

*The Indian Diaspora  
in Central Asia  
and its Trade*

1550-1900



BY

SCOTT C. LEVI

THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN CENTRAL ASIA  
AND ITS TRADE, 1550-1900

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CENTRAL ASIA AND ITS TRADE,  
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SCOTT C. LEVI



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## ABBREVIATIONS

CSHARU: Central State Historical Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan

OSIASRU: Abu Rayhan al-Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Antonova I: K. A. Antonova, N. M. Gol'dberg and T. D. Lavrentsova, eds. *Russko-indiiskie otnosheniia v XVII v. sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow: Nauka, 1958.

Antonova II: K. A. Antonova and N. M. Gol'dberg, eds. *Russko-indiiskie otnosheniia v XVIII v, sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow: Nauka, 1965.

*EI1*: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, first edition

*EI2*: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition

*EIr*: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*

TFS: Zia ud-Din Barani. *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī*, edited by Saiyid Ahmad Khan, W. N. Lees and Kabiruddin, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1860–62.

## A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Where it has been decided that it may be beneficial for the informed reader, words and phrases in non-Latin scripts have been included in the footnotes in their original scripts. Plural forms of non-English words have been formed by adding the final letter 's.' Names have, in general, been transliterated without diacritics as the benefit of doing so is outweighed by the distraction. In cases where the specific spelling of proper names may prove relevant to a discussion, the name has been included in the original script in the footnotes. In general, the system of transliteration used follows that of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* with a few minor simplifications. Those characters not obvious to the informed reader are, therefore, presented below:

<u>Persian</u>		<u>Russian</u>	
ث	<u>th</u>	ж	zh
چ	ch	х	kh
ح	ḥ	ь	'
خ	kh	ю	iu
ذ	<u>dh</u>	я	ia
ز	zh	ѣ	e
ش	sh	ц	ts
ص	ṣ	ш	sh
ض	ḍ	ч	ch
ط	ṭ	щ	shch
ظ	ẓ	ы	y
ع	‘		
غ	gh		
ق	q		
ء	’		
ة	at		

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years it has become more generally acknowledged that the comparatively well-recorded political and commercial activities of the Portuguese Estado da India and the Dutch and English East India Companies in the Indian Ocean have for some time received an amount of attention disproportionate to their importance to early modern Asian economic history. One product of this historiographical bias has been the long-held belief that, following periods of great prosperity under the Mongol and Timurid Empires, from the seventeenth century Central Asia became increasingly isolated and plunged into a lengthy period of political instability and socio-economic decline. This era of alleged isolation has generally been attributed to the Europeans' monopolization of the transcontinental movement of commodities between Asia and Europe, presumed to be the bedrock upon which all Central Asian prosperity was built. It is considered to have continued until the region again became a part of the global economy as a result of its growing trade relations with the developing markets of nineteenth-century Russia.

It is a central argument of this book that early modern Central Asia was not economically isolated and that, in fact, the commercial relationship between Central Asia and India during this period continued at an escalated level. In an effort to debunk the notion of Central Asian isolation, one need look no further than the main subject of the present work. It cannot be overemphasized that it is during the very period that Central Asia is supposed to have sunk into abject decline that we see thousands of Indian merchants overcoming seemingly prohibitive geographical, political, cultural, and religious barriers to establish a diaspora network comprised of dozens of highly active commercial communities dispersed across urban and rural Central Asia. It is hoped that the present work will encourage others to reconsider global history themes in a less Eurocentric perspective.

It is another central argument of this work that there was a qualitative difference between the commerce of the Indian diaspora merchants and the earlier caravan traders. While both types of merchants mediated the exchange of goods between these regions, the diaspora merchants did not limit their commercial activities to the import-export trade. Rather than exchanging their Indian commodities for other goods in demand in Indian markets and

then returning home with the next caravan, the diaspora merchants remained in distant locations for extended period of time, usually several years, and they deliberately engaged their capital in a variety of interest-oriented money-lending ventures. Throughout the diaspora these merchants were well known as a source of various types of short-term high-interest loans and for financing elaborate systems of urban and rural credit. It will also be shown that the Indian merchants' trade and moneylending activities placed them in a unique socio-economic position in their host societies. This, with only a few notable exceptions, earned them the outright protection of the local ruling elites, despite the fact that the vast majority of the diaspora population consisted of Hindu merchants living in Muslim states.

The Indian merchants' ability to dominate the moneylending business throughout the diaspora was made possible by their position as agents of Indian family firms. Those who have looked to European influences for the roots of Asian capitalism will find it interesting that, long before European merchants working for the Dutch and the English East India Companies arrived in the Indian Ocean, there were Indian family firms established throughout north India operating heavily capitalized commercial institutions that maintained diverse portfolios of trade and moneylending investments. Again, rather than triggering the decline of such indigenous commercial institutions, it is during the very period of European expansion in the Indian Ocean commercial arena that the Indian family firms began to diversify their portfolios geographically by sending agents to distant markets in port cities, villages, and major and minor urban centers as far away as Moscow and St. Petersburg. It was by means of the Indian merchants' affiliations with these great firms that the agents were able to leave their homeland for years at a time to participate in diaspora commerce. Primarily, this is because it was the directors of the firms who provided their agents with training in the relevant trade and moneylending techniques and equipped them with the capital investment necessary to begin their commercial activities. Furthermore, association with a respectable firm enabled Indian merchants to transfer money across great distances more safely by using bills of exchange rather than cash, and the firm directors were also in a position to support the agents' families in their absence. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that the directors and agents of these family firms utilized the Indian economy as an engine to finance transregional trade, rural credit systems and industrial production across the diaspora.

In a more general sense, the present work is a socio-economic analysis of



India's commercial relationship with Central Asia from its intensification in the sixteenth century under the great early modern Islamic dynasties to its disruption in the late nineteenth century under the pressure of the British and Russian colonial powers. At its core, however, this is a study of the emergence, economic function, social organization, and decline of an early modern merchant diaspora. That is to say, while it is a goal of this work to illustrate the vitality and general characteristics of the commercial relationship between India and Central Asia in the early modern period, it is primarily a study of the most important component of this relationship: the thousands of Indian merchants living and working in diaspora communities dispersed across urban and rural Central Asia from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. It should also be noted that, while this work focuses on the activities of Indian merchants in Central Asia, it does so in the context of their larger diaspora network. This network—one of the greatest merchant diasporas of the early modern era—consisted of tens of thousands of Indian merchants living and working in diaspora communities dispersed across not only Central Asia, but also Afghanistan, Iran, the Caucasus and much of Russia.

The present work is therefore intended to augment the growing body of literature by scholars who have begun to turn their attention away from the activities of the Europeans in Asia, focusing instead on the indigenous Asian commercial enterprise which was much larger in its totality. This literature, recently exemplified by Stephen Dale's *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750*, has brought some attention to the presence of Indian merchant diaspora communities in a number of Eurasian locations, and especially to the Indian community in Astrakhan, a port city on the Caspian Sea at the mouth of the Volga which for nearly two centuries served as Russia's primary southern trading entrepôt.<sup>1</sup> Muzaffar Alam has also made an admirable effort to situate the Indian merchant communities in the context of the growing transregional trade of Mughal India and Uzbek Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> The work of G. L. Dmitriev, based on extensive research into materials in the Russian colonial archives and the Office of the Bukharan Khushbegi (the *vizier*, or chief

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Muzaffar Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, c.1550–1750,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, 3 (August 1994), pp. 202–27.

advisor to the Bukharan *amīr*), illuminates much about the Indian communities in Central Asia during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Claude Markovits has added valuable new insights drawn from his research in previously unused British documents regarding the estates of Indian merchants who died while living in Russian Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> The discussions presented below will revisit a number of issues treated in these works. By augmenting the advancements of these authors with information from additional sources, we have attempted to piece together a more comprehensive portrait of the Indian diaspora. In a number of instances this has led us to contest certain assertions, made by the same authors, regarding the emergence, organization and decline of the Indian diaspora in Central Asia.

In terms of organization, this book can be divided into three parts. The first situates this study in the growing body of literature that challenges the widely accepted notion that, as the European maritime powers increasingly dominated Indian Ocean trade in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Central Asia correspondingly fell into economic isolation and was pushed to

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<sup>3</sup> G. L. Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Sredneaziasko-indiiskikh otnoshenii vtoroi polovini XIX–nachala XX v. (Indiiskie vykhodtsi v Srednei Azii),' Ph.D. diss., Tashkent, 1965; idem, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii v Srednei Azii (vtoraia polovina XIX–nachala XX v.),' in D. A. Ol'derogge, ed., *Strani i narodi vostoka*, vol. 12, part 2, *Indiia: strana i narod*, Moscow: Nauka, 1972, pp. 234–47. Soviet scholarship has an earlier tradition of studying the historical relations of India and Central Asia, although commonly in the context of the relations of India and Russia. Some of these studies discuss the presence of Indian communities in Eurasia. Most notable among these works, used extensively by Dale, are the published collections of documents from the Astrakhan State Archive regarding Russia's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political and commercial relations with India, including the activities of the Indian diaspora community in Astrakhan. See K. A. Antonova, N. M. Gol'dberg and T. D. Lavrentsova, eds, *Russko-indiiskie otnosheniia v XVII v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1958 (henceforth abbreviated Antonova I), and K. A. Antonova and N. M. Gol'dberg, eds, *Russko-indiiskie otnosheniia v XVIII v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1965 (henceforth abbreviated Antonova II). Some of these records are available in English translation in Surendra Gopal, *Indians in Russia in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1988. Another Soviet-era work that directly addresses the presence of Indian communities in Central Asia is R. G. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia naseleniia gorodov Uzbekistana v XV–XVI vv.*, Tashkent: Fan, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. By bringing his study up to the mid-twentieth century, Markovits also bridges the divide between the historical study of Indian merchant networks and the fast-growing body of literature on the contemporary South Asian diaspora.

