ARMENIAN MERCHANTS IN INDIA
1550-1800

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CHAPTER 1
THE BACKGROUND

Armenia:

Armenia, after Ashot I united it in the 9th century was a triangular piece of territory bounded on three sides by the safavid, the Ottoman and the Russian empires. Though landlocked, it was very strategically placed as it was the junction point for numerous important transit routes of the area. The busy overland trade routes eastwards from the Mediterranean, and the Black sea passed near or through Armenia. East of the Caspian, this same route forked into two directions - one to China, the famous silk Road; the other to India, through Herat and Qandahar. Armenia, in fact seems to have been a hub of important caravan routes of Asia, radiating not only towards Central Asia, India, Persia, Turkey and Russia, but also towards Europe - namely Istanbul, Venice, Leghorn, Marseilles Poland and Amsterdam.

Merchants from this region excelled themselves in their professional acumen. The Armenian were perhaps one of the most established merchants in the trade of the region by the 17th century. In 1697 the court of the Directors of the English East India Company remarked "... for most certainly they [the Armenians] are the most ancient merchants of the world".¹ In Asia they were well entrenched

in a number of commercial centres, much before the European made their entry in Asian trade.

Though Armenia was no longer a political unit after 1375, Armenians by their well recognised skill in commerce, were able to carve out an enviable niche in the trading world of the Middle Ages. The enterprising qualities of the Armenians, coupled with other characteristic features such as perseverance, thrift, probity, solidarity and above all, their exceptional aptitude for hard work, made them merchants par excellence. When one thinks of Armenians in this period of history, there is a tendency to immediately associate them with the commercial field. Contemporary sources have also mentioned their aptitude for trade in glowing terms. Fryer felt "that the Armenians being skill'd in all the intricacies and subtilities of trade at

1. Eastern Armenia came under the Ottomans in the last decade of the 14th century and Western Armenia in the following two decades, except for the Khanate of Erivan, which was ceded in 1828 to Russia by the Treaty of Turkmen Cay. See for details Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed. Gibb, Kramers, Levi-Provincial and Schacht, London, 1960.

home, and travelling with these into the remotest kingdoms become by their own Industry ... the wealthiest men".  

By the 16th and early 17th centuries they were able to spread out their tentacles throughout Asia and Europe. The long list of places given in the journal of Lucas Vanantesti, (a contemporary Armenian trade manual) though not all exhaustive, gives an idea about the extent of their trading operations. Regarding their geographical dispersal George Williams very aptly describes their area of operation as "they were dispersed over an immense extent of the globe, from the Indian Ocean to the Baltic, from the Steppes of the

1. Fryer, op.cit., 2, 249.


Tartary to the Valley of the Nile, the Crests of the Carpathian Mountains and the Alps".¹

They were equally adept at both overland and overseas trade. Ability to use different modes of transportation was their special forte, be it ocean transportation, or river shipping, or overland cart or sledge route, or horse route over mountainous terrain. A single merchant would not hesitate to use a combination of different types of transport in the course of his trade venture. We see that an Armenian merchant, Hovhannes Joughayetsi, who came to India in 1682 used the Caravan route from Isfahan to Bandar Abbas, then went by ship to Surat, by pack animals to Tibet, and eventually down the river by boat from Patna to Hugli.²

They were not only settled in important trade centres but they also established trade settlements along their routes. They were well connected with distant commercial centres owing to their well organised network. Connections and cooperation, two imperatives in long distance trade,


according to the Braudelian theory, were clearly discernible in the Armenian case. They were a very closely knit community preferring their own people in their enterprises.\(^1\) They were ready to help one another and share their knowledge.\(^2\) The Armenians wrote trade manuals as a deliberate effort to be of use to other taking up the profession. Lucas Vanantesti designed his manual "for you may country who belong to our nation".\(^3\) There were special schools for training where Armenians were made to learn even as children the exacting demands of the profession.\(^4\) Perhaps being a minority made them all the more inclined to stick to one another.\(^5\)

\[\text{------------------}\]
1. Khachikian: 40,H,J.; J.A.S.B. 1969. Hovhannes employers were Armenians and throughout the ledger we find Hovhannes himself dealing extensively with fellow Armenians.

2. This should not be taken to mean that there was no discord at all amongst the Armenians.


4. Fryer, op.cit., V.2, p.258: "they train their children under the safe conduct of experienced tutors, who instruct them first to labour for a livelihood before they are permitted to expend".

5. According to Braudel, successful merchants who controlled trade circuits often belonged to foreign minorities. He further says that a "minority was a solid and readymade network" Braudel, op.cit., pp.165-67.
The contracts and the credit system, in short, vital factors for success in trade, which an ordinary merchant would perhaps take a lifetime to acquire, were already tailor-made for the Armenians. Young Armenian entrepreneurs were able to set out on their business trip with a small capital, and "return to their hives laden with honey".  

Armenians in Persia:

While the Armenians operated in the entire world of Asia one of their most important area of trade operation was Persia. Their activities in Persia are of vital importance, because after 1604, they operated mostly from there. Shah Abbas following a "scorched-earth" policy, in his war against the invading Turks, had transplanted the whole Armenian community of Julfa on the river Zenda Rud, to Persia. Armenian agriculturalists were sent to Ghilan and other silk-producing areas; whereas a considerable proportion, belonging to the Armenian mercantile section was settled in a suburb of Ispahan which the Armenians renamed New Julfa. Owing to the patronage of Shah Abbas, they held a privileged position over here. Their religion was


2. *ibid.*, V.2, p.258, and 249; Hamilton, *op.cit.* 303; Manrique, *op.cit.*, V.1, p.39; *ibid*; 2, 260, and 360.
tolerated\textsuperscript{1} they were allowed to buy lands and property and their suburb was exclusively meant for them, no Mohammadan was allowed to enter it.\textsuperscript{2} They appeared to be the most privileged subjects of Shah Abbas I and Fryer remarks that Shah Abbas gave them so much protection that he asserted their "rights and privileges in a higher manner (abating some little circumstances) than the Moors themselves". Even if this statement is highly exaggerated, it shows that the atmosphere in Persia around this period was extremely favourable for Armenian merchants. The Armenians were able to thrive under the royal protection. "So mightily do they increase under this umbrage in riches and freedom, for whilst they sit lazily at home, their factors abroad in all parts of the earth return to their hives laden with honey".\textsuperscript{3}

The affluence of New Julfa has been marked by several travellers of the medieval period. To be designated a merchant of New Julfa meant that he was a person of considerable importance.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} They belonged to the schismatic branch of Christianity. They could freely practice their faith and build their chruchs Shah Abbas himself had a church built for them.

\textsuperscript{2} Fryer, \textit{op.cit.}, V.2, p.249.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid.}, p.258.

Above all, they became agents for royal trade. The importance of this aspect can be understood when one realises that the entire balance of external trade of Persia depended upon silk, it was the major export - and that silk, during Shah Abbas' time was a royal monopoly. Shah Abbas realising its vital importance had taken its production and sale under state control. One could not buy any silk from the producers "the ould Emperor Shah Abbas by his commands, prohibited all men what nation soever to buy any silk unless from his hands, and to this ende all should be collected and brought into his Magazenes".

Shah Abbas encouraged the Armenians by giving them special privileges and credit in this trade. Silk was given to them at a profit of 10 tomans a load.

With the Shah's benevolence, the Armenians were able to engross the major portion of the silk trade. They carried most of it to Turkey (particularly Smyrna, Brusa and Aleppo), where a considerable part of it went to London and:


Marseilles, and also to Venice and Leghorn, some of it carried by the Armenians themselves, especially so if a good market was not available in Turkey. Towards the north, Russia was the major outlet and towards the East - India (through Hormug or overland through Qandahar and Kabul).

The Armenians also deeply penetrated the internal trade of Persia, carried out through bazaars which were the centres of trade. They held a predominant position in the silk sector of the bazaar, with wide contracts throughout the country especially the silk producing areas. Owing to their control over the internal trade, when the royal monopoly was broken by Shah Safi in 1630. Armenians still came out as the major beneficiaries.

The English East India Company, out of necessity, had to resort to the Armenians, for the purchases of silk, for not only did the Armenians have an edge over them owing to their privileged position vis-a-vis the emperor their superior knowledge of the local conditions, markets and routes, but, because of the fact that they always had


2. It should be remembered that Armenians, during the forced evacuation by Shah Abbas in 1604, had also been sent to settle in the silk producing areas to foster silk production.
ample money resources to make large-scale purchases.\textsuperscript{1} The English Company was always short of silver, and relied mainly on their supplies of English broadcloth to barter it for silk - but silk was available only against cash payments.\textsuperscript{2} Consequently the English had to turn to the chief merchants who dealt in the complimentary trade of silk and broadcloth - and these were mostly none other than the Armenians themselves who were firmly entrenched in this sector.\textsuperscript{3}

The English Company faced stiff competition from the Armenians and realised that cooperation with this mercantile group was indispensable. In the last decade of the 17th century when the English were reactivating their trade, after a bull of about three decades in their trading

\textbf{1.} This was yet another very important element as Persia depended predominantly upon the silver obtained through trade for its coinage.

\textbf{2.} \textit{ibid.}, p.411. "The shaugh never tooke cloth unto his treasurie all the dayes of his life, and will not now beginne, his whole trade is in raw silk, which he selleth always for money to the Armenians and Turkes.

\textbf{3.} The Court of Directors of the English East India Company in 1692-3 instructed its Agent in Persia to consign broadcloth to the Armenian merchants, "provided it could be bartered for silk or ready money; or even for one third in money and two thirds in silk (see Bruce, \textit{Annals of the Honourable East India Company}, Vol.3, pp.140-141).

Similarly in 1695-6 the Court of Directors felt that the sale of broadcloth could be "effected at less expence by the Armenian merchants, and in return, money, Caramania wool, and silk obtained for it". See Bruce, \textit{op.cit.}, 3, 169.
activities in Persia, they made vigorous attempts to enlist Armenia help. One such major attempt was in 1693 when the English Company tried to reach an agreement with five Armenians merchants, proposing amongst other things, to buy silk at Isfahan itself, which would save the Armenians the trouble of carrying it to distant places.¹ The Armenians vehemently opposed this suggestion, realising that this would place them entirely at the mercy of the English Company: "... if we bring it to Isfahan there is only you to buy it, and if you won't give us a price, then we must let you have it, as you will, and take cloth of what price you will".² On the contrary, if they took it to Aleppo, they would have the choice of selling to various other merchants groups.

It was their privileged position in Persia and their near control on Persian silk trade that enabled them to spread their trading activities in East and West Europe as well as in many other regions. The Persian silk had a ready world market and the Armenians were the near monopolisers of the commodity.

It was this supremacy in Persian silk trade which they utilised in opening a new field for them in Netherlands. The

Dutch East India Company was more dominant in Persian Trade than the English Company and the trade between Holland and Persia was extensive and Armenians increasingly took part in it. Amsterdam was one of the places where the Armenians tried to consolidate their position, by making use of their superior position in Persia. They benefitted immensely from the Dutch-Persian Treaty of 1631, which granted amongst other things, privileges to Persian traders in Netherlands.¹

Armenians in Russia and Turkey:

They held a privileged position in Russia also,² where they were given benefits which other Asian traders were not enjoying. Illustrative of this point is the fact that in 1684, Eastern traders were forbidden to trade outside Astrakhan, but the Armenians were the lone exception.²

1. The Cambridge History of Iran, V.6, 456.

2. This section, regarding Armenian trade to Russia is based on the Russko-Indiiskie Otnosheniya, XVII and XVIII centuries, translated and brought together in Surendra Gopal, Indians in Russia in the 17th and 18th Centuries, Calcutta, 1988.

In the instructions of the Senate (in 1743) we find that the Armenians were to be "permitted to be tried by their own judges", "worship their own Lord they should not be hindered", "they should not be appointed in the army and any other burden should be placed on them only in case of extreme necessity", "the rent for the houses in which they live should be charged at the rates stipulated and no harm should be done to them". For details see, R.I.O. XVIII, pp.203-4, Indians in Russia, 206.

By the 17th century, they had become the chief carriers of trade between Persia and Russia. From data in the R.I.O. documents, it is evident that the Armenians engrossed from 59% to 85% of the total exports from Russia to Persia.¹

The route usually favoured was Ghilan to Astrakhan (across the Caspian) by boat, then up the Volga to Moscow and then overland to Archangel or St. Petersburg. Apart from silk, caviar, fish, hides and fur constituted other important exports from Persia to Russia.

¹ I have made this calculation on the basis of S. Gopal’s table of exports from Russia to Persia based on the R.I.O. Doc.


### Exports to Persia (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Armenians</th>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Persians</th>
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<td>84.73</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>75.40</td>
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<td>6.14</td>
<td>76.59</td>
<td>14.99</td>
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<td>1743</td>
<td>10.16</td>
<td>82.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>1744</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>81.04</td>
<td>10.79</td>
<td>3.84</td>
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### Imports from Persia (percentage)

<table>
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<td>8.31</td>
<td>60.50</td>
<td>22.66</td>
<td>8.50</td>
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</table>
Armenians usually dealt in individual enterprises, but surprisingly there seems to have been an Armenian Company in operation at Moscow.\(^1\) They also dealt in partnership with other merchants, either from their own community, or from other countries. The Indians after 1684, increasingly resorted to them in order to circumvent the restrictions placed on them\(^2\). In the ledger of Astrakhan Customs relating to goods of Indian merchants leaving for Persia (17th September 1778 - 15th October 1778) we find that 4 out of 6 ships were definitely Armenian.\(^3\)

1. R.I.O., V XVII, V. pp.237-39 Cf. Gopal: *Indians in Russia*. In an order in the Foreign Office for the year 1675, we find Indians being granted permission to trade in Moscow and the rate of duty was to be the same as concluded with the Armenians Company at Moscow.

2. As mentioned earlier, the Indians were only allowed to trade in Astrakhan. In the R.I.O. documents, we find a number of contracts relating to deals between Indians and Armenians. Apart from partnership where Armenians pooled their resources with the Indians; there are also instances where none of the Armenian capital is involved (they are operating purely on behalf of the Indians). In one such case the Armenian was entitled to 1/3 of the profit, which is higher than the customary amount he would have got within his own community. Contracts were also made for just transporting the goods of the Indians, for a given amount.

3. Interestingly these shipowners have been designated as Astrakhan bourgeois

- Sankt serafim of Astrakhan bourgeois Armenians Nikita Kabustov.
- On the ship of Astrakhan bourgeois Armenian Miney Dilyanchev.
- On the ship and galleon S. Joan belonging to petty bourgeois from Astrakhan - Armenians Karapet Aryaitunov. This also reflects social status in Russia (*ibid*, 369-75).
Geographical contiguity and religious affinity must have undoubtedly helped them in their operations in Russia. Apart from it, absence of a strong nation to back them and lack of territorial designs must have contributed a lot towards gaining the confidence of not only the Russians, but also others, specifically the Turks and the Persians.

Citizenship was granted to resident Armenians in Russia. In 1800 when a Russian Company was being proposed to be established, to further direct trade with India, it was felt that "the Armenians who have settled down in Russia, enjoy the mercy of the Emperor, and they should be permitted to enter into the Company as they would not be able to do harm since they would be compelled to participate in it on the basis of a common law. On the other hand, their entry might be useful because many of them know Asian languages and they know different places and the conditions in which the trade would be carried on".  

Previously in 1751 also, when the Russian had established a trading company at Orenburg to further trade

1. *ibid.*, 413-419.
with Central Asia and India, they took the help of the Armenians.¹

In Turkey also the Armenian merchants were in good stead, for as previously mentioned, Turkey was the most important outlet for Persian silk² and this trade was to a very great extent in the hands of Venetians and Armenians. The English Company, in their attempts to divert this trade on a north-south axis in the early Safavid period, time and again complain about the difficulty to trying to "breake the trade betwixt the Venetians and the whole company of the Armenians".³

Aleppo was the major market to which the Armenians took their silk. According to Jenkinson, one Armenian village "yeerely carrieth 400 and 500 mules lading of silks to Aleppo, and bringeth thence 800 or a 1000 mules laden with Kersies and Venice cloths.⁴ This silk was either sold for

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1. Six members were appointed in this Company, one of them being an Armenian, Vasil Makarov (ibid., pp.283-84).

2. Persian silk was consumed by Turkey itself, to a considerable extent. It was especially needed for the silk industry at Brusa. The rest went on to European markets.


