

# A HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

ROGER D. LONG

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## 3

## The Advent of Islam in South Asia

*Manan Ahmed Asif*

Beware, wrote Marc Bloch to fellow historians in 1941, of the 'obsession with origins'. 'In popular usage', he warned, 'an origin is a beginning which explains. Worse still, a beginning which is a complete explanation'.

There lies the ambiguity, and there the danger!<sup>1</sup> Such histories, Bloch argued, which were possessed by the 'demons of origins', could only be 'put to the service of value judgments'—a fate to which no history, nor any historians, should ever fall. Many heeded his call, as new venues of historical analysis rose in the post-War academy. Whether under the rubric of 'invented traditions' (via Eric Hobsbawm) or 'imagined communities' (via Benedict Anderson), or in the field of memory studies (from Maurice Halbwachs to Pierre Nora), both the impulse to create origin myths as well as their circulations and deployments have been thoroughly investigated.

Still, the origins remain prime—every nation-state clings to its sacred myths, feeding it from a heavy mix of state assistance and popular imagination. Pakistan's originary myth is tied to Islam's arrival,<sup>2</sup> the conquest of al-Sind by Umayyad troops in 711 CE and the assumption that it was from this seed that Islam spread throughout the Indian peninsula, that Muslims came to exist in that geography, and eventually in 1947, history fulfilled its

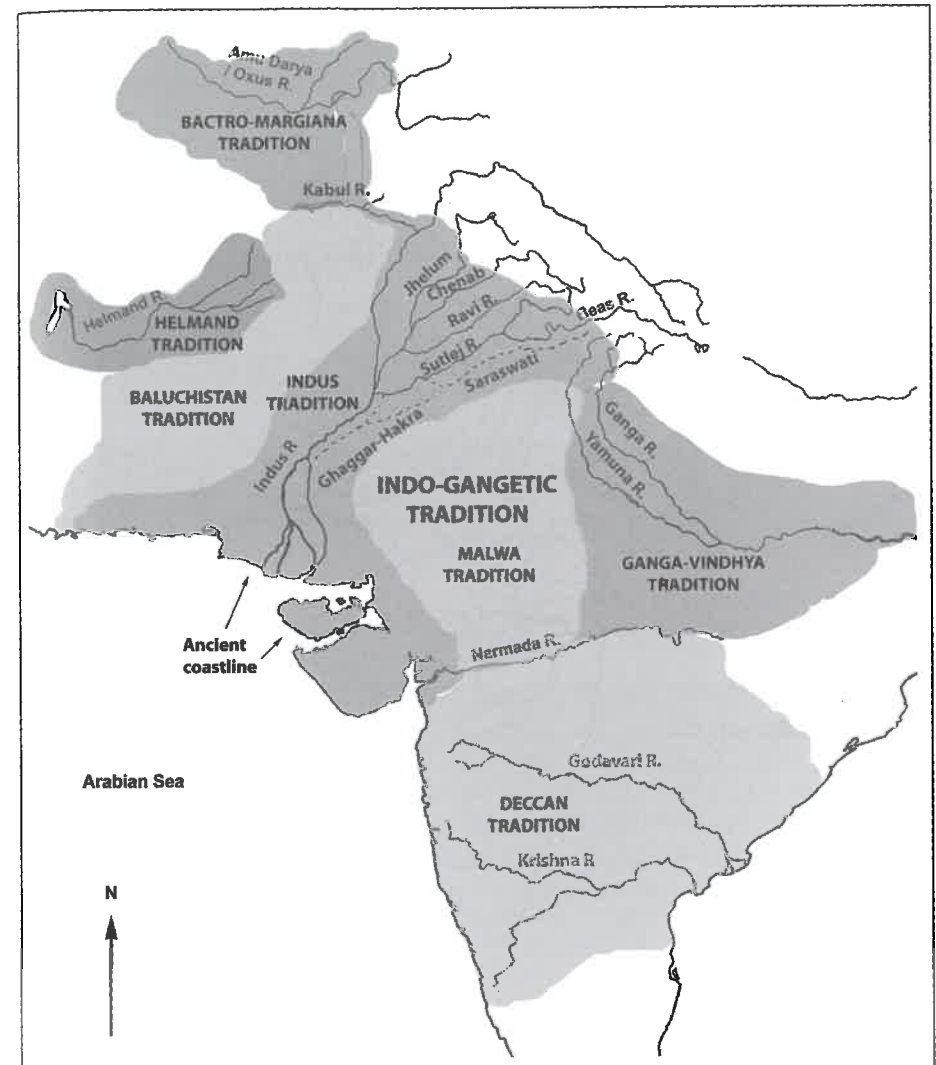
destiny in the creation of Pakistan. This origin story, to echo Bloch, is told to explain everything and to give everything that it explains a moral valence and divinely ordered inevitability. While the impulse of the postcolonial nation state has been thoroughly analyzed (from perspectives as distinct as Partha Chatterjee to Patrick Geary), the origin story itself has rarely been categorically questioned and its building blocks thoroughly contested.

It is my intention in this chapter to destabilize the originary narrative of Pakistan. I have titled it 'The Advent of Islam in South Asia', keeping in mind two perspectives. First, from a historiographical perspective, I will illustrate the emergence and dominance of 'Advent of Islam' from British colonial writings, the response within Muslim nationalist historiography, and the subsequent embrace of this narrative by the state of Pakistan. Second, I will take two of the foundational blocks of this narrative and demonstrate how ill-footed their purchase is in historical primary records, and using that as evidence of a thoroughly constructed narrative, I will show some of the silences that are deliberately built into it.

### THE HEGEMONIC 'ADVENT OF ISLAM'

In 1817, in his seminal book, *The History of British India*, James Mill (1773–1836) established the tripartite division of Indian pasts and anchored the arrival of Islam as a fundamental rupture in its history. He posited a golden age of Ancient Hindu India, which was interrupted and arrested by the dark age of Medieval Muslim rule, and followed by the enlightened, civilized, liberated rule of the British. For Mill, it was Mahmud of Ghazna whose sword rendered the cleave between Ancient India and Medieval India.<sup>3</sup> But quite rapidly, the timeline shifted to incorporate the

