

## The Political Situation in the North of the Arabian Peninsula and Its Impact on the Yemen and Indian Trade

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**ABSTRACT:** Played the Arabian Peninsula site an important role in trade, between India sources the commercial products, and her Consumer the world old. Increased of importance of the site, because the Dealers became in southern Arabian Peninsula monopolized that trade for several centuries, they have gained the great wealth of this trade, which helped them build their kingdoms, made famous in the ancient world. The trade was oscillating between the boom and collapse, depending on the political events, which were witnessing areas that experienced by the trade routes, especially north of the Arabian Peninsula, which has seen a lot of competition between the ancient kingdoms and empires (Sassanid, Greek and Roman) for control of the trade, which ends in the cities and ports of the Northern Arabia countries (Gaza, Palmyra, Petra) Has dominated economic nature of these wars. Where hastened those empires and kingdoms to send campaigns land, and sea, order to explore the ancient trade sources. Reached those campaigns to the coast of the Arabian Peninsula, and the coast of the West Indies, the Persians was the pioneers in this domain, followed by campaigns Alexander the Macedonians exploratory, But all these attempts did not bear fruit, only in the era of the Romans, who discovered that India is the source of that wealth, As Thanks in this discovery to the navigator Hippalus which discovered the movement of the monsoon in the Indian Ocean, and the consequent this discovered, positive results for some and negative on some others.

**KEYWORDS:** Arabian Peninsula, Trade, India, kingdoms, Red Sea.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There were many relations between the ancient kingdoms and Empires that contributed making remarkable change on the history that led to the appearance of new kingdoms instead of the old ones. The Macedonians and their leader Alexander the great invaded the old eastern part. There were some successors of Alexander who appeared after his death, namely the Seleucia and the Ptolemy. They were defeated by the Romans because the Romans were the dominating power in the east. All these groups had different relations that had a great influence on the economical status. The important geographical location of the Arab peninsula<sup>1</sup> was the corner stone to make direct and indirect relations between southern Arab kingdoms and Empires and kingdoms of the ancient world. Since the researcher is concerned to study the commercial relations between the south Arab peninsula and West India, the researcher will try to expose the political situation in such countries. It is also important to examine to what extent the political situation affects trade development or declining at that time. Some disputes and fighting took place in the northern part of the Arab peninsula and this affected the political, commercial and economical life. One may assume that the political, commercial and economical situations were affected by these disputes, whereas only the economical status of different countries was influenced due to such events. In addition, the commercial activities were very much affected by such events and problems that might happen at any point of the trading road around the world. The commercial activities are based on two important components; producer and consumer and their attitudes and civilizations that may determine the developing or declining some caravans cities.<sup>2</sup> Since the Arabian peninsula was the connector between east and west and was the ending point of most trading roads coming from India, China and south Arab

countries, the researcher will throw some lights on the disputes that took place there and its impact on the commercial activities between the east as producer and the west as consumer

## 2 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To shed the light on the political changes from the appearance of the Seleucia and Ptolemy until the appearance of the Romans and their dominance on the south Arab peninsula, there are some overlapping relations that can be summarized below:

