The period of the Western Ksatrapas:

The next period in the history of Gujarat is the period of the Western Ksatrapas. It begins with the reign of the Ksatrapa kings of the Ksatrata Family, who seem to have ruled over several regions including Gujarat at least from about 100 BC to about 125 BC.1 The power of the Ksatrata Kings was lost to the Satavahana Kings of the Deccan. But Ksatrapa Kings of the Kardamaka Family shortly recovered the northern regions including Gujarat. Their dynasty held power at least until circa 305 BC.2 It was succeeded by four small successive groups of Kings, their relationship with the Kardamaka family being unknown. The power of the last group seems to have lasted until about 400 BC.3

Part - 1

The Saka Era

The sources of information about the dating system prevalent in the kingdom of the Western Ksatrapas are stone inscriptions and coin legends.4

2. Ibid., P. 84
3. Vide f.n.ubelow
4. M. R. Majumder, Chronology of Gujarat, PP. 59 ff,
The records of the Kṣaharata Ksatrapas are dated in years, months, fortnights and (lunar) days. The years mentioned in their known records range from year 41 to 46°. These years are taken to be either regnal years° or years of an unspecified era. On assuming that the years belong to some continuous era, General Cunningham suggested that the era may be identified with the Vikrama era, but almost all the later scholars identify the era with the Saka era.

Only some stone inscriptions bear dates, while coins are found undated.


7. A. Cunningham, Numismatic Chronicles, 1888, p. 232, 1892, p. 4. This view was supported by R.D. Banerji (JRAS, 1917, P. 273, 1925, P. 1 to 19, LA, 1908, P. 63), steen Konow (JRAS, 1926, pp. 643 ff., H., Vol. XIV, P. 137); Nilkantha Sastry (JRAS, 1926, P. 643), V.S. Bakhale (ERDI, P. 101), Dubreuil (AHD, PP. 20. ff.) etc.

The attribution of the known years of Nahapāna to the Saka era leaves a short span of only six years between the last known date (year 46) of the Kṣaharatās and the earliest known date (year 52) of the Kārimakas. It necessitated the attribution of the Kṣaharata dates to an earlier era, which Cunningham supposed to be the well-known Vikrama era of 57 B.C.

8. Rapson, JRAS, 1899, P. 365, A.M. Boyer, JA, 1897
The stone inscriptions of the Kārdamaka Ksatrapas and their successors are dated from years 52 to 226. The dates of these inscriptions generally consist of years, months, fortnights, days and sometimes nakṣatras also. The coins of these Ksatrapas are generally dated. The dates given on these coins contain only the number of years which range at least from year 102 to at least year 310 to 312 or 320. The years mentioned in the stone inscriptions as well as on the coins of these kings obviously belong to some continuous era. The inscriptions do not specify the name of this era. But on chronological grounds the era is identified with the Saka era.

---

9. Acharya G.V., HIG., Part I, Nos., 2 to 5,6,7,8,10.
12. G. V. Acharya read this date on coins struck by Swami Rudrasena III (JASB., Numismatic supplement, No.XLVII, P.96). But the reading is hardly acceptable as Rudrasena III was already succeeded by Simhasena in or before year 304. Possibly the coins may belong to Swami Rudrasena IV (Ibid.)
13. Recently the date on a coin of the last Ksatrapa King Rudragīhā III is read to be year 320 (Ksatrapakālin Gujarat, Itihāsa ane Sanskriti, P.189 fn. 160, unpublished).
When the unspecified era used in the records of the Western Ksatrapas was chronologically identified with the Saka era, early scholars were naturally tempted to ascribe its origin to the Western Ksatrapa Kings who appeared to be of the Saka race. The numbers of years given in the inscriptions of the Kshaharata Ksatrapas and the Kardamaka Ksatrapas imply that the years in the records of both these dynasties probably belong to the same era. In that case the early dates of this era belong to the reign of the Kshaharata King Nahapana.

Accordingly when Fergusson read his paper 'On Indian Chronology'\(^{14}\) in 1869, he held that the Saka era was originally established by Nahapana.

The view was supported by Bhau-Daji\(^{15}\) (1867-72) and Indraj\(^{16}\). The latter suggested that the era was founded by Nahapana on his conquest of Gujarat and the West Deccan and that it was adopted by the successors of Nahapana and continued on the coins for nearly three centuries.

\(^{14}\) JRAS., New Series, Vol. IV, 1870, PP. 81 ff
\(^{15}\) JBBRAS., Vol. IX, 1867-70, 72, PP. 139 ff.
But in light of some later chronological grounds Fergusson changed his view and in his paper "On the Saka, Samvata and Gupta eras" he supplemented in 1880 arrived at the conclusion that the Saka era was established by the Kushan King Kaniska. This view was generally accepted by Oldenburg in 1881. In support of his view he presented the numismatical arguments shown by Von Sallet. According to V. Sallet the approximate period of Kaniska, Huviska and Vasudeva is between sometime before 1st cent. A.C. and about 200 A.C. On this ground he tried to prove that it is possible that Kaniska started the Saka era which begins in 78 A.C.

Then in 1888 Cunningham propounded a different theory that the Saka era was started by Caṣṭana. For it was contended that the years given in the inscriptions of the time of Mahapana could hardly belong to the Saka era and accordingly the early dates in the


But later on in 1911, Oldenburg supported Boyer who thought that Kaniska came to the throne in 90 A.C. (J.E. Van Lohuizen De Leeuw, The Scythian Period, P.5, f.n. 32)

19. Ibid, P. 214
records of the succeeding Western Ksatrapas belonged to the reign of King Castana.

In 1897 A.M. Boyer supported the view that Nahapana was the founder of the Saka era.