Map 1: Indo-Gangetic Tradition, Integration Era—Major Sites



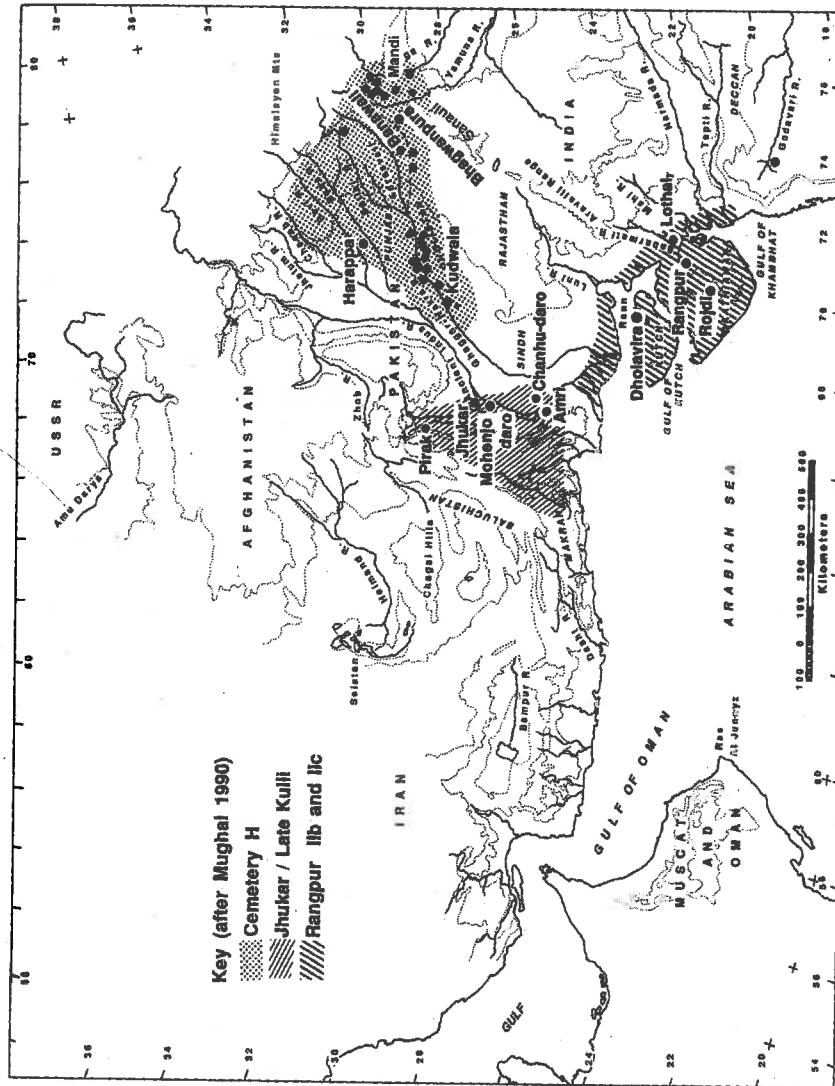
Arab history from the earlier invasion. Perhaps the best example comes from Richard F. Burton (1821–1890) who wrote three volumes on his time in Sindh:

It is related by the chronicles of antiquity, that in days gone by, and ages that have long fled, Scinde was a most lovely land situated in a delightful climate, with large, flourishing, and populous cities; orchards producing every kind of tree and fruit. It was governed by a powerful monarch who had mighty horses and impregnable forts, whose counsellors were renowned for craft, and whose commanders celebrated for conduct. And the boundaries of his dominions and provinces extended as far as Kanoj and Cashmere, upon whose south-western frontier one of the Rahis planted two towering cypresses. During the caliphate of the Chief of True Believers, Umar son of Khattab, it was resolved, with the permission of Allah, to subject the sinners of Scinde to the scimitar of certain sturdy saint militants.<sup>4</sup>

This narrative was picked up, and elaborated upon, by two profoundly important colonial historians of India: Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859) and Henry Miers Elliot (1808–1853). In their respective works *History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (1841) and *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (1843), the arrival and advent of Islam to India is chronologically fixed to the campaign of the Umayyad general, Muhammad bin Qasim (695–715). In both, this is a rupture with the Indian past and accompanied by stark brutality and terrorization of the local population.

As this particular rendering of Islam's arrival solidified in colonial historiography, it provoked a vigorous response from Muslim nationalists, though not on the particular framing of the narrative. Rather, they argued against the 'value judgment' embedded in the colonial histories. The two foundational texts which frame

Map 10: Major Sites and Cultural Areas of the Indus Tradition, Localization Era





the nationalist response are *Arab o Hind kay Ta'alluqat* (1930) by Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (1884–1953) and *Arab Conquest of Sindh* (1929) by Muhammad Habib (1895–1971). Nadvi, a student of Shibli Nu'amani (1857–1914) and the stalwart representative of the Aligarh School looked to connect Indian Muslims to the earliest moments of Islam and argued for a primordial relationship between India and Islam. Muhammad Habib, a stringent Marxist more critically engaged with the conduct of the Muslim armies, sought a rehabilitation of that first Muslim campaign especially compared to the later Ghaznavid campaigns of the tenth century. Strands of their work were picked up and continued by historians such as U. M. Daudpota (1897–1958), Nabi Baksh Khan Baloch (1917–2011), and Mubarak Ali (b.1941). These historians were not simply responding to the British construction of the Muslim past, but also to Hindu nationalist voices which echoed, with great resonance, the charges laid at the feet of Muslim conquerors by the British.<sup>5</sup> The Muslim scholarly response was both an apologia but also a rehabilitation of the earliest conqueror Muhammad bin Qasim, who came to embody the conqueror (and the conquest) with the least amount of blood on his hands, and hence, the most defensible in the communal terrain of early twentieth-century India.

It was in these Muslim nationalist texts that the main narrative books of 'Advent of Islam' were first articulated. The character of Muhammad bin Qasim as a supremely righteous commander, the emphasis of his treatment of the local population, the wide-acceptance of Muslim policies, and thereafter, Muslim faith were elucidated and fixed with historical data. The minutiae of the conquest were endlessly debated in a series of articles written for the influential journal *Islamic Culture* in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, it was a de facto assumption that this originary

history was the most relevant history for the Muslims of South Asia, and, even then, only the singular event of the conquest and divorced from its historical moorings, with no past and no future.

That the history of Muslim arrival in India would become the originary myth of Pakistan's political foundation is apparent quite early on. In 1953, the first five-year anniversary of the creation of Pakistan was celebrated with the production of a commemorative volume issued from Karachi: *Five Years of Pakistan: August 1947–August 1952* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications). The second chapter, 'Pakistan's Pasts' was written by the staff at the Department of Archaeology. It begins with the sites in the Indus Valley as providing a connection for the country to ancient history but quickly moves towards the more important time-periods. As one of the earliest 'official' pronouncements of the 'origins' of the state of Pakistan, it is worth being reproduced in detail:

The explorations in Baluchistan and the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro in 1950 had alike been concerned with the pre-historic period of the country's history and with clarifying a picture of the past which was already known in part. They represented the application of new methods and more intensive study to old problems. The excavations at Bhambhor, by contrast, were of pioneering importance. They were carried out by the Department of Archaeology early in 1951, and they represent the first attempt of a young Islamic State to understand her own Islamic past. For Bhambhor is a site not of pre-historic times, but of the Arabs' eastward expansion through Makran and Afghanistan into Sind and up to the border of 'Hind'. Its excavation is the first of the kind on an Islamic site in Pakistan or, indeed, throughout the subcontinent.

For if the identification of some scholars is accepted, Bhambhor is none other than the famous port of Daibal. From this port, during the last years of Buddhist rule in Sind, pirates set forth for the

Arabian Sea, to harass the flourishing trade between China and the Middle East, until the Caliph, exasperated by the ravaging of his fleets and by the refusal of the rulers of Sind to suppress the pirates, sent a force by land and by sea against Daibal. The port had thrice repulsed the Arabs, but now in AD 712, it fell to a brilliant campaign led by the young General Muhammad bin Qasim. Its fall led in turn to the conquest of the whole of Sind, which thus became the first province in the subcontinent to receive Islam.<sup>6</sup>

In 1998, the *Fifty Years of Pakistan* series of statistical and historical data was published by the Federal Bureau of Statistics. In it is reflected the growth and development of this origin myth as Muhammad bin Qasim becomes now the 'first citizen of Pakistan' and the foundation of Pakistan is now firmly established in 711 CE.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the narrative springs from the 8th century to the 18th century, as it is that progression of Muslim past in India that is deemed to directly inform the creation of Pakistan. This narrative is crystallized around two strains: it highlights the presence of Arabs in Sindh, and it privileges the earliest acts of Muslims over all subsequent history.