4. ibid., pp.396-7.
cash, partly in cash, cloth, cochneal, amker, coral or false pearl to "Venetians, Dutch, English, French merchants who flocked to Aleppo". On not getting a good market the Armenians themselves took it to Europe.

Interestingly, in this country, the Europeans had by force to deal with the Turkish Muslims through the Armenians or Jews, because their (the European) movements were restricted. They were, unlike the latter communities confined to a particular part of the town and in Aleppo to a specific building.

The Armenians were well suited to act in this capacity i.e. cross culture brokers and intermediaries - in fact they were the natural resort for such purposes, not only because they had a good understanding of the Asian setting, held a privileged position in all the three Empires bordering their homeland, had extensive commercial dealings in the area; but also to a very considerable extent because of their extraordinary linguistic ability. Apart from a separate language of their own¹, the Armenian was equally at

¹. The Armenian language belongs to the Indo-Eurasian Group, and has a number of Persian loanwords. It has a separate script of its own.
home with a host of other languages. Contemporary scholars have also taken note of this special trait. According to Fryer, they made "Syriac, Arabic, Turkish and Persian their own; and by lingua franca became conversant with most of the western foreigners, which language is a mixture of Portuguese, Italian, French and Spanish, and thereby made intelligible to European traders as universally as Latin to the Gentry and scholars".¹

It goes to the credit of the Armenians that in spite of the loss of their nation and in spite of staying in foreign lands, they were able to retain their 'Armenianese'. They were able to preserve their language and their religion, which acted as common bonds for this community.

The Armenians were before the 16th century basically "birds of passage" but after this period we find permanent Armenian settlements in a large number of trading centres. By being resident Armenians, they were able to diversify their operations on a wider scale, not only in the commercial field but in various other capacities.

¹. Fryer, op.cit., V.2, p.288.
Similarly, in India also they had been trading from centuries\(^1\), but became quite noticeable a number of trading centres by the 16th century only\(^2\), it was in the 17th century that they truly blossomed out in all parts of the Empire. As Surendra Gopal has aptly said that till now they were "trading with India" but after the 16th century they were "trading in India". They had till now made India their temporary sojourn but in the 17th century we find permanent Armenian settlements in a large number of trading centres in India\(^3\), indicating the establishment of permanent type of merchants, amongst whom can be listed big magnates like Khwaja Minas, who made India his base and operated from

1. Seth : History of the Armenians in India, p.23. Mar Thomas, an Armenian merchant landed on the Malahar Coast in 780 A.D., seven centuries prior to Vaseo Da Gama's landing.

2. Mainly Lahore, Agra, Delhi, Cambay, Surat, Goa and Diu. Discussed in detail later on.

here. These resident Armenians rose to eminent heights not only as merchants but in a number of other capacities as well. Interestingly enough the Armenians make their appearance in our sources as the officials of the Mughal Empire first.

Coming as merchants at least some of them got entry into the Mughal Imperial service. Mirza Zulqarnian, a grandee of Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's time is a notable example of the illustrious position which an Armenian was able to attain in India (case study given).
ZULQARNAIN

Zulqarnain was an outstanding Armenian figure, who shone on the Mughal firmament from the fag end of Akbar's reign, through Jahangir's and throughout Shah Jahan's period.

His father, Sikandar Mirza was a merchant from Aleppo, who came to Lahore in the time of Akbar.\(^1\) While no information regarding his mercantile activities is forthcoming from our sources it is apparent that he settled down in the Mughal Empire and joined imperial service and seems to have become one of his close companions. Jahangir notes in his memoirs that Zulqarnain was the son of Iskandar, an Armenian, in the service of Akbar.\(^2\) He further informs us that Akbar had given to him in marriage, the daughter of another Armenian, Abdul Hayy, who was serving in the imperial house-hold; by whom Iskandar had two sons, one of them being Zulqarnain.\(^3\)


\(^3\) *Ibid.*
From various sources, it is evident that Sikandar Mirza was in the good graces of Akbar.\(^1\) In the Jesuits Accounts, there is a detailed report of the second marriage of Sikandar Mirza, in which Akbar played a prominent part.\(^2\) As the former was getting married to the sister of his deceased wife,\(^3\) the Jesuit Fathers were against it, but according to them, this match had Akbar's blessings. The Fathers were opposed to this marriage, and according to their own version, on their adamant refusal, Akbar got annoyed and went to the extent of threatening the Jesuits.


\(^2\) Akbar and the Jesuits, pp.85-86. Jahangir and the Jesuits, pp.15-23, Fr. Corsi's Account, see Memoirs, V.

\(^3\) Sikandar Mirza's first marriage was with Juliana (Zulqarnain's mother). In the Tuzuk, p.324, she is mentioned as the daughter of an Armenian, Abdul Hayy, who was in the service of the royal harem. We do not specifically know who this person was, but definitely he was a well-reputed figure. According to Corsi's Account, Memoirs V, by virtue of Sikandar Mirza's marriage with the daughter of Abdul Hayy, the former was more esteemed at Court.
that Mirza can get converted to the Emperor's religion to solemnise this marriage.¹

Sikandar Mirza appears to be a close companion of Jahangir as well Jahangir himself has recorded that in 1609, Sikandar Mirza accompanied him to a hunt; and that he (the Emperor) was so pleased with Mirza's performance on the hunting ground, that, as a reward, he promoted him to a rank of 300 zat and 500 sawar.² An interesting dialogue, quoted by Coryat, between Jahangir and sikandar further shows that Jahangir was on quite close terms with his Armenian companion. The Emperor teased Mirza as to whether he or the Jesuits had ever converted a single Mohammedan to Christianity, who had converted for conscience and not for money - Sikandar claimed that he had at least one such

¹. Akbar and the Jesuits, pp.85-86. It is held that Sikandar Mirza was getting married to his dead wife's niece, but the translator (Payne) himself has written that in a later part of the original book Historia of du Jarric, the bride is supposed to have been Sikandar Mirza's sister-in-law, similarly, according to Payne, Sikandar Mirza in the first part of the book relating to Akbar's reign is bitterly criticised by the Jesuit Fathers for this marriage, which they declared was illegal, and for abandoning Christianity; but in a later part of the book, he comes out as a hero, forced into the marriage by Akbar and his wife.

². Tuzuk, p.79. There seems to be an error in Athar Ali, Apparatus, p.50, J 305 where the rank is wrongly recorded as 600/500.
honest convert. However, after a couple of months, Jahangir tested the said person's real faith, by sending some wild hogs that he had killed in a hunt, through the convert to Sikandar. The royal gift never reached the recipient and the myth of honest conversion was broken.¹

Jahangir informs us that Sikandar was in the service of Akbar,² but in spite of all the evidence of Sikandar Mirza's close relations with Akbar, it seems rather frustrating that we have no information about the nature of his job nor any evidence about award of any mansab to him during Akbar's reign is forthcoming. The picture is somewhat clearer for the period under Jahangir. As noticed earlier, we categorically know that during the 4th R.Y. Jahangir increased the mansab of Iskandar Mirza to 300 zat 500 sawar.³ The Jesuit Accounts also strongly suggest that he held some post under Jahangir - it is mentioned that in 1605, Sikandar Mirza "came from the province which he

1. *ibid.*
3. *Tuzuk*, p.79. This obviously implies that Sikandar Mirza was in 1609 already holding a mansab, but we do not know whether this mansab was awarded by Akbar or had been conferred by Jahangir.
governed to pay his respects to the new King and to submit his accounts to the Controller of the royal treasury," but neither the name of the province is mentioned, nor the nature of the office he held. Hosten has suggested that in 1603, Sikandar Mirza was at Sambhar, "in charge of the government salt monopoly at the salt lake". Seth too makes the same assertion, but unfortunately none of the two discloses the source on the basis of which they make this statement.

Monopoly is a complete misnomer as there was nothing of the sort in the Mughal period, leave alone a government salt monopoly as mentioned by the above historians. As the region of Sambhar was under Khalasa, and salt panes must have been a considerable source of revenue, naturally the dinan would be directly or indirectly concerned with the sale of salt as he was the person who was responsible for collecting the revenues (jama) and remitting it to the imperial treasury. Perhaps this is the reason for the confusion with the word monopoly. In return the dinan was given a fixed salary, and

1. Jahangir and the Jesuits, p.16.
under no circumstances were his emoluments correlated with the margin of profits obtained from the sale of salt.

The Jesuit Fathers want us to believe that Jahangir forcibly tried to convert Sikandar, along with his two sons to Islam, a story which, keeping Jahangir's tolerant policy in view, is difficult to accept. This piece of evidence comes only from the Jesuit Fathers, who should be treated with reservation regarding matters of religion. Even if we take the Jesuit Accounts at face value, then also this information becomes all the more suspect, because in 1596 (at the time of Sikandar Mirza's second marriage) they alleged that Sikandar Mirza had got converted to Islam,

On the basis of Botelho's statement, that Sambhar yielded Rs. 8 lakhs a year, and as at another point in his account, he had given the 'Kings share' to be Rs.6 lakhs in 1649-51; and as Fr. Castro has given the annual revenues to the King as being Rs.5 lakhs, Hosten has inferred that in 1649-51, it left Zulqarnain "a profit of two lakhs and a larger margin of profit during his earlier tenures of administration". See Memoirs V, pp.146, 161, 162.

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2. Jahangir and the Jesuits, pp.15-23. According to the Jesuit Fathers, in 1606, when Zulqarnain came to submit his accounts to the King's treasury, Jahangir made vigorous attempts for his conversion to Islam, but in the meantime had to rush off in pursuit of his rebel son Khusrau. Sikandar Mirza, taking advantage of this opportunity, went back to the province from where he had come, but his two children whom he had taken with him, were recalled, forcibly circumcised and converted to Islam.
owing to which fact the prince [Jahangir] was very angry. How could it be possible, that a few years later, Jahangir wanted to practise the same thing himself. It is more probable that the children being brought up under the royal patronage and in the imperial household, might have been treated as Muslims. Jahangir was considerate enough to later on permit them to become christians. The following statement by Bernier substantiates this point. "He permitted two of his nephews to embrace the Christian faith and extended the same indulgence to Zulqarnain, who had undergone the rite of circumcision and been brought up in the seraglio. The pretext was that Mirza was born of Christian parents".

Sikandar Mirza died in 1613, to be succeeded by Zulqarnain, who was at that time around nineteen years of age.

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1. Fernao Guerreiro remarks in the Relacaes, fol. 153 r., that the children had been brought up by one of the Queens "who reared them in the spirit of Moors, with as much aversion to park as the Moors themselves:; see Memoirs, V, p.117.


3. Fr. Corsi's Account, quoted from Memoirs, V, p.133. At his death Sikandar Mirza Left Rs.20,000 in the service of Christianity.
Zulqarnain was associated with the Mughal court throughout his life. As a child he was a playmate of the royal princes, including Prince Khurram, as he was brought up in the imperial harem till the age of twelve.¹

Jahangir records under the 24th R.Y. that "Zulqarnain who was holding the post in the imperial harem and in attendance at the Court, during my reign, was made one of the dimans and appointed the [diman of] the salt pans [Jahangir does not mention Sambhar, but latter evidence clearly indicates that the reference is to Sambhar]. He performed that service with rare efficiency, and in the meantime the "aujdar of that region was also bestowed upon him".² Apart from a brief interruption of a few years (dealt with subsequently) Zulqarnain worked in Sambhar for nearly the whole of his career³, ending in his retirement in 1654, a couple of years prior to the presumed date of his

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1. Akbar and the Jesuits, pp.85, 86; Jahangir and the Jesuits, p.16; Bernier, p.287; Tavernier, p.92.

2. Tuzuk, p.324.

3. According to Peter Mundy, 2. 240, Sambhar was the "Jagueere of Mirza Zilqurne" [Zulqarnain] but this could not have been so as Jahangir explicitly says it was under the khalsa.
death. It was not an insignificant post, as the Sambhar salt lakes were a good source of revenue and its management an important assignment. The *Ain-i Akbari* gives the *jama* of Sambhar as 1,616,825 *daws*. According to the *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*, three varieties of salt were obtained from Sambhar pink, white and blue, which yearly brought into the imperial treasury, a few lakhs of rupees. Botelho has stated at one place for the year 1649 that Rs. 6 lakhs was to be paid to the royal treasury, and at another (roughly pertaining to 1651) that Sambhar yielded Rs. 8 lakhs a year. In 1654 Fr. Castro observes that Rs. 5 lakhs was the 'King's share'. Manucci is of the opinion that in the second half of the 17th century, about Rs. 17 lakhs of revenue went into the imperial treasury. He mentions at another point that

2. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Syed Ahmad Khan, Delhi, p.....
5. *ibid.*, p. 162.
"Aurangzeb gifted Sambhar to the Rajah in 1658, which brought in to the crown a million and more of rupees. Perhaps the last two figures are not accurate, but exaggerated, nevertheless one gets a rough idea of how important the mines were.

Apart from being the faujdar of Sambhar, Zulqarnain held the faujdari of sarkar Bahraich, suba Awdh, from 1629-33. Tavernier also mentions that he held valuable

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1. ibid., p.306.

2. The comparative figures given below, though admittedly of a later date, help in the assessment of the importance of Sambhar as a major salt production area of northern India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade in Evaporated Salt (1889-90)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sambhar</td>
<td>3,834,805 maunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diduana</td>
<td>377,068 maunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pachbadra</td>
<td>614,901 maunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falodi</td>
<td>44,955 maunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi salt sources</td>
<td>328,851 maunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,200,580 Bri-maunds</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another table of the 1890's giving the production of salt in northern India for three years, the production at Sambhar is 4,512,661 maunds out of a total of 8,416,86 maunds. Quoted from George Watt, Dictionary of the Economic Products of India, Calcutta, 1889., V, p.514.

governorships. Lahori and Waris have both mentioned Zulqarnain as a mansabdar, holding the rank of panjsadi, seh sad sawar or 500/300 under Shah Jahan. The same rank is mentioned in all the three lists of the years 1647-48, 1656-57 and 1657-58, suggesting that no promotion was awarded to him. For the period under Jahangir, the rank has not been stated, either by the Mughal historians or the Jesuits.

In 1632, Zulqarnain was received with much honour, when he came to the Mughal Court from his governorship in Bengal and presented five elephants as naqr. Here the Jesuit Fathers, who have supplied us this evidence, are at

4. Peter Mundy, 2, 240. Mundy states that the Sawar rank was of '1000 horse pay', which is in disparity with the Mughal historians.
6. The Apparatus, also does not throw any light on this aspect. Zulqarnain is mentioned as a faujdar of Sambhar in 1619 but his mansab or rank has not been stated.
7. Memoirs, pp.141, 181. In August 1682 Fr de Castro wrote to Fr. Baudo that he had been for the last three years with Mirza Zulqarnain "who had all the time been Governor of some provinces in Bengala". In Nov. 1632, he had written that the King had recalled the Mirza from Bengal.
variance with the Mughal historians, Lahori and Salih, who categorically state that Zulqarnain in 1632, came from Bahraich, where they say he was faujdar.¹

At this point in his career, Zulqarnain seems to have temporarily fallen out of favour with Shah Jahan, though the exact reasons² are not known. Zulqarnain was charged with not having given a full account of his assets and had to pay Rs. 8 lakhs.³

Nevertheless, by 1640, he was definitely back in royal favour⁴. In 1642, he was seeking permission from Shah Jahan to serve with Shah Shuja in Bengal, where the latter was serving as Provincial Governor. In 1648, as previously

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1. Lahori, 2, 446, Salih, 1, 513.

2. Different reasons have been assigned by the Jesuit missionaries, like Zulqarnain's refusal to convert to Islam; Shah Jahan's inclination to squeeze out money from him, and that Zulqarnain had refused to help Shah Jahan, when the latter was a prince and in rebellion against his father. Another possibility which appears quite likely seems to be linked up with the defeat of the Portuguese at Hugli by the Mughal Governor Qasim Khan, which also coincides with this date.

3. Peter Mundy, 2, 240. Mundy says it is Rs. 60 lakhs but in the appendix it is given as Rs. 8 lakhs.

stated, he was holding a *mansab* of 500/300. In 1649 he was again appointed as *faujdar* of Sambhar.

**He continued to be on good terms with Shah Jahan. In 1651, he accompanied the latter to Kashmir, and in 1652 to Lahore.**

Zulqarnain was on equally good terms with the Princes. Prince Shuja acted as Provincial Governor of Bengal from 12th to 19th R.Y. It has already been mentioned that Zulqarnain in 1642 had taken leave to serve under Shuja in Bengal. In 1645 we find that he was still over there; and according to Fr. Castro he was there till 1648. Fr. Maracci also states in 1649 that "these last years a distinguished Christian Lord called Mirza was Governor of Bengala".