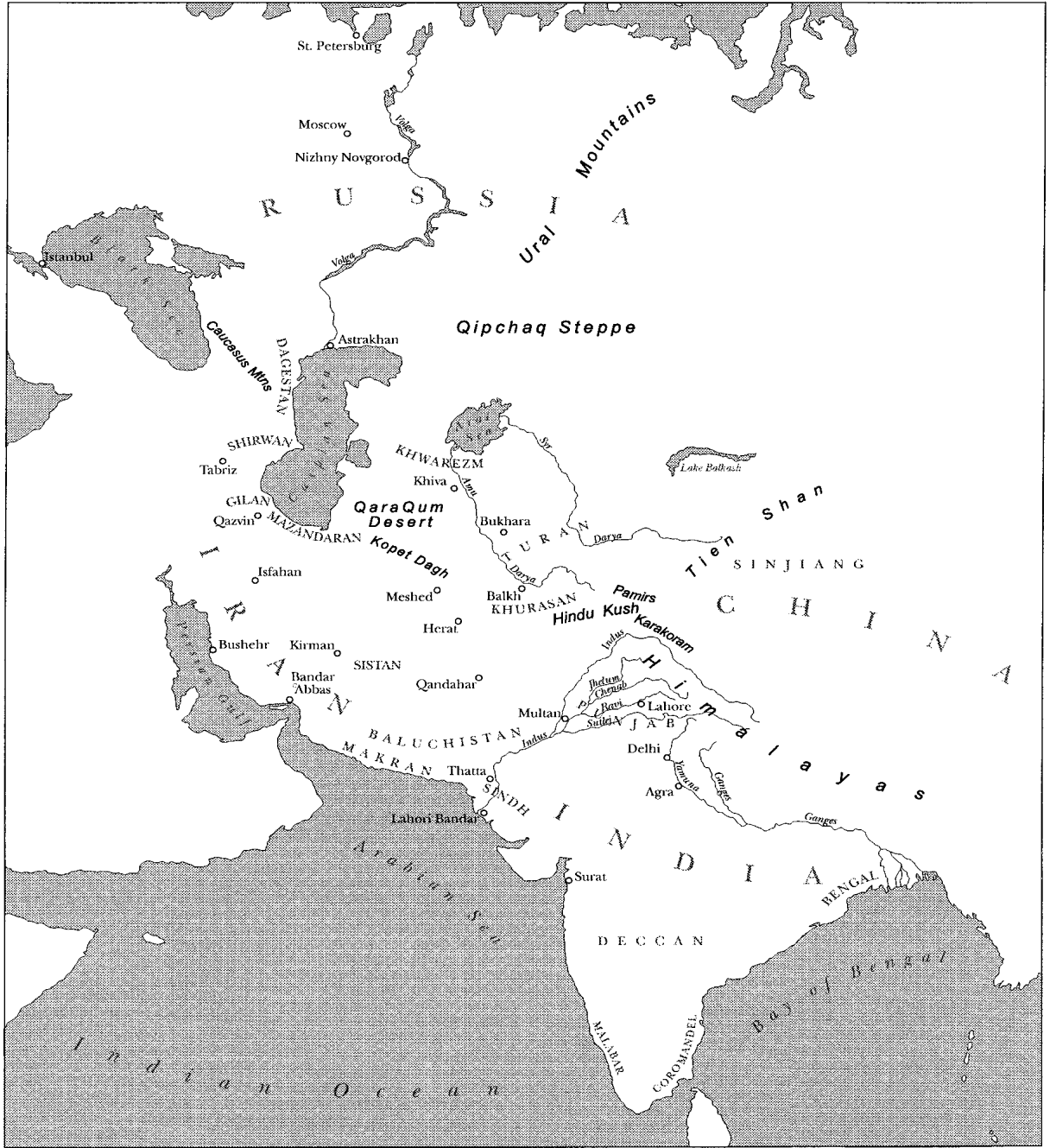
the periphery of the global economy. Beginning with a historiographical sketch of early modern Asian trade, chapter one focuses on the ways in which the commercial relations between India and Central Asia were transformed in response to changing early modern social, political and economic circumstances. This chapter discusses the growth of trade under the patronage of the great Islamic dynasties in early modern India, Central Asia and Iran and surveys their general commercial relationships, paying attention to a number of the more important commodities to have been transported along the caravan routes connecting these regions.

The next three chapters provide a socio-economic overview of the Indian diaspora and endeavor to establish that the Indian merchant communities, dispersed throughout dozens of Central Asian cities and villages, were the most important element in early modern Indo-Central Asian commercial relations. These chapters explore such issues as: the historical processes surrounding the medieval development of homogenous, caste-based Indian family firms and their commercial operations within India; the sixteenth-century emergence of the Indian diaspora in Central Asia as the family firms responded to growing competition within the subcontinent; the ethnic composition of the diaspora communities and their social organization around the institution of the Indian family firm; the impressive magnitude and degree of dispersion of Indian merchant diaspora communities across the urban centers and agrarian countryside of early modern Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, the Caucasus and Russia; and the complex trade and moneylending operations engaged in by the Indian merchants in Central Asia and their other host societies. Some of the more anthropological issues to be addressed include: the means by which the overwhelmingly non-Muslim Indian merchants maintained their religious identity while residing in Islamic states; their general patterns of interaction amongst themselves and their host societies; the gender dynamics of the almost exclusively male population of the diaspora; and the traumatic results that occurred when the interests of the regional ruling elite occasionally came into conflict with those of the Indians.

Finally, chapter five will discuss the transformation of India's commercial relations with Central Asia during the politically turbulent eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This chapter attempts to demonstrate that, throughout this period, Central Asia continued to benefit from its mediatory position in overland Eurasian trade as caravan traders responded to Russia's increasing demand for Indian textiles and raw cotton. It also provides an overview of the Russian advances southward through the steppe and a discussion of the

economic factors contributing to Russian motivations to establish a military and political presence in Central Asia. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the late nineteenth-century policies of the Russian colonial administration toward the Indian diaspora communities in their newly acquired territory, the Turkestan Krai. Based on documents found in the Russian colonial archives—many of which are used here for the first time—this discussion illustrates how these policies brought about the end of the Indian merchant diaspora in Central Asia and provides an important and rare insight into Russia's growing control of the Central Asian economy in the early colonial period.

Were it not for the frequent mentioning of the Indian merchant communities in the accounts of travelers to the region, and these authors' repetitive expressions of astonishment at the Indians' commercial vitality and dominance of the moneylending business, the Indian diaspora communities in Central Asia might be dismissed as a historical anomaly of little significance. Other sources that have proven useful for this study include dynastic chronicles, judicial records, *fatwās* (mandates of Muslim rulers), and other letters of the Bukharan *khāns*. Nineteenth-century sources are more plentiful and have more to say about the Indian communities than the earlier sources. Not only are there more travel accounts from which to elicit information, but, with the nineteenth-century expansion of Russia's political and economic frontier into Central Asia and the fear of an impending military confrontation with Great Britain (a cold war commonly romanticized as the 'Great Game'), the Russian colonial administration and the Russian press took an active interest in the affairs of the Indian communities. This may partially be attributed to the Indians' status as British subjects in Russian territory, but the Russian archival sources make it clear that the colonial administrators were primarily concerned with the Indians' economic function in this recently colonized region. The bulk of the information from nineteenth-century sources will prove relevant to historical processes to be discussed in later chapters. Some of it, however, suggests a continuity of centuries-old social systems and, as such, is germane to more general discussions of the constellation of interrelated communities that emanated from northwestern India to form the Indian merchant diaspora.



Map 1. Eurasia.

*A Brief Note on Geographical Terminology*

One result of the complex political and ethnic history of Central Asia is that any historical discussion regarding this region requires an explanation of the author's preference for geographical terminology. The term 'Central Asia' is today most commonly used to refer to the region consisting of the ex-Soviet states of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan, although by some definitions it also includes the Sinjiang region of China, parts of northern Afghanistan, and large stretches of southern Siberia. This common, even colloquial, term enjoys the benefit of accessibility to a broad audience, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the corresponding independence of the above-mentioned Islamic republics. The term 'Central Asia' has the added advantage of placing the region of study in the context of the other familiar modern geographical designations 'East Asia,' 'South Asia' and 'West Asia.' However, the modern geopolitical conceptualization of 'Central Asia' is not without its disadvantages, especially in relation to studies of the pre-colonial history of the region. As used today, the term refers to the territory circumscribed by the borders placed on the region during the Soviet Union's 'great delimitation of the states' in the 1920s, and does not reflect the older political and cultural boundaries of the region. As such, it carries modern political, cultural and geographical connotations that significantly detract from its precision in a historical discussion. Rather than superimposing a modern geopolitical designation over a historic cultural and political realm, an effort has been made here to introduce more precise terms for historical contextualization.