From the glorification of the 1950s to the establishment of a singular 'origin' history of Pakistan, lies the development of a conscious project of a state in official narratives, in school textbooks, in monuments, in museums, and in public memorials—a process which intensifies after the second partition of 1971, when the bloody creation of Bangladesh rendered false the notion that Muslims of India were a unitary body with a unitary civilizational past. While the process of fixing such a particular notion of origins of Pakistan began under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928–1979), who served as President of Pakistan from 1971–73, and as Prime Minister from 1973–77, but it was General Zia ul-Haq (1924–1988), the military dictator who served

as President of the country from 1978–88, who threw the whole weight of the state apparatus behind it. On 3 October 1977, he called for a national 'New Education Policy' where he proclaimed that one of the goals for state education was to 'create an awareness of the Pakistani nation as a part of the universal Muslim Umma (Brotherhood) striving through successive stages to spread the message of Islam throughout the world.'<sup>8</sup> In his inaugural address to that conference, he called attention to the centrality of Islamic history to Pakistan's ideology, and mandated Arabic instruction from mid-level grades, and established the mosque as the fundamental unit of public education. His overall strategy had the explicit goal of 'use[ing] Islam and Pakistani nationalism to prevent ethnic groups from breaking away from the centre and to build a modern, cohesive nation out of different linguistic and ethnic groups.'<sup>9</sup>

The educational policies created after 1977 were put in effect across the four educational boards in the country.<sup>10</sup> The new textbooks introduced Muhammad bin Qasim from the fourth grade onwards—progressively adding more historical detail and texture to the narrative. Chapter Six of sixth grade Social Studies textbook is titled, 'Advent of Islam in South Asia', and is emblematic, as it hits all the major narrative points in the originary tale. Again, it is worth being reproduced in full:

Before the dawn of Islam, trade relations had been set up between India and the Arabs. The Muslims invaded the subcontinent in AD 712. Prior to this the Arabs used to visit this land for the sale and purchase of their goods. The Arab traders were staunch Muslims and therefore they taught Islam to the people of India. The Arab traders used to carry merchandise from the Indian ports to the other countries of the world. A number of Arab traders had also settled in Sri Lanka and due to trade they had good relations with the people.

With the passage of time some of the traders died. The Raja of Sri Lanka who was kind-hearted, sent the widows and their children and belongings on eight ships along with gifts for the Muslim Caliph. When these ships reached near the port of Debal the pirates plundered these ships. The Arab women and children were made captives. Some of the Muslims managed to escape and they made Hajjaj bin Yousaf aware of the entire incident. Conflict between the Arabs and the ruler of Sind started due to this incident.<sup>11</sup>

The narrative moves on to Muhammad bin Qasim's excellent treatment which 'overawed the people' and 'Hindus began to embrace Islam in great numbers due to the good and kind treatment of Muslims.'<sup>12</sup> This 'first contact' model is replicated throughout the school curriculum, contrasting the benevolence of warrior Islam against the horror of local rule as in this civics textbook for the tenth grade: 'For the first time the people of Sindh were introduced to Islam, its political system and way of government. The people here had seen only the atrocities of the Hindu rajas.'<sup>13</sup> The result of this encounter is spelled out in greater details in a section titled, 'The Impact of Islam in South Asia':

Islam spread rapidly after the conquest of Multan. The main cause was the benign treatment of Muslims with the Hindus. Due to this attitude Hindus began to love Muslims and they became nearer and nearer to Muslims. Before the Arab conquest the people were fed up with the teachings of Buddhists and Hindus. Muhammad [sic] bin Qasim was kind both with the Buddhist community and with Hindus. The Arabs treated the locals with generosity, good treatment and justice, with the result that most of the Hindus embraced Islam along with other Brahmins and Buddhists. They began to accept the customs and manners of the Muslims and changes took place in their lives and society.<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis throughout these texts is on good governance, and on ensuring that the conquered population was given 'complete freedom to follow their own religion irrespective [sic] of caste or creed.'<sup>15</sup>

From this sanitized, yet jaundiced, history, the student is led directly to sixteenth-century Mughal art and literature; and from there to the British era. That is the only teleology relevant to the 'Advent of Islam'. To enumerate all of the various silences, historical or geospatial, built into this narrative would be the purview of a much larger study, but two aspects are worth lingering over: implicit in the forgetting of all subsequent history is a crucial lesson for the young citizen-in-training, that there was purity to that first encounter which was squandered by most later generations of Muslim rulers who fell from the ideal established by Muhammad bin Qasim. Furthermore, history as conceived in these school textbooks is demarcated explicitly along borders. The Delhi Sultanate is excluded; the majority of Mughal rule is excluded although Humayun (1508–1556 CE), the Mughal Emperor from 1530–40 and 1555–56 CE is included because he spent time in exile in Sindh. Shah Jahan (1592–1666), who remained Emperor from 1628–58 also exists because he constructed monuments and forts in Lahore. British rule is introduced post-1840s when the Punjab and Sindh were colonized.

The official publications of the state of Pakistan, the textbooks governing the rules of historical consciousness do not exhaust the ways in which 'Advent of Islam' permeates the everyday lives of citizens. Working closely with the state, or taking its lead, were religious parties, community organizations, popular historians, novelists and playwrights. Across this broad spectrum, one can trace the hegemonic 'Advent of Islam' narrative.



Since the early 1970s, the Jamaat-i-Islami, founded in 1941, and an early and frequent recipient of Saudi Arabian largesse, became the chief organizer of *Yaum Bab ul Islam* (Door of Islam Day) which celebrated Muhammad bin Qasim and his conquest via public rallies, poetical submissions, and mass prayers. The Jamaat also sponsored journals and magazines devoted to extolling the virtues of the Arab Muslims and the direct linkages between Arabia and Pakistan. An example is the following news report that appeared in *Dawn*, Pakistan's premier English daily:

*Yaum Bab ul Islam* was observed on Wednesday in various parts of the city, and speakers in various meetings recalled the services rendered by Mohammad bin Qasim for the people of this region who defeated the forces of tyranny, and established a rule of law here. They said that even today to save humanity from the clutches of evil forces, a Mohammad bin Qasim is badly needed who should foil conspiracies against humanity and again make the world a cradle of peace. They said after the carnage of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan, the real face of the US had been unveiled. The Ummah today needed a Mohammad bin Qasim who could save it from the atrocities of the US.<sup>16</sup>

In direct conversation with such sentiments are the vast corpus of 'Heroes of Islam' styled narratives in novels, histories, and comic books which glorify the character and deeds of that earliest generation of 'Pakistanis', the companions of Muhammad bin Qasim who accompanied him to the shores of the Indus. There are also the communal histories which traced genealogical descent from these soldiers and their progenies and actively argued for social mobilization along communal lines. They are exemplified in the appropriately titled *Mujahid-e Azam Hazrat Muhammad b. Qasim kay Ruska Shami Mujahideen yani Pak o Hind ki Qaum*

*'Arain ki Dastan* (The Story of the Descendants of the Syrian Companion Mujahideens of the Greatest Mujahid, Muhammad bin Qasim, that is the Arain Community of India and Pakistan):

The Arain *qaum* (community) is *sharif* (a refined class), hard-working and of Arab descent. They are the true *mujahid* of this nation. However, we are not united, nor organized. Whether you write Mian, Chaudhri etc. before your name, please write Arain after it. So that by seeing the word, from East to West, from Peshawer to Karachi, we can recognize ourselves.<sup>17</sup>

Similar originary myths were written and circulated in official histories about other communities such as the 'Awans, the Maliks, and the Jats'. In each case, these histories represented a direct engagement with the State since they contained rosters of notable members in service, in politics, or leading the nation (General Zia ul-Haq remains the most prominent member of the Arain community).