1. Lahori, II, 748.
2. Fr. Botelho's Account, see Memoirs V.
5. According to a letter of Castro dated July 20, 1645, Sambhar was left in charge of Zulqarnain's uncle Jani Beg, on an annual salary of Rs.50,000.
We know that Zulqarnain was neither the subedar or the hakim of Bengal. By 'governor' it's perhaps meant that he was holding some other important post in Bengal.

Dara Shukoh also held him in esteem. In 1654, at his request, Mirza Zulqarnain was condoned 50,000 gold muburs'. The amount of money is definitely heavily overstated, but we are not concerned with the amount, but with the fact that Dara Shukoh pleaded on Zulqarnain's behalf to Shah Jahan, and obtained a remission for him, which goes to show the favoured position he enjoyed. According to Botelho's account also, Zulqarnain was on very friendly terms with Dara Shukoh. He relates an incident where the prince addresses the Mirza as his brother and asks him to compose a song for Shah Jahan, who had just then arrived from Lahore.

Though we do not have any evidence of Zulqarnain acting in the capacity of a merchant, he may nevertheless had most probably to deal at least at limited scale in salt trade as he was in charge of the khalsa namaksar at Sambhar, and


2. Botelho's Account see Memoirs, V, Reference is possibly to 1651.
hence responsible for direct or indirect sale of salt. He also had relations with the merchants, which is not unexpected since as throughout the period of our study (especially in the early phase of European commercial operations in India) we find that the Europeans were seeking assistance of the Armenians to get access to the Mughal Court and administration. The Armenians, apart from being their co-religionists were well acquainted with the Asian setting and with the intricacies of the Mughal administration. In fact the history of such relations starts with Zulqarnain. In 1636 we find him advising John Drake at Khirki on the choice of a proper person through whom to approach the King.

True to the spirit of his race, Zulqarnain was proficient in other languages, apart from his own. The *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* again comes handy in giving un information in the cultural field. Jahangir (a connoisseur of art) praises him in his memoirs as being an "accomplished composer of hindi songs". He further states that Zulqarnain's

1. Dealt in detail in the preceding pages.
"compositions were often brought to his notice and were approved". ¹ The Badshahnama also testifies to Zulqarnain's skill as a poet.² Tavernier also calls him an excellent poet.³ He presented poems at the court of Shah Jahan on a number of occasions, especially at the time of his accession⁴ and on the eve of the establishment of capital at the newly built city of Shahjahanabad.⁵

It is said that he did not hesitate in presenting a horse or an elephant to a singer who merited his appreciation.⁶

As this study is not much concerned with Zulqarnain as a Christian (and as a lot has already been written on the subject) a detailed treatment, on this aspect, has not been attempted. It is sufficient for us to know that he was the

¹ Tuzuk, p.324.
³ Tavernier, I, p.92.
⁴ Badshahnama, p.392 (Bri. M.S.S.).
⁵ Seth, p.4.
⁶ Memoirs, V, 161.

According to J.P.H.S. (1953), p.76, Zulqarnain's name is mentioned in the Ragmala (details not given) and Mirat-i Aftabnama of Shahnawaz Khan.
'chiefest' Christian of the Mughal Empire\(^1\), who adhered to his faith throughout his life, gave lavish endowments to the Christian Church\(^2\) and helped in establishing chronicles.

He is presumed to have died in 1656, but interestingly enough, we find his name included in the list of nobles for the year 1657 and also for 1658.\(^3\) Perhaps he fell very ill before his death, as Tavernier has related an incident where Shah Jahan had gone to visit a sick Armenian friend of his "whom he [Shah Jahan] much loved, and whom he had honoured with splendid appointments.... The Armenians had been brought up with Shah Jahan, and as he was very clever and an excellent poet, he was high in the good graces of the Emperor, who had given him valuable governorships, but had never been able, either by promises or threats to induce him to become a Mussalman".\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) Peter Mundy, 2, p.240.
\(^{2}\) Apart from paying the amount of Rs.24,810 left by his father for the Christians, Zulqarnain gave a monthly allowance of Rs.200 which by 1620 amounted to Rs.22,400; a lump sum of Rs.20,000; and Rs.40,000 worth of silver and gold plate. See Memoirs, V, pp.135-139.
\(^{3}\) Salih, III, 482.
\(^{4}\) Tavernier, I, 72.
CHAPTER 2

ARMENIAN MERCHANTS IN INDIA'S FOREIGN TRADE

There were two major trading regions to which the Armenian merchants conducted overland trade from India - one was West Asia, and the other was the region stretching from Nepal to China via Tibet.

Trade with Persia and Turkey:

The Trade from India to West Asia was primarily meant for Persia, especially after 1604 A.D., when New Julfa in Isfahan became the Armenian base. The other destination for Indian commodities carried by Armenian was Turkey.

Multan and Kabul were twin outlets of India.¹ From these two places a number of routes radiated towards the west.² The most favoured route for Persia was the one going to Qandahar, Herat, Farrah and Isfahan. From Isfahan, goods were also carried to the frontier town of Aleppo. Another important route to Turkey frequent by Armenians was through Kabul, Balkh and Bukhara.

Caravans left at fixed intervals to these places. At times adequate arrangements were made by the Armenians to

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1. *Ain, op.cit.*, 2, 409.
provide enroute facilities to the fellow merchants at a certain charge. The Armenian merchants took great care in economising their travelling expenses. Their frugality has been well recorded by Fryer. According to him, the Armenians, setting out with a stock of hard eggs and a metorrah of wine "will travel for fifty shillings where we cannot for fifty thomands".

Qandahar was a very important transit centre - a rendezvous for caravans and merchants of different countries. Camels were hired here for both India and West Asia, and merchants joined to form a caravan to cross the mountain passes. The halt over here was quite a prolonged

   The Master of the caravan between Poland and Turkey was always an Armenian. see Braudel Wheels of Commerce, op.cit., p.157.
2. Fryer, op.cit., 2, 249.
3. Samuel Purchas, Purchas his Pilgrims, Glasgow 1905, 4, 269 & 272. In the beginning of the century it was reported that usually at least 12-14000 camels lading travelled Qandahar and Persia every year. (ibid, 272).
4. At times merchants preferred to trade in Qandahar itself, instead of crossing the mountains and coming further to India, though it meant a loss of 20% on their profits. ibid, 262.
one, as it took at least two to three weeks to obtain permission from the chief to leave the city.\(^1\)

The major commodities that the Armenian merchants exported from India to West Asia were indigo\(^2\) and textiles\(^3\). It is not possible to estimate on the basis of the limited information available to us the distribution of commodities in these two countries. It however appears that usually the same commodities were exported to both the countries.

As has been discussed earlier, goods were not only carried by them to the West Asian markets, but also from there, to a certain degree, to the European markets.\(^4\)

The Armenians made enormous profits on this overland route. If the Director of the English East India Company is

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4. Discussed in detail in Chapter I. According to President Rastell, Armenian merchants bought various textiles like calicoes, 'lawnes, shasses namely, guldares, sursalles, and cuscasces far West Asia and onwards to Europe, and in spite of the fact that a part of the commodities changed several hands before reaching Europe, it yielded immense profits at each stage. See *E.F.I.*, 1630-31, p. 124.
to be believed, they at times made profits to the tune of 300%. Even when the overseas trade route gained in importance over the land route, the Armenians were still vigorously in operation over the land route, which implies that they still found it lucrative.

Armenian Trade with Nepal and Tibet

The trading operations of the Armenians merchant in India stretched to the Kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, as well as to the Chinese lands. The route favoured from India to China by the Armenian merchants was through Nepal and Tibet, and as Manucci has observed this route was very long and "most hazardous due to the great mountains and many rivers". Hovhannes speaks of the road from Lhasa to the frontier town of Xining in China being 1,400 km. long and the time taken to go and come back spanning almost a year.

1. Letters Received by the East India Company from its servants in the East ed. Danvers (VI) and Foster (Vols. II-VI), London 1896-1902, 177. After all charges were deducted, the profit was supposed to be 'two, three and four for one' i.e. at times higher than 300%.

2. Due to paucity of material on Armenian trade from India to China, this aspect of trade has not been dealt with in this dissertation.


While starting from India, they had selected a base at Patna, to make preparations for this long distance trade. The ledger of the Armenian merchant, Hovhannes, gives the most vivid account of this trade.

The commodities that were brought by Hovhannes to Tibet mainly consisted of textiles, and precious stones especially amber and pearls which he brought in Agra, Patna and in centres along the route to Tibet. Tavernier also mentions the Armenians supplying iconographic images of yellow amber representing all kinds of animals and monsters, which were used to embellish the pagodas of Bhutan.

From other Armenian sources, it appears that Hovhannes was preceded by other Armenian merchants in trade with

2. ibid.
3. Namely palankpoosh, chapla, alaja, luhari khassa, white cheera, thick and thin calico and solagazi.
4. 323 kg of amber and 32 kg of seed-pearls apart from 72 pearls.
5. ibid.
Tibet. Therefore Tibet was well known to the Armenian commercial community, their ledgers and manuals give extensive details of the weights and measures used in Tibet. It is perhaps this aspect of the Armenian diaspora which distinguished it from other mercantile groups.

In Lhasa, Hovhannes finds a number of Armenian merchants settled there, together with their families, he himself stayed with one of them. He stayed in Tibet for almost half a decade, conducting business at various Armenian merchants stationed at Tibet, as well as the Tibetan factors of his Armenian master. From Hovhannes journal itself we learn that the Armenians brought great amounts of gold, tea, musk and shawls from a town called Slink [sining] on the Chinese frontier, tracking over hundreds of kilometres of uninhabited terrain.

In Tibet, Hovhannes sold the goods he had brought from India and Nepal, to the local tradesmen as well as to a great extent to fellow Armenians. The terms of transactions,

2. *ibid*.
with the latter group indicate that in almost all the cases where the commodity sold was either amber heads, or gold, was exchanged for silver, the amount was paid after a year either in the form of remittance from sining or directly to Hovhannes, after the Armenian merchants returned from there. It is apparent that certain commodities which Hovhannes brought with him, especially silver, were taken to sining to be sold, and gold was brought from there along with other commodities. From the local Tibetan merchants, Hovhannes obtained musk, tea and gold in lieu of precious stones and amber, besides brassware, chinaware high-priced woven fabrics, spices and tobacco.

He then returned to Nepal taking the same difficult route mostly 'obliterated by flood waters'. At Kathmandu, he sold some of the goods he brought from Tibet and obtained candles, cardamom and various textiles in exchange. The entire stuff was brought to Patna from Kathmandu. A part of

1. Silver according to European standards was overpriced in China. Hovhannes exchanges silver with gold at a ratio of 7:1 which was quite profitable.

2. Gold in Tibet was stratified into three varieties, pana, khamsu and joonser. The cost price of each of them in rupees was Rs.12.75, Rs.12.05 and Rs.11.55 respectively (ibid, 180).
the goods which Hovhannes had brought from Lhasa, mainly gold, was sold at Patna, along with those brought from Nepal. The rest of the Tibetan and Chinese goods were shipped to Hugli, either to be sold there or to be sent to Europe in a manner not very clear to us. Indications, however, to other transactions of similar nature between Armenian and English merchants do exist. The profits Hovhannes made on his trade with Nepal ranged from 77% to 168%.

**Overseas Trade**

Side by side with the overland trade, the Armenians were engaged in the overseas trade to West Asia, both from the Persian Gulf as well as via the Red Sea.

The Armenians traded to this region from various points in India. At the opening of the century, Swat and Masutipatnam were very important centres of Armenian

1. *ibid.*
   According to the treaty of the English East India Co. with Khwaja Phanoos Kulanthar in 1688, the Armenians had agreed to supply commodities from Patna and Bengal to the English at Calcutta or Hugli, at a certain profit (see Chapter 3 for details).


activity, but as the century wore on Surat rose to a pre-eminent position, whereas the trade to Masulipatnam lost its lustre by the end of the 17th century. Armenians became more and more active at Sand Thome in Coromandel. The Armenians had also been actively trading from Goa and Diu from the 16th century. Their trade to Bombay and Madras developed after the second half of the 17th century. Trade from Bengal also was a later phenomena. Their most

1. According to Schreuder's (Chief of the Dutch Company at Surat in the early 18th century) estimate, the total merchant capital at Surat was 87 1/2 lakhs, out of which 60 lakhs was 'independent' capital; 5 lakhs, 15,000, of it was Armenian i.e. 12% of the 'independent' capital - a substantial amount for a foreign merchant community to be operating with from one outpost. See Furker, Bombay Presidency in the mid-18th century, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p.64.

2. K.N. Chaudhari, feels that Armenian competition at St. Thome was a probable reason for the reduction of Masulipatians importance in the latter half of the 17th century. See Chaudhari, op.cit., p. 198.

3. Pyrad, op.cit., 2, 36 and 239; Linschoten, 1, p.223.

4. Ibid.

5. The Armenians had been specially invited to come to Bombay by the English Company in 1665 and attractive terms offered to them. In detail in the following chapter.

important settlement, initially in Bengal was Hugli. Later on with the development of Calcutta, they shifted their operations to the place, where they prospered under the auspices of the English. Their Bengal trade grew by leaps and bounds and by the turn of the century far outstripped that from any other outpost in India. Armenians were also present in Cochin, especially in the 17th century, but in comparison to Madras and Bengal, Cochin remained less important for them.

In the 16th century, the nearest destination of Armenians carrying on trade between India and Persian Gulf was Hormuz. This operated in Persian Gulf mainly through Hormuz, but after Shah Abbas took it over from the Portuguese, Hormuz declined while Gombroon rose as Bandar Abbas and, the Persian Gulf trade of the Armenians

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1. From the shipping lists of Hugli for the period around 1700, we find a member of Armenian ships in operation. For details see Om Prakash, The Dutch East India Company and the economy of Bengal 1630-1720, Delhi, 1988, pp.33-34 and Susil Choudhary, Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720.


5. E.F.I., 1637-41, pp. 42 and 105 Tavernier, op.cit., 1, 205.
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\item \textit{Annals of Bengal}.
\item Furker, \textit{Bombay Presidency}, p. 45.
\item \textit{Principal Voyages, op.cit.}, 3, 334. Linschoten, \textit{op.cit.}, 1, 47. Tavernier, \textit{op.cit.}, 1, 5.
\item \textit{E.F.I.}, 1637-41, pp. 42 and 105 Tavernier, \textit{op.cit.}, 1, 205.
\end{enumerate}
shifted there or to, Basra¹ that became the other important part in the Persian Gulf. Kung² also was frequented by the Armenians, but to a much lesser degree. Mokha and Aden were favoured ports of call for them on the Red sea.³

The Armenians either sold their goods at the port cities or took them inland. The pattern of their distribution was similar to that of overland trade, once the goods reached the port-cities.

From the second quarter of the 17th century, sea route gained in importance. For the Armenians also it resulted in an intensification of their maritime activity. Previously they had been carrying goods primarily on the Asian ships, but now then started using European shipping in a major way.⁴ The English factors in 1638 envously stated that

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4. The English Factory Records have abundant information on it. In the initial stages, at times, the Eng. factors are indignant of this 'very carriers trade' as they call it, but otherwise it is smooth sailing except for minor occasional unpleasantness about Armenian goods lost or damaged in transit.
the Armenians thrive between Gombroon and Masutipatnam in spite of paying 15% more in costs.¹

Gradually the Armenians overseas trade developed to such a degree that hiring tonnage on the ships of other merchants or companies no more suffixed and they stated chartering full ships.² Moreover now they came to have a considerable amount of shipping of their own, wherein carrying European and Asian goods as freight and their persons as passengers was a frequent practice.³

But they still continued to use the English East India Company's ships. In 1701 we find the English East India Company's governor Thomas Pitt enlisting Armenian help to fill a ship to the Persian Gulf.⁴ Even as late as the 1740's in the twilight of Surat trade it was felt that the Armenian trade to the Persian Gulf was quite considerable.⁵

1. E.F.I. 1637-41, op.cit., 42.
2. According to Susil Choudhary, 218, the majority of the merchants who freighted or chartered English Company's ships in Bengal were Armenians.
3. Dealt in detail in the following section.
South-East Asian Trade:

The other important area of Armenian overseas trade was south-east Asia. Malacca¹, Kedah², Achin³, Bantam⁴, Siam⁵, Tenasserim⁶, Pegu⁷ and the Philippines⁸ were the other important places to which Armenians carried their Indian trade.