In 1902 D.R. Bhandarkar suggested Vonones to be the founder of the Saka era. He ascribed the dates in the inscriptions of Kaniska and his successors to the Saka era, but he supposed that the figure of two hundred was omitted in the numbers of years, so that Kaniska flourished about 278 A.C. He further suggested that Kaniska was not the first king who established the independence of the Kushanas. Moreover Kaniska was not a great conqueror who extended the dominions inherited by him. So Kaniska could not be the founder of the Saka era. He also refuted the theories that Nahapana and Castana founded the Saka era. He argued that both of them were provincial governors and the Saranath inscription of Kaniska proves that the title Mahaksatrapa does not

22. JBRAAS., Vol. XX, PP. 269-302, 356-408.
23. As regards Nahapana Bhandarkar indicated that he was a subordinate king and not an independent sovereign. (JBRAAS., Vol.XX. PP.269-302)
24. IA., Vol.37,1908, P.43
imply that the holders of it were independent sovereigns. It is impossible for local governors to establish the era of their own. In 1903 in his book *A catalogue of the Indian coins in the British Museum*, Rapson supported the theory presented by Fergusson in 1880. The former held that the titles Ksatrapa and Mahākṣatrapa show that the Western Ksatrapas were originally feudatories and hence the era used by them was presumably started by their sovereign Kaniska.

As regards the objection that King Kaniska was not a Saka, but a Kushan, Rapson explained the significance of the name Saka era by suggesting that the name would have been derived from the kings who used it rather than who established it. In support of this view he adduced epigraphic evidence for the Northern Ksatrapas being feudatories of the Kushan King Kaniska, and applied the analogy to the Western Ksatrapas.

---

25. Ibid., p. 43.
28. It is also possible that the Yush-chis were so intermingled with the Sakas that the former were often considered Sakas by Indians in later times. (J.E. van Lohuizen-De Leeuw, *The Scythian Period*, p. 5, f.n. 32)
In the same year Prof. R.D. Banerji published his article entitled, 'Scythian Period of Indian History' in *Indian Antiquary*\(^29\). In this article he discussed the various theories about the origin of the Saka era. First he refuted Bhandarkar's arguments against the Kaniska theory. He stated that it is not absolutely necessary for the founder of an era to be the establisher of the independence of his dynasty\(^30\). From the observation of the Greek legend on a coin of the Scythian Prince Hias as containing the combined name Saka-Kushanas, Banerji also refuted Bhandarkar's view that Kaniska was not a Saka. On the basis that Kaniska came from Sakadvipa and so was a Saka, R.D. Banerji tried to prove that Kaniska started the Saka era\(^31\).

Then in 1913 J.F. Fleet supported the theory that the Saka era was founded by Nahapana\(^32\).

In 1918 Sten Konow\(^33\) propounded that the Saka era was established by Vima-Kadphises. This view was

\(^{29}\) IA., 1908, Vol. XXXVII, p. 25.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., P. 43
\(^{31}\) Ibid, P. 51
\(^{32}\) JRAS. 1913, PP. 965-1011
\(^{33}\) EI., XIV, 1918, P.141
corroborated by V.A. Smith in 1919. Again in 1929 in his book Kharosthi Inscriptions, i.e. CII., Vol II, Part I, Sten Konow treated this subject. On the basis of Kālakārtya Kathanaka, he tried to date the conquest of Vima-Kadphises in or about 78 A.C. Moreover Khalatse inscription of the year 187 i.e. 103-4 A.C. shows that Vima Kadphises was on the throne long after the beginning of the Saka era, which cannot be instituted by Kaniska. By thus stating such arguments Sten Konow showed that Vima-Kadphises was the establishor of the historical Saka era.

In his Palaeography of India published in 1918, Pandit G.H. Ojha observed that the era was left unspecified in its early centuries; that it was attributed to some Saka King or the Sakas since about 500 A.D. and that the name of the ancient King Śālivāhana i.e. Satavahana of the Deccan is found to have got associated with it since the 14th

34. V.A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, 1919, P.128
36. Pandit G.H. Ojha, Indian Palaeography, P. 171
37. Sakaṃpatirājyābhīṣekasamvatsarasvatiṃkranteṇu
   Pancāsu Śateṣu (IA.,Vol.X, P.58)
Pandit Ojha then refers to the different views suggested by different scholars for ascribing the era to the Kushan King Kaniska, Ksatrapa Nahapāna, Vonones and the Saka King Azes and remarks that these are mere surmises and that the name of its founder is not known definitely.

In 1920 Prof. G. Jouveau Dubreuil objected that Nahapāna could not be the founder of the Saka era by showing that the inscriptions of Nahapāna are dated not in the Saka era but in an earlier era. Next he also refuted the view that King Kaniska is the founder of the Saka era on the following grounds:

(1) If it is admitted that Kujula Kadphises and Hermasus reigned about 50 A.D. and Kaniska established the Saka era in 78 A.D., there will be only 28 years for the duration of the whole reign of Vima and Kujula Kadphises, but as shown by V.A. Smith their reign lasted for a long period. So it is not possible that

---

33. Nṛpaśālivahanasaka 1271 (Melhorn, List of Inscriptions of the Northern India, P. 78, No. 455)
40. G.J. Dubreuil, AHD., P. 29
41. G.J. Dubreuil, AHD., P. 32
42. V.A. Smith, EHI., 2nd ed. P. 239, f.n.1
Kaniska should have come to the throne in 73 A.D.

(2) As Sten Konow has shown, Tibetan and Chinese documents prove that Kaniska reigned in the 2nd cent. A.D.

(3) As the inscriptions of the Kaniska era and those of the Saka era are not dated in the same fashion, it is illogical to say that Kaniska was the founder of the Saka era.

(4) John Marshall has discovered at Taxila in the Chir Stupa a document dated 136 which is in Vikrama era and corresponds to 79 A.D., and the King mentioned in it is Kadphises I and not King Kaniska.

On these grounds J.G. Dubreuil refuted the view that the Saka era was founded by King Kaniska. Similarly he discussed the possibility of Sten Konow's view that the Saka era was established by Vima Kadphises i.e. Kadphises II. On the basis of the date of

43. EL., Vol. XIV, PP. 141 and 290
44. EL., Vol. XIV, P. 141
45. JRAS., 1914, PP. 973, 78
46. G.J. Dubreuil, AHD., P. 34
the silver scroll inscription of the Chir Stūpa at Taxila, he established that it was Kujula Kadphises and not Vima Kadphises who reigned in 78-79 A.D. According to him the Kushan King used the era of 58-57 B.C. even after 78 A.D. Moreover there is no evidence to prove that Kadphises II founded an era and that the era was adopted by Castana or his descendants.