### Hellenistic Era

Different dominating powers tried to control over the trading roads some of these groups are Seleucia in Asia and Mesopotamia, Ptolemies in Egypt, Levant, Mediterranean and Arabian Kingdoms of Nabataeans and Palmira in Jordanian Plateau and Levant. The Macedonians and their leader Philip II appeared in the middle of the fourth century (382-336 B.C) and united the Greek states and became their king<sup>3</sup>. After his death, his son Alexander (356-323 B.C) was the king and his age was less than 20 years. He was able to reunite the Greek states and defence his land from the Eastern attacks<sup>4</sup>. He could bring the peace to his land and send the fighting to the Empires of Achaemenid<sup>5</sup>, the Empires of Achaemenid were controlling middle Asia and north India, ancient nearest and Egypt for many centuries. At the time of Empire Darius III (380-330 B.C) who was the last king of Achaemenid Empire from 336 to 330 B.C, couple of battles took place in four years between him and Alexander the great during which Empire Darius III was defeated<sup>6</sup>. The first victory made by Alexander was made in 334 B.C near Granicos River in Asia. All of these battles ended with killing Darius III in 330BC<sup>4</sup>. Alexander continued his victories until he arrived to the kingdoms in miner Asia which were belonging to Darius III<sup>7</sup>, after controlling these kingdoms, he headed to the south and obtained lots of tribes and places whom he met on his way towards Indus river. In his last battle Hydaspes with Porus was Ancient Hindu king of Paurava in 327 king Porus was arrested and then appointed by Alexander to be the king of all Indian lands belonging to Alexander<sup>8</sup>. At this point of time, Alexander decided to go back to Babylon according to his army and their willingness to go back to their home lands<sup>9</sup>. On their way to home, they faced different lots of obstacles that obliged him lose lots of his soldiers<sup>10</sup>. After a long and difficult journey, he arrived to Babylon in 324 BC and then arranging his Emperor which is considered one of the most famous on in the ancient nearest. After making these adventures in only 12 years, he died because of fever in Babylon at the age of 32 years<sup>11</sup>. The sudden death of Alexander caused the appearance of three new kingdoms in the east namely, Seleucia kingdoms in Mesopotamia, north Syria, Armenia, Anatolia and north India, Ptolemy kingdom in Egypt, Palestine, south Syria and Cyprus island, and Macedonia kingdom in Macedonia and Thrace<sup>12</sup>. After the Alexander death the Hellenistic Era started from 323 to 30 B.C<sup>13</sup>.

### Conditions in the era of the Seleucids 312-64 B.C

The kingdom of the Seleucids, named after the founder of Seleucus I (312-280 B.C) who was called Nikator<sup>14</sup>. He did not prompt any position when dividing the states after Babylon conference<sup>15</sup>, but he took his share of government in Babylon after the conference of Triparadeisos<sup>16</sup>, after the death of Perdicas<sup>17</sup>. The recent years of the fourth century B.C have witnessed many wars by Seleucus I to have control, and saving his kingdom, but he was surprised by Antigonos I<sup>18</sup> the king of Macedonia who had a campaign to subjugate Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. He managed in 315 B.C to enter Babylon, the capital of the Seleucids. Seleucus run away to Egypt, but he returned to Babylon, with the help of Ptolemy I in 312 B.C. And he announced the beginning of his own jurisdiction<sup>19</sup>. Lysimachus (306-281B.C) became an ally to the Seleucids, and thanks to this alliance they had a victory over Antigonos I in the Battle Ipsus 301 B.C<sup>20</sup>. He represented the main threat to Alexander friends in the nearest, which was the last battle witnessed elimination of the dream of bringing Alexander's empire again. Seleucus I could manage include Armenia and northern Syria, to become the largest country was founded on the ruins of the kingdom of Alexander the Great<sup>21</sup>. Seleucids did not make any change in the administrative system which was in place during the reign of Alexander the Great. But they had a limited change to cancel the previous calendar, and they considered that 312 B.C was the date of their kingdom and the beginning of their history and used for recording their events<sup>22</sup>. In order to renew the kingdom structure, Seleucus I created the city of Seleucia on the right side of the Tigris River, and away from Babylon about 63 kilometres. This city became the capital of the Kingdom (312-300 B.C), and when King Seleucus moved to this city, many of the inhabitants of Babylon,<sup>23</sup> went with him. After this city became famous, people from corners of the earth came to it to be one of the most important commercial cities, where the trade routes of land and sea meet together, and became famous more than the city of Babylon. It was selected for its economical importance. It is located on the trade caravans that pass in Mesopotamia<sup>24</sup>, and remained the capital of the kingdom of the Seleucia for a period of twelve years<sup>25</sup>. The first years of the third century B.C were the most powerful stage in the era of the kingdom of the Seleucids, where they were able to extend their influence and control over large areas of Asia Minor. The weakness of the local governments and the power of their young kingdom<sup>26</sup> helped them to do so. After the entry of northern Syria under the rule of Seleucus I, he started to build a new city on the Orontes River called it Antioch on the name of his father. He moved there in 300 years B.C