In best-selling historical novels by Naseem Hijazi (*Dastan-e Mujahid, Muhammad bin Qasim*), Inayatullah Iltutmish (*Sitara Jo Tut Giya*), Sadiq Hussain Siddiqi (*Muhammad bin Qasim*), this same 'Advent of Islam' is represented with the franker sensibilities that only great literature can muster. Collectively, from the ranks of official publications to public holidays to histories and novels, 'Advent of Islam' is the tether hook for Pakistan to its distant past, both historically and geographically aligning it to the Middle East, away from its geographical, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural anchor in South Asia.

### THE SILENCES IN THE 'ADVENT OF ISLAM'

The state of Pakistan's originary narrative of Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of al-Sindh remains largely uncontested in recent historiography. Contemporary histories of South Asia consider the region of Sindh a 'backwater region' and the nearly three-hundred years of the Muslim principalities in Sindh a 'forgotten' age.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the most notable silence in this narrative is the silence of contemporary historiography.<sup>19</sup> The paucity of contemporary historical research on the eighth–twelfth century has rendered any contestations of the 'Advent of Islam' either into the realm of communal memory or onto dated scholarship. In the following, I will attempt a brief reframing of the arrival of the Muslims, touching on both the points of emphasis with the 'Advent of Islam' and the many silences embedded.

The Indian Ocean trading arc around the Arabian Gulf participated in four distinct regions of maritime contact and movement between coastal settlements and communities: (1) the Gulf and East Africa (Hadramawt to Somalia); (2) the Gulf and the western shores of India (Muscat to the Indus delta or to coastal towns in Gujarat and Kerala); (3) the eastern coast of Bengal and the Andaman/Malay islands; and (4) the southern China shore and Malaya/Ceylon. In turn these networks linked up with the Red Sea trade to the Roman cities of Petra, Palmyra and beyond to the Mediterranean. The discussions of the 'Indian Ocean network' in the ancient periods are really discussions of particular nodes on this network and all contain their own contingent histories. For example, the two dominant foci of examination in existing scholarship are the Harrapan/Mesopotamian trade connection and the ancient Rome/India trade—both of which would constitute only one arterial network among the many Indian Ocean nodes.<sup>20</sup>

It is this connection that is emphasized by the 'Advent of Islam' as the vehicle for the movement of Arab traders and newly converted Muslims. However, the complexity of source material (from linguistic variation to major lacuna), the diversity of nodes, and the resultant fissures in historiography, make it entirely impossible to paint a comprehensive picture of the 'Indian Ocean world' which extends from the fifth millennium BCE to the tenth or the eleventh centuries CE. The archaeological (as well as numismatic and epigraphic) evidence for pre-medieval periods is sketchy due both to the vastness of terrains that need coverage and the political realities that have made inquisitive activities, such as digs, quixotic, to say the least. The textual evidence is no better—sources are limited, scattered, and often uninformative and require expertise in languages ranging from classical Greek to Sanskrit to Chinese and much else. As a result, we have clusters of archaeological and epigraphic data that sometimes dovetails with anachronistic textual data, but often, does not. Scholars are working with many silences.

Restricting ourselves to the contacts between the Indus valley coastal settlements and the Arabian Gulf, we have evidence from as early as the fourth and third millennia BCE that a trade in ore metals, grains, and other ceremonial artefacts existed across this node.<sup>21</sup> Into the Hellenistic period, there is evidence of a substantial trade in oil and wine, pepper, salt, sugar, coconut coir, iron, silk, copper, timber, precious stones, and even elephants, crossing the waters between Roman Egypt, the eastern coast of Africa, the western and southern coasts of Arabia and the western coast of India.<sup>22</sup> The majority of classical Greek accounts of maritime activity throughout the Red Sea, Arabia, and coastal cities of India, survive in later histories and geographies such as Strabo (c. 645 BCE to 21 CE), Pliny the Elder (before 77 CE), Claudius Ptolemy (c. 146–170 CE), and others.

The rise of the Persian Sassanid Empire in the mid-third century CE and its growing domination over the Gulf trade mirrors the declining presence of Roman accounts from the period. It can be surmised that from roughly the mid-third century to the seventh century CE, Sasanian merchants took over much of the trade flowing in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf. Excavations in sites at Siraf, Risahr, and Jazirat al-Ghanam have revealed substantial evidence of Sasanian trading activity, with these ports sites acting as hubs with merchants from various nodes trafficking through Sri Lanka.<sup>23</sup> The sixth century work by Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, contains a chapter on *Sarandip* (island of Sri Lanka) in which he describes a world of trans-local trade flowing in and out of its ports—all managed primarily by Sasanian merchants. The island, Cosmas states, was frequented by ships from Persia, China, Ethiopia, and India. From China, came silk, aloes, cloves, and sandalwood, which were taken to sites in the Malabar Coast (Kerala), Sindh, Himyar, and Adule. From the Indic ports came ivory, pepper from Malabar; musk, castor, and spikenard from Sindh; copper, *shisham* wood, and cloth from Bombay.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the sixth century, the Sasanians controlled the westward flow of the trade by owning the port cities along the Arabian Gulf as well as the Indus port city of Daybul, acquired during the reign of the Sasanian ruler Bahram V (421–438 CE). The Byzantine emperors Justin (518–527 CE) and Justinian (527–565 CE) made repeated efforts to break the Sasanian hold over this network, even convincing the Christian kingdom of Axum to invade and, briefly, occupy Yemen in 524–25 CE. These imperial contestations between the Byzantine and the Sasanians became the legacy of the Muslim political power as it emerged out of the Arabian Peninsula in the 630s and rapidly

expanded towards the Mediterranean on the one side and towards Persia on the other.

However, this very transition of the Roman to the Sasanian to the Arab stretching from roughly the fifth to the tenth century is also accompanied by evidentiary gaps in the surviving textual corpus. We only surmise from much later textual or archaeological evidence the realities of the sixth, seventh, or eighth centuries. We surmise, for example, that there existed a sizable Muslim community in Gwalior by 730s which may have existed earlier.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, there are various accounts asserting either pre-Islamic or early Islamic existence of communities in Gujarat, Karnataka, or Kerala, but the overwhelming textual evidence comes from much later, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and the numismatic and archaeological evidence is rather inconclusive.<sup>26</sup> However, this ambiguity, this knowledge that our evidence and our reconstructions are anachronistic is rarely commented upon. There was a trade network which linked Arabia and India, and we can trace it to the first and second centuries CE, and also to the ninth and tenth centuries CE, but there is much that is missing from this picture which requires ardent research.

#### ARAB CONQUEST OF AL-SIND

Based on the citations offered by later historians, the earliest accounts that dealt specifically with al-Hind and al-Sind were written by Ali b. Muhammad b. Abdullah b. Abi Sayf Abu'l Hasan al-Mada'ini (752–843 CE).<sup>27</sup> This early Arab historian is known to have written over two hundred works but only two survived. All others, including his material on al-Hind is lost. A later early thirteenth-century Persian text *Chachnama* is often considered to be a translation of al-Mada'ini's lost histories but this is a gross



error in historiography. *Chachnama* is a text firmly situated in, and created for, the thirteenth century and is not a translation of an earlier Arabic history. It cannot be used for the purposes of investigating a past five hundred years prior to its issuance.<sup>28</sup> However, the three universal historians of the ninth century, al-Baladhuri (d.892), al-Ya'kubi (d.905), and al-Tabari (839–923), did incorporate al-Mada'ini's reports into their accounts on al-Hind and cited him as their primary source. The greatest amount of material (as well as direct quotes) from al-Mada'ini appears in al-Baladhuri who is the only one of the three to have a section devoted to the conquest of al-Sind in his *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*. His 13-page section on al-Sind (the shortest in the book) is the central, earliest surviving textual source on the campaigns in al-Hind and Makran and the conquest of al-Sind. The archaeological and numismatic information from the digs at Bhanbore and Aror confirm the outlines of the narrative but do not offer any additional details.<sup>29</sup>