By thus refuting the theories about Nahapana, Kaniska and Kadphises II, J.G. Dubreuil revived the theory that the era was founded by King Castana who was a Saka and founded the dynasty in Western India. In support of this view he points out that the era was used exclusively in the kingdom of Castana for about three centuries and hence known as the Saka era. He assigned Andhau inscriptions of year 52 to Rudradaman the grandson of Castana and justified the attribution of the Saka era to King Castana.

In 1927 in his book named Political History of Ancient India, Raychaudhuri has cleared objections raised by Prof. J. Dubreuil.

47. El., Vol. XIV, P. VII, 1918, P. 289
48. G. J. Dubreuil, AHD., P. 35
49. Ibid., P. 35
50. Ibid., P. 36.
(a) The duration of 28 years for the end of the reign of Kadphises I and the whole reign of Kadphises II, is not too short, for Kadphises I dies at the age of more than eighty and so Kadphises II must have been old at that time.

(b) The king mentioned in the Chir-Stūpa document at Taxila belongs to the Kaniṣka group and can be better identified with Kaniska.

(c) Kaniska mentioned in the Tibetan and Chinese documents may have been Kaniska who is mentioned in the Ara inscription of the year 41. Accordingly he would be Kaniska II and the year 41 according to Saka era would fall into the 2nd cent. A.D.

(d) As regards the objection that the inscriptions of the Kaniṣka era and those of the Śaka era are not dated in the same fashion, it is replied that just as Kaniska in the border land used the old Śaka-Pahlava method of dating and in Hindustan used the ancient Indian way of dating prevalent there, so in Western India his officers would have added the Pāksa to suit the custom in that part of the country.

31. Raychaudhuri, PHI., P. 297
32. Ibid., P. 297
In conclusion Raychaudhuri endorsed the popular view that Kaniska was the founder of the reckoning commencing A.D. 78, which came to be known as the Saka era\(^5\).

In 1929 H.C. Ghosh discussed the problem of the date of Kaniska at length in his article entitled, 'The Date of Kaniska', published in the journal Indian Historical quarterly\(^5\). In this article he has written "At present two theories sway the field and each has able exponents. The substantial controversy is now between those who maintain that Kaniska started the Saka era and others who hold that he began to reign about 125 B.C.\(^5\). Then on Literary, Numismatic, Archaeological, Epigraphical, Palaeographical and Astronomical grounds Ghosh has tried to disprove the latter theory and establish the former theory on a more solid basis. In other words he advocated for the theory that Kaniska started the Saka era in 78 A.D.

On the basis of the Sanchi inscription which seems to have belonged to the time of Vasiśkā and which is most probably dated in the year 28\(^5\), for instance, Ghosh contends that Kaniska could not have commenced

\(^{55}\) Ibid, PP, 296 f. \(^{56}\) IHQ, Vol.V, P.49
\(^{57}\) Ibid., P. 49 \(^{58}\) IHQ, Vol. V, P.80
his reign about 125 A.C., as in 153 4/5 A.C. the Sanchi region was certainly included within the territory of Mahakasatrapa Rudradaman who did not owe allegiance to anybody. The careful examination and comparison of the facts recorded in classical Chinese histories also, according to him, support only the theory regarding the establishment of the Saka era by Kaniska.

In his paper *Viranirvana Samvat Aura Jainakalagapanā* published in V.E. 1937 (1930-31 A.C.) Muni Kalyanavijayaji, on the basis of the Jain tradition, ascribed the origin of the Saka era to the conquest of Malwa by the Sakas after exterminating the power of the Gardabhillas. He also suggested that the leader of the Saka victors was possibly Caṭana who held sway over Malwa and had his capital at Ujjain.

In 1939 in his book *Early History of India*, Narendranath Ghosh revived the theory that Kaniska founded the Saka era in 78 A.C. He refuted the view of some scholars that Kaniska began his reign in the 2nd cent. A.C. and established that Kaniska...

---

59. Ibid., P.80
60. Muni Kalyanavijayaji, *Viranirvana Samvata Aura Jainakalagapanā*, P.61, F.n.44
61. N.N. Ghosh, EHI., PP.219 f.
started his reign in 73 A.C. In support of this view, he contended that if Kaniska started his reign in the 2nd cent. A.C., then independent sovereignty of Rudradaman who reigned from 130 A.C. to 150 A.C. cannot be explained.

In 1949 J.H. Van Lohuizen De Leeuw discussed the problem of the identification of the era used in the inscriptions of Kaniska and his successors, refuted the frequently changing views of Sten Konow about the date of Kaniska, and established that the so called Kaniska era is no other than the Saka era of 73 A.C., that it began in the first year of Kaniska's reign, and that it was also used by the Western Ksatrapas who were the vassals of the Kushans.

In his Indian Palaeography published in 1952 R.B. Pandey emphasised the Jain Tradition that the Sakas founded their own era at Avanti after having killed a descendant of king Vikramaditya 135 years after the latter's accession to power and identified the Saka king with Castana of Ujjain.

In 1957 in his work A comprehensive History of India K.A. Nilakant Sastri discussed the problem of the Saka era. He favoured the view presented by

64. J.H. Van Lohuizen De Leeuw, The Scythian Period chapter I and VII.
65. R.B. Pandey, Indian Palaeography, P.186
Fergusson and Oldenburg who suggested that Kaniska was the inaugurator of the Saka era of 78 A.C. In support of his view he presented that the era which started from the first regnal year of the great Kushan emperor Kaniska remained in force for ever and there is no era except this well known Sakabda which could have its origin in the 1st or 2nd cent. A.C. He then refuted the argument that Kaniska as a Kushan could not be associated with this era and established that the Kushans were a branch of the Sakas and that they imbibed many Saka characteristics on behalf of their long association with these people. Moreover the first mention of the word Sakakāla in the inscriptions of the 5th cent. A.C. shows the continuous use of the era throughout the reigns of Saka Ksatrapas of Western India who owed allegiance to the Kushans.