For the period under discussion, the primary sources from this region only infrequently mention geographical conceptualizations other than territorially unstable political entities (e.g. the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Khoqand), historically established regions (e.g. Khurasan, Khwarezm, Farghana, Badakhshan) or smaller divisions (e.g. the *tūman*, an administrative district typically of one hundred villages). On occasion, however, authors both indigenous and external to the region have found it necessary to distinguish the civilization that prospered in the area roughly delimited by the Qara Qum ('Black Sand') desert in the west, the Tien Shan mountains in the east, the Hindu Kush mountains in the south and the pastoral-nomadic Qipchaq steppe in the north, from the neighboring civilizations of India and Iran. Toward this end, these authors have used a number of designations, the most common of which are

‘Turkeṣtān,’ ‘Mā warā’ al-nahr’ and ‘Tūrān.’ It is important to note that each of these terms carries with it different cultural and geographical connotations and that reaching a workable definition for any of them is complicated by the fact that their meanings have changed markedly over the centuries. It is therefore only logical that the most precise method for choosing the appropriate geographical terminology for the present study is to focus on the terminologies used during this period.

The etymologies of the terms ‘Mā warā’ al-nahr’ (Arabic, ‘that which is beyond the river,’ i.e. the Amu Darya river), and its Greco-Latin counterpart ‘Transoxania’ (‘the land beyond the Oxus,’ also referring to the Amu Darya), suggest their intent to designate the region across the Amu Darya river, defined in opposition to the northeastern Iranian region of Khurasan (sometimes referred to in Arabic sources as ‘Mā dūn al-nahr,’ ‘that which is on this side of the river,’ or its Greco-Latin equivalent ‘Cisoxania’). This is demonstrated by the anonymous author of the late tenth-century geography *Hudūd al-‘Ālam* (‘The Regions of the World’), who refers to Khurasan as the southern neighbor of Mā warā’ al-nahr despite the fact that, at the time of authorship, both regions were clearly under the domination of Bukhara’s Samanid dynasty (819–1005).<sup>5</sup> According to the eminent Russian orientalist V. V. Bartol’d, the term ‘Mā warā’ al-nahr’ also implied an association with Islamic civilization. Bartol’d suggests that the term was coined specifically to refer to the more sedentary territory beyond the Amu Darya that was occupied by Arab armies in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>6</sup> The attachment of a similar connotation to this term into the sixteenth century is suggested by Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur (1483–1530), the founder of the Mughal Empire, who observes in his memoirs that Mā warā’ al-nahr produced more ‘leaders of Islam’ than any other region and that the homeland of these great Islamic achievers, and therefore the boundaries of Mā warā’ al-nahr, extended as far eastward as the Farghana Valley, his birthplace and ‘the limit of settled habitation’ at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas the territory of Mā warā’ al-nahr included the ‘civilized’ (i.e. more

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<sup>5</sup> V. Minorsky, trans., *Hudūd al-‘Ālam: the Regions of the World*, 1937, reprint, Karachi: Indus Publications, 1980, pp. 102, 112, 119 (fols 19a, 22b, 25a).

<sup>6</sup> See *EII.*, s.v. ‘Mā warā’ al-nahr.’

<sup>7</sup> Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, *Babur-nama: Memoirs of Babur*, edited and translated by Annette Beveridge, reprint, Delhi, 1989, pp. 75–76. The author of the *Hudūd al-‘Ālam* also includes Farghana in the territory of Mā warā’ al-nahr, see pp. 115–16 (fol. 23b).

sedentary) lands which were largely, but not exclusively, confined to the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river basin, the designation was commonly used in contradistinction to the almost exclusively pastoral-nomadic steppe to the north, known to the medieval Perso-Arabic authors as ‘Turkestān.’<sup>8</sup> This distinction continued into the early modern period, as is demonstrated by Hafiz Tanish, the chronicler of the celebrated Uzbek Khan ‘Abd Allah II (r. 1583–98) of the Shībānid dynasty, who clearly considered Khurasan, Mā warā’ al-nahr and Turkestān to be three distinct regions.<sup>9</sup> The association of the term ‘Turkestān’ with the pastoral-nomadic steppe was to change, however, with the late nineteenth-century Russian colonization of large portions of the territory around Tashkent, Samarqand and the Farghana Valley and the colonial administration’s designation of these possessions as the Turkestan Krai (the ‘Turkestan District’). To avoid confusion, in this study the designation ‘Turkestan’ is restricted to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian colonial context.

In medieval and early modern literature the term ‘Tūrān’ (henceforth Turan), also of foreign (Iranian) origin, is used much like ‘Mā warā’ al-nahr.’ Some texts even use them synonymously.<sup>10</sup> As early as the tenth century, both terms were used to refer to the territory on the side of the Amu Darya opposite from Khurasan.<sup>11</sup> In their early modern usages, however, the terms acquired subtle, although important, differences of meaning. Most notably,

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<sup>8</sup> V. V. Bartol'd, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 2d edition, translated and revised by V. V. Bartol'd and H. A. R. Gibb, London: Luzac and Co., 1928, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> The citation is in reference to caravans directed to the three different regions. See Hafiz Tanish, *Sharaf-nāma-i-Shāhī*, Institute of Oriental Studies, St Petersburg, Ms. No. D88, fol. 451a–b. Cited in Il'ias Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii, (IX–XVIII vv.)*, Tashkent: Fan, 1969, p. 47 and note 1.

<sup>10</sup> According to Vladimir Minorsky, the Arab geographer Yaqut (1179–1229) considered the two terms to have been synonymous. Roughly a century later, Damashqi similarly suggested that the eastern border of Turan was the Syr Darya. The use of the term ‘Turan’ can be traced back to Sassanian sources (226–651) although, according to Minorsky, subsequent authors owe their understanding of the word to that proposed by Firdawsi (940–1020), the author of the *Shāhnāma* (‘The Book of Kings’). It is interesting that in this source the term specifically refers to Turanians as a nomadic people of the steppe and the inveterate enemies of the Iranians. Minorsky suggests that the change in its meaning is due to ‘a case of two sets of traditions being amalgamated by giving the ancient peoples Iranian eponyms.’ *EII*, s.v. ‘Tūrān.’

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bartol'd, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 64–65; *EII*, s.v. ‘Tūrān.’ Firdawsi also mentions the Amu Darya as the border between Iran and Turan.



the conceptual boundaries of Turan were less rigid than those of *Mā warā' al-nahr*.<sup>12</sup> Whereas, by this time, the term 'Mā warā' al-nahr' carried with it the connotation of a historically established region, much like Khurasan to the south or Khwarezm to the west, 'Turan' was more vague. This made it a more convenient term to employ in reference to the united territory of the Bukharan Khanate, a region which included, but was not restricted to, *Mā warā' al-nahr* (for example, Balkh, second most important city of the Bukharan Khanate, was situated in Khurasan).<sup>13</sup> The comparatively colloquial nature of the Persian term 'Turan' may have further contributed to its greater popularity. Persian was the language of a considerable proportion of the region's settled population, and it was also the court language of the Turkic ruling dynasties throughout the period of our study. Conversely, the etymology of the less colloquial '*Mā warā' al-nahr*' is Arabic, a language which, with the exception of religious and scientific treatises, had fallen out of popular use in this region long before the beginning of the early modern period.

The combination of these factors explains why the early modern Uzbek dynasties in Bukhara preferred to refer to their realm as 'Turan' in their official correspondence with Safavid Iran and Mughal India.<sup>14</sup> Although '*Mā warā' al-nahr*' continues to appear in sources authored by the educated Islamic elite from the region (the '*ulamā'*') even to the end of the nineteenth century, the geographical versatility of the term 'Turan' and its popularity among the indigenous ruling dynasties as the designation for their political realm make that term the more precise one in a discussion of the region as an early modern political and cultural entity. Still, in a number of instances below it has been necessary to utilize the contemporary term 'Central Asia' and the

<sup>12</sup> *EII*, s.v. 'Tūrān.'

<sup>13</sup> Minorsky, trans., *Hudūd al-Ālam*, p. 108 (fol. 21a).

<sup>14</sup> The word 'Turan' is routinely used in reference to the territory of the Bukharan *khāns* in their correspondence with the Mughals. Cf. Riazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations (1500–1750)*, 2 vols, Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation, 1982, II, pp. 203–89; Mansura Haidar, ed., *Mukātabāt-i-Āllāmī (Inshā'i Abul' Fazl), Daftar I*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998. See also the letter of Subhan Quli Khan (r. 1681–1702) to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) about his victory over the Khwarezmian Anushah Khan (r. 1663–87) in *Maktūbāt munsha'āt manshūrāt*, a collection of seventeenth-century letters of the Ashtarkhānid rulers, compiled in the eighteenth century by Mirakshah Munshi, Mulla Zahid Munshi and Muhammad Tahir Wahid, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 289, fol. 3a. For more bibliographic information on this valuable source, see A. A. Semenov et al, eds, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, 11 vols, Tashkent: Nauka, 1952–85, I, p. 157.

more amorphous ‘Inner Asia,’ the latter of which refers to a much broader geographical region stretching from eastern Europe and the Caucasus to western China and Mongolia. Most of the references to ‘Central Asia’ occur in the context of citations of other authors’ works, such as in the historiographical essay of chapter one, or in discussions of the more recent history of the region, such as in chapter five. In order to minimize the confusion resulting from the various meanings associated with the terms ‘Central Asia’ and ‘Inner Asia,’ a concerted effort has been made to limit their use.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE GROWTH OF INDO-TURANIAN TRADE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

### *Introduction*

This chapter challenges the widely accepted notion that, following a period of great prosperity under the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Timurid Empire, Turan sank into a long period of economic isolation and cultural stagnation from which it never recovered: a perception that has misdirected studies of early modern Turan and obstructed an improved understanding of the commercial and cultural relations between early modern India and Turan. Scholars have generally attributed this ‘decline’ to the commercial activities of the Portuguese Estado da India and the Dutch and English East India Companies in the Indian Ocean, suggesting that the European merchants effectively monopolized the transportation of commodities between Asia and Europe, and thereby usurped Turan’s traditional role in Eurasian trade. Still, while many have accepted the notion of a continuous early modern economic decline, others have recognized brief periods of ‘renaissance.’ By way of explaining such revivals, some authors have suggested that the East-West transcontinental caravan trade either re-emerged or did not entirely disappear, while others have pointed to the emergence of North-South caravan trade routes.