In the early sixteenth century, we find the Armenians trading with Malacca on a triangular pattern. From the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, they used to come to Gujarat where they exchanged their goods with the textiles of Gujarat. About thirty different kinds of textiles from Gujarat are mentioned. Other commodities which were taken by them to Malacca were foodgrains, pachak, rosewater, tapestry and incense. The principal item brought back was spices. Gold,

2. E.F.I.
3. ibid; Annals of Bengal, op.cit., 345.
5. E.F.I.
tin, sandalwood, and Chinese items such as damask silks, musk and porcelain were other substantial imports.¹

With the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511, the Gujarat Malacca trade in the 16th century suffered a setback. The Dutch drove away the Portuguese from Malacca in 1641, but themselves imposed such heavy tariffs that Kedah, Johor and Perak arose as alternative centres on the Malay peninsula. We do not find evidence of Armenian trade to Johor and Perak, though they might have been most probably trading there, but we find that the Armenians had commercial interests in Kedah. In 1672, in spite of disturbed conditions on the maritime front due to the third Anglo Dutch War, Khwaja Minas sent his ship to Kedah, most probably primarily for tin, as it was a notable tin producing area.² Other important imports from this place were elephants, pepper and gold.

In spite of Dutch monopoly, Armenians were able to carry on their trade to Indonesian ports, but after 1677 as the Dutch passes became increasingly difficult to obtain, Manilla because the focus of their attention, from Gujarat as well as from the Coromandel. Khwaja Minas had already

¹ Pires, op.cit., 2, 268.
² E.F.I. 1670-77, 233.
realised the potential of this new centre and had for three consecutive years 1670, 71 and 72 sent his ship *Hopewell* to it.\(^1\) Textiles, especially calicoes, were the major commodity sent on these ships.\(^2\) The Armenian interest became so deeply connected with Manilla, that the profitability of trade in this area was gauged by their relative involvement - felt that if the Armenian 'interests could not fit a ship to Manilla, then meant that trade is little worth".\(^3\) According to the Vestiges also around 1724 trade to Manilla was entirely in Armenian hands.\(^4\) A very interesting development in the Armenian commerce to Manilla was the entry of private trade by the English merchants under 'cover' of the Armenians, as Spanish policy in the Philippines did not allow any European to trade there.\(^5\)

The Armenian ships were likewise busily plying between Madras and Pegu\(^6\), in fact it was again felt that "trade to

2. *ibid*.
4. *Vestiges*, *op.cit.*, 2, 23.
5. See Furker, *op.cit.*, 271, for details.
Pegu was entirely in the hands of Moors, Gentiles and Armenians and the English who were previously flourishing in the trade were relegated to building and repairing of ships. An idea of their shipping activity can be had from the shipping list of Madras in 1700. Out of seven vessels entering the port, three of them were Armenian ones.

Bantam also figured prominently on the list of Armenian trade. It also appears to have served as transit point for ships going to Manilla. It was further more the main base of the opium trade of the English Company as well as the Asian traders till 1682, when Bantam came strictly under Dutch control, which made the Armenians together with the other Asian merchants shift their interest to other centres like Manilla and Achin, which had already developed as very lucrative centres.

Achin was an important point in south-east Asia, with which the trade from Gujarat was carried on. Dutch

4. The main commodities exported to it were Gujarati textiles, wheat and rice, and imports were spices, pepper, tin, elephants and gold. For details see Arasaratnam’s contribution in India and the Indian Ocean ed. A.D. Gupta and Pearson, Calcutta, 1987, p.112.
The Armenians traded to this region from both Gujarat as well as Bengal, in the 17th as well as the 18th centuries. We find Khwaja Minas' ship operating to Achin from Gujarat in 1672. It also became an important centre for the opium trade of the Armenians from Bengal.

We also have evidence of Armenian trade from Siam and Tenasserim. The major commodities brought back from the latter point by the Armenians were elephants, tin, tutenage and copper.

Armenian Shipping

Though the Armenians largely operated on the ships of the Europeans and on those of their Asian counterparts, they nevertheless had a considerable amount of shipping on their own account especially from the second half of the 17th century and well into the next.

2. For details see. Om Prakash, Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, op.cit., 153.
5. ibid.
monopoly did not extend to this region. The Armenians traded to this region from both Gujarat as well as Bengal, in the 17th as well as the 18th centuries. We find Khwaja Minas' ship operating to Achin from Gujarat in 1672. It also became an important centre for the opium trade of the Armenians from Bengal.

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2. For details see. Om Prakash, *Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal*, op.cit., 153.
5. *ibid.*
Armenian ships were operating in the trade to West Asia, and south east Asia, apart from being engaged in the coastal shipping of India.\textsuperscript{1}

We do not have much evidence on the size and type of ships\textsuperscript{2} as the places where they were built\textsuperscript{3}. With respect to fares, a lone reference by Thevenot throws some light on it. He travelled aboard the \textit{Hopewell} from Basra to Surat, the fare was 40 abbasis or 60 shillings per head, which Thevenot feels was triple the amount that a Muslim ship would charge.

The \textit{nakhudas} were either Armenians\textsuperscript{4} or Europeans\textsuperscript{5}. The captains of both the Dutch and the English Companies were allowed to serve temporarily on the Armenian ships.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Abbe Carre, \textit{op.cit.}, 92; Thevenot, \textit{op.cit.}, 1; Hamilton, \textit{op.cit.}, 396, Vestiges, \textit{op.cit.}, 2, 231; \textit{Annals of Bengal}, \textit{op.cit.}, 2, 245. \textit{E.F.I.}, 1622-23, 189; \textit{ibid}, 1637-41, 225; \textit{ibid}, 1668-69, 195.
\item Hopewell was of 150 tons (\textit{E.F.I.}, 1668-69, 159) and \textit{Queddah Merchant} (Bruce, 3, 271). According to Abbe Carre, Khwaja Minas owned four 'large' ships (Abbe Carre, 92). The \textit{Hopewell} was built after the European model and had been brought from the English. The \textit{Queddah Merchant} was after the Mediterranean model as had been mistaken for a Genoese vessel.
\item \textit{Hopewell} was built at Surat. \textit{E.F.I.}, 1661-64, 118-119.
\item Thomas Quinn, English captain on Armenian vessel, Abbe Carre, \textit{op.cit.}, 93; Italian captain on \textit{Hopewell} Thevenot, 1. \textit{Queddah Merchant} had an English captain, 12 other Europeans and a French gunner Leroy, Bruce, 3, 271.
\item Furber, \textit{op.cit.}, 315; Hamilton, \textit{op.cit.}, 1, 233.
\end{enumerate}
Apart from their salaries, it appears that the *nakhudas* were allowed to take goods on their own account. Perhaps these cargoes were freight free after the custom in European and Asian shipping, which allowed this privilege to the captains.¹ In the *Hopewell's* voyage to the Philippines, the supercargo or *nakhuda* owned a third of the cargo.²

As already mentioned, the Europeans often went aboard these ships, and sent their goods as freight on them. Apart from this, the Europeans occasionally chartered Armenian ships. The *selimony* was hired by the French in 1680 to be sent to Persia.³ Most probably this vessel was hired previously by the French in 1669.³

There are hardly any references to Indian ships being sent out on joint ventures or in partnerships⁴, but this

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1. Indians around 1620 employed European navigators at the rate of 10 - 15 a month, apart from giving them a certain amount of free carriage for their goods. See Hamilton, *op.cit.*, 1, 233.

2. *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, 195; The Cargo was reported be worth 15,000 larins.


4. Amongst the first ships sent by the French to Persia, Abbe Carre mentions a hired vessel *Saloman* which left Surat in 1669. There is a strong likelihood of this being the *Selimony* which has at times also been referred to as the *Sulaiman*.
practice does not seem to be unknown to the Armenians. The Hopewell was sent out in partnership to the Philippines in 1672, the concerned merchants borrowing money on bottomry.  

A number of Armenian ships fell to pirates at the end of the 17th century, references to the amount of losses in these piracies help us to form a broad idea of the worth of goods consigned on Armenian vessels. Around 1689, two Armenian ships fell prey to pirates, off the coast of Malabar. One was bound from Goa to Madras, the other from Goa to Surat, the cargoes being 20,000 pagodas and 50,000 xeraphims respectively. In 1699, the notorious William Kidd captured the rich Queddah Merchant, bound from Bombay to Surat. It was regarded as the 'best prize' Kidd had made. It is interesting to note that a leading Mughal noble, Mukhlis Khan was reported to have had Rs. 2 lakhs worth of goods on it. The entire ship, according to Dutch

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3. ibid.
5. Mukhlis Khan claimed this amount to have been lost on the Queddah Merchant, Surat to Batavia, 22nd Sept. 1698, K.A. 1517, quoted from A.D. Gupta, p.
sources, was worth Rs.15-16 lakhs. Keeping in mind, the relative value of other vessels of the time, this amount appears rather staggering, even if due weightage is given to exaggeration.¹

Major Commodities:

The Armenians dealt in a very wide range of commodities, comprising of both bulk goods as well as luxuries, though more substantively the farmers. There hardly seems to be any item that had not drawn their attention.² Their major thrust however, especially in West

1. Sheikh Hamid's ship the Ahmadi about whose safety Surat merchants were especially worried about was said to be Rs. 8 1/2 lakhs. Hussain Hamadani's ship with interests of such a personality as the Imam of Mocha was reported to be about Rs. 18,50,000. Mulla Ghafoor's, the merchant prince's ship taken around this time was said to be worth Rs. 2 1/2 lakhs. Rahimi, another ship belonging to him was worth Rs. 5 lakhs. For details regarding the above mentioned ships, see A.D. Gupta. Buddulph reports the Queddah Merchant to be worth 10-12000 pounds. Hill puts it at Rs. 5 lakhs, which is still substantial enough.

Apart from this, it should be kept in mind that the Queddah Merchant and the other two Armenian ships fallen to pirates, were all engaged in coastal shipping, whereas most of the ships with which I have made comparisons were deployed in the lucrative Red sea trade.

2. The list of commodities dealt by Hovhannes in his trade in India, Nepal and Tibet speaks volumes about the wide spectrum of goods dealt with by Armenian merchants. The journal gives about 174 items (Given in Appendix ²²)²² Khachikian.
Asian trade, seems to have been in textiles and indigo as exports and bullion as the major import. Broadcloth also constituted a very important item of import as well as to a certain degree, export, especially in the 17th century.

Textiles:

Regardless of the fact whether the Armenians traded to West Asia, south-east Asia or towards Nepal and Tibet, textiles were the dominant export commodity from India. They dealt in an almost infinite variety of textiles, ranging from rough calicoes to expensive silks and brocades.

In Hovhannes journal also, we find a great diversity in the range of textiles, and in their prices. The textiles were of cotton, silk, wool, jute and velvet; plain, printed and checked; white as well as coloured; of lace, of brocade, and of silver and gold embroidery on them, catering to all stratas of society. The prices ranged from 0.25 and 0.64 per length to Rs. 4 and Rs.5.5, and in one case to Rs.15.

The Armenian merchants bought these commodities from all over India.¹

¹ For example Chintzes from Delhi, Sirhind and Masulipatnam, silks from Bengal, Golconda and Banaras and Calicoes from Samana. E.F.I. 1637-41,134, annals of Bengal 2, 278 and 379.
It is held that there was not a single weaving village or production centre of which the Armenians were not aware of.

Apart from getting the commodities cheaper, the Armenians were drawn to these primary centres, because like indigo, certain varieties of textiles were not available on the open market. Most often the designs, weave, measurements and colours had to be adopted to the requirements of Turkey and Persia, and hence they had to be ordered or contracted for at the production centres.

For West Asia\(^1\) as well as for Nepal and Tibet\(^2\), a number of textiles were in demand but for south east Asia, the requirements were primarily for calicoes, against which the commodities of the islands were usually exchanged. From very early in the 16th century we find Armenians coming from West Asia, breaking their journey at Surat from where textiles were picked up for trade in Malacca.\(^3\)

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1. In 1620, President Rastell of the English Company observed that 'calicoe, lawnnes or shashes, namely sallowes, guldares, sursalles and cuscosees' were the chief commodities carried by the Armenians to West Asia. (E.F.I., 1630–31, 124).

2. Apart from having calicoes, woollens and palankposh (regarded as an expensive item) Hovhannes buys at Patna, a variety of textiles to trade into Tibet with, namely chapla, alaja, luhari, khassa, fine calico, rough calico and solagazi.

3. Pires, op.cit., 2, 268. About thirty varieties of textiles were taken to Malacca from Surat.
Armenian merchants, together with "Mogul" merchants in the 16th century are reported to have bought auritis and kincobs worth ten hundred thousand in Banaras every year.\(^1\) Khwaja Minas’ ship in 1672 had cargo worth 1500 larins in calicoes.\(^2\) Even individual Armenian merchants invested fairly large amounts in textiles. An Agra merchant at Patna bought Rs.30,000 worth of cloth and sent it to Surat.\(^3\) Hovhannes bought 11,000 lengths of Khairabad at Lahurpur.\(^4\)

Indigo:

Similarly Armenians were closely involved in the indigo trade in all the major indigo producing centres like Sarkhej, Bayana, Koil and Koria. Armenians took it from here directly to Aleppo and Isfahan.\(^5\)

In the 17th century\(^6\), after the advent of the Europeans, indigo generally came to be sold directly at the

\(^{1}\) *Annals of Bengal*, op.cit., 2, 379.

\(^{2}\) *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, 195.

\(^{3}\) Manucci, op.cit., 2, 77.

\(^{4}\) Khachikian.

\(^{5}\) Pelsaert, op.cit., pp.15, 16 and 18; Manrique, op.cit., 2, 152; *E.F.I.*, 1642-45, p.303.

\(^{6}\) Earlier, Lahore and Agra were more important centres, because of the location on the caravan route from the West.
production centres. The Armenians, amongst other merchants swarmed to these areas.¹ Even big merchants, at times personally went to make indigo purchases.² Manrique informs us that when he went to Agra to meet a certain influential Armenian merchant, he found that he had gone to Bayana to make indigo purchases. He decides to go to Bayana himself, inspite of knowing that the journey would take a week, which meant that the merchant had gone for a longer period for the negotiations.³

The Armenians had such heavy interests in this commodity that its price level was affected by their demand. The English factors in 1628 felt that the price of indigo could not depreciate unless the Armenian and Moor merchants put an end to their purchases.⁴ Apart from the supply-demand factor, the Armenian commercial techniques also manipulated the prices. The Dutch complaint regarding them is quite amusing. They feel that the Armenians pretend to "buy up the whole stock, raising prices, losing a little

3. *ibid*.
themselves, and causing great injury to us and to other buyers who have to purchase large quantities"\(^1\).

They not only manipulated the prices but also contributed in fixing the time when indigo was to be purchased. The peak months were October and November though the Europeans would have preferred to buy a couple of months later.\(^2\)

Indigo, being in great demand in West Asia and Europe, and yielding high profits, the Armenians bought it despite exceedingly high rates in certain years, for example in 1630, due to drought\(^3\). In 1635 also, the rates were so high, that the Europeans forebore from buying it. The Armenians nevertheless bought it and consequently made a profit of 150% on it.\(^4\) In normal years, this commodity yielded a profit of 50%.\(^5\)

An idea of the quantity dealt with by the Armenians can be had from Hovhannes transactions of indigo at Khurja. He

\(^{1}\) Pelsaert, *op.cit.*, 16.
\(^{2}\) *E.F.I.*, *1646-50*, 253.
\(^{3}\) *ibid*, 62.
\(^{4}\) *ibid*, *1634-36*, 138.
\(^{5}\) Khachikian.
bought 50 charms of indigo, equal to 368 kg., a fairly large amount, a part of it was shipped to the Red Sea, and the other to Gombroon.¹

Broadcloth:

If cotton textiles and indigo were the major commodities that the Armenian exported from India the main import commodity that for them was broadcloth.

Broadcloth deserves special attention as it was an item extensively dealt in by the Armenians, at least till the end of the 17th century.²

In the first chapter, we have noticed the interdependence of Persian silk with English broadcloth, and the heavy Armenian involvement in it. This trade continued into India, the Armenians bringing them both overland and overseas. In the first half of the 17th century, the English factors frequently grumble that the market was oversupplied in centres like Delhi, Agra and Lahore, due to broadcloth being supplied overland by the Armenians.³ The

¹ ibid.
² E.F.I., 1624–29, 63; ibid 1642–45, 18; ibid, 1646–50, 7 and 336; ibid 1651–54, 9 and 30.
³ E.F.I., 1624–29, 63; ibid, 1646–1650, 7; ibid, 1651–54, 30.
English East India Company was unable to dispose of their broadcloth due to this 'cloying' of the market. Apart from oversupplying, the Armenians also at times undersold the English 'Company' in this commodity thereby lowering prices and resulting in reducing profits to the 'Company'.