Then in 1958 in his book *Early History of North India*, Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya maintained the theory that Kaniska was the establisher of the Saka era. In support of his view he suggested that the continuous reckoning in the records of kings of the

66. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A comprehensive History of India* P. 235
68. S. Chattopadhyaya, *EHNL*, P. 78
Kaniska group viz. Kaniska 1-23 Vasiska 24-23. Huviska 28-66 and Vasudeva 67-93 shows that Kaniska was the originator of the era 69. Further there is no proof that any era started between 120 and 134 A.C. 70. Secondly no inscription of this dynasty for about six years from the year 61 to 66 has been found. It suggests the declining position of the Kushan power. This period falls between 130 to 150 A.C. when Rudradāman conquered the parts of North India 71, and this does not tally if we place Kaniska from 120 to 134 A.C. The Taxila silver Scroll inscription dated year 136 (79 A.D.) 72 mentions a Kushan ruler, who did not belong either to the Kadphises group or to the Kaniska group. Thus it is evident that about 78-79 A.C. there arose rival claimants for the supreme power in the Kushan Empire and by crushing them Kaniska at last become supreme.

69. Ibid, P. 80 70. Ibid, P. 80

71. Andhau stone inscriptions of 130 A.C. (D. C. Sircar, SI, Book II, Nos. 65-66, PP.167 ff) show Rudradāman ruling as a Mahākastrapa in conjunction with his grandfather Castaṇa and Junagadh rock inscription (Ibid, No. 67, PP.169 ff) shows his conquests in North and South India round about 150 A.D.

In Indian Epigraphy published in 1965, D.C. Sircar tried to harmonize the prevalent views about the date of Kaniska, the significance of the name Saka era and its association with King Salivahana, by holding that the era was started by Kaniska I in 78 A.C. and was continued by the Western Ksatrapas who were the vassals of the Kushan kings that it got known as the Saka era among the Indians who confused the Kushans with the Sakas and applied the name Saka to all foreigners in general and that when the foreign association of the Saka era was forgotten, the word Saka began to be used in the sense of an 'Era', and the era was then associated with king Salivahana, the great popular hero of the Deccan.\footnote{Sircar, IE., PP. 258-267}

As regards the era used in the records of the Western Ksatrapas and its origin, the following points deserve special considerations:

(i) The records of the Kshaharata Ksatrapas are dated years 41 to 46 and those of the succeeding Ksatrapa dynasties from year 52 to 310 or 312.\footnote{M.R. Majumdar, (ed.) Chronology of Gujarat, P. 90}

The years probably belong to one uniform era which is unspecified in the records but is identifiable with the Saka era.
(ii) During the early centuries the era was not introduced by any specific name. The year of the era was referred to simply as Varṣa or Samvatsara.

The earliest association of the era with the Sakas can be traced to its 5th cent. in epigraphic records, as well as in literary works. The use of this name continued up to its 13th century.

(iii) Later on the word Saka came to be used in the sense of an era and the era got associated with King Śālivāhana of South India.

(iv) This era is especially favourite with the astronomers and astrologers of India since long and is in vogue in the country even at present.

75. D.C. Sircar, IE., P.259

76. The earliest Saka date in the Cālukya records is 465 i.e. 543 A.C. (Ibid., P.259 f. f.n.2)

77. Lokavibhaga by Śiṅha Śuri claims to have been composed in S.E. 380 (458 A.C.) and associates the era with the Sakas (D.C. Sircar, IE., P.259). But it is not certain whether the claim of the date can be accepted with respect to the work in its present form.

78. The earliest association of the era with Śālivāhana is founded in the Kannada work Vabhatakavya by Somarāja composed in S.E. 1144 expired (1222 A.C.) and the Taspavan plates (S.E.1172 = 1251 A.C.) of the Yādava king Kṛṣṇa (D.C. Sircar, IE., P.262)

79. In the modern period its use is common in the South, but it has now begun to extend throughout
The earliest association of the era with Śālivāhana can be traced to literary and epigraphic records of its 12th century. Accordingly the era is at present known as Śālivāhana Śaka.

From these factors it clearly appears that the current association of the era with Śālivāhana is of very late origin. In its early centuries beginning with at least the fifth (or possibly even the fourth) century, the era was explicitly ascribed to a Saka king or the Sakas.

The Jain tradition ascribes the commencement of the Saka era to the conquest of Malwa by the Sakas. Generally this event is dated prior to the reign of Vikramaditya, but it is also possible that the Sakas occupied Malwa for a second time 135 years after they lost it to king Vikramaditya.

So. The earliest epigraphic records with dates in which the Saka era is ascribed to king Śālivāhana belong to the 13th cent. A.C. (D.C. Sircar, IE., P. 262).

However it is very difficult to identify the Saka chief who may have reoccupied Malwa and commenced the Saka era. King Cāstana of the Kārdmaka family of the Western Kṣatrapas reigned at Ujjain and held sway as far as Kutch in the West in about 52 (130 A.D.) but he could hardly have conquered Malwa as many as fifty two years before the date of the Andhau inscriptions of his reign.

It is very probable that the dates given in the inscriptions of the time of Nahapāna also belong to the Saka era. But the known dates of these records take us only eleven years back. Accordingly it is hardly possible to ascribe the origin of this era even to Nahapāna whose earliest known date is 41.

As long as no records dated in the first four decades of this era come to light in Western India, it is not possible to ascertain that the era was started by the Western Kṣatrapas. On the contrary its association with the Sakas seems conspicuous by its absence during its early centuries, which correspond to the Kṣatrapa period.

The feudatory position of Nahapāna or even of his predecessor Bhūmaka, in fact, leaves little scope for the probability that the era though not
specified as the Saka era was started by the Ksaharāta Ksatrapas, who belonged to the Saka race.

On chronological grounds it is generally established that the Western Ksatrapas, particularly Ksaharāta Ksatrapas, were originally subordinate to the Kushan emperors of North India. It is also noticed that the Kushan power extended as far as Malwa by this time. Moreover the Kushan kings beginning with Kaniska I are known to have used one continuous era of their own, very probably that era also seems to have commenced in 78 A.C. In the present state of our knowledge, it is therefore very plausible to accept the view held by the majority of modern scholars that the so-called Saka era was originated by the Kuśāna sovereign Kaniska I and that it was adopted by the Western Ksatrapas who were originally feudatories of the Kuśāna sovereigns.