The emergence of the Indian merchant diaspora in Turan during the very period presumed to mark Turan’s protracted period of economic decline, and the prosperity of these merchants to the end of the nineteenth century, clearly demonstrates that India and Turan shared close economic relations throughout this period. It will be illustrated below that, through their exportation of Indian investment capital to Turanian agricultural and industrial producers, Indian family firms and their agents used the Indian economy as an engine for agricultural and village-industrial production throughout early modern urban and rural Turan. It will also be argued that the Indian family firms constituted the most important element in the economic bonds connecting early modern India and Turan (and India and Iran, for that matter). They were not, however, the only commercialists mediating Indo-Turanian transregional trade. Numerous groups of pastoral nomads and Indian and Bukharan caravan traders were

also engaged in the annual transportation of tens of thousands of horses and other commodities across the Afghan frontier to India, and vast amounts of Indian merchandise, especially cotton textiles and slaves, to the markets of Turan.

Recent work by Audrey Burton, Jos Gommans, Muzaffar Alam and others has dramatically improved our understanding of the early modern Bukharan and Indian caravan trade and the general importance of the horse trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This chapter presents a more comprehensive analysis of the commodities involved in early modern Indo-Turanian commercial relations by synthesizing the cogent conclusions of these authors with additional research. It also supports the broader argument advanced here that—despite the general tendency in historical literature to dismiss early modern overland Asian trade as insignificant—the caravan trade between India, Turan and Iran enjoyed considerable vitality throughout this period. Prior to venturing into a critical discussion of the historiography of this trade, however, readers unfamiliar with the general history of early modern India, Turan and Iran might benefit from a brief introduction to the subject.

*Early Modern India, Turan and Iran: Political and Economic Overview*

The early modern growth of commercial relations between India and its neighbors to the north and west was a product of a number of factors, not the least of which were the rulers' common interest and investment in improving trade routes and maintaining a favorable transregional commercial climate, as well as their patronage of the Indian merchant communities which are the focus of this study. Also, from the beginning of the sixteenth century into the eighteenth century, north India, Turan and Iran were all independently ruled by powerful Turkic dynasties with ancestral roots in the steppe.<sup>1</sup> These *shāhs* and *khāns* shared a strong sense of Islamic identity and viewed their own and each others' realms as constituent elements of the *Dār al-Islām* ('Abode of Islam'), a geographical conceptualization that included all territories under Islamic law, a region stretching from north and west Africa to Indonesia and far into the Eurasian landmass. This was held in contradistinction to the *Dār al-Ḥarb* ('Abode of War'), the territory neighboring the *Dār al-Islām* that was yet to be brought into the Islamic orbit.<sup>2</sup> The cultural similarities and

<sup>1</sup> With the notable exception of the reign of the Afghan ruler, Sher Shah Suri, in northern India, 1540–55.

<sup>2</sup> *EI2*, s.vv. '*Dār al-Islām*' and '*Dār al-Ḥarb*.'

similar worldviews of the rulers of India, Turan and Iran may, to some extent, explain the great importance they placed on maintaining regular diplomatic contact and ensuring the safety of their subjects traveling through neighboring territories, whether the purpose for travel was religious or commercial. Furthermore, the numerous accounts of the Mughal-Uzbek and Mughal-Safavid embassies demonstrate that, in addition to their obvious function as a means of transmitting official information, embassies were also an important medium for large-scale gift exchanges, usually involving expensive luxury items and considerable amounts of bulk goods.

Although close diplomatic relations generally fostered a positive commercial climate, early modern historical accounts report many periods of political tension and even outright hostility among the rulers of these regions. The especially marked enmity between the Uzbeks and the Safavids developed from their mutual interests in controlling Khurasan, the northeasternmost province of Iran, which was subjected to repeated Uzbek invasions and occupations. Mughal-Safavid conflict focused on Qandahar, the most important city on the Indo-Iranian caravan routes in southern Afghanistan, which changed hands between the Mughals and the Safavids a dozen times.<sup>3</sup> Mughal-Uzbek relations, although generally amicable, also included important points of contention. Throughout their 'exile' in India, the Mughal emperors maintained a strong psychological attachment to Turan, the homeland of their Timurid ancestors.<sup>4</sup> This is suggested by repeated discussion among the Mughals of their desire to reconquer Turan and clearly demonstrated by Shah Jahan's aborted occupation of Balkh, the Bukharan Khanate's 'second capital,' in the years 1646–47.<sup>5</sup>

Although clear cultural similarities existed among the Muslim ruling elites of these regions, many of whom moved freely from one royal court to another, the religious and cultural identity of each regime was derived from distinctly different factors. The Uzbeks were descendants of the nomadic Turkic tribes who probably took their name from their early association with Özbek Khan (r. 1312–40), a descendant of Chinghiz Khan and leader of the Golden Horde (or, more correctly, the White Horde) in the Qipchaq steppe. At the beginning

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<sup>3</sup> Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and Iran*, Sources of the History and Geography of Iran, no. 32, Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation, 1970, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> This is the central thesis of Richard Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of this invasion, arguably the most important event in early modern Indo-Turanian political relations, see idem, 'The Mughal Occupation of Balkh, 1646–1647,' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, 1 (1996), pp. 49–61.

of the sixteenth century, under the leadership of Muhammad Shibani Khan, the Uzbek tribal confederation migrated in large numbers to Turan and forced the last Timurid ruler in the region, Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur (1483–1530), to flee Samarqand for Kabul. For the next four centuries the territory of the Bukharan Khanate, later styled the Bukharan Amirate, was ruled by the Uzbek Shībānid dynasty (1500–1599; also known as the Abu'l Khairids), the Ashtarkhānid dynasty (1599–1747; also known as the Toqai Timurids or the Jānids) and the Mangīt dynasty (1753–1920).<sup>6</sup> Khwarezm, the less fertile region lying to the south of the Aral Sea, was ruled from Urgench, and then from Khiva, by collateral Uzbek dynasties, the most notable of which were the 'Arabshāhids (1511–late seventeenth century) and the Qungrats (1770–1920). Meanwhile, throughout the course of the eighteenth century, the Uzbek Ming tribe progressively gained influence in the political administration of the fertile Farghana Valley, Babur's homeland in eastern Turan. By the end of the eighteenth century the Mings had established their independence and founded a third Uzbek state in Turan, the Khanate of Khoqand (1798–1876). Furthermore, in the early eighteenth century, Russia began to play an increasingly important role in the politics and economics of the steppe. By the mid-nineteenth century, Russia had annexed a considerable portion of the steppe and advanced its frontier almost to the Syr Darya. This process triggered the Russo-British cold war known as the 'Great Game' and led to the Russians' entry into Tashkent in 1865 and subsequent colonization of much of Turan. Whereas the Bukharans and the Khivans (Khwarezmians) managed to maintain a semblance of autonomous control over their realms into the twentieth century, the Khoqandians rather quickly suffered the full brunt of Russian imperialism. Already in 1876 the Khanate of Khoqand was liquidated and the Farghana Valley was directly annexed as a new *oblast'* (an administrative region) in the recently established Turkestan Krai (a *krai*, or 'military district,' is comprised of a number of *oblast's*).

The Sunnī Muslim Uzbek *khāns* and *amīrs* were largely characterized by their recent nomadic past and religious opposition to their Iranian neighbors, the Shī'a Muslim Safavid dynasty (1501–1722). By the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century the Safavid emperor Shah Isma'īl I (r. 1501–24) had extended his control over nearly all of Iran and imposed Shī'a Islam as the state religion. Although Isma'īl initially established his capital in the north-

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<sup>6</sup> Those rulers who were not familial descendents of Chinghiz Khan were referred to as *amīrs* (military commanders) as they could not legitimately claim the title of *khān*, hence the adoption of the term 'Amirate.' This distinction was disregarded in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries.

western city of Tabriz, in 1555 Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–76) moved it eastward to Qazvin in an effort to remove the capital from the threat of Ottoman invasion. At the end of the sixteenth century (c. 1597–98), Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) moved it again to the more central location of Isfahan, the celebrated jewel in the crown of Safavid cities. The Safavid dynasty maintained control of Iran, although sometimes only tenuously, until the Ghilzai Afghans invaded the country in 1722. The Afghan invasion was short-lived, but it opened the door of opportunity for Nadir Quli Afshar, the chief of the Turkman Afshar tribe and a highly skilled military commander under the Safavid emperor Shah Tahmasp II (r. 1722–32). By 1727 Nadir had ejected the Afghans from Iran and less than a decade later he assumed the title ‘Shah’ for himself, ruling as Nadir Shah from 1736 until he was assassinated by a group of tribal chiefs in 1747. Although, from the Iranian perspective, Nadir Shah managed to conduct a number of successful military campaigns and secure the territorial boundaries of Iran against aggressive neighbors, his regime was tumultuous, destructive and militaristic, and the quarter century from 1722–47 is generally considered a low-point in Iranian history. This was especially true for Indo-Iranian relations, as Nadir’s short-sighted, predatory policies toward the Indian merchant communities in his territory made his reign the most disruptive period in the long history of the diaspora.