This woolen cloth was more in demand in the higher strata of society, though it is not clear who were the major purchasers of this commodity. Even Hovhannes detailed diary does not reveal to whom he sold the 726 gazes of broadcloth, he had brought from Persia.

Broadcloth came in several varieties and colours, and was priced accordingly. The rough broadcloth for which Khwaja Minaz contracted for in the 1660's and 1670's remained between Rs. 3 1/2 and Rs. 5 per yard. As for the fine broadcloth, the exact rate was not determined beforehand. Forward contract could be made for the fine cloth, but at a fixed percentage of profit on the invoice.

4. Red and green broadcloth was more in demand in India.
5. *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, 207, *ibid*, 1668-69, 183. The coarse cloth which Mina's contracts far in 1670 was Rs. 4 per yard and the cloth mashes Rs. 3 1/2 per yard. Previously in 1669 Mina's had bought at Rs. 4 3/4 per yard and in 1663 at 4 5/8 per yard.
price from England. The cost price of the cloth brought by Hovhannes was roughly Rs.8 per yard.

The Armenians not only brought it themselves, but also brought them off the English Company in huge quantities. In 1663 Khwaja Minas puts in a tender for Rs.4 5/8 which is accepted. In 1669 he contracted for the entire cargo of broadcloth arriving by the coming fleet (this was about 12,000 pounds). In 1670 he again makes a forward contract for the entire cargo of broadcloth, but this time for Virji Vohra, the merchant prince.

Broadcloth imported into India was also for re-export. The Armenian exported it to Nepal, Tibet and China.

Bullion:

As balance of trade was in favour of India and the country needed few imports, silver was the dominant import good, throughout the period of our study. Interestingly,

1. *ibid*, 1668-69, 183.

2. Khachikian.


5. *ibid*, 1670-77, 192.

Thevenot has observed that the major part of American silver "after running through several kingdoms of Europe, goes partly into Turkey, for several sorts of commodities, and partly unto Persia by the way of Smyrna for silks" from where vast quantities of it go to Mokha, Basra and Gombroon, and eventually to India.¹

According to Tavernier, the major part of the Spanish m coin which came to India was through the Armenians.²

As we have noticed earlier since the gold-silver ratio was much lower in China, the Armenians brought a considerable amount of gold into India via the Nepal-Tibet route.³ Gold also formed an important import from South East Asia. In the former area it shared with other equally or more important imports such as musk and tea, and in the latter area with spices, tin and elephants. Gold did not have the dominant quality of silver imports from West Asia into India. They were of a gigantic nature, the other imports from West Asia appeared liliputan compared to them.

1. Thevenot, op.cit., 240.
2. Tavernier, op.cit., 1, 19.
APPENDIX

LIST OF ARTICLES MENTIONED IN LEDGER OF JOUCHARYES (July 1712)

1. A doom - the name of a cloth; bought in all two lengths in Kairabad; paid 1,252 rupees.

2. Aghegh - a precious stone-sard; two types are mentioned - white and limpet.

3. Alaja - (various sorts of alaja are mentioned: chukha, timgayi, kham, charkhana), a variegated cloth coverlet.

4. Aloor - flour.

5. Ambravi kezes - the stone of date-palm of which beads were made.

6. Ampua - a kind of dress made of chanti.

7. Anach - uncertain.

8. Apricshoom - a silk thread of which hoods were made.

9. Ater (also green ater) - an aromatic leaf used as spice.

10. Atrak, atrak jam - a square towel, handkerchief.


15. Bara gaza - the name of a cotton cloth manufactured in Lakahur and elsewhere; he bought it at the price of 2.5 rupees per length.


17. Baroot - gunpowder.

18. Behdaria - quince stone used in medicine.

19. Bihar khassa - a costly cloth; he bought the length at 1.75 rupees.
20. Bohcha - a simple cloth; bought for making clothes for the servants.
21. Boor (which in kechifarta) - uncertain; he bought one only.
22. Boorgi - a precious stone.
23. Boozghanch - uncertain.
24. Bora - a sack.
27. Chai - tea.
28. Chakma - footwear
29. Chali (which is jajim) - a small carpet.
30. Chanakh - a vessel with deep-lying bottom.
31. Chatti (kura, thin and white) - a kind of cloth; he bought it in Sironj.
32. Chapla - expensive cloth bought in Patna; the length at about 3 rupees.
33. Cherak - an icon-lamp.
34. Chini (bowls, cups, etc.) - chinaware.
35. Chipigar - uncertain.
37. Chit (of Valanduz, Bandar, Bnaris, Unugur, thick, thin, Siakat) - calico.
38. Chola - cloth, 1.08 rupee the length.
40. Chotabara - cloth, 0.64 rupee the length.
41. Chotari - cloth, 0.25 rupee the length.

42. Chowia - lining.

43. Chuni - a kind of article sold by the piece.

44. Daba - a leather pouch.

45. Danak - a knife.

46. Dastakhan dogazi - a tablecloth, two gazes long.

47. Dergazi - a cloth, he bought in Khairabad, 333 lengths and sent it to Isfahan and Istanbul for sale.

48. Durbin inglisi - an English spyglass.

49. Duria, durie - a costly cloth; he sold the length at 5.5 rupees.

50. Dzet - thread (?).

51. Emerti - a kind of fabric; he bought three lengths for 6.525 rupees (including the price for dying).

52. Erankin - the same washed-white gaz.

53. Erekhta - ingot of gold.

54. Erevant - rhubarb.

55. Fili lain - ivory (?)


57. Gani - a coarse thick fabric to make 'bora'.

58. Gavat - a cup.

59. Ghalam franki - a European pen.

60. Ghalian - a hooksh.

61. Ghotazi poch - the tail of an ox-like animal that was fastened to the ends of glads.
63. *Ghuti* - a box.
64. *Glula* - a bullet.
65. *Gon* - leather.
67. *Gulap* - rose-water.
69. *Jajim* - a thick tarpaulin-like cloth.
70. *Jezma* - slippers.
71. *Jola* - see chola.
72. *Jora* - perhaps *jorap*, i.e. stockings.
73. *Kadak* - handkerchief or coverlet-shaped white or green silk cloth. Widespread in Tibet as articles for sacrifice.
74. *Kaghat* - paper.
75. *Kaghtsreghen* - sweetmeats.
76. *Kalaiptun* - klapiton, i.e. an edge laced with gold and silver threads.
77. *Kandi* - an expensive cloth, 2 rupees the length.
78. *Karbar* - amber.
79. *Karmizar* - piece-goods, each bought for 3.5 rupees.
80. *Kassa* (brass or iron-made) - a vessel with deep-lying bottom.
82. *Kesherk* - scales.
83. Keshta - a fabric used for covering the goods or the sacks.
84. Khanchal - a dagger.
85. Khassa bihari - see Bihari khassa.
86. Khavandasta - mortar and pestle.
87. Khazan arkate - an iron saucepan.
88. Kherapati - a costly fabric manufactured in the same city.
89. Koochin - a cloth of large dimensions which he bought in Lhasa.
90. Koorajani - uncertain.
91. Koora ketav - used as coverlet for loads.
92. Kor - a kind of article sold by the piece.
93. Ktav - coarse cotton
94. Ktav - a white, thick sama-cloth.
95. Hakhmoor zarov - velvet woven in gold-thread.
96. Hamoorkhani - an expensive cloth; he bought the length at 1.1 rupee.
97. Mancha - goods sold by weight; he bought this kind in Lhasa.
98. Lachidana - cardamom.
100. Lagan - a large vessel for water.
102. Lain - an expensive coloured cloth, perhaps calico.
103. Lakayuri - an expensive fabric woven in the same city; he bought the length at 2.5 rupees.
104. Lanka arkate - an iron vessel.

105. Latoor - an article sold by the piece; he bought it together with a lock.

106. Lekhep - a quilt ( < Persian lihaf).

107. Leghak - blue.

108. Londrine - English broadcloth.

109. Londre - inexpensive red stuff.

110. Hafrash kashe - a leather-made large-sized sack.

111. Margarit - pearl.

112. Harhaa - a soft cotton cloth that has been used both as towel and for bandaging.

113. Marmar - an expensive fabric, 4 rupees the length.

114. Mekh arkate - an iron nail.

115. Marjam - a small pearl.

116. Mintali - an article sold by weight, probably almond.

117. How - candle.

118. Hooshk - musk.

119. Hooshtak - fur, fur-coat.

120. Mooza - high-necked shoes.

121. Necha - goods sold by the piece; bought in Patna.

122. Palankpoosh (thick altana, etc.) - a coarse fabric for wrapping the loads.

123. Papooch - simple footwear.

124. Patari - a carafe.
125. *Patka* - an expensive cloth.
126. *Patka zarov* - a gold-thread-woven cloth of large dimensions; he bought it in Benares 15 rupees the length.
129. *Peri* (printed) - perhaps a coverlet or a cloak.
130. *Pisooz deqhnapeghentse* - brass candlestick.
131. *Poch* - see *ghotazi poch*.
132. *Samsa* (sia samsa) - cloth adorned with silk.
133. *Sandoogh* - a trunk, box.
134. *Sank* - see *booghzi*.
136. *Segari* (also *soogari*) - an article sold by weight, bought in Patna, sold in Nepal.
137. *Semagh* - a kind of Oriental spice used in meat courses.
139. *Shal* - shawl.
140. *Shila* (red hemp) - a kind of hemp.
141. *Shisha* - a flask or tube.
142. *Solagazi* - a simple cloth for suits and lining.
143. *Soup* - an article sold by weight; he bought 50 litres of it in Patna and sold the article to the English ( = Hindi sauph, 'anise').
144. *Soorai* (perhaps *jastesooriai*) - uncertain.
145. Soossy \((soossidaria)\) - an expensive silk-woven cloth; he sold it in Agra 2 rupees the length.

146. Soozani - laced cloth.

147. Taghik namazi - a small carpet to pray on.

148. Taisamsa - an article sold in pairs.

149. Tali - a kind of piece-goods.

150. Talis - hemp-thread-woven cloth.

151. Tombaku - a kind of tobacco.

152. Tank dziu - horse saddle.

153. Tantsoo - a kind of precious stone.

154. Tas - a plate

155. Tas chaikhori - a tea plate, saucer.

156. Tavartash - some kind of piece-goods.

157. Tavizani - an ornament made of precious stones, beads.

158. Tefeldan beghendze - spittoon.

159. Tel - thread.

160. Timach karmir - inexpensive cloth; bought in Nepal, the length at 14.25 rupees.

161. Tirma \((red, \ white \ tiki \ tirma)\) - a fabric made of fine goat hair.

162. Tla-i zar - gold thread.

163. Toomafarmis - some kind of goods sold loose.

164. Torn - fishing-net.

165. Uru - an iron.
166. *Varpoosh* (of Tabriz, Agra, etc.) a simple cloth used as coverlet; a sack.

167. *Yapnji* - felt used to wrap the bales.

168. *Yara gazi* - the same as thin chanti.

169. *Yiljankali* - cardamom.

170. *Yudi* - a dress made of chanti.

171. *Zafran* - saffron.

172. *Zarajat* - small articles.


CHAPTER 3

THE ARMENIANS AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

The Armenians in India’s free trading world had to compete with the merchants English East India Company as well as with other European merchants besides the Indian and Asian merchants. Armenians and English both had to make adjustments with each other since they could, of course, not wish away the fierce competition.

The conditions obtaining in India’s commercial world forced them not only to compete but to cooperate as well. The Armenians utilised English stupping that was so far to freight their goods to various trading centres. The English in turn relied on the Armenian better acquainted with the land and its practices for the purchase of commodities, for the negotiations at the Mughal Imperial court and with the local Mughal administration and for gaining concessions at both the levels.

While I have little access to the resources of Dutch East India Company’s records of the English East India Company seem to offer enough information on the relations of the Armenians with the English Company to enable as to have fairly detailed picture.

Soon after the advent of the English, in India, we find them being assisted by Armenians in the capacity of couriers
qasids and interpreters. The English being new to the setup were unacquainted with the languages and cultural environment, hence the Armenians with their command and languages and their thorough understanding of the local stage, were the natural resort of the English.

Frequent mention has been made in contemporary sources of Skander, Hopkinson's interpreter, who carried out a varied range of functions for his employer - holding the charge of the caravan of the English Company, enroute to Surat from Agra; getting released goods detained at the tolls of Ankleshwar, and acting as guide to guests of English Company.

The Armenians also acted as brokers of the English Company, but we have very few references to it. They seem to have been mainly involved in direct trade with the Company, and less as brokers.

3. ibid., p.179.
5. See Chapter 5.
From the records of Fort St. George, we get evidence of a leading Armenians merchant over there, Gregorie Paroan being appointed as justice of the superior Court of Judicature in Madras, at its establishment in 1690 "for the better understanding and satisfaction of foreigners and natives, and that the bench may be rightly enforced to their language, Laws and Customs".1

The Armenians were frequently employed by the English as their representatives (vakil) at the Mughal Court and the courts of regional governors.2 Some very important farmans and nishans were obtained by the English through their services Prince Azimu-sh-Shan's nishan granting the zamindari rights of Suttanati, Govindpur and Dihi-kalkatta was procured with the assistance of Khwaja Sarhad in 1698.3 The farman of 1717 often known as the "Magna Carta" of the English trade in India, granting the English customs - free


2. In 1701 the English dispatched an Armenian vakil to prevent Morris, an 'interloper' from gaining any favour from Aurangzeb. See Annals of Bengal, p.

3. Annals of Bengal, V.2, pp.149-50. First Sarhad was sent to the Camp of Tabardast Khan to goun assistance against the "interlopers" and for restoration of Malda & Rajmahal but on getting a negative response from him, they proceeded to the Prince who granted them the right of these three villages.
trade in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa was also obtained chiefly through his helps. In the delegation appointed to call on Farrukh-siyar for the farman, Khwaja Sarhad was "second in council" the others being Surman and Stephenson.\(^1\) Khwaja Sarhad, in fact was very close to not only the dignitaries at the imperial court\(^2\) but also with the influential nobles at the court of the governor of Bengal, which made him of invaluable assistance to the English in getting the officials to intercede on their behalf in disputes with Indian merchants and officials, and to secure extraordinary concessions from them.

A major area of Armenian and English cooperation was in the field of shipping. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the Armenians freighted and took passage on English ships in large members, right from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Later on when the Armenians developed their own shipping, this practice became reciprocal.\(^3\)

The English Company it appears, preferred to freight goods rather than to let the Armenians charter the entire

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2. One of the reasons given for Sarhad's appointment by the English factors was that Sarhad knew King Farrukhsiyar personally, having taken presents for the King when the latter was a young prince (*ibid*).

3. See chapter 2.
ship as more profits could be obtained by the former practice.

Armenians shipping had become so substantiated that by the end of the seventeenth century, the English factors observed that the duties from Armenians shipping at Madras exceeded the entire duties obtained by the English at Gombroon. The freighting of Armenian goods from Bengal to Surat was also very lucrative.

In 1693-94, the English factors at Coromondel were ordered to sell the Company's coasting ships and hire small vessels from the Armenians for their coastal trade.

At times, the captains of the English Company were engaged to navigate Armenian ships, as this was permitted on a temporary basis by the Company's.

The English Company was well aware of the extraordinary skill of the Armenians in conducting trade, the systematic

1. See Susil Choudhari, p.218.
2. Bruce, V.3, pp.159, 60.
3. Furker, 276.
4. Bruce, V.3, pp.142-3.
way in which they carried out their commercial operations, as evident from the fact that the Court of Directors of the English Company in 1673 specifically ordered its writers in Persia to board with the Armenians, learn their language and acquire their method of conducting business. Thus it is not surprising that the Armenians were closely linked with the English Company in their commercial ventures in India both in the role of buyers as well as suppliers.

In Persia, the Armenians traded with the English Company partly by barter and partly in cash, whereas in India, there is not evidence of barter of any sort between them. The transactions consisted of both cash and credit, with bills of exchange figuring prominently in them.

Broadcloth was the major item bought in India by the Armenians from the English Company. Forward contracts with prices determined beforehand to avoid the vagaries of the market and monopolising the market by buying up the whole stock were frequent practices employed by the Armenians vis-

1. Bruce, V.3, pp.140-1.
a-vis the English Company. At times the Armenians also bought on behalf of other Indian merchants.