The unspecification of the name of the era during its early centuries may be explained by assuming that the era was the only prevalent era in the Kuśāna empire and was therefore known simply as 'the era'. It may be further assumed that in course of time a specific name was attached to it when it had to be distinguished from other eras that became prevalent by this time.
The specific mention of the name appears from the 5th cent. of this era. In North India its earliest known reference occurs in the Pancasiddhāntikā of Varahamihira, while in South India it appears the Bedāmi Inscription of Pulakesi. From this time the Saka era is found to be pre-eminent in yogue in works on Jyotish, and Ujjain was regarded to be the choice site of mean longitude, in these works. It is therefore evident that the Saka era was by this time especially associated with Ujjain, and that the name given to it by this time most probably owes its origin to the Western Ksatrapas, who belonged to the Saka race and who ruled at Ujjain for a pretty long period.

As far as North India is concerned, it is quite probable that when the name of the era got specified after a few centuries, it got named after the Saka Kings in whose records it figured commonly for a pretty long period of about three centuries. The actual origin of the era seems lost to oblivion by this time. This assumption

82. Ojha, Bharatiya Pracīna Lipimalā, P. 171.
83. D.C. Sircar, JRAS, p. 259, f.n. 2
84. The attribution of the origin of the era to the second conquest of Malwa by the Sakas given in the Jain tradition may be interpreted as a later attempt for explaining the significance of its association with the Sakas which was established by that time.
is analogically corroborated by its later attribution to Śālivāhana when its early association with the Śakas got lost to oblivion in course of time.

The significance and process of its association with the Śakas in South India will be discussed in the next chapter, as it is there associated with them through some later connections.

Thus the so-called Śaka era was probably originated by the Kusānas of North India, but in the subsequent period, the era got associated with the Śakas who had made its common use in Western India for a pretty long period of about three centuries.

The era does not seem to have received any specific name during the Kṣatrapa period. But its long and extensive use in the kingdom of the Western Kṣatrapas left a remarkable impression for its close association with the foreign rulers. The association marks an outstanding landmark in the history of the era as well as in that of Gujarat, which represented the principal territory that remained under the sway of the Western Kṣatrapas throughout their career.

According to the reckoning of the era as fixed by the early astronomers and corroborated by
its current reckoning the true epoch of the Saka era is 78 A.C. The first current year of the era corresponds to the period from the 3rd March 78 A.C. to the 20th February 79 A.C. However, in Northern and Western India, the era is regulated by expired years. According to this system the period from the 3rd March 78 A.C. to the 20th February 79 A.C. marks the year of the Saka era, while the first (expired) year corresponds to the period from 21st February 79 A.C. to the 10th March 80 A.C. To obtain the (current) Christian year equivalent to the (expired) Saka year, we have therefore to add 78-79 to the latter. In the absence of determinative data it is not possible to ascertain whether the Saka years used in Gujarat during the Ksatrapa period, were current or expired.

The Saka era commenced on the 1st lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month Caitra.

85. IA., Vol. XVII, P. 208
86. Ibid, P. 208
87. The system of current years is preserved to the present day in Madras State (Fleet, II, Vol. III, P. 141)
88. From the 1st lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month Caitra to the 31st of December we have to add 78 and from the 1st January to the 15th lunar day of the dark fortnight of Phālguna we have to add 79.
The years of this era are Caitrādi all over India, but the system of months is different in North and South India. In north India, the months are Pūrṇimānta but in South India the months are Amānta. As the weekdays are not expressed in the inscriptions of the Western Kṣatrapas, we are unable to determine whether the system of months in the Saka era used in Gujarat during this period was Pūrṇimānta or Amānta.

89. G.H. Ojha ... Bharatiya Pracina Lipimāl, p. 173. But in the areas of the South where the solar months are used, the year begins from the Maṣasankramti and the months are solar.
APPENDIX

The Problem of the Year on the Inscribed Pot Sherd at Amreli

The legend on a pot sherd found in layer 6 of AM 8 in the excavations at Amreli contains a date which is read साल 300(+) 40(+). मागह, शुक्ला 2°. Palaeographically the editor ascribes the figures of the year to the Ksatrapa period and refers the year to the Vikrama era. Accordingly, he assigns the date to January, 287 A.C. 2.

If this be accepted, साल 344 would be the earliest known Vikrama year, found in records of Gujarat. Excepting this, we do not come across any Vikrama date in the records of Gujarat prior to साल 813. 3 As the layers above and below layer 6 (wherein the inscribed sherd is found) yield coins of Ksatrapa Kings who reigned from about शक year 172 to 301, it is true that the given year cannot be referred to the Gupta era, but the appearance of a Vikrama year between dates of शक years, obviously, appears to be sudden and

1. S.R. Rao, Excavations at Amreli, P. 92, Pl. XXVI A.
2. Ibid, P. 92

In fact, the given date corresponds according to the expired Vikrama year (Caitrādi as well as Kārtikādi), to December 24, 287 A.C.

3. Vide chapter V, Section iv below.
unexpected. It is hardly possible to account for the sudden emergence of the Vikrama era in Gujarat at this stage and its subsequent disappearance for more than four centuries and a half.

If the year 344 be referred to the Saka era rather than the Vikrama era, it would correspond to 422-23 A.C. and fall slightly later than the end of the Ksatrapa period. Thus the year 344 would not hold good if it be referred to the Saka era.

Nevertheless, it is quite probable that the year inscribed on the pot sherd must be in the Saka era, as the coins found in layers above and below are all dated in the Saka era. This raises some doubt about the reading of the year. It seems likely that the correct year would be 244 rather than 344, so that the proposed year would well fit in between the Saka year 185, on a Ksatrapa coin from layer 7 and the Saka year 28x on a Ksatrapa coin from layer 3.