In these earliest historical and geographical texts dated from the early ninth century the region of Sindh is labelled *al-Hind wa'l Sind*. It is possible that 'al-Sind' entered Arabic via the Sassanid usage of *sindhū* (considered a 'local' word for the river Indus). By the ninth century, it clearly came to denote the land west of the river with 'al-Hind' lying on the eastern shores. In classical Arabic, there are two clear usages of 'al-Hind' (and related words based on h-n-d stem: *muhnid*, *muhindah*, *hindi*, *hinduvani*)—Hind as a proper, feminine noun and as a geographic entity 'al-Hind'. The most famous example of the former is Hind bin 'Utbah, wife of Abu Sufyan and mother of Mu'awiya (founder of the Umayyad dynasty). There is also Hind al-Hunud who founded the fifth-century central Arabian kingdom of Kindah.<sup>30</sup> A range of products are labelled as 'from al-Hind' such as *saif al-hindi* or *saif hindvani*

(sword from al-Hind) but there are also camphor and sandalwood (*'ud al-Hind*), among others. However, there is no good reason to assume that al-Hind, in such usages, always corresponded to the geographical region of the Indian subcontinent. Rather, merchandise that originated elsewhere, such as silk (China), camphor (Malaya), and metal (Aksumite Ethiopia) were all tagged as 'al-Hind'.<sup>31</sup>

We can conclude, however, that not only were the new political rulers of the Arabian peninsula familiar with the world beyond the sea; they knew and understood the imperial necessity of owning the trading networks and were cognizant of the conflicts arising from taking charge over port cities. Hence, it is fairly clear that as soon as the nascent Muslim polity centred in Medina conquered their first port (in Bahrain), they commenced efforts to purchase a foothold on the Indian subcontinent.

Hence, the incursion of Muslim forces to *al-Hind* and *al-Sind* began under the very first wave of expansion from Medina to Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and western Iran. During the reign of 'Umar (634–644 CE), the appointed governor of Bahrain, 'Uthman b. Abi'l 'as al-Thaqafi dispatched three naval expeditions to port cities in al-Sind and al-Hind: to Thana near Bombay in 636 CE, to Broach in Gujarat, and to al-Daybul by the delta of the Indus. These were, perhaps, little more than raiding parties or attempts to trace the trading networks. They did provoke a sharp rebuke from the 'Umar to the governor: 'O Brother of al-Thaqif, you have put the worm on the wood. I swear by Allah that if they had been smitten, I would have taken the equivalent (in men) from your tribe.'<sup>32</sup> 'Umar prevented further excursions across the sea but overland campaigns continued across Khurasan, Kirma, Sistan, and Makran.



Unlike the Byzantines in Syria, the Sasanid retreat from Khurasan lingered for more than a decade and continually drove Arab armies into pursuit of them. By 650 CE, Yazdagird, the last Sasanian king, had fled to Marv and tried to raise Kirman and Khurasan against the Arabs. While he was unsuccessful, the continuing struggle of the Arab armies to subdue these regions meant a constant open front to the east. During the reign of the third caliph, 'Uthman b. 'Affan (644–655 CE), further expeditions were dispatched towards al-Sind. The fall of Sistan in 652–53 CE gave the Muslims a new base to launch raids into Makran. One such raid in 658 CE, during the reign of Ali b. Abu Talib, (655–661) netted them 'copious booty and slaves' from al-Kikan (present-day Balochistan region).<sup>33</sup>

The frontier of Makran and al-Sind proved much more resilient in the decades that followed. During Mu'awiya's regime (661–680 CE), a number of raiding parties were defeated by the local tribes before the Arab army was able to capture Makran in 664 CE and gain horses, gold, and slaves from various tribes. The list of armies and commanders given by al-Baladhuri illustrates the continual pressure Mu'awiya exerted on the eastern front: in 663–64 CE, 'Abdallah b. Sawwar al-'Abdi led two expeditions to Kikan, perishing in the second; in 665 CE, Sinan ibn Salamah reached Makran and established a fort. Sinan's conquest was short-lived, as it goes in and out of Arab hands until 672 CE when al-Mundhir ibn al-Jarud al Abdi was successful in establishing control of the area. The northernmost outpost of Arabs in the last decades of the seventh century was at Bust in southern Afghanistan. From here, Arab raids for slaves were carried into Makran or towards Kabul without any lasting Arab presence. The local Zunbils of Zamindawar and Zabulistan, and the Kabulshahs of Kabul were often persuaded to pay tribute but, with the lack of an Arab army, they often changed their mind, and were ferocious opponents.

Additionally, the impenetrable region provided ample sanctuary to rebellious tribes and leaders, such as the Azariqa Kharajites who used it as a base to launch attacks.

Abd al-Malik (685–705) re-focused Umayyad attention towards the eastern front as the emergence of a safe haven for Kharajites and Alawis (a proto-Shi'a group who advocated Ali's caliphate before Uthman) started to disrupt the capital. In 694 CE, Abd al-Malik appointed Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thakaqfi to the governorship of Iraq, which administratively included the entire eastern frontier of the Umayyads. Immediately, Hajjaj bin Yusuf launched an effort to take out rebellious footholds from the frontier of Makran. The 'Alawis killed his first governor and took over numerous posts in Makran. In 696 CE, Hajjaj bin Yusuf sent Muhammad bin Harun al-Numri as the next governor of Makran. He urged al-Numri to move against the Alawis, but only to partial success. In 698 CE, he sent the governor of Sistan, Ubaidallah bin Abi Bakra to Zabulistan at the head of the doomed *Jaish al-Tawawis* (Army of Destruction) to subdue the region.<sup>34</sup> The 'Umayyad army retreated after suffering a massive loss of troops. This certainly put further expeditions to the eastern front on hold.<sup>35</sup>

It is during al-Numri's governorship, that we encounter what will emerge in 'Advent of Islam' as the dominant *casus belli* of the Arab invasion of al-Sind, though, as should be readily apparent by now, the 'Umayyad Empire was already engaged in a continual struggle to take these port cities. Al-Baladhuri cites:

Then al-Hajjaj, after the death of Mujjah, made Muhammad bin Harun al-Numri the governor. During his reign, the king of *Jazirat al-Yaqt* sent some women, born in his realm as Muslims, to al-Hajjaj. Their fathers were traders and had died there. The intention was to gain the favour of Hajjaj. The ship in which they were sailing, was

captured by the people of Mid of Daybul on *bawarij* (barks). One of the women from Bani Yarbu cried *Ya Hajjaj!* (Oh Hajjaj) and when he heard of this, he said, *Ya Labaik* (I come). He sent a letter to Dahir for the release of the women. He replied: 'They were captured by pirates, whom I do not control.' Al-Hajjaj sent Ubaidullah b. Nabhan to Daybul but he was killed. Then he wrote to Budail bin Tahfah who was in Oman and told him to go against Daybul. But when he faced the enemy, his horse bucked and he was killed by the enemies. Some say he was killed by the Zutt of the Buddhists. They call this *Jazira* (island or peninsula), *Jazirat al-Yaqut* (Island of Rubies)<sup>36</sup>

Immediately after this account, al-Baladhuri begins the narration of Muhammad bin Qasim's invasion of al-Sind, noting most significantly that this was done 'during the time of al-Walid b. Abd al-Malik.' Here is the lag which has gone unremarked in scholarship: the governorship of al-Numri (698 CE), during whose tenure the piracy episode is said to have taken place, and the expedition against Daybul led by Muhammad bin Qasim (712-713 CE), were separated by at least a decade!