The Armenians, as previously discussed were well established in the hinterland and according to one calculation were able to buy commodities for export 30% cheaper than the Company. Moreover the Armenians bought commodities out of their own capital and at times supplied the Company on credit. All these features plus the fact that the Board of Directors of the English Company in London already had diplomatic relations with the Armenians in Persia led the English Company to seek closer relations with the Armenian merchants in India.

In 1665 the Armenians were specially invited to come and settle in Bombay by Gerald Aungier, the President of

5. *E.F.I.*, 1665-67, p.51. *ibid.*, 1670-77, pp.38, 159. After Bombay was handed over to the English by the Portuguese, the English Company endeavoured its best to develop it as a substantial port. Aungier invited the leading merchants of Surat to settle in Bombay. The Armenians were specially earmarked and approached through Khwaja Minas. See Chapter 4 for details.
the English Company special privileges were offered to them including gift of land for houses, warehouses and church for them. ¹

In 1638 the English Company entered into an agreement with Khwaja Phanoos Kalantar (who was acting on behalf of the Armenian nation) at the headquarters of the Company in London. ² The Armenians were given a number of privileges in return for foregoing their conventional trade to Europe via the land route through Persia and Turkey, in favour of sending them on the English Company's ships to London and then to Europe via the new Cape route. The Armenians were promised all benefits the English enjoyed, were to be treated on equal terms with the English merchants, even where employment was concerned; to use the Company's ships to any part in India, China and South east Asia, that was included in the Company's charter, live in the Company's settlements, practice their own religion and to purchase and sell lands and houses. The English Company also promised not to unload the Armenian goods consigned on their ships for Rukey, Venice or Leghorn at any port in Europe except at that

¹ E.F.I., 1665-67, op.cit., p.159.
² For the text of the agreement see Seth, op.cit., p.233.
directed to by the Armenians, but with the understanding that the English reserved the right to keep back in London any good that they thought fit, for the Company for which the Armenians would be paid at a rate which would guarantee one third profit on the first cost.

A copy of the contract was sent to Madras, to the English Company over there and the principal Armenian merchants; and formal invitation extended by the Company in Madras to the Armenians in 1690.¹ This must have been the case with the other English settlements in India.

Subsequent to the signing of the contract with Phanoos Kalanther, a number of directives were issued, till the very end of the century to the English settlement of Bombay, regarding encouragement to be given to Armenian traders.²

¹ Records of Fort St. George, Diary and Consultation Boot of 1690, Madras. The Armenians were "invited to settle and trade here [Madras] and line and he as free therein as any English whatever, paying only 5% Custi to the said Rt Honourable Comp. and nothing to Peddanarque, Town Connacaply, muskut, pagoda or any other petty custome or duty whatener...."

² In 1688-89 it was ordered that "Ist Bengal goods had lately been in great demand at the Company's sales, and as the imports of them, from Hughly were uncertain, the general and Council of Bombay were to hold out every encouragement to the Armenian merchants, or, that they should receive not only protection, but a profitable market". Bruce, V.2, pp.617-18. In 1619-2 it was felt that the encouragement given to the Armenians ought to be continued, and a duty of 1% only, taken from, for goods imported from Europe into India (ibid, p.107).
The main emphasis of the directives, as of the treaty of 1688, appears to have been on two counts. Firstly to procure goods from the hinterland, especially Patna and Bengal commodities, through the Armenians.

For supplying these commodities at Bombay, the Armenians were to be given 30% profit on the prime costs. It was felt that the Armenians "finding their way in times of trouble into the interior provinces and bringing fine goods in small quantities, that purchase from them would become a valuable resource for their [English Companies] European investments." The Court of Directors in England further expressed the opinion that the Armenians were trustworthy and qualified to be their Agents.

Secondly, the English Company was equally interested in re-routing the silk trade from its Levant route - through Turkey to Europe, to the overseas one on English ships through London. To encourage this, broadcloth was to be made available to the Armenians, cheaper than they would get through Aleppo.

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2. *ibid*.
The Armenians were largely operations at the English settlement of Calcutta, right from the beginning of its establishment. In 1694, according to another agreement between Phanoos Kalantar and the English Company, it was agreed that the Armenians would buy commodities from Patna with their own capital, and supply these to the English at Calcutta or Hugli at a profit of 15% on the prime costs.¹

Apart from the main treaty between Phanoos Kalantar and the English Company, two other treaties were simultaneously concluded between them in 1688. One granted the sale monopoly of the garnet trade to Phanoos Kalantar and his family, at a rate of 10% on custom duties in London. The other treaty promised to build a Church, give an allowance of fifty pounds per annum for the maintenance of a priest till seven years, in all the settlements that had a population of over forty Armenians.

One can thus conclude from the available evidence that in the seventeenth century the English did not make any major impact on the pattern of Armenian trade. The Europeans and the Armenians shared the ocean with other Asians. The

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Armenians could fiercely compete with the English Company, at times destroying their market in a particular commodity and at times also driving them out from a particular area. Perhaps, in spite of alleged superiority of organisation of the English Company¹ they were at least in the 17th century in no commodity position and the Armenians could outmanoeuvred them in number of instances but the situations changed in the 18th century as discussed later on and the English Company got the upper hand and the Armenians had to accept English superiority. They emerged as the dominant power, but here also the Armenians sought a way out - they worked in collaboration with the English, whereas other merchant groups were not so lucky. In this they were aided to a considerable extent by the diplomatic ties which they had been able to establish with the English Company at its headquarters in London.

CHAPTER 4
ARMENIAN MERCHANTS PARTICIPATION IN INLAND TRADE

To participate in India's foreign trade the Armenian merchants needed access not only to ports and the exit centres for overland trade but also to the hinterland and centres of production from where the commodities could be acquired at low prices. They were not confining their ventures to foreign trade only but once well entrenched in India’s trading world were more than ready to participate in inland trade as well. They operated in nearly all the important centres of trade.

In the 16th century the Armenians were present mainly in centres on or near the overland route. Lahore was a centre where the Armenians were very prominent.¹ It was a major indigo market, and Armenians mainly exported indigo through Lahore, so much so that the indigo going overland to the West, came to be identified in European markets as Lahori indigo. Even when trade in indigo diminished, the Armenians remained still very active in Lahore, shifting from indigo to the fine textiles from Masulipatnam, which were in demand in Turkey and Persia².

Agra being strategically placed near the trunk road and well connected and in proximity to a number of inland trading centres as well as centres of production, and being until 1648, the capital of the Mughal Empire, enjoyed the full attention of the Armenian merchants. Even when it ceased to be the political capital, it remained the commercial capital of the Empire. In 1620’s Pelsaert complained that the individual Armenian merchants made so much attempts at Agra to ensure supply of indigo, that the prices went up. Hovhannes on visiting Agra in 1669 found a well established Armenian colony with their church over there. He gives the list of several Armenian merchants with whom he had trade dealings.

In Delhi also, the Armenians were well entrenched, even when it was not the capital of the Empire, and continued with their trading activities even when the overseas trade had overwhelmed the overland trade. In 1639 it has been


2. Khachikian.

noted that though trade in this city was practically dead, the Armenians were still widely in operation in this centre, though now dealing only in chintzes whereas Delhi previously boasted of a wide range of commodities.¹

Kabul², Multan³, Burhanpur⁴, Sirong⁵, Sirhind⁶ and Samana⁷ were amongst the other thriving centres on or near the main trunk road.

Apart from these centres, the Armenians were also initially present in ports like Cambay, Diu, Daman, Goa and Quilon⁸, but by the first quarter of the 17th century, their

4. Manrique, 1, p.65. Armenians frequented it specially for the iron available here and the fine cloth for veils and women’s headresses.
5. The Armenians resided here and bought its cloth in large quantities, both coloured and white, the latter being very much in demand in Persia. ibid, 66.
6. Commodities that invited the Armenians here were chintzes and sugar. see E.F.I. 1637-41, p.134.
7. ibid.
trading activities extended to all the major trading regions of India, where they were found buying commodities like calicoes at Samana, opium at Patna, chintzes at Masulipatnam, indigo at Bayana, Koil and Sarkhej, brocades at Banaras and silk at Bengal to quote a few examples.¹

It appears that the Armenians made on the spot transactions as well as making contracts for future deliveries, the latter especially so, because as already discussed certain commodities were not readily available on the open market. They had to be acquired by placing orders in advance at the primary level.

Either the merchant himself had to go to the production centre or depute his agents or brokers to conclude the transaction. The travelling merchant, due to paucity of time, had no option but to deal through brokers, or enter into partnerships with fellow Armenians who would conclude the deal and send the goods later on.

The Armenians were not only buying these commodities to feed the long distance trade, but also purely for trade

within India. Thus were ready to deal in any commodity that offered them a good profit.

Surat was an emporium for a large number of commodities pouring in from all over.

The intimate knowledge of and access to the primary production centres enabled the Armenian merchant to buy commodities at rates far cheaper than those paid by the European Companies for the same commodities.

The Armenians contributed in supplying the city with the commodities from the hinterland. In 1683 the English factors have clearly stated that commodities were brought into Surat by Armenian merchants from Agra, Lucknow, Burhanpur, Darrongon and Ahmadabad.¹

In Bengal, the Armenians were supplying commodities from Patna to the English East India Company at Hugli and Calcutta.²

Not only did the Armenian merchants settled in India participate in the purely internal trade but also the

¹ O.C. 30 Nov. 1683 V.43, no.5001 quoted from O.P. Singh.
merchants who had come overland or overseas on short term trading venture. Hovhannes provides a very good picture of it. He bought a considerable quantity of cloth in 1682 at Lahurpur, and sent it to Surat to be sold there. At Patna, he bought *soupons* and sold them to the English Company at Calcutta.¹

**Coastal Trade**

A considerable amount of trade was also carried by Armenians along the coasts of India. The Armenians participated in the coastal trade between centres like Surat, Bengal, Madras, Masulipatnam, St. Thome, Pondicherry, Goa and the Malabar.

We do not have evidence of the specific commodities being carried, by the Armenians along the coasts. They must have naturally followed the general trend of the coastal trade carried on by other merchants, in which textiles and grains formed the bulk of the commodities.

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1. Khachikian; *Soupons* is unfortunately an unintelligible word.
Before the Bengal-Surat trade was directly established, we find Bengal commodities usually going to Madras, and from there being taken onwards to Surat, and the same happened vice versa. From Surat, textiles and other commodities as well as West Asian goods, thus reached Bengal in this indirect manner. But in the second half of the century, direct trade between these two centres attained great dimensions.¹ The Armenians had heavy interests in this Bengal-Surat trade, especially in the last decades of the 17th century and early 18th century. The Armenians either sent their own ships or freighted others. At times they were stationed at Surat, but carrying on trade from Bengal to Persia as well as to the Coromandel.²

There was no distinction between merchants who took part in long-distance trade and those carrying on local and coastal trade. In most cases the same merchant was involved in both. In 1669 Khwaja Minas had trading interests on a

¹. According to Schreuders observation the Armenian trade between Surat and Bengal was 'reasonably great' see Furker, *Bombay Presidency in mid-18th Century*, p.65.

For details on Armenians trade between Surat and Bengal see Furker, 276; Om Prakash *Economy of Bengal*, pp.33-34.

². *ibid.*
ship bound from Surat to Bombay. Khwaja Sarhad in Bengal had sent factors to trade in Goa on his account. Sarhad Israeli frequently sent his ships on these coastal voyages. In 1708, his ship went from Hugli to Goa. In 1699-1700 from Hugli to Surat. He also sent on account of the Surat merchants Aka Beyrie and Koursie, ships from Hugli to Coromandel and Surat.

The Armenians seem to have been working hand in hand with their Indian counterparts. We at times find them bickering with there own countrymen or involved in long drawn out litigations with the English Company; but surprisingly they had an amiable relationship with the Indian merchants. It is quite striking that we do not come across any single evidence of feuds between them. Even Hovhannes ledger, which has recorded a number of disagreements between the Armenians and other merchants, has no account of Armenian merchants' conflict with India to offer.

The Court of Directors of the English Company in 1668-69 felt that the Armenians traded in India 'in a manner

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1. E.F.I., 1668-69, 159.
2. Annals, 2, 100-2.
3. Shipping list of Hugli given in Om Prakash Economy of Bengal, pp.33-34.
which had not excited the jeavousy of the Natives'.\textsuperscript{1} Perhaps this goes a long way in explaining the cordial relations between the Armenians and the Indians.

In 1663, Khwaja Minas defeated Virji Vohra's tender for the purchase of the English Company's broadcloth\textsuperscript{2}, but this did not result in any differences between them, for a few years later we come across Minas contracting for the entire amount of broadcloth coming on the next fleet on behalf of Virji Vohra.\textsuperscript{3}

In 1700 Khwaja Sarhad Israeli operated ships in Bengal on behalf of surat merchants Aka Beyrie and Koursie.\textsuperscript{4} In 1701 we come across a ship chartered from the English Company at Hugli for surat by Armenians and Indians in collaboration.\textsuperscript{5}

The activities of Armenian merchants and their fortunes in India can perhaps be illustrated in a perusal of the career of Khawaja Minas.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Bruce's \textit{Annals of the Honourable East India Company}, V.2, pp.617-18.
\item \textit{E.F.I.}, 1661-64, P.207.
\item \textit{E.F.I.}, 1670-77, p.192.
\item Om Prakash, \textit{Economy of Bengal}, pp.33-4.
\item Susil Choudhary, p.124. The Indian merchants were Mathuradas and Brindabandas, and the Armenian ones Khoja Padroes and Khoja Phanous.
\end{enumerate}
Khwaja Minas: A Case Study

Khwaja Minas was undoubtedly the most eminent Armenian merchant in Surat in the latter half of the 17th century. A study of his career as a merchant may provide us some insight not only into the trading activities of the Armenians at Surat but also into the condition of trade and commerce at Surat in general, at a crucial time when the English were striving hard to establish their supremacy like other Armenian merchants, Khwaja Minas too carried his trade as an individual. The Armenian merchants usually operated as individuals, though at times they operated in partnership with members of their family as members of their community. However since Minas is referred to as the 'President of the Armenians', most probably they had some sort of an organisation which looked after their mercantile interests and served as a liaison between their community and other organisation, but in no way their organisation had any similarity with the European companies. They could never draw upon the kind of financial and political support available to these companies at home.

1. In detail in the last chapter.

2. *E.F.I.*, 1665-67, p.61. The President of the English Company at Surat in his correspondence with the Bombay, Council refers to Minas as the 'President of the Armenian nation in connection with the Bombay - Surat transaction dealt with later on.
merchants were all concentrating on Basra at this time. The ship that was used was the of the mentioned Hopevell. It was a locally built ship as Surat at this time had a flourishing shipping industry. Minas had bought it from the English President, George Oxinden in 1665 for Rs.14,000. Oxinden claimed that it was in a very bad shape. Perhaps Minas got it fully repaired since it was successfully employed by him for a number of years.

A cargo of 1500 l mostly comprising of calicoes was sent to the Philippines in the Hopevell in 1669. The details of this voyage are recorded in the English Factories. Minas' brother Khwaja Kirakose, was the supercargo of the ship and owned a third of the stack. Money was taken at high interests of 45%, 50% and 60% to finance this voyage, which goes to show the great faith in the venture. In spite of such high interests the voyage seems to have met with considerable success, because the records of 1672 show that the Hopevell was making frequent voyages to Philippines, between 1669 and 1672 it made three voyages.

1. E.F.I., 1661-64, pp.118-19.
2. E.F.I., 1665-67, p.8. ibid, 1661-64, 327.
One of the main hurdles, faced by Minas during these voyages was the Dutch Blockade. The Dutch had emerged as the leading European power in the Archipelago. In the early sixties, they monopolised the entire area, except two ports, Achin in Sumatra and Kedah on the Malayan coast, thus Minas was compelled to confine the voyages of his ships to these places alone. During this time, Siam was another port, his vessels visited in these trying times.  

As far as Minas' trading activities are concerned, broadcloth was the main item in which he dealt. In 1663, Minas submitted a tender for broadcloth that was accepted over riding that of Virji Vohra. This in itself speaks volumes about the eminence of Minas. Again in 1669 the entire stock of broadcloth (except the Malabar factories quota) was contracted for in advance by Minas. The ordinary broadcloth was priced at Rs 4 3/4 per yard and the fine one at 40% advance on the invoice price. The quantity was a fairly large one as the total import of broadcloth by the English Company in 1669 was 12,758.