The inscribed pot sherd is illustrated in page XXVI, but the digit read 300 is not fully legible therein. Inspite of insistent correspondence with the writer and the publisher of the report as well as the superintendent of the Western Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, it has not been possible to trace the original
pot sherd or procure a perfect facsimile of the epigraph. Under these circumstances, it is not possible to arrive at any definite conclusion about this problem, but in the present state of our knowledge, it seems quite probable that the year given in the inscription on the pot sherd should better be read 244 and referred to the Saka era. According to this assumption, the given date would correspond to December 27, 322 A.C.
(ii) The Kathika Era:-

Archaeological excavations conducted at a mound near the village of Devni-Mori situated in the vicinity of Samalaji in Sabarkantha District, reveal the remains of an old Buddhist Stūpa. Vertically it consisted of (i) the foundation and the base, (ii) the first square platform, (iii) the second square platform and (iv) the damaged hemispherical drum. From the evidences of the plan and elevation of the stupa, the drapery style of the images of the Buddha, Indo-Corinthian pillar capitals, Acanthus leaves pattern and the Ksatrapa coins, the construction of the monument was dated from the 3rd cent. to the 5th cent. A.C.1.

In course of subsequent excavations a stone casket was unearthed from the interior of the drum at a depth of about 13 feet from the top. The main body of the casket bears an inscription which records an account of the construction of the stūpa and the installation of the casket therein. It clearly indicates that the great stūpa was erected during the reign of King Sri Rudrasena on the 5th day of Bhadrapada in the year 127 of the Kathika Kings2. This reference raises

---

1. R. M. Mehta and Chowdhary, Jol, Vol.IX, PP. 451 ff
2. Saptaj+yatiṣyaṭadhiḥ Kathika-nipātam Samagataḥ bdasse Svabhā drapeṣuṇāmcamadino Nṛpatau Sri-
a new problem in the history of the region as well as in that of Indian Chronology.

The excavations first identified this King Rudrasena with King Rudrasena I of the Western Ksatrapa family and equated the year 127 with 205 A.C. by referring the date to the Saka era.3

As the Western Ksatrapas ruled over Gujarat from about 100 to 400 A.C. and as four kings of their dynasties bear the name 'Rudrasena' it is naturally tempting to identify this Rudrasena with a western Ksatrapa King of that name. Again as the Ksatrapa records are dated in the Saka era, the year 127 may naturally be ascribed to the Saka era and the king may accordingly be identified with Rudrasena I, whose known records are dated from the (Saka) year 121 (199-200 A.C.) to the (Saka) year 144 (222-23 A.C.), including a stone inscription dated exactly in the (Saka) year 127 (205 A.C.).

It is suggested that in the Buddhist literature the word Kathika commonly means a preacher of the Buddhist faith and that this inscription suits

---

Rudrasena ca (Ver. 2) (JOI., 1965, Vol. XIV, p. 336)
4. M.R. Majumdar, Chronology of Gujarat pp. 71 ff
5. The Gaghā Inscription of the Western Ksatrapa
Kaniska and some of his successors, who were the overlords of the early Western Ksatrapas who adopted the Kaniska era and after whom it later on got known as the Saka era.

But several points go against this assumption:

(i) The palaeography of the inscription shows that some of its characters belong to a later period than those of the Gadha inscription of the Ksatrapa king Rudrasena I dated the (Saka) year 127 (205 A.C.). Palaeographically the record seems to be slightly earlier than the Pardi Plates of the Traikutaka King Dahrasena, dated (Kalacuri) year 207 (457 A.C.). The record may, therefore, probably be assigned to about the 4th cent.

(ii) The record is written in good Sanskrit, but Sanskrit was not commonly used in the inscriptions of the 3rd cent. A.C.

(iii) The inscription does not represent King Rudrasena as a Ksatrapa or a Mahaksatrapa or a Kardamaka.

---

6 D.C. Sircar, JOI, Vol. XIV, P. 337
8 Ibid, P.103, The records of Vajña Satakarni for instance are in Pārākṛt.
Probably belonged to the Kathika dynasty instead\textsuperscript{10}.

(iv) Rudrasena of this record seems to belong to the Kathika dynasty, while the Ksatrapa King Rudrasena I belonged to the Kardamaka family\textsuperscript{11}. This king, therefore, cannot be identified with the Ksatrapa King Rudrasena I or Rudrasena II\textsuperscript{12}. The Ksatrapa King Rudrasena II belonged to the Kardamaka family\textsuperscript{13}.

(v) The discovery of the pot containing Ksatrapa coins including two of Visvasena (394-304 A.C.) from below the casket bearing the epigraph\textsuperscript{14} precludes the possibility of dating the construction prior to about 300 A.C.

(vi) In case this Rudrasena be identified with any other Rudrasena of the Ksatrapa family, it is not possible that the epigraph may have been dated in some other


\textsuperscript{11} V.V. Mirashi, VIJ., Vol. III, P. 104

\textsuperscript{12} K.F. Somapura Jol. Vol. XV., P. 69; S. Sankaranarayanan, JOL. Vol.XV., P. 62

\textsuperscript{14} The excavators did not find any trace of a later opening up of the Stupa or of any disturbance in or repairs to its interior (D.C. Sircar, JOI., Vol. XIV., P.339; R.N. Mehta, Ibid P. 411)
era since it was only the Saka era, that was particularly used in the epigraphic and numismatic records of the reign of the Saka Ksatrapas. The discovery of the Ksatrapa coins testifies the rule of the Ksatrapas in this region. The assignment of this date to the Saka era would accordingly preclude the possibility of identifying this Rudrasena with any later King Rudrasena of the Ksatrapa family.

(vii) The practice of composing epigraphical records completely in verse became popular in North India only after the rise of the Guptas in the 4th cent. A.C. 15.

(viii) No dynastic or regional name appears to have been associated with any of the known Indian eras earlier than the 5th cent. A.C. 16.

Some of these doubts can be refuted on some other ground, but it is hardly possible to account for certain objections, especially the statigraphical position of the casket in relation to the Ksatrapa coins and the invariable use of the Saka era in Gujarat during the Ksatrapa reign.

However, it is suggested that the date of the record may be assigned to the Kalachuri era, though

15-16 S. Sankaranarayanan, JOI, Vol. XV, P. 67
the King may be taken as belonging to the Ksatrapa Family. The year 127 of this record would accordingly correspond to 375-76 A.C. As for the Ksatrapa Kings this date would fall during the reign of Rudrasena III, whose coins are dated from the (Saka) year 270 (346-49 A.C.) to the (Saka) year 301\(^\text{18}\) (379-80 A.C.).