A number of regional powers emerged after the death of Nadir Shah. In Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali, one of Nadir Shah’s Afghan commanders, took advantage of the power vacuum in Iran and the concomitant decentralization of the Mughal Empire in India to assume control of Nadir Shah’s Afghan and Indian territories, including cities as far to the west as Herat and Qandahar and as far to the east as the Mughals’ great commercial center of Multan. The eighteenth-century unification of this territory under Ahmad Shah’s Durrani confederacy ushered in an era of prosperity for a number of Afghan tribes, which benefited greatly from their control over the caravan routes connecting India, Turan and Iran, and from annually transporting tens of thousands of horses to Indian markets.<sup>7</sup> Much of the population of Iran also experienced a mild renaissance during the second half of the eighteenth century. Southern and central Iran enjoyed economic growth under the firm leadership of Muhammad Karim Khan (r. 1751–79) of the Zand dynasty. This dynasty was a brief one, however, and in 1794 it was overthrown by Agha Muhammad (r. 1779–97) of the north-Iranian Turkman Qajar dynasty (1779–1925), a prominent figure in Iranian history credited with reuniting all

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<sup>7</sup> This is the central thesis of Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c.1710–1780*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.

of Iran and establishing his capital at its present location of Tehran.

Afghan tribes were an important political and economic presence in north-western India already during the Ghaznavid period (977–1186), long before Ahmad Shah's eighteenth-century Durrani Afghan state. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the first two Mughal rulers, Babur and his son Humayun, competed against tenacious Afghan rivals for the hegemony of north India. Afghan military commanders under the leadership of Sher Shah Suri (r. 1540–55) even succeeded at defeating Humayun and ejecting him from the country. Following a fifteen-year hiatus in his reign, part of which was spent at the Safavid court in Iran, Humayun returned to India and eventually suppressed the Afghan constituencies. He died shortly thereafter, however, and it was not until the ascent to power of Humayun's son, the great Mughal emperor Akbar Shah (r. 1556–1605), that the Mughals carved out an empire by extending their control over much of the subcontinent, including the immense and fertile Indus and Gangetic river valleys. For over a century after Akbar's death, the subcontinent was ruled by the effective administrations of his heirs: Jahangir (r. 1605–27), Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57) and Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). Following Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughal Empire quickly decentralized into a number of regional components, a process which was greatly expedited by Nadir Shah's infamous sack of Delhi in 1739. Eighteenth-century north India witnessed the rise of states controlled by such regional powers as the Durrani Afghans, Sikhs and Marathas, as well as a dramatic growth in the economic and political influence of the European powers. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the British began to make serious inroads into India's northwestern frontier, and it is largely in this context that they are brought into this study. It should be stressed that, throughout the 'eighteenth-century era of transition,' the Indian diaspora communities (outside of Nadirid Iran) continued to prosper, benefiting from an impressive ability to adapt quickly to changing socio-economic circumstances.

Demographically, as well as politically, India, Turan and Iran exhibited significant differences. Whereas in Turan and Iran the Uzbek and Safavid dynasties were comprised of Muslim elites ruling over predominantly Muslim populations, the administration of the Mughal regime in India (many of whom were émigrés, and descendants of émigrés, from Turan, Iran and Afghanistan) included a considerable number of non-Muslims and ruled over a predominantly Hindu population.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the early modern populations of Uzbek

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<sup>8</sup> Roughly 70 to 80 percent of the *manṣabdārs* (administrative officials) employed by the Mughals and ranked 500 *dhāt* or above were Muslim and, at least during the reign of



Turan and Safavid Iran were not likely to have exceeded five million each, yet at the end of the sixteenth century, the population of the Mughal Empire is estimated to have reached between sixty and ninety-eight million, roughly 85 percent of whom lived in villages.<sup>9</sup> In Iran and Turan the majority of the population was also rural but, largely due to geographical and climatic factors, even on a per capita basis their agricultural production did not approach that of the Indians. Whereas Indian agriculturalists benefited from an annual monsoon season and an abundance of river networks, the predominantly desert and semi-desert nature of Iran and Turan dictated that agriculturalists in those regions were dependent upon artificial irrigation networks, significantly limiting their agricultural production. Thus, prior to the twentieth century, agriculturalists in Turan necessarily devoted the vast majority of their lands to the production of grains and other foodstuffs, while Indian agriculturalists were able to augment their food crops with cotton and other cash crops. India's cotton production supported the development of a sizeable premodern textile industry for both domestic and international markets, a significant portion of which found its way to Turan, Iran and beyond.

The imposing natural barriers between these regions also influenced the transregional relations of their populations. This is especially relevant in terms of Indo-Turanian commercial relations as the two regions were separated by the snow-capped peaks of the Karakoram, Pamir and Hindu Kush ('Hindu-Killer') mountain ranges. Such geographical barriers precluded casual cross-cultural contact among the sedentary populations. These same frontiers were, however, regularly traversed by nomadic groups, such as Afghan and Pushtun tribes, and commercial contacts were sustained by caravans of intrepid merchants who made regular use of the few accessible mountain passes. The difficulty of the terrain was only one of the problems faced by such merchants, who commonly had to wait for months at India's northwest frontier posts of Peshawar and Kabul for the mountain passes to become clear of snow or for a large enough caravan to amass to discourage raiders.

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Aurangzeb, nearly 50 percent of the total number of Mughal nobles ranked 1,000 or above were foreigners or descendants of foreigners. M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, revised edition, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 16–37. According to the figures provided by Lahori in the *Padshahnama*, in 1647–48, 23.3 percent of the *manṣabdārs* over 500 *dhāt* were identified as 'Turani' and were outnumbered only by elite from Iran, who comprised 28.4 percent. Lahori's information has been converted into Table 3 in John Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 5, part 1, 1993, reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 145.

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of the economic distinctions between India, Iran and Turan in this period, see Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 15–21.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, the widely accepted notion that commercial contact with land-locked Turan diminished significantly following the arrival of the European Companies to the Indian Ocean commercial arena is far from an accurate assessment. Throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, India's commercial relations with Turan persisted at an elevated level and Turan continued to benefit from its mediatory role in overland Eurasian trade. Among the most important elements of this commercial dynamic were sedentary Turan's relations with the nomadic communities of the northern steppe. This has been commonly characterized as a somewhat symbiotic relationship, with Turanian merchants supplying agricultural goods, textiles and other manufactured products not easily produced by the nomads in exchange for livestock, especially horses, and such animal products as leather and wool. Even into the nineteenth century, mediatory merchants annually transported tens of thousands of these horses and numerous other goods across Turan to markets in India. A smaller amount was transported across the Amu Darya river, the dry expanses of the Qara Qum desert, and the Kopet Dagh mountain range to markets in Iran.

Geographical barriers dictated that Indo-Iranian commercial relations were no more casual than those of India and Turan. Most of the overland movement of commodities between these two regions was directed through Qandahar, which contributed to its position as the focal point of Mughal-Safavid conflict. On the Indian side, the caravan traffic from Qandahar was routed through either the Sanghar Pass, from where it continued on to Multan, or through Quetta (Baluchistan) and the Bolan Pass, from where it continued on to Shikarpur. It will be seen below that the latter route became especially important in the nineteenth century. On the Iranian side, the caravan routes leading from Qandahar either passed northerly to Herat and Meshed, where they connected with routes leading to Turan, or they followed a more southerly route to Kirman and on to Isfahan.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the Indo-Iranian overland routes were complemented by maritime routes. Merchants could, and did, utilize both avenues of transportation simultaneously or, when necessary, shift from one to the other in an effort to minimize their risk of losses by raids from unruly Baluch or Afghan nomads, Indo-Iranian conflict over Qandahar, or maritime disturbances caused by pirates or warfare. During our period of study the maritime trade between these two regions was largely conducted through the Gujarati port of Surat (in the Gulf of Cambay), the Sindi ports of Thatta and Lahori Bandar (which received goods from Lahore

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to Map 2, 'Trade Routes,' p. 37.

and Multan via the Indus River to the Arabian Sea) and the Safavids' great Persian Gulf port of Bandar 'Abbas, which was replaced by Bushehr in the eighteenth century under Zand patronage.

*The Historiography of Early Modern Overland Asian Trade*

*A. Marginalization and Decline?*

In the historiography of early modern Turan there appears to be a general consensus that the region suffered some sort of a socio-economic crisis prior to its colonization by Russia in the nineteenth century. Referring to the long-lasting, politically charged debate regarding the socio-economic climate of early modern, 'Uzbek period' Turan, Yuri Bregel summarizes that 'the decline of Central Asia in the Uzbek period is still a matter of controversy. Sometimes the fact itself is denied; more often the recognition of a decline is accompanied by certain reservations, and the explanations given for it can differ greatly.'<sup>11</sup> The image most commonly encountered is one of a prolonged period of decline initiated by the arrival of Europeans in the Indian Ocean and their usurpation of the transcontinental caravan trade. For example, as recently as 1993 it was argued by the authors of the *Istoriia Uzbekistana* that, at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, Turan plunged into economic crisis. This is attributed to internal political struggles, weakening trade relations with other 'Eastern' countries, the disruption of trade routes and diplomatic relations by foreign aggression and, most importantly, the European maritime monopolization of long distance trade.<sup>12</sup> The authors argue, as have others before them, that European commercial activity in the Indian Ocean brought about the demise of Turan's traditional role in overland trade, causing economic decline and resulting in increased 'feudalization,' political conflict, and deurbanization. Whereas prior to European dominance of the Indian Ocean trade the central role of Turan in transregional Eurasian commerce is argued to have promoted the development of 'handicraft' production and to have brought prosperity to the middle-class,

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<sup>11</sup> Yuri Bregel, 'Western Turkestan in the 17th to 19th Centuries' (unpublished paper), cited in Eli Weiner, 'The Polemics Between Moscow and Central Asians on the Decline of Central Asia and Tsarist Russia's Role in the History of the Region,' *The Slavonic and East European Review* 71, 3 (July 1993), p. 428.