Muhammad bin al-Qasim b. Muhammad bin al-Hakam bin abu 'Ukail, a relative of Hajjaj bin Yusuf, was a young commander active on the eastern front when he was asked to lead an expedition of 6,000 to 10,000 troops to the kingdom of Daybul. He reached the fort via Makran and in four campaigns took the main forts from the local king Dahar, the forts of Daybul, Brahmanabad, and Aror, after prolonged sieges. Dahar was killed at the final battle, and al-Qasim established Umayyad rule in al-Sind. He then proceeded to conquer the city of Multan. Al-Baladhuri reported that from Multan al-Qasim was able to acquire double the amount expended upon the campaign. It is while al-Qasim was at Multan that al-Hajjaj died. Sulaiman bin Abd al-Malik, the next Umayyad caliph, recalled al-Qasim, imprisoned him, and had him executed.

Not only was the 'piracy episode' not the *casus belli* but there is no historical justification to even seek a unique cause behind Muhammad bin Qasim's expedition. It was merely the latest in a sixty-year long campaign by the Arab regimes to gain a foothold over the port trades and to extract gold and riches from these port communities. The invasion of al-Sind, when it happened, had more to do with the state of financial affairs of the Marwanid branch of the Umayyad, or the need to secure a frontier region against rebels, than any romantic episode of piracy. As Khalid Yahya Blankinship's work has shown, much of the expansion during the early eighth century was driven by the need for revenue. Al-Baladhuri makes this explicit, in that he reports that when Muhammad bin Qasim conquered al-Sind, he sent back 120 million dirhams as booty to Iraq. Some years later, when al-Junayd al-Murri campaigned to recapture al-Sind, he was reported to have sent back four hundred million dirhams.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE FRONTIER OF AL-SIND

Just as the foundational episode in 'Advent of Islam' fails historical scrutiny, so do the claims of the establishment of a secure, safe Muslim polity in Sindh. The conquests of Muhammad bin Qasim proved transitory, though later Umayyads continued their efforts to control al-Sind and generate revenue from it. In 731, al-Hakam bin Awana al-Kalbi was appointed governor of Sindh. He founded a city to act as the Arab base of operations at the frontier, al-Mahfuza, because 'by this time all inhabitants of al-Hind had reverted back to unbelief from Islam and there were no cities safe for Muslims.'<sup>38</sup> This provides one fleeting hint that any conversion activity that might have resulted from the earliest campaigns was temporary and of a political nature. From this new base, the Umayyads re-attempted waves of raids into Gujarat and

Rajasthan but failed to gain much foothold. The Rashtrakutas gathered strength in Gujarat and provided a bulwark against forward expansion of the Muslim frontier. After the death of al-Kalbi, Muhammad bin Qasim's son, `Amr returned to al-Sind as a governor (740–743 CE). He was soon besieged at al-Mansura and could barely maintain his control over the city. With the end of the Umayyad dynasty in 750 CE, came the end of any further expansion east across the Indus into al-Hind.

Sindh was still the frontier, and as such, it continued to attract those who had reason to flee the centre. The successor state to the Umayyad polity, the Abbasid state, immediately faced the revolt of Muhammad ibn Abdullah An-Nafs az-Zakiyya (the pure soul), who claimed the Imamate, and travelled to Mansurah to gain the support of the local governor.<sup>39</sup> Even though al-Mansur (750–754 CE) quickly crushed the revolt, the supporters of the an-Nafs az-Zakiyya continued to proliferate in al-Sind. Harun al-Rashid's governor at the frontier, Yahya bin Khalid al-Barmaki, stabilized the region and reported substantial revenue from al-Sind. The twin cities of Daybul and Mansura flourished as nodes on a network of trade and mobility.<sup>40</sup>

By the time of al-Mu'tasim (813–833 CE), the Abbasids had sent a long list of governors to Sindh. The period between the death of al-Mu'tasim and the assassination of al-Mutawakil (833–861 CE) is one of a fairly stable court in Baghdad. A large influx of *muhaddithun* (hadith scholars) made their way to the port cities in Sindh.<sup>41</sup> Pottery and coins gathered from Samarra, Fustat, Daybul, and Mansura show that a cross-regional trade flourished during this period.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the Abbasids had their eyes and attention set on the Byzantine front. As conditions worsened in Baghdad with the inclusion of Turkic troops and the rise of

their political clout, the regions of Sistan, Fars, Khurasan, and Sindh grew more and more distant from imperial concerns. Local warlords exerted domain over nodal forts from which to launch raids onto surrounding territories. There were constant uprisings in the Makran and Rajasthan regions and newer incursions were coming from the north-western tribes, which resulted in the foundation of new Arab principalities, or more accurately, city-states.

The earliest, noted by al-Baladhuri, was established during the time of al-Ma'mun (809–813 CE), when a client of Banu Samah, Fazal bin Mahan captured the Gujarat port city of Sindan (near Bombay) and sent an elephant as a gift to the caliph in Baghdad.<sup>43</sup> Al-Baladhuri reports on only two generations of the Mahaniya who ruled the city and carried out expeditions against the coastal pirate colonies. The second to emerge were the Habaris at Mansura. After the death of al-Mutawakkil in 847 CE, Amr bin Abdulaziz Habari declared himself ruler of the city of Mansura and pledged allegiance to the new Abbasid caliph. He collected taxes and organized the flow of trade through the channels of the Indus. The third main principality emerged in the city of Multan when it was occupied by Muhammad bin Qasim bin Munabbih Sami around 892 CE. In 915 CE, when the geographer al-Ma'sudi travelled to Mansura and Multan, he noted that both of these cities were governed by descendants of Ali bin Abu Talib and that the *khutbah* (Friday sermon) in both cities was read in the name of the Abbasid caliph.<sup>44</sup> It is important to conceive of these fort-cities as having a very limited influence outside of their fortifications. From the geographers, al-Istakhri and al-Ma'sudi, we know that they were in constant struggle with regional Indic principalities, even as their revenues depended on travellers and pilgrims. The little we know of these cities in the ninth and tenth centuries



shows that they did not have much expansionist ambition, which is perhaps one of the reasons they fell to the encroaching powers from the west. Also of note is that until the eleventh century, and due largely to migration and settlement traffic from the coasts of Yemen and Arabia, these were the only cities in the region with ethnically Arab populations.

West of the Indus, in the regions of Makran and Qusdar, two principalities emerged after the Kharajite revolt in Khurasan of Hamza bin Adharak (d.828 CE). This region had not been secured by the capital since Hajjaj. Bands of warrior rebels and outlaws, the *'ayyars*, roamed the region of Khurasan, Sistan, and Zabulistan, extorting from populace and seeking legitimacy from the rulers. One of the key polities was established by the Saffarid brothers Ya'qub and 'Amr bin al-Layth who threatened Baghdad itself in the 870s and were given a grant by the Abbasid caliphs over Fars and Sindh. The Saffarids took over cities such as Ghazna, Qusdar, Kikan, Qandabil, and even Multan and held them until 900 CE.<sup>45</sup> They were dethroned by the Samanids, rivals of the Saffarids from Khurasan, who pursued Saffarids into Makran and took Multan during the second decade of the tenth century. By this juncture, the fracturing of the Abbasids at Baghdad had eroded even the nominal connection between the frontier of Sindh and the capital of Baghdad.