But this suggestion is also shrouded with several difficulties. It is inexplicable that the Kalachuri era, the use of which remained confined to South Gujarat, penetrated into the northernmost part of Gujarat and has left only a single instance of its use in that region which was under the rule of the Ksatrapas whose records are all dated in the Saka era.\(^\text{19}\)


18. M.R. Majumdar, CG., PP. 86 ff.

19. The date in the Mewa inscription of a Mahakasatrapa is read to be year 103 and ascribed to the Kalachuri era (B. N. Mukerjee, JRAS., 1961. PP. 106 ff).

But the text and the reading of this record being corrupt, we can hardly deduce any definite inferences from it. The assumption for the use of the Kalachuri era based on a mere reference to an Abhira, obviously seems far-fetched especially in view of the fact that all the other records in the
Again King Rudrasena III probably belonged to the Kardamaka dynasty, whereas this Rudrasena is probably represented as belonging to the Kathika one. The non-mention of the title Ksatrapa or Mahāksatrapa in the epigraph in association with King Rudrasena seems inexplicable, if we take him as belonging to the Ksatrapa family.

The date of this epigraph can, therefore, hardly be assigned to the Saka era. Nor can King Rudrasena mentioned therein be identified with any king Rudrasena of the Ksatrapa family.

Chronologically there seems to be a great probability for assigning the year 127 to the so-called Kalachuri-chedi era, which started in 249-50 A.D. From a comparison of the name Rudrasena with that of Isvarasena, Prof. Mirashi suggests that this King Rudrasena possibly belonged to the Abhira dynasty and may be taken as one of the eight successors of the Abhira King Isvarasena.
who was probably the founder of this era. He also suggests that Kathika may well have been the family name of the Abhiras22.

This dating seems to have been also supported by Palaeography23, iconography of the carvings of the Stūpa and its architecture, the general cultural index of the antiquities from the site, the occurrence of the Pratītya Samutpāda Sūtra engraved on the lid of the relic casket 24 etc.25

R. N. Mehta who had assigned the construction of the Stūpa to 205 A.C. in his preliminary report of the excavation, reconsidered the date in the light of further evidence and he also came to the conclusion that all the other available evidences - archaeological, numismatic, stylistic and constructional - go in favour of assigning the erection of the Stūpa to the 4th cent.

22. V.V. Mirashi, VIJ, Vol. III, P. 104

23. The Palaeography of the relic casket inscription is very much aequent to the records of the time of Ikawakuking Bhuvāṇ Chantamula of Hāgārjunakondā, which cannot be placed earlier than the 1st part of the 4th cent. A.C. (Soundara Rajan, JGRS, Vol. XXV, P. 289)

24-25 A traditional record which generally does not obtain before the Gupta times in Northern India. (Ibid)
A.C. and that the Kathika year 127 must, therefore, be ascribed to the Kalachuri-Chedi era.

The stratigraphical position of the Ksatrapa coins dated up to the reign of Visvasena (294-304 A.C.) indicating a later date, for casket 26 is also corroborating the dating of the record in the 4th cent. A.C.

Sundara Rajan, Mirashi, R. N. Mehta and B. N. Mukherjee thus agree in assigning the year 127 to the so called Kalachuri-chedi era and equating the date with 375 A.C. However, Shri Saundara Rajan, Mehta and B. N. Mukherjee identify King Rudrasena with Rudrasena III of the Ksatrapa dynasty, while Mirashi suggests to associate him with the Abhira family 27.

27. D.C. Sircar refers to Prof. Mirashi's article published in Visvesvarananda Indological Journal Vol. III, PP. 101 ff. and reports that in Mirashi's opinion Rudrasena of the Devni-Mori Inscription was identical with the Saka MAHAKSATRAPA Rudrasena III (D.G. Sircar, JOI., Vol.XIV, P. 333)

But in this article Mirashi clearly states that King Rudrasena of the present inscription did not probably belong to the family of the Western Ksatrapas and suggested that he may have belonged to the Abhira family (Mirashi, VIJ. Vol. III, P.104)
Mirashi's view seems to be the most probable one in the present state of our knowledge, so far as the epoch of the Kathika era is concerned and King Rudrasena of the present inscription is dissociated from the Ksatrapa family. However, the identification of the Kathika era with the so-called Kalachuri-Chedi era indicates an instance of the use of that era in North Gujarat in the 4th cent. A.C. and the instance seems to be a single and exceptional one, since the era is found to have originated in the South, extended over South Gujarat not earlier than the 5th cent. A.C. and remained confined in South Gujarat throughout. The assumption that the era penetrated as far as the northernmost part of Gujarat in the 4th cent. A.C. is unwarranted by any other evidence. Moreover it is pointed out that the practice of recording gifts of private individuals as seen in the present record appears to have started in the 5th cent. A.C.

It is also objected that no dynastic or regional name appears to have been associated with any of the known Indian eras earlier than the 5th cent A.C.

29. Ibid, P. 67
Sankaranarayanan examines the possibility of identifying the Kathika era with the Vikrama, the Saka, the Kalachuri and the Gupta eras and, like Somapura\textsuperscript{31} concludes that the Kathika era appears to be altogether a new era different from the Indian eras known hitherto\textsuperscript{32}. However, Somapura\textsuperscript{33} suggests that the epoch of the Kathika era may fall between 174 and 273 A.C. while Sankaranarayanan\textsuperscript{34} puts the epoch between 275 and 350 A.C. In the opinion of Somapura, the construction of the Stūpa is assigned to the 4th cent., whereas in the opinion of Sankaranarayanan its date may fall between about 400 and 470 A.C.\textsuperscript{35}.

The survey of the different views mentioned above indicates that in the present state of our knowledge it is hardly possible to arrive at any definite conclusion about the identification of 'King Kudrasena' and 'Year 127 of the Kathika Kings' mentioned in the Devnī-Mori stone casket inscription.

\textsuperscript{31} K.F. Somapura, Ibid P. 65
\textsuperscript{32} Sankaranarayanan, Ibid, P. 71
\textsuperscript{33} K.F. Somapura, Ibid, P. 65
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, P. 72
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., P. 72
Politically, Gujarat seems to have been under the rule of the Western Ksatrapas from about 100 to 400 A.C. and under the Gupta sovereigns of Magadha from about 400 to 470 A.C. with the intervening reign of Sarva Bhaṭṭāraka for a few years round about 400 A.C.