<sup>12</sup> A. A. Askarov et al, eds, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, vol. 3, XVI–pervaia polovina XIX veka, Tashkent: Fan, 1993, p. 126.

the subsequent ‘breakdown’ in these trade relations is purported to have inflicted economic hardship upon handicraft producers and furthered class distinction.

Writing for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Bregel himself favors the interpretation that, ‘by the beginning of the 12th/18th century Central Asia was in a state of deepening political and economic crisis,’ which, he argues, ‘can be attributed primarily to the decline of the international caravan trade in Asia and the growing isolation of Central Asia from the main routes of commercial and cultural exchange.’<sup>13</sup> Samuel Adshead similarly argues that, in the mid-seventeenth century, Central Asian civilization began a transition from an ‘active phase’ into a ‘passive phase.’ This was characterized by declines of military power and political stability, and it is argued to have resulted in deurbanization and decreases in population, cultivated acreage, and artistic and intellectual creativity.<sup>14</sup> Again, Adshead attributes this to a shift in importance from continental trade routes to European-controlled maritime routes and further argues that, in this period, Central Asia was pushed to the periphery of the world economy. Thus, any impact the world market exercised on Central Asia at this time was ‘indirect and oblique’ and mediated through Central Asia’s neighbors.<sup>15</sup> In *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Bertold Spuler argues that, partially due to the inability of the Uzbek Shībānīd regime (1438–1599) to extend its control over Persia and the central Islamic lands, from the early sixteenth century Central Asia became isolated ‘and therefore led an existence on the margin of world history.’ Spuler concludes that ‘the discovery of the sea-route to East Asia rendered the Silk Road increasingly superfluous [and] from the threshold of modern times Central Asian history becomes provincial history. This justifies us in giving no more than a rapid sketch of the following centuries.’<sup>16</sup> Vartan Gregorian rather acridly adds to this that ‘the emergence and political predominance of the culturally and economically retarded Uzbeks in Central Asia and their control of northern Afghanistan inhibited the growth

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<sup>13</sup> *EIr*, s.v. ‘Central Asia in the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries.’ In this article, Bregel acknowledges a renaissance in the nineteenth century resulting from increased commercial activity with Russia.

<sup>14</sup> S. A. M. Adshead, *Central Asia in World History*, London: Macmillan, 1993, p. 177.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>16</sup> Bertold Spuler ‘Central Asia from the Sixteenth Century to the Russian Conquests,’ in P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Central Islamic Lands*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 470, 483.

of international trade in both areas.’<sup>17</sup> Thus, there appears to have been little change in the perception of early modern Central Asian society since the early twentieth century, when Bartol'd wrote that ‘in the nineteenth century, when Europe had definitely assumed cultural leadership, Turkestan stood lowest of all Muslim lands on the cultural scale.’<sup>18</sup>

There is no shortage of citations supporting the notion of an economically isolated and culturally stagnant Turan during this period.<sup>19</sup> But there is little benefit or new insight to be gained from investigating notions of a general economic ‘decline’ in early modern Turan or in joining the ideologically charged debate as to whether or not pre-colonial Turan had begun to display characteristics consistent with the emergence of capitalism. The question to be addressed is not whether the early modern period represents a period of ‘decline’ or ‘renaissance’ for this region. There is more to be gained by exploring to what extent, quantitatively and qualitatively, historical developments transformed the socio-economic landscape of early modern Turan. While there is convincing evidence suggesting economic hardship, political decentralization and deurbanization in specific regions of early modern Turan, other evidence suggests that early modern Turan was responding to changing global economic trends and was undergoing a process of economic re-alignment and even growth in some transregional trade relations. One result of this re-alignment was the removal of some previously central regions to the periphery and the intensification of economic activity in other, previously peripheral, regions.

Historians have used deurbanization as one of the primary socio-economic indicators demonstrating the ‘decline’ of Turan in this period. For example, the Spanish ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo visited Samarqand at the beginning of the fifteenth century—when the city was at the height of its glory, near the end of Timur’s reign—and reported that ‘there was so great a number of people brought to this city, from all parts, both men and women, that they are said to have amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand

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<sup>17</sup> Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Bartol'd ‘A Short History of Turkestan,’ in V. and T. Minorsky, trans, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, vol. 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Similar perspectives are presented in Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, translated by Quintin Hoare, London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 1988, pp. 2–3, and Seymour Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 4.

persons, of many nations... There was such a multitude of these people that the city was not large enough to hold them.’<sup>20</sup> By 1831 the population of Samarqand had reportedly dropped to a mere 8,000 to 10,000, while the mid-nineteenth-century population of the other great Timurid capital, Herat, was only some 9,000.<sup>21</sup> Balkh, known to the Arab geographers as the ‘mother of cities,’ also underwent severe deurbanization throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup>

Deurbanization in Turan has been interpreted to suggest urban flight from economic hardship, political strife and nomadic raids, an assessment not without some merit.<sup>23</sup> It should be stressed, however, that deurbanization is not necessarily an indicator of economic decline.<sup>24</sup> Not only can deurbanization in one region simply be representative of improved economic opportunity

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<sup>20</sup> Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand*, A. D. 1403–6, translated by Clements R. Markham, Hakluyt Society Publications, 1st ser., no. 26, London, 1859, p. 171.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, 3 vols, London: John Murray, 1834, I, p. 317; Some thirty years later, Arminius Vámbéry estimated the population of Samarqand to have been 15–20,000 people. Cf. Arminius Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, London: John Murray, 1864, p. 213; Ludwig Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 4 vols, Graz, Austria: Akademische Druk- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1979, III, p. 174. Bertold Spuler’s assessment is marginally more optimistic, estimating the population of Samarqand in this period to have been as high as 30,000. See Spuler, ‘Central Asia from the Sixteenth Century to the Russian Conquests,’ p. 486.

<sup>22</sup> Estimates for the population of Balkh in the sixteenth century run as high as 200,000. By the time Alexander Burnes passed through the city in 1831 it had dropped to a mere 2,000. Cf. Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, p. 238; Akhror Mukhtarov, ‘Balkh in the Late Middle Ages,’ translated by R. D. McChesney, Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies: Papers on Inner Asia, no. 24, Bloomington, 1993, pp. 3–4. For a discussion of the Nadirid occupation of Balkh, see Robert McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 198–216.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that, following a series of nomadic invasions of Samarqand from the Dasht-i Qipchaq in 1735, some 12,000 residents are reputed to have moved to India. T. K. Beisembiev, ‘Farghana’s Contacts with India in the 18th and 19th Centuries (According to the Khokhand Chronicles),’ *Journal of Asian History* 28, 2 (1994), p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> C. A. Bayly warns that ‘it is important to bear in mind that the connection between the decay of large cities and economic decline is quite uncertain.’ C. A. Bayly, ‘Delhi and other Cities of North India During the “Twilight”,’ in Robert Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 222. For a more detailed essay comparing deurbanization in Turan with post-Mughal north India, see Scott Levi, ‘India, Russia and the Eighteenth-Century Transformation of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,’ in *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 42, 4 (1999), pp. 537–40.

elsewhere, but it can also result in a *higher* standard of living for all involved.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Balkh, much of the population seems to have simply relocated to the rising urban and political center of nearby Mazar-i Sharif. Although the eighteenth-century invasion of Nadir Shah is certain to have had a negative impact on the region, the deurbanization of Balkh may also be attributed to India's increased demand for horses during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This increased demand improved the economic viability of pastoralism so that, rather than investing in the maintenance of irrigation systems, there was a transformation of agricultural land to pastureland in such areas as Balkh's Hazhdah Nahr irrigation region.<sup>26</sup> Although this resulted in decreased state revenues, McChesney suggests that, rather than economic decline, Balkh's deurbanization may represent 'shifting economic patterns, i.e., a proportionately larger demand for horses, that led to a change in production, encouraging the expansion of pastoralism and at the same time the abandonment of irrigated lands, the migration of the rural population, and a decline in the urban share of the rural surplus.'<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, information suggesting deurbanization in Bukhara remains tentative, with nineteenth-century population estimates reaching as high as 150,000.<sup>28</sup> Thus, accepting the evidence for some areas, the factors precipitating early modern deurbanization in Turan beg further investigation. How extensive was this deurbanization? Was deurbanization the result of push factors, pull factors, or, most likely, a combination of the two? And, perhaps most importantly, to which region, or regions, did this population migrate and why?

<sup>25</sup> See Charles Issawi, 'The Decline of Middle Eastern Trade, 1100–1850,' in D. S. Richards, ed., *Islam and the Trade of Asia*, Oxford: Bruna Cassirer, 1970, p. 249.

<sup>26</sup> McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, p. 234.

<sup>27</sup> This process continued at an accelerated rate during the second half of the nineteenth century when, according to McChesney, 'Balkh receded in both political and economic importance until it remained a great city only in memory—completely eclipsed by the shrine.' *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 270.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Burnes estimated the population of Bukhara in 1831 to have been 150,000 and described it as being so heavily populated that there was space for 'scarcely a garden or burying-ground within the city walls,' Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, I, p. 302. Spuler estimates the population of Bukhara in this period to have been 70,000. See Spuler, 'Central Asia from the Sixteenth Century to the Russian Conquests,' p. 486. Becker estimates it to have been between 70,000 and 100,000 and he further notes that, at that time, Qarshi's population was between 60,000 and 70,000, Shahr-i Sabz and Chardjui each had populations of some 30,000 and there were a dozen towns in the khanate with populations ranging from 4,000 to 20,000. Becker, *Russia's Protectorates*, pp. 6–7, note 12. See also O. A. Sukhareva, *Bukhara XIX–nachalo XX v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1966, pp. 98–103.