to be the new capital, the seat of government. It was known as Antioch<sup>15</sup>. The goal of changing the capital is the proximity of the coast of the Mediterranean Sea for its strategic, economical and political importance. Then becoming a port to promote the trading with the lands of the Mediterranean and its proximity to the area of conflict with other powers. All this make it easier for their arms to move quickly in case of wars. In addition Greek communities living in these areas was also one main reason<sup>27</sup>. With all these victories made by Seleucus I in the West, he wanted to broaden his kingdom to India, and the elimination of independent kingdoms that appeared between 315-305 B.C, along with the original ruler Chandragupta Maurya, where these kingdoms made their money from gold, silver and zinc to show its independence<sup>28</sup>. But the failure of Seleucus to control these cities he made an agreement with Chandragupta Maurya, during which the marriage took a place as a sign of good intention in which Seleucus I got a gift rewarding up to 500 elephants. He used them in the wars later on<sup>29</sup>. He went to in Macedonia in 281 B.C to control Thrace and then he was killed in the battle of Corupedium<sup>24,30</sup>. The Kingdom of the Seleucids was weak in the era of the successors of Seleucus I when some areas were lost especially in the reign of Antiochus II (263-247 B.C), where the region of Parthia (Khorasan) got independence in 248 B.C under the leader Arsacid. He found the state of Parthian and took over many areas and attached them to his kingdom<sup>31</sup>. At the time of Antiochus III (223-187 B.C), the Seleucid state took back its power and control over what former kings lost. He had the fourth Syrian war against Ptolemy IV at the Battle of Rafah, in the year 217 B.C, was a victory in which the Ptolemy who were able to control some parts of " Syria Coele" <sup>32</sup>. Antiochus III went towards the north and east, where he managed to re-control some parts of Anatolia down to Armenia, and all of Asia Minor, including coastal areas. The Kingdom was controlling until the borders of Thrace<sup>33</sup>, which led to their entry in fighting with the Romans in the period between 191-188 B.C, which ended with a loss of Antiochus III in the Battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C. After that he was forced to accept the agreement and leave each country in Asia, which is located behind the Taurus Mountains<sup>34</sup>, and at the end of this long journey from war, it was ended the killing of the king in 186 B.C<sup>35</sup>. After the death of Antiochus III, Territory was independent and limited its borders to the Mesopotamian and western Iran, and the Romanian Emperor began and the Kingdom of Parthia to control of some parts of the Kingdom of the Seleucids in the absence of powerful rulers. After the rule of Antiochus IV, (174-164 B.C) the situation began to change in favour of the Seleucids, where they entered the war with the Ptolemies, known as the Syrian war sixth in 170 B.C in which Ptolemies were defeated and the Seleucids could dominate a big part of Egypt, but that did not last long. The Romans interfered and sent envoy to Antiochus IV to inform them to leave Egypt and Cyprus<sup>36</sup>, without any conditions. Antiochus preferred to withdraw from Egypt to save himself from opening a new war with the Romans at such time<sup>37</sup>. The situation in the east of the kingdom was instable. Antiochus IV went in a campaign in 165 B.C to the country of Anatolia and brought it back under the Seleucids control<sup>38</sup>. With the death of Antiochus IV the Kingdom conditions were bad because of the conflicts and fights between the family members, where their enemies could benefit from such conflicts to eliminate them<sup>39</sup>. In 143 B.C, the conditions were worst and this gave an opportunity for Parthia who controlled Babylon and send the Seleucids out. The sent them out to Syria, but they have gathered their strength and regained Babylon again, and the war continued between the two parties until Parthian could control Babylon. In 126 B.C, Mesopotamia left the era of Seleucids to the rule of Parthian<sup>40</sup>. The rule of Seleucids was limited in Syria, where they were fighting a war for survival but that did not last for long. In the era of Pompeii, Romans could regain Syria to become a Roman province in 63 B.C<sup>41</sup>. Seleucids gave great importance to trade from both land and sea, but the trade coming through land had greater importance at the beginning because of the appropriate conditions in terms of the excellent location, the area space as the Kingdom controls over vast areas in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and the Levant. All these conditions helped in the presence of an active commercial movement<sup>42</sup>, accompanied by the emergence of commercial cities, which became important in economic terms<sup>43</sup>. With the expansion of the Kingdom and the control of security, a number of trade routes flourished, which were up between the capital Seleucia on the Tigris, and the trade routes coming from India, and China<sup>44</sup>. Seleucids increased their importance to the commercial ways linking all parts of the Kingdom, and focus on its maintenance, and have made a great effort to ensure the security of these roads and established some forts to protect them from the dangers that may be exposed to commercial convoys, which led to the prosperity to become a strong source to bring the goods from the east to the west<sup>45</sup>.