The Ismaili *da'wa* (summons, invitation to convert) spread in Sindh from the Yemeni port cities during early tenth century and was followed by the emergence of Isma'ili centres and close relations with the Fatimids in Egypt (909–1171 CE). By 965 CE, the city of Multan became associated with the Fatimid court in Egypt and became a centre for Ismaili activities across the region. The name of the Abbasid caliph during Friday sermons

was replaced by those of the Fatimid caliphs. The caliphate in Baghdad was now only a distant observer of the fringes of their eastern realm.

In 962 CE, Abu Mansur Sebuktigin, a slave commander of the Samanids (Sunni Persian Empire in Central Asia), established himself as a nominal Sultan in Ghazna, retaining the claims of the Samanids and the Abbasids as overlords, and began expansion into northern Punjab. By his death in 997 CE, he had acquired a number of forts from the Hindu Shahis of Kashmir and extended his dominion over Ghur and Makran. His son, Mahmud (d.1030 CE), continued his excursions into northern Punjab and Sindh wresting control of Lahore, Multan, and Mansura from the local Ismaili rulers. The Ismaili community had arrived in Sindh from Yemen and the local governors switched their allegiance from the Abbasids in Baghdad to the Fatimids in Cairo. This prompted Mahmud, eager to establish his credentials with the Sunni Abbasid caliph, to invade the Sindhi principalities in 1006 and again in 1010 CE.<sup>46</sup> The seasonal raids of Mahmud in Punjab: he led over twenty campaigns to northern India between 1001 and 1027 CE, survive in contemporary communal histories as the acts of a temple raider and destroyer.

The Ghaznavids (962–1186 CE) were followed by Mui'zz al-Din Muhammad bin Sam Ghauri (d.1206 CE), who emerged from Herat and conquered Multan and Uch in 1175 CE, Daybul in 1182 CE, and Lahore in 1186 CE. With the Ghurid invasions, Abbasid claims over city-states in Sindh came to an end. Ghauri continued expansion towards Delhi from Lahore and directly engaged the surrounding polities of Chawhans, Chandellas (Bundelkhand region), Gahadavalas (capital at Varanasi), and Calukyas. He suffered some setbacks: he was defeated by Prithviraja of the



Chauhans at Tara'in and was forced to retreat to Ghazna in 1188 CE. However by 1192 CE he was permanently established near Delhi, controlling a string of forts, allowing him access over the northern Gangetic plain with his capital at Lahore. Alongside his lieutenant Qutb al-Din Aybeg (Aybak) (d.1210/11 CE), he launched expeditions into Rajasthan, Gujarat, and the Deccan.

In 1205 CE, Aybeg went from Delhi to Lahore and declared himself sovereign, setting up a struggle for control of Afghanistan, Punjab, and Sindh with Yildiz (Mu'izz al-Din's senior lieutenant) at Ghazna. The remnants of the Ghurid realm were now available to their rival, the Khawarzem Shahi, a polity that emerged in the 1130s from the fringes of the Seljuq polity in Khurasan, who challenged Yildiz to the west. Aybeg's death in 1210/11 CE fractured the eastern frontier of Mu'izz al-Din's conquered realm even further as Aybeg's *ghulam* (slave) Iltutmish was set up as a ruler in Delhi. Another lieutenant, Ali-yi Mardan, became Sultan Ala al-Din in Bengal, and Nasir al-Din Qabacha, who was a former slave-lieutenant of Mu'izz al-Din and had been stationed in Uch since 1204 CE, declared his independence and occupied Lahore.

What followed was a predictably mad scramble among those warlords who laid claim to the key city-forts of Delhi, Multan, Lahore, and Uch, i.e. between Yildiz, Qabacha, and Iltutmish. As bands of Turkish-Muslim armies roamed from the hills of Peshawar to the plains of Lahore, these Sultans rallied luminaries, intellectuals, and mystics to their courts as they desperately sought to legitimize their individual and collective claims.<sup>47</sup> After Khawarzem Shah forced Yildiz out of Ghazna in 1215–16 CE, Yildiz took Lahore and marched on Delhi but was defeated and captured by Iltutmish at Tara'in in 1216 CE. The battle for

northern India was now between Iltutmish in Delhi and Qabacha in Uch.

The roughly seventy years of campaigns extending towards al-Sind over land (and one across sea) from Damascus, overlap with some turbulent periods in the history of Islam's earliest expansion. However, it is important to realize that these campaigns differed in focus, in motivation, and in effort. In fact, only the middle phase, that under al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf, can be convincingly linked. Moreover, the episode of Muhammad bin Qasim's campaign is itself followed by another 150 years of campaigns with varied political rationales. The attraction of the frontier for those who found themselves at odds with the regimes in Medina or Damascus or Baghdad, proved to be a much greater incentive for military action than any other motive.

Arab Sindh was a place for rebels, for heretics, for missionaries, for traders, for travellers, and for refugees. It was a place where the Muslim governor extended full protection over the Sun Temple in Multan for all pilgrimages, since it guaranteed him safety from irate neighbouring kingdoms. It was a place where nodal cities: Lahore, Uch, and Multan vied for cultural, political, and military power from the neighbouring region and where they competed to attract both trade and large-scale immigration based on a generous political climate or promise of refuge. It wasn't the utopia described in 'Advent of Islam' as a framing narrative for all the regions which currently comprise Pakistan or India; there never was mass conversion; there never was political stability from the Arab capital; there never was a 'Muslim' nor a 'Hindu' category.

It is no great revelation that the originary myth of Pakistan has very little to do with the historical circumstances of Muslim political power in eighth–eleventh century Sindh. However, there are no

grounds to contest that origin myth until such investigations are laid bare for the public, and the student. This essay is one small step in such a contestation. However, it is not the first or the only one. Many historians, chief among them being K. K. 'Aziz and Mubarak Ali, have always raised their scholarly voices against the 'Advent of Islam'. This is to make those voices into a chorus!

## NOTES

1. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 24–9.
2. Islam—a faith based on a set of rituals and compliance to a spiritual authority as well as a political—can be said to have emerged in the deserts of Arabia in early 7th century. But Islam's transition to Islamicate (to use Marshall Hodgson's coinage) which stands to mean a world-religion, with civilizational heft, a vast corpus of texts, practices, ideas, beliefs, cultures and people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, cannot be explained from its originary place or through those earliest participants. Islam is, to put it bluntly, not a homogenous, a historical category. Similarly, other terms of common usage such as Arab, Hindu, Muslim, India, and Sindh, are terms with sustained historical developments, variations, and cannot be uncomplicatedly applied in an anachronistic fashion. See Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1–59.
3. James Mill. *The History of British India*, (London: James Madden And Co., 1840), 4th edn., vol. 2, 250.
4. Richard F. Burton, *Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), vol. 1, 125.
5. A fuller treatment of the Hindu nationalist engagement with 'Advent of Islam' lies beyond the scope of this essay but I would like to draw attention to the works of N. C. Majumdar, *Explorations in Sind: Being a Report of the Exploratory Survey Carried Out During the Years 1927–28, 1929–30 and 1930–31* (Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1934); K. S. Lal, *Early Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1984); and Ram Gopal Misra, *Indian Resistance to Early Muslim Invaders: up to 1206* (Meerut: Anu Books, 1983) for the standard representations.
6. *Five Years of Pakistan (August 1947–August 1952)* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1953), 29.
7. *Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Karachi: Manager of Publications, 1998), 23.
8. Rafiullah Shehab, *Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Lahore: Maqbool Academy, 1990), 299.
9. Tariq Rahman, 'Education in Pakistan: A Survey' in Craig Baxter, ed., *Pakistan on the Brink: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2004), 173.
10. See, Ayesha Jalal, 'Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imaging', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, 1 (1995), 73–89.
11. *Social Studies for Class 6* (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2004), 93–4.
12. *Ibid.*, 95.
13. *Civics for Class IX and X* (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2001), 19–20.
14. *Social Studies for Class 6*, 97.
15. *Ibid.*, 97.
16. *Dawn* (Karachi), 4 Oct. 2006, A 9.
17. Ali Asghar Chaudhri, *Mujahid-e Azam Hazrat Muhammad b. Qasim kay Ruffka Shami Mujahideen yani Pak o Hind ki Qaum 'Arain ki Dastan* (Lahore: Ilmi Kutb Khana, 1963), 418.
18. Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18.
19. One recent, and exemplary, work in re-centring attention on Arab Sindh is Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
20. 'Rome' can mean anything from Hellenic Egypt to Byzantine Constantinople. There is also confusion in sources whether 'India' refers to the subcontinent or East Africa, Ceylon, or even China (notwithstanding, the occasional references to coastal towns of Malabar and Sindou [Sindh]). See Philip Mayerson, 'A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 113, 2 (April–June 1993), 169–74.
21. See, Elisabeth C. L. During Caspers, 'Sumer, Coastal Arabia and the Indus Valley in Protoliterate and Early Dynastic Eras: Supporting Evidence for a Cultural Linkage', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22, 2 (May 1979), 121–35.
22. See, for example, E. H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928);