The find of the coins of some Ksatrapa kings including Visvasena (A.C. 294-304) and Sarva Bhaṭṭāraka in the successive strata of the Stūpa and Vihāra as well as the conspicuous absence of Gupta coins pre-eminently signifies that the site was under the rule of the Western Ksatrapas for a long period and at the end it passed under the reign of Sarva Bhaṭṭāraka. The construction and the re-construction of the Stūpa may, therefore, be dated from about 300 to 400 A.C. The stylistic features of the Buddha images and the motifs also corroborate this dating.

At the time of the construction of the Stūpa, the site, thus, seems to have been under the Ksatrapa kings. Accordingly it would be natural to assign the year 127 to the era, which later on got known as the era of the Kathika Kings during this time. The suggestion of Sircar that the Kathika kings may be identified with the Kusāna kings of the Kaniska group, who patronised Buddhism, deserves special consideration in view of the fact that the era seems to have been originated
by them and that the epigraph is pertaining to Buddhism in particular. According to the identification of 'the era of the Kathika Kings', with the so-called Saka era, King Rudrāsenac of this record is identifiable with King Mahākṣatrapa Rudrasena I.

From report of the Archaeological excavations at Devni-Mori it appears that the archaeological, numismatic, stylistic and constructional evidences, however, go in favour of assigning the stūpa to the 4th cent. A.C.36. The archaeological evidence thus comes into conflict with the epigraphic evidence, on ascribing the year 127 to the Saka era. Sircar, therefore, suggests a possibility that the construction of the Stūpa was begun in 205 A.C. but it was abandoned and was again taken up and completed after a century37.

In accordance with the given reading and comparative chronology, the year 127 of the record should, however, be probably ascribed to the era which later on got known as the Kalacuri or the Chedi era. It is well-known that the name of this era was left unspecified in the records dated upto about year 500 of that era. It is surmised that the era originally belonged to the Abhiras, but there has come forth no evidence for establishing that the regnal years of the Abhira

36. R.N. Nehta and S.N. Chowdhary, Excavations at Devni-Mori, P. 28
King Isvarasena gave rise to this era through his successors. The association of this era with the Abhiras is a mere surmise. In case the year 127 of this record actually belongs to this era, the reference in the record throws new light on the original character of the era. The name of the era was usually left unspecified in the official records of the early period, but the poet who composed this sectarian record in verse, fortunately happens to insert an important detail regarding the era used therein. According to the positive statement made in this record, the era definitely belonged to the Kathika Kings. Mirashi has tried to reconcile this fact with the earlier surmise by suggesting that Kathika may well have been the family name of the Abhiras. However, if the era of the Kathika Kings be identifiable with the so-called Kalachuri-Qhedi era, it becomes clear that the era was originally known as that of the Kathika Kings. Accordingly, the era may now be ascribed to the Kathika Kings rather than the Abhira Kings.

In the context of the Kṣatrapa coins unearthed from the monument, King Rudrasena mentioned in this record, may then be identified with King Mahākṣatrapa

38. V.V. Mirashi, WJ., Vol. III, P.1, P. 104.
Rudrasena III (348-379 A.C.)\(^{39}\). In that case, however, it is difficult to account for the unusual and sudden use of the Kathika era in a territory of the kṣatrapa kingdom. If the Kathika era be identified with the so-called Kalachuri era, its use in this northernmost part of Gujarat appears to be inexplicable in view of the fact that the Kalachuri era was introduced into Gujarat from the South and its use remained confined to South Gujarat\(^{40}\).

As for the Kathikas, they appear identifiable with the Kathikas (Kathācli) or the Kaṭakas of the Punjab\(^{41}\). This identity makes the identification of their era with the Kalachuri era, less possible, as the tribe would have migrated to Gujarat from the North, while the era got introduced here from the South.

\(^{39}\) He was son of a Mahāksatrāpa, as well as a Mahāksatrāpa himself, and he issued coins at least from the Saka year 270 (348-49 A.C.) to the Saka year 301 i.e. 379-80 A.C. (Majumdar, CG. PP.86 ff)

\(^{40}\) Shri Sankaranarayanan assigns the date to the 5th cent. A.C. that makes it clear that the era cannot be identified with the Gupta era on the ground that the Kings are referred to as Kathikas and not as Guptas, and that the record contains no reference to the rule of the Gupta Empire (JOL. Vol.XV,F,70). Here it may also be pointed out that unlike the earlier eras, the Gupta era was generally referred to by its specific name (Gupta-Kāla)

The era of the Kathika kings may, therefore, better be taken as a hitherto unknown era rather than identifying it with the Kalachuri era.

As remarked above, the numismatic and archaeological evidences go in favour of identifying King Rudrasena with King Mahākṣatrapa Rudrasena III (346-399 A.C.). Accordingly the epoch of the Kathika era seems to fall between 220 and 250 A.C.

As noticed above, the find of the Kṣatrapa coins dated up to the reign of Visvasena (294-304 A.C.) indicates that the region was since long under the power of the Kṣatrapas, who dated their records in the Saka era. The dating of this event in the Kathika era, therefore, appears inexplicable, unless we suppose that the use of that era was sectorially associated with the Buddhist Sāṅgha of the locality. This assumption is corroborated by the parallel instance of the unusual use of the Saka era in his Harivaṃśa Purāṇa by Jinasenaśūri at Wadhvan during the reign of the Vaiśākha Kings who dated all their records in the Valabhi era.

Just as the Punnāta Sāṅgha settled at Wadhvan hailed from Karnatake, it is quite probable that the Buddhist Sāṅgha at Devni-Nori hailed from the Kingdom of the Kathika Kings, which was probably situated in the Punjab.

42. Vide Chapters 4 and 5 below
This assumption must be taken as hypothetical, as long as we do not come across any other date, given in the Kathika era even in North India. Till then we may provisionally regard the era of the Kathika Kings as a hitherto unknown era, put its epoch probably between 220 and 250 A.C. and ascribe its unusual use at Devnimori to the Buddhist Sangha of that locality.