2. *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, p.204.
Minas also made contracts with the English Company for coarse cloth, cloth rashess and perpetuanoes. Apart from broadcloth and other textiles indigo was another item in which Minas dealt.

The merchants of the 17th century Surat often had to put up with oppressive Mughal officials, particularly the subadar of Gujarat and muttasadi of Surat; Khwaja Minas was no exception, he too had to make gifts in kind and cash to the Governors handsomely, particularly when he was seeking protection against the English.

However, the governors, such as Saifullah Khan were very oppressive and in 1676, some of the leading merchants were compelled to send a complaint to the Royal Court, but the governor, Mirza Saifullah, found out about it and the

1. E.F.I., 1668-69, p.183. 250 pieces of damaged perpetuanoes were contracted for at Rs.20 each in 1669.


According to Carre', Saifullah was so tyrannical with the merchants that no one knew that to do about it. He was insatiable and instead of being satisfied with the rich presents and large sums of money which he received from every side, became so unsupportable that it seemed the more he got, the more he ill-treated those who he knew could satisfy his unjust claims.
merchants were very badly treated to the extent that their leader was beaten with slippers. Khwaja Minas was most probably one of the complainants, since two of his ships were detained in this connection, and he had to give lavish gifts to get back his ships.¹

Similarly, in 1672, Minas had to suffer great humiliation at the hands of the then governor, Ghiyas-ud-din, who had him "beaten with slippers and staves until they had almost killed him for writing to the king of injustice done him by the Government." Perhaps it was these factors and oppression that was the major cause which made Minas think about shifting to Bombay. In 1665 there was great uproar in Surat over the fact that the English factors were trying to draw away the leading merchants from Surat to Bombay. Owing to various reasons the English long cherished the idea of Bombay replacing Surat. By now they were seriously thinking on these lines, and offering heavy inducements to the leading merchants to settle at Bombay. Gary⁴ reported that he was endeavouring to draw hither as

1. ibid., p.148.
many merchants (Banians as well as Moores and Perseans) as possibly I can from Suratt, Cambaya, Ahmadabad, Broach, Diu, Tahtah, etc. ......." It appears from the records that the Armenians were marked out as most coveted merchants at Bombay. Not only were they to be given land to build houses, warehouses and church\(^1\) but the General and Council of Bombay decided that they were to hold out "every encouragement to the Armenian merchants, or, that they should receive not only protection but a profitable market, any charges that might be incurred, in giving such encouragement, would be fully compensated, by the trade this people would introduce......... if therefore they could be induced to make Bombay their principal market; the commercial effect would be incalculable; and farther to induce them to accept of this offer, they were to be allowed to send their goods on the Company's shipping, to Europe, for sale.\(^2\)

Furthermore they were to be offered thirty percent profit on fine Bengal goods, supplied by them.\(^3\)

\(^1\) E.F.I., 1665-67, p.283.
\(^3\) Bruce's *Annals*, II, pp.617-8, Cf. Seth, p.283.
Aurangzeb came to know about it through the reports of the *waqi-a-navis*, and a letter was sent to the Governor, who summoned the English, who immediately denied the charge. Upon this all the leading merchants were called, and asked whether they had been invited by the English, if their answer was in the negative they were supposed to sign a paper stating it, on pain of penalty and forfeiture unto the king if proved to the contrary. All went well for the Company till it was Minas's turn, who fearing that it might be found out that he had been invited, blurted out the truth and produced a paper which incriminated the English. The Governor was enraged and Sayyid Mahmud was sent to Bombay to investigate into the matter.\(^1\)

The English on the contrary claimed that Khwaja Minas had himself promised to come to Bombay with the rest of the Armenian merchants.\(^2\) They planned to show Sayyid Mahmud, Minas's letter "to manifest unto him what a jugler he hath proved himself, in first inviting himself, to come to live among us and then to cause so much trouble."\(^3\)

\(^1\) *E.F.I.*, 1665-67, p.61.
\(^2\) *E.F.I.*, 1665-67, p.70.
\(^3\) *ibid.*, p.61.
Not withstanding all the protestations of the English, Minas in all probability was telling the truth. It was but natural for the English to approach him if they really desired to attract the Armenian merchants to Bombay. He being in their own words 'president of the Armenians', the key person.

Before the unpleasantness of this episode, Minas' relations with the English Company were nearly always very amicable uptill 1671. We have already noted that he was the main buyer of the broad-cloth brought by them. The English factors also travelled on his ship as passengers,¹ and also hired his ship to send their goods to Persia.² They consider him 'an able and a well reputed Armenian merchant'.³

One fact which must have counted a lot in the relationship between Minas and the English Company was that the Armenians had links with the English Company not only in


The English factors Rolt and Sainthill were passengers on the St. Michael on its voyage from Mokha to Surat.

2. *E.F.I. 1670-77*, Sugar was sent on the *Selimony* of Minas in 1677.

India but also in England. There are several instances of Armenians holding parleys in England with the Board of Directors, some of them like Khojah and Phanoos Kalandar and Khojah Kirakose were close relatives of Minas. 1 The well known Phanoos Kalandar who was instrumental in getting the treaty of 1688 signed was Minas's father-in-law. 2 The treaty was drawn up between Phanoos Kalandar resenting the Armenian merchants and the Governor and Company of London merchants trading to the East Indies. Amongst other things the treaty granted the Armenians all the advantages that the Company granted to their own merchants, to reside and trade freely in the Company's territories and garrisons, to hold civil offices and employments, equally with the English, and their passage and transportation of their merchandise in the Company's ships. Kalandar was furthermore granted the monopoly of the garnet trade.

Minas' brother Khojah Kirakose had been to London with a recommendation from the King of Persia. 3 He held discussions with 'certain committees' of the Company, and

the English were of the opinion that would be instrumental in securing privileges from Shah Sulaiman of Persia. Amongst other things he was given special permission to ship foreign cloth on the Company's ships.¹

In 1670, *S. Francisco* in which Kirakose and Minas were interested was forced to take shelter in Bombay. As a mark of special concession, the payment of anchorage dues was exempted. Moreover, the Surat Council requested the Bombay authorities to render every possible help including providing warehouses for the protection of goods from rain.²

Minas's relations with the English soured over a debt which the former was unable to clear. As noted earlier, broad-cloth was usually sold by contracts in advance, that were finalised much ahead of the arrival of the cargo from England. Minas often made such contracts, but in 1671, we find Aungier complaining that minas owed the Company Rs.75,000 for broad cloth contracted, for earlier, but as its price had fallen down since its contract was made, Minas was trying to "fling on our hands, but we so roundly dealt

with him, declaring our intention to seize all his shipping and estate wherever we could find it, that we at last made him stand to the bargain.\(^1\)

The dispute over the payment lasted for more than a decade. At times Minas was badly harassed by the English who at times posted peons at his door, at other time, the intervention of the Governor and Customer was sought.\(^2\) Matters reached such a point that the English sent their own commander on Minas's ship, the Selmony, so as to seize the freight money. Their plan was however defeated by two Armenian nakhudas secretly planted on board.\(^3\)

However they certainly realised sufficient amount, since at one stage, when the English were pressing Minas for more money, when he had sold one of his ships, Minas took to position that the principal amount had already been paid and what was demanded further was the interest, which was forbidden by Mohammadan law.\(^4\) In 1677 he became insolvent.\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) *E.F.I., 1670-77*, p.209.
\(^{2}\) *ibid.*, p.239.
\(^{3}\) *ibid.*, pp.276-7.
\(^{4}\) *E.F.I., 1670-77*, p.239.
\(^{5}\) *ibid.*, I, p.234.

In 1680 it was again reported that he was an absolute bankrupt.
In 1673 the English still held that Minas owed the Company Rs.40,000. At least in 1680, the English extorted a further sum of Rs.5,000 from Minas. But up till 1684 the debt was allegedly not fully paid.

However perhaps Minas finally succeeded in using his influence and connections to approach high authorities, since we find that in 1690's the Company rebuked the English factors, Harris and Annesley for slighting "the Armenians that are honest men; and it is very impertinent that you write us Coja Minass Hodges debts are cleared out of your Surat books as your accounts doth say."

After 1690's no mention of him is made by the English. Either his trade relation with the English ceased totally or he died.

However, one thing is almost definite from evidence that he all through operated from Surat and never shifted to Bombay.

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2. Bruce's Annals.

Harris was President of the English Factory at Surat from 1690-94 and Annesley from 1694-98.
CHAPTER V

ARMENIAN MERCHANTS; COMMERCIAL ORGANISATION AND PRACTICES

At the outset I would like to state that this chapter is heavily based on the 'Ledger of Hovhannes Joughayetsi' as different trade practices are best illustrated in it, and also owing to paucity of such material in European or Persian sources.

Partnership

Apart from carrying out business in individual capacity (which was the general rule) the Armenians also carried out trade under partnerships of various forms through these partnership ventures were mostly confined within the Armenian community.

The practice of rich merchants sending out their factors to different parts of the globe was a traditional one practiced by the Armenians. Fryer states it in very

1. L.O.H.J.; J.A.S.B., 1966 tr. Lvon Khachikian. It is a journal by an Armenian merchant, Hovhannes Joughyetsi, who came to India to trade in 1682. It is a valuable record of all his commercial transactions and has been preserved in the National Book Repository of Portugal. It is originally in Armenian but has been translated in both French & English Khachikian.

explicit terms "they are a kind of privateers in trade, no purchase, no pay; they enter the theatre of commerce by means of some benefactor whose money they adventure upon, and on return, a quarter part of the gain is their own. From such beginnings do they raise sometimes great fortunes for themselves and factors". Fryer whilst discussing the wealth of substantial Armenian merchants in New Julfa, again refers to this practice, "far whilst they sit lazily at home, their factors abroad, in all parts of the earth return to their hives laden with honey". Hamilton also says that "they send factors all over India to carry on trade".

According to this form of partnership, the Armenian khojas or rich merchants used to give cash or merchandise, or a combination of both, to their factors for trading purposes. The factor was the recipient of not a fixed amount of salary but a share in the profits, which was traditionally one-quarter.

Hovhannes Joughayetsi is a very good illustration of this type of partnership. His case was not an individual one

1. Fryer, op.cit., p.249.
or an exception, for apart from this practice being mentioned by contemporary historians, it is to be found as 'established and verified cannons of law' in the statutes of the Armenians, of Astrakhan, drafted in 1765. Nearly a whole chapter is devoted to the rights of mutual parties. To deserve such detailed attention means that it was an important and widespread tool of Armenian commercial operation.

It had its parallels in the commenda of the European trading world and in the girad, mugarada and mudaraba of the Islamic world. It is believed to have appeared in the late

1. *ibid*.

2. Commenda was an Italian term. According to Postan, "it was a contract of sleeping partnership, by which the commendator or the sleeping partner delivered goods or money to the tractor or active partners... and it was on his behalf and to his use [the commendators] that the tractor was supposed to be trading". See Postan *Medieval Trade and Finance*, Cambridge, 1973, p.68.

3. Undovitch: *Commercial Techniques*. The terms are interchangeable. The first two are of Arabic origin and the third of Iraqi. They all stand for commenda which undovitch was defined as "an arrangement in which an investor or a group of investors entrusts capital or merchandise to an agent manager, who is to trade with it and then return to the investor (5), the principal and a previously agreed share of the profits". See Undovitch, *Commercial Techniques in Early Medieval Islamic Trade*, published in *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, A Colloquium, ed. D.S. Richards, Oxford, 1970.
11th century in Europe and even before the advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. In the absence of adequate data it is difficult to say since when it was used by the Armenians. From the account of Fryer and Hovhannes journal, it is obvious that it was a traditional custom in use since long time.

In all these models, there is hardly any difference in the basic concept of the commenda. The terminology was naturally different but these performed almost the same functions and appeared in more or less the same forms. The share of the partners is of the same proportion - one quarter of the profits to the factor. Total freedom of the

1. *ibid.*

According to Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the late Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1983, p. commenda appeared in Italy in the 11th and 12th centuries and in Hanseatic ports in the 14th century.


3. In England also, partnerships of this type were though, at times nameless, were often given the name of commenda. For details see Postan: *Medieval Trade and Finance*.

4. *ibid.* One of the chief characteristics as elaborated by Postan was of the commendator contributing capital and no labour, whilst with the tractor it was vice-versa.
agent in carrying out his business (as long as it contributed to the attainment of profit); and the masters not being responsible for the liabilities of their factors, which are hallmarks of the commenda, are to be found in all the three models.

Another very important aspect was that repayment was linked with the success of the venture, acting as an insurance against loss - so vital in the risky world of long distance trade.

Hovhannes was an Armenian factor, who in 1682, enters into a contract with two wealthy brothers of New Julfa - Embrn Agha and Zakaria - who were leading merchants with wide ranging trading interests. According to it, Hovhannes received 250 tumans in goods, bills and cash.

1. If a factor was carrying on trade, honestly and to his best efforts, but unfortunately still suffers loss, then he was not held responsible for the capital. In L.O.H.J., in case of the factors being dishonest and disobedient, the losses were prescribed to be borne by them alone. It was only as a means of punishment and not a normal procedure. Undovitch has also stated that in the commenda the factor was not responsible for either total or partial loss. See Undovitch: Commercial Techniques.

2. Like Hovhannes, there must have been a number of merchants operating as factors, from his diary it is evident that his masters had a number of other factors, operating in India. Nazaret, who gets out Hovhannes goods from the warehouse at Surat, Hovhan of Shiraz were two such co-factors of Hovhannes.
to proceed to India for trade. The masters were entitled
to three-quarters of the profit apart from the capital which
they had put in. He leaves via Bandar Abbas for Surat to
carry out this objective.

The factors were custom bound to maintain a diary in
which all transactions were to be recorded in detail and
with dates. It was called a roozlama. Hovhannes, in
accordance with the custom, compiled a register, and thanks
to the preservation of it, we are in possession of an
immense amount of material pertaining to Armenian trade
practices. All details to be truthfully entered by the
factor, who was also naturally expected to honestly and
strictly follow his master's orders.

1. About 217 tumans worth of goods consisting of 738
   metres of red and green broadcloth, about 3 tumans in
cash, and bills for 29 tumans on M. Avetik payable at
Shiraz.

2. Arrives in Surat in March 1683.

3. It is stated in the XIV chapter of the statutes written
   for the Armenian of Astrakhan called Code de la Loi,
   Khachikian.

4. It is a meticulous diary of all his transactions in
   India, Nepal and Tibet. Details regarding various
   aspects of trade or matters indispensable for trade are
   also given. A partial translation has been made by
   Khachikian in both English and French, with separate
   chapters devoted to different aspects for example taxes,
   weights and measures, bills of exchange, profits &
   commodities.
The goods remained the property of the master, the factors share was only in the profit and not in the capital. It is clear from Hovhannes case that the goods belonged to the master. Similarly Khwaja Sarhad, an eminent merchant of Bengal, in connection with a debt he owed to the English East India Company, mentions that he had factors in Goa, trading with goods, on his account, and authorises the English Company to take over the goods, a clear proof of ownership or right to the goods resting with the master or commendator.

The Armenian merchants, were to a great degree involved in long distance trade, and the commenda was extremely suitable for it. It was a conveniently profitable venture

Khwaja Sarhad owed the Company about Rs.39,000 and as he was unable to clear the debt, authorises them to get the money through his lawyers at Goa, where he had goods worth Rs.75,000 consigned to his factor Aga Peere, who had succeeded another factor Avenoose, and from whom he had received no returns.

Postan classifies the commenda into three categories 1) service partnership where capital hires service of merchants 2) finance partnership - where it is vice versa 3) real as complete partnership - where all parties contribute both labour and service.

According to him, these partnerships can be differentiated according to the commercial relations between tractator commendator. When the latter was a substantial merchant then the partnership was definitely a service partnership. The Armenian model appear to be nothing else than these.
for those who had capital to invest in trade but were not in a position to personally carry out long distance trade or a specific branch of it. It was generally owing to the fact that it was beyond the capacity of a single person to personally supervise trade in diverse centres. It was equally profitable for merchants not having sufficient liquid capital but sufficient enterprise carry out trade on a sufficient large scale. Commenda solved problems of both the parties, the investors as well as the merchants.