### Some of the most important trade routes in Mesopotamia:

#### 1. Royal Road:

This road has two types as below.

**A.** The first road which was Sousse its most important stations from which it moved towards the west to the Mediterranean, passing those of Ashnuna when the valley of the Tigris, and up to Jarablos, then Aimar, and then to Aleppo, it passes them traders to Alalakh, and Ugarit, or even towards the south of Hama and then to Qatna and then heading to the Mediterranean coast, and continue towards the south to Gaza, and ends with the Nile Delta<sup>46</sup>. where many commercial cities appeared on this road<sup>47</sup>.

**B.** The second road; trade routes coming from East Asia, and India meet in the capital Seleucia on the Tigris River<sup>48</sup>, and keep moving to Antioch, and then to Aleppo to meet the road coming from Egypt, and then to Damascus. Although the ways across the Levant are closer to the Mediterranean ports, it was more dangerous because of Ptolemaic control. Seleucids were obliged to use longer roads to save their goods from the Ptolemaic, They used by the Euphrates large<sup>49</sup>, which begins from Seleucia, north to Nineveh in front of the city of Mosel, then cut the steppes of the island from east to west- the land between Tigris and Euphrates- passing a number of cities, including a Shaher-Bazaar, to Tal-Halfa and then to Harran, then cut the Euphrates at Jarablos, or at Masknah, passing from Aleppo, or close to it, and ends at the valley of the Orontes River where it has some sub-roads to the Mediterranean coast, and central Syria. Some branches came out from the main road to different places such as Cilicia and Anatolia, and Nineveh can reach Armenia and eastern Anatolia, and continues across the Tigris until Diyarbakir, then pass the Taurus Mountains through the narrow passages<sup>50</sup>.

## 2. Northern Road:

This road was passing through cities of Kabul and Balkh, and continues to the mouth of the river Oxus (river Jayhoun)<sup>54</sup>, then crosses the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, but the location of this road from the centre of the Kingdom decreased its importance<sup>51</sup>.

## 3. Silk Road:

It is one of the most important trade routes in ancient history, which begins from east Asia (China), breaking the deserts, plains and mountains in Asia to Mesopotamia and the Levant and then to the Mediterranean countries<sup>52</sup>. Seleucids made their best to facilitate all difficulties that may face trade coming from the countries around them, to go through their country, in order to take advantage of them<sup>53</sup>, and prevent as much as possible to arrive in the kingdom of the Ptolemies, and worked to consolidate their business relationships with the Mediterranean islands to find markets for goods coming from the east, with emphasis on the production of the Seleucid cities which led to a large area of the diversity of their territories, climate, and hence to the diversity of commercial materials produced locally, as well as commercial interest in materials brought in by traders from different countries<sup>54</sup>. One of the most important products is Seleucids wine, cooking oil, cheese, dried figs, prunes, products, linen, and wool, perfume, and cosmetics, and ointments, and soothes<sup>55</sup>. while the commercial materials that were brought by traders from neighbouring countries, papyrus from Egypt, and glass from Sidon, gum, and timber from Asia Minor, and leather from the Syrian coast. Other products such as wood perfume smell and cotton yarn, spices, ivory, rubies were brought from India, silk from China, and the Arab Gulf was extracted pearls, and incense from the southern Arabian Peninsula<sup>56</sup>.

