahmad, son of Husain, son of Abu Bakr, *alias* al-Qaziul-Isfahani i.e. Isfahani Qazi (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 21-22). He probably served as local Qazi at Cambay. The tombstone dated 1321 is presently embedded in the southern wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shah and not *in situ*.

Another such tombstone is that of Imam Maulana Muhammad, son of Ahmad al-Jauhar al-Farsi (lit. of Fars) dated 24 Rajab 731/3 May 1331, survives from the western wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shahid. The epitaph applauds the deceased as ‘Maulana, the greatest Imam’ Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 31-32). He appears to be a man of great learning and piety and enjoyed utmost respect in society. A similar tombstone of another righteous and pious person, addressed as ‘great Shaikh’, is that of Jamaluddin, Haji Muhammad, son of Abdullah *alias Kukband* (?), which survives at the west wall of the Faraspur/Piraspur ki Masjid dated 1376 Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 53-54).

Persian merchants' establishments at Cambay do not appear to be just transitory settlements. It seems that their families too migrated along with them, and they established their permanent settlements at Cambay. This is confirmed by some tombstones of the ladies and the sons of the merchants. One such inscription dated 1335 that survives on Parvaz Shahid's tomb is that of Kamaluddin Kamal, son of a Persian merchant Husain al-Basri. In the inscription, the deceased is addressed as ‘dear son’ suggests that probably during his father's lifetime, he died, and the tombstone was built by the father in Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 45).

Similarly, there is another such epitaph on the tomb of Bibi Rani daughter of Saiyyid Tajuddin Husain al-Alavi dated 1337 at present village Nagara, five kilometres north of Cambay (old Cambay) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 48). It clearly suggests that the deceased belonged to a respected Saiyyid family. Another inscription dated 1340 embedded in the eastern wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shahid pertains to daughter of the prince of merchants Sad (?) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 50-51). Clearly the merchant was living at Cambay along with his family. Another

tombstone embedded in the west wall of Parvaz Shahid's tomb pertains to the grave of Lady Sharaf, daughter of Kamaluddin Muhammad, son of Abdul Baqi, son of Amir, son of Tarahan Ansari dated 1345 (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 52-53).

Conclusion

The above description clearly points out the prominence of Persian merchants in the province of Gujarat. Among the Persian merchant families of Persia Al-Bammis and the *Fatolias* (Irbilis) appear to be of great prominence. Besides them, we get the reference of the settlements of merchants from Isfahan, Basra, Hormuz, Fars, Qazwin, Hanjur, Kazarun and Kirman. These families confirm Ibn Battuta's statement regarding the dominance of Persian merchants (foreign settlers) at Cambay. However, though Cambay was the major centre, where Persian merchants' settlements were largest, the Persian settlements were not only along with the coastal towns, but their penetration is clearly visible into the interiors.

Cambay was the chief connection with Qays/Hormuz and ports of Persian Gulf as well as the Red Sea during the 10-15th century. Clearly, the spread of Persian settlements was not confined to Cambay; instead, it was spread all over Gujarat.

Even the prominent religious centre of the Hindus, Somnath, appears to have big Persian settlements there. Persians were scattered all over, as far as Junagarh and Anhilwara (the capital town of the Chalukyas). Inscriptions corroborate the accounts of Arab travellers like Al-Masudi, Istakhri, Ibn Hauqal, who speak aloud the presence of Muslim merchants in Gujarat and their flourishing trading activities. Another point to ponder is that under the Chalukyan rule, Muslim

settlers enjoyed complete freedom – they were not only granted space for settlements but had the freedom to construct mosques. Persian merchants appear to have constructed mosques at Cambay and Somnath Pattan, suggesting tolerance and communal harmony. In one instance in Cambay when mosque was damaged by the rogues Chalukyan king not only ordered for its restoration but also funded the repairs. Further, even they were allowed to send the excess income earned from the property at Cambay to Mecca and Medina.

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