The emergence of the Khanate of Khoqand in the eighteenth century has been interpreted to suggest the inability of the Bukharan Khanate to maintain centralized control over the Farghana Valley, illustrating political ‘decline,’ economic isolation, and a climate of growing ‘feudalization.’ Early modern Bukhara was, however, far from ‘economically isolated,’ and deurbanization, although an issue, was questionable in regard to many urban centers in the Khanate, including the capital. Approaching the rise of the Khanate of Khoqand from a different perspective, the evidence appears to suggest that the primary factor in Khoqand’s growing political independence from Bukhara in this period was not a Bukharan ‘decline,’ but increased economic activity and agrarian investment in the Farghana Valley.

Economic growth in the territory of the Khanate of Khoqand, centered in the Farghana Valley, dates from the early eighteenth century and can be attributed to its strategic location on increasingly important trade routes connecting the commercial markets of Turan, India, Russia and China and the active role of the merchants of Khoqand in the transit trade connecting these regions. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, increasingly large amounts of Russian goods were taken from Orenburg to the Khanate of Khoqand and further transported by thousands of Khoqandian merchants to Kashghar, Yarkand and other cities in Sinjiang, from where they were transported on to more distant markets in China and India. These Khoqandian merchants returned across the Tien Shan with such Chinese goods as bricks of tea, silk textiles, porcelain, silver, and large quantities of rhubarb, used for medicine and as a dye.<sup>29</sup> Khoqandians pursued an active role in this profitable trade, having sent some forty-eight missions to China between 1762 and 1821.<sup>30</sup> Indian merchants also regularly traversed the Karakoram mountains to trade in Sinjiang and, it is interesting to note, despite Ch’ing efforts to attract merchants from India to Kashghar and Yarkand by offering agreeable taxation rates, they were forbidden to conduct direct commercial relations with Khoqandian merchants.<sup>31</sup> To some degree these two communities were

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Tôru Saguchi, ‘The Eastern Trade of the Khoqand Khanate,’ *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library)* 24 (1965), pp. 47–114; W. H. Wathen, ‘Memoir on the U’sbeck State of Kokan, properly called Khokend, (the Ancient Ferghana) in Central Asia,’ *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3, 32 (Aug. 1834), pp. 369–78; K. Warikoo, *Central Asia and Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 55–88.

<sup>30</sup> Adshead, *Central Asia in World History*, pp. 196–97.

<sup>31</sup> Wathen, ‘Memoir on the U’sbeck State of Kokan,’ p. 376. Whereas most merchants were taxed at a rate of ‘one in thirty’ (3.33 percent), merchants coming from Kashmir and ‘Baltir’ (Baltistan) were only charged ‘one in forty’ (2.50 percent). Saguchi, ‘The Eastern Trade of the Khoqand Khanate,’ pp. 72–73.



able to circumvent Ch'ing restrictions, the very implementation of which illustrates the importance the Ch'ing attached to mediating Indo-Khoqandian commerce.

Especially from the early nineteenth century, the caravan route between Semipalatinsk and India, directed through Kashghar, was also very active.<sup>32</sup> However, considering the thousands of expensive Kashmiri shawls and the total amount of Indian cotton, indigo and other commodities annually brought to Turan in this period, even more than that which was brought to Turan via Kashghar came through Durrani Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup> No doubt some of these commodities found their way to local consumers, but the bulk was transported on to Tashkent, where the Bukharan caravans would join with those of Khoqand and, according to Wathen, 'proceed viá Turkistan through the Steppes occupied by the Cossacs, part to Omsk, and part to Orenburg.'<sup>34</sup> These commodities were then further dispersed to markets throughout Russia, and large numbers of Kashmiri shawls were transported on to other European markets, where they enjoyed considerable demand at the time.

As the Russian demand for cotton increased, so did Russia's imports from Khoqand. According to the authors of the *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, from 1758 to 1853 the import-export trade of Russia and Khoqand increased by well over ten times, most notably in cotton.<sup>35</sup> Efforts to increase the amount of irrigated lands in the Farghana Valley suggest that the Khanate of Khoqand responded to this increased demand for cotton by investing income from the transit trade in new irrigation projects, stimulating cotton cultivation for export to

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<sup>32</sup> Liusternik notes that merchants traversing this route brought to Russia such goods as tea, cotton cloth, dyes and Kashmiri shawls and that each caravan transported to Russia goods valued as much as 160,000 rubles. E. Ia. Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi v XIX v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1966, p. 57.

<sup>33</sup> Wathen, 'Memoir on the U'sbeck State of Kokan,' p. 376.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377. Omsk and Orenburg are two Russian frontier forts which, in the eighteenth century, developed into important commercial centers. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. Refer to Map 4, 'Russo-Central Asian Frontiers, 1801, 1864,' p. 236.

<sup>35</sup> Askarov et al, eds, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, p. 228. In 1758 the value of Russian imports from Khoqand totalled 37,000 rubles and exports to Khoqand totalled 174,000 rubles. Roughly a century later, in 1853, Russian imports totalled 676,000 rubles and exports totalled 2,171,000 rubles. In a pattern similar to the inversion of the cotton textile trade between Britain and India, following the industrialization of the Russian textile mills during the first half of the nineteenth century, Russia imported increasingly large amounts of raw cotton from markets in Khoqand and exported finished cotton textiles to the same markets.

Russian markets.<sup>36</sup> During the eighteenth century, irrigation agriculture in the northern part of the Farghana Valley benefited not only from state investment and the efforts of the local agriculturalists, but also from the efforts of sedentarized, or semi-sedentarized, nomads throughout the region.<sup>37</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, irrigation agriculture was practiced throughout the Farghana Valley and, throughout the nineteenth century, the construction of major irrigation channels progressively increased in response to rising demand brought on by population growth and increased production.<sup>38</sup> It is in this context that the historian Numan Negmatov has asserted that ‘during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Khojand area [of the Farghana Valley] had not been in a state of decline, but, on the contrary, was undergoing vigorous economic growth... The city of Khojand grew appreciably and enjoyed development in the crafts and trade [and,] in the countryside, peasants began to cultivate new lands.’<sup>39</sup>

It should come as no surprise that eighteenth-century prosperity and economic growth in Tashkent and the Farghana Valley attracted large numbers of people to the Khanate of Khoqand. Tashkent’s increasingly important role in mediating trade with Orenburg attracted merchants and artisans from throughout the region and beyond, and by the middle of the nineteenth century Tashkent had risen from a regional town of some 30,000 to a major commercial center of 80,000 inhabitants.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the city of Khoqand—newly founded circa 1740—had by 1867 also grown to an urban center of more than 80,000.<sup>41</sup> Economic growth in this region is further illustrated by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century migration of Indian merchant communities to urban

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<sup>36</sup> V. V. Bartol'd, ‘K istorii orosheniia Turkestana,’ in *Sochineniia*, 9 vols, Moscow: Nauka, 1965, III, pp. 97–233.

<sup>37</sup> See Michael Thurman, ‘Irrigated Agriculture and Economic Development in the Ferghana Valley Under the Qoqand Khanate,’ M. A. Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1995, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>39</sup> N. N. Negmatov, ‘Iz istorii pozdnesrednevekovogo Khodzhenia,’ in S. P. Tolstov et al., eds, *Materialy vtorogo soveshchaniia arkheologov i etnografov Srednei Azii. 29 oktiabria–4 noiabria 1956 g.*, Stalinabad, Moscow, 1959, pp. 71–72. Cited in Weinerman, ‘The Polemics Between Moscow and Central Asians,’ pp. 458–59.

<sup>40</sup> F. Azadaev, *Tashkent vo vtoroi polovine XIX Veka*, Tashkent: Nauk, 1959, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> *EIr*, s.v. ‘Central Asia in the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,’ p. 195. The population estimate is based on figures in the account of A. P. Khoroshkin, cited in Mary Holdsworth, ‘Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century,’ Central Asian Research Centre, 1959, p. 8. For more on the flourishing state of Khoqand in the nineteenth century, see Askarov et al, eds, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, p. 195.

centers throughout the Farghana Valley.<sup>42</sup> Although it is impossible to say whether the principal motivation for most of these migrations was the pursuit of newly emerging economic opportunities or a dissatisfaction with the socio-economic landscape elsewhere, population growth in the Farghana Valley suggests that the Khanate of Khoqand was the primary recipient of the above-mentioned migrations.<sup>43</sup>

### *B. The European Maritime Trade and Turan's Role in Transcontinental Trade*

It is widely acknowledged that long before the beginning of the common era Turan benefited from its mediatory position between the ancient civilizations of China, India, the Middle East and Europe. It can even be argued that, by linking these regions in a premodern Eurasian economy, the overland caravan network should be included among the most important phenomena in world economic history. However, the styling of this overland caravan network as the 'Silk Road' has often led to an erroneous image of premodern Asian trade. The term is most often used to refer to the movement of silk and other luxury goods from China to the West along caravan routes protected by local political establishments that benefited from taxing merchants passing through their territory. While not wholly inaccurate, this conceptualization fails to characterize Turan's role in Eurasian overland commerce in several respects. Most importantly, the 'Silk Road' was not a premodern superhighway, and Asian caravan traders did much more than move Chinese goods to Europe. Premodern overland Eurasian trade consisted of a complex, ever-changing web of caravan routes connecting urban centers spanning the entire Eurasian land mass, with Turan strategically located at the intersection of many of them. The amount and direction of traffic was directly and indirectly affected by a number of factors, including such variables as regional economic growth and decline, political stability, transportation costs and security, as well as climatic, demographic and technological changes. Luxury goods traversed the distance from China to Europe, or countless other terminal markets, but their

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<sup>42</sup> References to Indians in the Farghana Valley prior to the rise of the Khanate of Khoqand are unavailable. However, in 1877, 375 Indians are reported to have lived in various cities and villages of the Farghana Oblast—a rather considerable number as they were uniformly engaged in commerce and moneylending. Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Sredneaziasko-indiiskikh,' p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> *EIr*, s.v. 'Central Asia in the 12th–13th/18th–19th Centuries,' p. 195. According to Bregel, the Farghana Valley enjoyed a period of relative stability under the guidance of Narbuta Bey Ming (r. 1770–1810) 'which contributed to an influx of population from other areas, especially Transoxiana and Kashghar.'

total quantity and value was much less than that of the bulk commodities and precious metals which also passed along the Eurasian commercial arteries.