## 3 CONCLUSION

All these goods contributed to reap large profits which increased the state's income<sup>57</sup>. The political situation changed with the mid-second century BC, where the succession of weak kings. All these led to the large number of internal and external conflicts, which influenced the boom, and a weak Seleucids' trade. The business conditions changed when the weakness began in the kingdom, especially after the defeat of the Seleucids in the battle of magnesia (190 BC)<sup>58</sup>. This led to the existence of trade powers compete with them, such as Altadmrien and the Nabataeans in the southwest of the kingdom, and the Romans from the north, the west and the emergence of the Parthians in the east who took descend from the highlands to the plains, and what caused by their presence of instability<sup>59</sup>, and their control over the eastern part of the kingdom of the Seleucids, which led to banditry business coming from East Asia, and turned toward the south to India, and then transported by sea to the port of Gerrha on the Persian Gulf, and on to the Mediterranean<sup>60</sup>. Seleucids were forced as a result to the search for new roads to trade, they found only the sea route through the Persian Gulf, which represented one of the most important trade routes marine coming from India, and the southern Arabian peninsula<sup>61</sup>, which was for them a kind of control over the trade of the Persian Gulf, and was commercial fleet transports trade from India to Mesopotamia<sup>62</sup>, has become their permanent representative in India during the reign of King Chandra Gupta<sup>63</sup>. With the beginning of the interest of Seleucids on trade in the Gulf, this led to the rise commercial competition with the Ptolemies, who was not at least as important for military rivalry, where Seleucids were fast to trend towards the south, and gaining control of different cities on the Persian Gulf as Alexandria charax (Maysan)<sup>64</sup>, at the head of the Persian Gulf which was also one the most important ports there<sup>65</sup>. They also made military campaigns on the commercial cities on the west coast of the Gulf and tried to control the port Gerrha which is one of the most important trading ports in the Arabian Peninsula but they failed to do so<sup>66</sup>. Trade was moved from Gerrha westward to Petra and Palmyra, and then to Gaza on the Mediterranean,<sup>67</sup> This was the reaction to what Ptolemies did as the establishment of many of the important commercial centres, in the western regions of the Arabian Peninsula, along the eastern coast of the Red Sea, in order to control Eastern trade<sup>68</sup>. Transformation of trade routes that were passing in their lands to the west across the Syrian desert to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea<sup>69</sup>, this was the reason for the emergence of new business centres including the city of Palmira, which emerged as a rival business in the area since

this era<sup>70</sup>, and the Seleucids trade became more weak, with the advent of the Romans in the east, and controlling the trade in the Mediterranean after their victory over Carthage<sup>71</sup>, and closing the trade of Seleucia, where the Romans became the dominating power of the caravan trade routes in Mesopotamia and the Levant<sup>72</sup>, Syria turned out to be a Roman state in the era of Pompey (64 BC)<sup>73</sup>. After the severe weakness in the Kingdom of the Seleucids, and the accompanying chaos, and the independence of the states, all these led to weaken its ability to benefit itself, but this was reflected weakness on the economy, where it has no ability to take advantage of this vital resource, which is one of the most important sources of income for Seleucids, in addition to turning the trade routes coming from the east towards the south, to India, specially the Silk Road. South of the Arabian Peninsula was not affected by Mesopotamia conflicts, but on the contrary, these areas had some benefits more than the other areas where the conflicts took place. It is found that the kingdom of Chandragupta in India has benefited from these conflicts, as the Silk Road which was going towards the Mediterranean turned to the south to India, where such goods were transferred through the ports of western India to the Persian Gulf and the southern Arabian Peninsula, then to the country's Mediterranean basin, by trade caravans<sup>72, 74</sup>. Accordingly, the kingdoms of the south of the Arabian Peninsula benefited from the events in Mesopotamia. The events that emerged after the death of Alexander the Great, and the conflict between successors in the far east that destroyed the project, that Alexander the Great had prepared for controlling the South Arab Peninsula which was known for its wealth, as a result of its involvement in the trade, which provided them with profits and this what made the kings of the West to come and occupy these areas<sup>75</sup>. With the deterioration of the situation in the north, and the disruption of commercial caravan routes and turning it into other areas has increased the importance of the commercial goods coming from south Arabian Peninsula. The traders of these countries monopolized aromatic substances, and they continued their trading as intermediaries in the ancient world, as long as they could maintain the secret of production of these materials. The trade became stronger than it was before rising prices of commercial materials, depending on their importance as it was find that the Incense and Myrrh as important commercial materials in all aspects of daily life in the West, where they used it in most of the religious rituals, and in the funerals of the deaths, and entered in the pharmaceutical industry and ointments, and it was used by the ancient Egyptians in the mummification process, all this led to the significant rise in the price of those goods. The price of the amount which can be carried up by a camel was about 688 dinars<sup>86</sup>. This camel was leaving from the Kingdom of Hadhramaut in the south, to the port of Gaza on the Mediterranean Sea. As a result, the kingdoms of the south of the island reaped huge profits sparked other old emperors to get such products.

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