Khachikian feels that the legal terms were formulated after the class interests of the masters and the agents were first 'servile executors of their master's will. Harsh measures were prescribed for them, if they did not return at their master's first command or if they did not produce the accounts ledger. But these appear to be just measures to enforce honesty and discipline and to have some sort of control (even if a loose one) over their factors or one can say, the capital they have invested. Maintenance and production of the ledger was given considerable importance because it was the key through which the profit and loss

1. Khachikian.

2. ibid. Harsh measures included being jailed, profits to be appropriated by the master and loss to be borne by factor alone.
could be gauged. Regardless of the fact whether the tenets of law were in favour of the factors or not, in practice this system was positively conducive to the prosperity of the factors.

Fryer states that they were at times able to raise great fortunes for their masters and themselves.\(^1\) However, the prosperity of the New Julfa merchants was attributed to the practice of sending out their factors to all parties of the trading world.\(^2\) Hovhannes had set out with a meagre capital of 250 tumans and by 1686 we find him in a position to invest Rs.4,685 of his own.\(^3\) In a span of a few years he gets transformed from a petty merchant to a substantial one, dealing in costly items and in contact with high officials and nobles.\(^4\)

Another very interesting point is that Hovhannes, though already had a contract with Embroom Agha and Zakaria, ---------------

2. \textit{ibid.}, p.250.
3. Khachikian: Hovhannes Joughayetsi forms a partnership with Hovhan in which both invest Rs.4,685 each. Hovhannes is here trading his own account.
4. At the time of leaving Tibet in 1692, he has with him, from other things, 783 kgs of musk and 5 kg 130 gms of gold.
entered into other partnerships. In 1686 Hovhan of Shiraz and Hovhannes Joughayetsi form a partnership in which both invested an equal amount of money.¹

Arasarotnam has cited evidence from Coromondel which show that the Armenian factors could not enter into other partnerships until they settle accounts with the first and obtain a discharge from them.² It is not known whether this was a usual practice or it was some sort of exception in Hovhannes, case.

One can presume that the factor was entitled to enter into other partnerships provided it was outside the sphere of the first partnership, because when Hovhannes signs a contract with his masters in New Julfa it was for trade with India and the partnership he makes with Hovhannes of Shiraz was for trade in Tibet. However this point is negated by the fact that Hovhannes enters into a contract within India also for whilst speaking of the fifty bales of cloth bought at Lahurpur and sent to Surat says that "Hovhan of Shiraz has

1. Khachikian. Both of them invest Rs.4,685 each, to trade in Tibet.

2. Arasaratnam, op.cit., p.289. A case had come before the Magors Court in Madras in 1735, where the factor Coja Techarial de Aviettde wanted to be discharged from the service of his masters Coja Tantasu, Coja Anotaka and Coja Sarad in order to enter into a new partnership, but the masters were refusing to do so.
the right to sell at his discretion for we are partners”. This incident was in Jan. 1686 prior to the signing of the second contract.  

Just as the practice of sending out factors had its counterparts in the European and Islamic trading circles, so also did the two types of partnerships (mentioned above) contracted between Hovhannes and Hovhan of Shiraz. They can be compared with the Inan partnership of Islam which was of two types - *khas* and *amm* - general and specified.  

In English medieval trade the latter form of partnership is known as single venture partnership or as Postan calls it 'occasional partnership’. It came to an end once the deal was over. Hovhannes’ partnership in all 

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1. The agreement with Hovhan for trade in Tibet was signed a month afterwards.

2. The first was for general trade when one could deal in all types of goods and the second for trade in specified commodities. The contracts which Hovhannes makes for the *bardar* cloth, can be termed as one belonging to specified category of Inan and the contract he makes for trading in Tibet of the general category.

For details see Udovitch - *Commercial Techniques in Early Medieval Islamic Trade*. 

probability came to an end with the sale of the bardar cloth.1

As noticed earlier, the Armenians in India do not seem to have been operating under a chief or head. We do not have any such evidence except for Surat; where Khwaja Minas is referred to as the 'Chief' or 'President' of the Armenians in the English Factory Records2, but it appears, that most probably it meant that he was the most important of all Armenian merchants of Surat. He is nowhere else referred to as acting in the capacity3.

Hovhannes journal, which has recorded even the minor offices of people connected with the commercial world, is also silent about this aspect.4

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1. Postan: Medieval Trade and Finance, p.83. The partnership began with the purchase of a certain merchandise and ended with its division or joint sale.


3. Abbe Carre, op.cit., p.95 also calls him a very powerful man in these countries and not a head.

4. Khachikian, Hovhannes gives a long list of rulers and government officials, of both high and low ranks. About 39 of them are listed in his journal. Had a head of the community been existing, it would indeed have been surprising of him to have missed him out.
The Armenians operated on their own as far as possible and it seems that matters requiring the offices of a head were left to the discretion of a body of important Armenian personages of the area, rather than to any single person.¹

A perusal of their legal proceedings also reveal this pattern. The legal cases were not decided on the judgement of any single person but on the pattern of the jury system. A body of Armenian representatives known as the joomiät decided the cases.² Important transactions were also conducted through this body.³

1. We find repeated references to the existence of a head of the Armenian community of New Julfa; at times he was also referred to as the Governor of New Julfa, but surprisingly in spite of this fact, the very important agreement of 1693-4 between the English East India Company and the Armenians of New Julfa, regarding the silk trade, was made not through the 'head' but through Five Armenian merchants. Moreover, the all important treaty of 1683, between the same company and the Armenian nation was conducted through Khwaja Phanoos Kalantar, who was neither the head, nor acting as his deputy, nor held any office, he was just an important and influential merchant acting on behalf of the Armenian merchants as such.

2. Khachikian. The New Julfa the dispute was written on a piece of paper, the joomiät noted their resolution on it, and then kalantar or the bailiff, his judgement of the matter.

3. ibid. Hovhannes buys Rs.1760 worth of amber from Avetik, in front of representatives of the Armenian business community (joomiät), who weigh and evaluate it.
Under foreign skies, the Armenians must have repeatedly faced the problem of not having a sufficient number of persons to make up a joomiat.¹ This problem was resolved by inviting merchants from other communities to make up the required number.²

Interestingly, in a case cited by Arasaratnam pertaining to Coromondel, the Mayor refers an Armenian dispute to an assembly of Armenian merchants and priests, and then gives his verdict on the basis of their report. This procedure is in conformity with the traditional one of New Julfa, with the difference that instead of the Armenian Kalantar, the English Mayor is the bailiff.³

The Armenians preferred to settle their cases within their own community and according to their own customs, but this could only be done as far as they were dealing with their fellow countrymen, but once outside this sphere, the

1. Actual number required not known.
2. ibid. In a dispute in Lhasa between Hovhannes Joughayetsi and his servant Kashmiri merchant were invited to settle it, together with other Armenian merchants.
local laws and regulations of the country of their operation, governed their activities.¹

Manucci has related an incident, which throws light on a dispute between an Armenian merchant and a number of Indian merchants, and how it was resolved.² In 1662, in Patna, Khwaja Safar buys cloth on credit from a number of merchants, though he knew he would not be able to pay them as the sarraf on whom he had a bill of Rs.25,000 had gone bankrupt. He lades the goods for Agra (from where had come), but himself stays at Patna³, and upon being pressed by his creditors to make payment, declares himself bankrupt. The case was taken before the court where the judge declares that since the sarraf was a fellow countryman of the

1. This should not be taken to imply that when Armenian merchants were dealing within their own community in foreign lands, they did not, at all resort to the local laws. Naturally if one party found the local laws and customs more in his favour, he would not hesitate to apply to it. In Tibet, though there were enough Armenians to form a joowiat, the Armenian merchants on more than one occasion resorted to the local authorities. Similarly in the case cited above from Arasaratnan, which had been referred to the Mayor of Madras, both the parties concerned were Armenians.


3. He could have gone back to Agra, to claim payment for his bill, but it would have led to loss of precious time and money and perhaps also the deals.
merchants, "they must take the bill and procure payment for themselves .... It was unreasonable that a stranger should suffer in a foreign country".

Khwaja Minas was involved in a long drawn out case with the English Company over a debt, he owed to them. In 1669 he makes the plea that the money was for interest, which was forbidden by Islamic law. This was later on disproved, but regardless of the fact whether Minas was making a first claim or not, one should not be misled to think that in Mughal India, Armenians were judged according to Islamic tenets. As Prof. Irfan Habib has aptly pointed out, that the legal cases were not decided by the religious judges or qazis but by secular officials.

The case study of Minas, given at the end of the chapter is illustrative of the dealings of Armenian merchants with Mughal officials. To realise the debt from Minas, various procedures were adopted, like seizures of goods, arbitration, sending peons to sit at the door, and

1. E.F.I., 1670-77, VI, p.239.
2. Irfan Habib, Usury in Medieval India, Comparative studies in Society and History, Netherlands.
3. Similarly in Khwaja Sarhads case, peons were deputed to sit at the door until payment was obtained. See Annals of Bengal, V.2, p.315.
so on. The officials were perhaps so insistent on getting the debt cleared, because usually they themselves got a share of the amount recovered.¹

Khwaja Sarhad engaged the offices of lawyers. In 1713 we find Sen Augustine Robero and Khwaja Nayur (obviously an Armenian) acting as his attorneys in Goa. They were to settle the accounts of Sarhad's factor Aga Feere, and out of it to make payment to the English Company to clear the debt which Sarhad had incurred.²

Credit

In the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires, the Armenians had an edge over the European Companies owing, to a large measure, to their ability to pay in cash.³ In India also, they must have dealt extensively in cash transactions, but nevertheless we find that a sizeable amount of their trade was also based on credit.

Bills of exchange were very widely in use in medieval India.⁴ By the 17th century, most of the commercial

1. Irfan Habib: Usury in Medieval India, "Common practice of Mughal officials in Shah Jahan's time to claim a fourth part of the debt which they recovered on behalf of any suitor.


3. Dealt in detail in Ch.I.

transactions were made through this medium. The Armenians like other merchants made full use of it, both as a means of remittance\(^1\) as well as an instrument of credit.

Hovhannes, on a number of occasions, raised loans from the money market through bills of exchange. At times he becomes a lender himself.\(^2\) In 1684 he gives Rs.1,800 to Baba in Ahmadnagar at an interest of 3/4\%. The bill was payable at Surat after 41 days.

On one occasion, presumably to make more profit out of speculative investments, he borrows money at the rate of 0.75% per month and gives it out as respondentia loan to Shamketsi Gaspar, who was leaving for Isfahan, at a rate of 27%, payable to his masters in Isfahan.\(^3\) This might give an

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1. Khachikian. Hovhannes often remits money from one city to the other. Agra, Khairabad, Patna and Surat are mentioned in this connection. The interest ranging from 1% to 8%. To give an example, Hovhannes in 1686 transfers Rs.1000 from Agra to Patna at a rate of 1-275\%.

2. ibid. He seems to have lent money on at least three occasions.

3. The interest is not as high as it appears at first glance. The interest of 27\% seems to have been for 1 1/2 years as Hovhannes has remarked that he made a profit of Rs.13.5. The interest on the loan he had borrowed at 0.75\% in 18 months would have come to 13.5\%. 
idea of how Armenian merchant utilized the credit system for their capital accumulation.¹

The term avak has been used for the above transaction and also with reference to a few other Armenian transactions of a speculative nature.² These appear to be respondentia loans³ and interest on them ranged from 20% to 60%. The rates of interest must have varied depending mostly upon the degree of risk involved.

In 1669 Kh. Minas sent his ship Hopewell to the Philippines.⁴ The English factors noted that there is "soe great hopes on this voyage that Cojah Meenas and the persons concerned have taken up money at avog (or bottomarie) thereon at 45, 50 and 60%. Though it has been stylised only

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1. Similarly he borrows avak from Topchents Poghos and Toomajan of Van who were leaving for Isfahan and Basra respectively. The interest was 17% in the first instance and 20% in the second. Payment was to be made by Hovhannes masters in Isfahan and Hovhan of Shiraz in Basra.


3. Respondentia was a loan given to a ship-owner or a merchant upon goods laden on a ship, and could be either for a round trip or a one way trip. The lender was entitled to get back the loan on condition that the goods reached their destination safely.

as bottomry, it seems to have been an example of both bottomry and respondentia.¹ As Arasaratnam has shown for Coromondel², bottomry was a loan 'in which the keel or bottom of the ship was pledged³; and this could only have been done in the event of the borrower owning the ship. As far as Khwaja Minas had taken the loan, it could have been bottomry, but since even the other merchants had taken up money at avog, it must have been on the goods laden or respondentia.

Evidence pertaining to mortgage comes from the Coromondel.⁴ It points to the practice of Armenian churches lending money by mortgaging the property of the borrower.⁵

'Sale Credits'⁶ or deferred payments on goods purchased and advances for future delivery, also played a

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1. Perhaps the separate rates are indicative of this fact.
2. Arasaratnam, op.cit., p.278.
3. A similar definition is given in Webster's English dictionary - "a contract by which a shipowner borrows money, pledging the ship as security".
4. Arasaratnam, op.cit., p.278. From cases recorded in the Mayor's Court in Madras.
5. Postan Credit in Medieval Trade, I.H.R. 1964.
very important part in the commercial operations of the Armenians. We find that Khwaja Minas\(^1\) and Khwaja Sarhad\(^2\) were both largely indebted to the English East India Co., but the debts were not for ordinary loans but were for goods taken on credit (postponed payments), and not cleared at the time due. These were not trivial transactions, a substantial amount of money was involved in both cases - Khwaja Sarhad owed Rs.38,831\(^3\), and Khwaja Minas, Rs.75,000\(^4\).

Similarly in 1617, we find the English factors engaged in trying to recover the debt from an Armenian for 'cloth sold him in Agemere [Ajmer] five months before'.\(^5\)

In connection with credit transactions with other Indian merchants, Khwaja safar in 1662 was able to buy on credit, cloth worth Rs.25,000 from different Indian merchants, regardless of the fact that he was a resident of

3. *ibid*.
5. *L.R.*, V.6, p.244.
Agra and not of Patna where the transaction takes place.\textsuperscript{1} This can be taken to be illustrative of the trust enjoyed by Armenian merchants, which enabled them to buy on credit a substantial amount of goods.

Credit, as Postan has observed did not always flow from the buyer to the seller but also in the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{2} Armenians made advance payments for future delivery to the English East India Company, in other words they made forward contracts. Such contracts were either paid for in part or in full. Khwaja Minas in 1669, buys in advance all the broadcloth expected by the coming fleet. He gives in advance 40% of the invoice price.\textsuperscript{3} In 1670 he again makes such contracts not only for himself\textsuperscript{4}, but also on behalf of Virgi Vohra.\textsuperscript{5}

Not only did the Armenians make forward contract with the European Companies, but also directly at the primary source, at least as far as indigo is concerned.

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Manucci, \textit{op.cit.}, V.2, p.77.
\item[2.] Postan: \textit{Credit in Medieval Trade}.
\item[3.] O.C. no.3373, C.P. 10, see O.P. Singh.
\item[4.] \textit{E.F.I.} 1667-84, p.183.
\item[5.] \textit{E.F.I.} 1670-77, p.192.
\end{itemize}
Just as the Armenians took goods on deferred payments, so also did they sell on deferred payments. With their dealings with the E.F.I. Company, the latter being always short of cash, the flow of credit from the Armenians to the E.F.I. Company must have been more frequent than vice versa. The English East India Company at times paid the Armenians by bills of exchange on the Court of Directors. Bills in India, were generally payable after a lapse of ascertain time; so one can safely say that paying by bills was another form of deferred payment.

In 1721, we find an Armenian broker, (along with other brokers) demanding payment for goods sold previously on credit, as well as advance payment for goods yet to be sold.27

1. Khachikian.
In Tibet also, we find Hovhannes selling musk to his countrymen, the amount, in several instances being payable in a year. To quote an example "I sold to Tratoar, seven sets of amber heads, weighing 16 lanks, the sum to be paid in a year, on his return from slink".

2. Sushil Choudhary, p.131.
In 1703, Khwaja Surhaud Israel received three bills of exchange on the Company in London for 1,356.5 against Rs.7000 worth of goods supplied by him.


Apart from 'sale credits' the commenda partnerships dealt with in the preceding pages were also undoubtedly a type of credit. Instead of charging interest on the loan, a fixed share of the profits was taken. It was not only a form of partnership, but combined in it the characteristics of an insured loan.

1. Postan *Partnership in English Medieval Commerce*, Partnership was a legitimate form of commercial loan (includes commenda in it).

Undovitch: *Commercial Techniques*: He feels that the commenda served the economic function of interest bearing loans.

2. *Ibid*. "Commenda" could serve as a means of financing and to some extent insuring commercial ventures."
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