- Mortimer Wheeler, *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954); G. W. Bowersock. *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Lionel Casson, 'South Arabia's Maritime Trade in the First Century A.D'. *L'Arabie Prislamique et son Environnement Historique et Culturel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989); Steven E. Sidebotham, 'Ports of the Red Sea and the Arabia-India Trade', in *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); and Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade in Early India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
23. See, Derek Kennet and Regina Krahl, *Sasanian and Islamic Pottery from Ras al-Khaimah: Classification, Chronology and Analysis of Trade in the Western Indian Ocean* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004).
  24. J. W. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), 336–38.
  25. Michael D. Willis, 'An Eighth Century Mihrab in Gwalior', *Artibus Asiae*, 46, 3 (1985), 227–46.
  26. See, Alka Patel, 'The Mosque in South Asia: Beginnings', in Finbarr Barry Flood, ed., *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3–29.
  27. Sezgin, Ursula, al-Mada'ini, 'Alī b. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah b. Abī Sayf, Abu 'L-Hasan', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edn. (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
  28. For a fuller discussion of this issue, please see my study, Manan Ahmed, 'The Many Histories of Muhammad b. Qasim' (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2008), 102–56.
  29. See, F. A. Khan, *Banbhore* (Karachi: Department of Archaeology in Pakistan, 1963); Muhammad Abdul Ghafur, 'Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore, the Site of Daybul', *Pakistan Archaeology*, 3 (Feb. 1966), 65–90; and Pervin T. Nasir, 'Coins of the Early Muslim Period from Banbhore', *Pakistan Archaeology*, 6 (1969), 117–81.
  30. Nabia Abbott, 'Pre-Islamic Arab Queens', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 58, 1 (Jan. 1941), 1–22.
  31. See, Philip Mayerson, 'A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 113, 2 (April–June 1993), 169–74.
  32. Ahmad ibn Yahya ib Jabir al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Hilal, 1988), 416.

33. *Ibid.*, 417.
34. C. E. Bosworth, 'Ubaidullah b. Abī Bakra and the "Army of Destruction" in Zabulistan', *Der Islam* 50 (1973), 268–83.
35. Ibn Khurdadhbih cites a couplet from Ibn Mufarrigh which laments about the many graves that were filled with Arab fighters at Qandhar. This may refer to another tradition about Qandhar (or Kandahar in Afghanistan) that was oft-cited by 19th century Orientalists such as Major Augustus Le Messurier (1837–1916) and Joseph Pierre Ferrier (1811–1886): 'In the time of al-Muqtadar (916), during the digging for the foundation of a tower in Kandahar, a subterranean cave was discovered, in which were a thousand Arab heads, all attached to the same chain, which had evidently remained in good preservation since the year 70/698, for a paper with this date upon it was found attached by a silken thread to the ears of the twenty nine most important skulls, with their proper names.' See, J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journey and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Beloochistan* (London: John Murray, 1856), 323.
36. al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, 419–20. The identity of this island is debatable. Ibn Khurdadhbih mentions in his *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l Mamalik* that Sarandip is the land of *Yaqut wa'l Mas* (rubies and diamonds) which would place this island as present-day Sri Lanka. However, 'Rubies and Diamonds' was a much-used generic marker in many other 10th century Arab geographies. S. Q. Fatimi in his article, 'The Identification of Jazirat al-Yaqut', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* (1964) states: 'I think it would be safer to consider it to be an Arabicized form of a local place-name, like *Yavakoti*, which has been placed in a Southeast Asian region, that is probably Sumatra by *Aryabhatiyān* and *Suriya-Siddhanta*.'
37. For a thorough treatment of the financial demands upon the Umayyads, see Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State: The Reign of Hisham Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 47–73.
38. al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, 426.
39. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. *The History of al-Tabari: Abbasid Authority Affirmed* (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 1995), vol. 28, 94.
40. S. Qudratullah Fatimi, 'The Twin Ports of Daybul: A Study in the Early Maritime History of Sind', in *Sind Through the Centuries* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 97–105; and F. A. Khan, 'Debal and Mansura: The Historical Cities of the Early Islamic Period', 2, 1 (Jan. 1981), 103–22.



41. Derryl Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).
42. Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind* (Calcutta: Archeological Survey of India, Government of India, 1925).
43. al-Baladhuri, *Futūh*, 438.
44. Abu al-Hasan `Ali b. al-Husayn al-Mas`ūdi, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma`adin al-Jawahir*, vol. 1, 99.
45. C. E. Bosworth, 'Rulers of Makran and Qusdar in the Early Islamic Period', *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture* (Brookfield, VT. Variorum Collected Studies Series, 1996); and M. S. Khan, 'The Five Arab States in South Asia', *Hamdard Islamicus* 15, 2 (1992), 5–28.
46. See, C. E. Bosworth. *The Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963).
47. In this they followed the practices established by the Samanids and the Ghaznavids. Firdawsi's *Shahnama*, for example, was written in Mahmūd Ghazna's court.

## 4

## The Delhi and Provincial Sultanates

Emma J. Flatt

In the year 1192 CE, the Ghurid Sultan Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam (d.1206) defeated a confederation of Rajput armies, under the command of Prithviraja III, the Chauhan Raja based at Ajmer, in Rajasthan. With this victory, the Gangetic plain was opened up to the Ghurid armies. Over the next fourteen years, a series of conquests by the Ghurid armies, often under the control of Qutb al-Din Aybek (d.1210), Mu'izz al-Din's Turkic slave general, extended the Ghurid dominion from Ghazna to the borders of Bengal. In 1206 CE, Mu'izz al-Din was assassinated at Damyak on the Indus, and his four chief Turkic slave governors each tried to claim the Ghurid inheritance in the areas under their control. The area around Delhi now came under the nominal as well as de facto control of Qutb al-Din Aybek, who had led many of the campaigns in India. The political formation that resulted and endured until its final defeat in 1526 by Mughal Emperor Babur (1483–1530; Emperor 1526–1530), the Central Asian Timurid prince, is commonly known as the Delhi Sultanate.

Not merely a convenient label, this name imposes both a central focus, the city of Delhi, and an illusion of unity and inevitability on the political history of this formation. Unlike most South Asian political formations of the pre-modern period, the Delhi Sultanate is named for a place, rather than for a dynasty. This is hardly surprising. As a capital city, Delhi remained a constant feature,