Caravan routes were not the only avenues by which commodities were transported between regions. As far back as the ancient period merchants also made use of maritime routes, a means of transport which did not directly involve landlocked Turan. But, at least as far as the early modern era is concerned, the relationship between overland and maritime routes generally has been perceived as one of the overland transit trade being usurped by the organizationally and technologically advanced European Companies. Even as early as the 1920s, Bartol'd suggested that in the eighteenth century all of Muslim Asia slid into a period of 'political, economical and cultural decadence' and that this should be attributed to 'the development of maritime routes controlled by Western Europeans, which began in the fifteenth century and brought about the decline of the caravan trade.'<sup>44</sup>

In a thesis presented over fifty years later in *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, Niels Steensgaard argues that the Dutch and English East India Companies exercised an advantage over indigenous competitors as they successfully internalized protection costs and enjoyed improved technology and communication networks, providing the Europeans with economic buffers not shared by Asian peddlers.<sup>45</sup> These Asian peddlers are then presumed to have become increasingly disadvantaged and unable to compete with the European Companies in the transportation of Asian commodities to Europe. According to Steensgaard, 'the establishment of the Companies led in a few years to an increase in the number of [European] ships sent out and returned per annum, and a number of goods disappeared from the intercontinental caravan routes. From the first decades of the seventeenth century Asian goods were conveyed from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and to the Levant towns that previously had been exporting the same goods.'<sup>46</sup> He further suggests that, already in the early seventeenth century, European ships were bringing to Europe 'a quantity of goods equal to that which used to pass along the caravan routes.'<sup>47</sup> Dismissing the possibility that there was any dramatic increase in European demand as 'such an explosive development

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<sup>44</sup> Bartol'd 'A Short History of Turkestan,' pp. 65–66.

<sup>45</sup> Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

would be unique in the history of pre-industrial economy,' Steensgaard concludes that, although 'it is impossible to determine the exact date when the transit trade ceased..., the broad stream that had characterized the sixteenth century, particularly its last decade, ceased abruptly at the beginning of the seventeenth century.'<sup>48</sup>

Taken out of context, Steensgaard's thesis can be misleading. Although it has been interpreted to suggest that the European Companies co-opted all of Central Asia's transit trade, his argument is explicitly restricted to the movement of goods bound for European markets and says nothing about a European monopoly of all Eurasian overland trade. Indeed, in the same text Steensgaard himself acknowledges that Asian trade continued to be active throughout the seventeenth century, and he cites Dutch East India Company documents which report that, in the mid-seventeenth century, some '25–30,000 camel loads of cotton materials were imported annually by Persia from India'; and this was only a small fraction of the contemporary Eurasian caravan trade.<sup>49</sup>

In his brief study of the decline of the 'so-called Silk Roads,' Morris Rossabi also notes that the entrance of the European Companies into the Indian Ocean did not bring about an unmitigated end to Eurasian caravan trade, at least in regard to China and Russia.<sup>50</sup> Rossabi accepts the notion of a decline in Central Asia's caravan trade, although he attributes it not to European involvement in maritime trade, but to 'political disruptions and the religious and social changes of the time...[as] these transformations were as critical as the economic pressures challenging merchants who were intent on maintaining the caravan trade.'<sup>51</sup> Specifically, Rossabi argues that, from the middle of the sixteenth century, political instability in China and other Eurasian economic centers disrupted overland commercial traffic by adding significantly to the insecurity of the caravan trade and, therefore, to its protection costs.<sup>52</sup> He further argues that 'the clearest indication that political considerations, not simply cheaper transport costs via seaborne commerce, were important considerations in the decline of the Central Asian trade was that the caravan trade did, in fact, prosper in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries... The caravans traveled north through southern Siberia and northern central Asia, as Russian merchants dominated the trade. Russians, with the help of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>50</sup> Morris Rossabi, 'The "Decline" of the Central Asian Caravan Trade,' in James D. Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, pp. 351–70.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 352, 360.

peddlars from Bukhara, revived the caravan commerce.’<sup>53</sup> Clearly, these routes, free from political turmoil and banditry, provided merchants an agreeable and predictable environment in which to conduct their trade. Thus, despite Rossabi’s questionable acceptance of a general economic decline in early modern Turan, an image emerges of East-West transcontinental overland trade routes complementing the thriving maritime routes.

This was the case not only for the northern Eurasian caravan routes. Samuel Adshhead has offered a variant interpretation of the changing dynamics in the early modern Turanian transit trade. Adshhead accepts the notion of a global ‘seventeenth-century general crisis’ which, he posits, was followed by eighteenth-century expansion.<sup>54</sup> For Turan this expansion is surmised to have brought with it growth in new and different directions. Adshhead argues that, whereas economic decline continued along ‘latitudinal,’ or ‘Silk Road,’ trade routes, in the second half of the eighteenth century, commercial traffic began to increase along Central Asia’s ‘longitudinal’ routes. Although Adshhead maintains that this trade was terminal, not transit, he suggests that it was enough to support a ‘modest renaissance’ in Central Asia during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Turan’s ‘longitudinal’ commercial activity was an important feature of the regional economy. It was not, however, an eighteenth-century development, nor is it properly characterized as ‘terminal.’ Stephen Dale and Muzaffar Alam have independently demonstrated that India’s northwestern caravan routes continued to be active throughout the early modern era.<sup>56</sup> Alam notes that, despite periods of political hostility, regular overland commercial relations

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>54</sup> The notion of a seventeenth-century global economic crisis remains a point of considerable contention. See Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, eds, *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, 2d ed., London: Routledge, 1997. For India and China, at least, the notion has largely been dismissed as the seventeenth century appears to have been one of general economic growth with only periodic recessions, most notably in the 1630s and 1640s. Cf. William Atwell, ‘A “General Crisis” in East Asia?’, in Parker and Smith, eds, *The General Crisis*, pp. 235–54; Niels Steensgaard, ‘The Unity of Eurasian History,’ in Parker and Smith, eds, *The General Crisis*, pp. 255–63; John Richards, ‘The Seventeenth-Century Crisis in South Asia,’ chapter six in John Richards, *Power, Administration and Finance in Mughal India*, Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1993; Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

<sup>55</sup> Adshhead, *Central Asia in World History*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Dale, ‘Indo-Russian Trade in the Eighteenth Century,’ in Sugata Bose, ed., *South Asia and World Capitalism*, p. 141; idem, *Indian Merchants*; Alam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change.’

continued between Mughal, Uzbek and Safavid territories and that indigenous merchants responded to the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean by shifting their trade from maritime to overland routes. According to Alam, 'the land-route in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries not only competed successfully with the maritime route, but it also seems to have posed a kind of threat to it.'<sup>57</sup> This is supported by Richard Steel's 1615 report that the Safavid-Portuguese wars had pushed that portion of India's trade with Iran which had previously passed through the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz to the caravan routes passing through Qandahar. Steel observed that, 'the Merchants of India assemble at Lahore, and invest a great part of their monies in Commodities, and joyne themselves in Caravans to passe the Mountaines of Candahar into Persia, by which way is generally reported to passe twelve or fourteene thousand Camels lading, whereas heretofore scarsly passed three thousand, the rest going by the way of Ormus.'<sup>58</sup>

The growing European control over the Indian Ocean trade throughout the seventeenth century motivated Mughal and Safavid rulers to increase efforts to promote, protect, and profit from the caravan trade. Qandahar's strategic location on the Indo-Iranian frontier and its value as a commercial entrepôt contributed to its status among the Mughals and the Safavids as a highly coveted and profitable possession. In his discussion of seventeenth-century Qandahar, Thevenot noted that 'the trade that it hath with Persia, the Country of the Uzbecs and Indies, makes it very rich; and for all the Provinces is so little, it heretofore yielded the Mogul betwixt fourteen and fifteen Millions a year.'<sup>59</sup> Mughal and Safavid rulers alike took every opportunity to capture the city which, as mentioned above, changed hands between the two on a dozen occasions.<sup>60</sup> It is important to note, however, that just as maritime disturbances were known to have pushed merchants to the caravan routes, during periods of Mughal-Safavid rivalry over Qandahar merchants temporarily returned to the maritime routes.<sup>61</sup>

Still, the Qandahar route maintained its importance throughout the early

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<sup>57</sup> Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' pp. 212–14.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Steel and John Crowther, 'A Journall of the Journey of Richard Steel, and John Crowther, from Azmere in India...to Spahan...in the affaires of the East-Indian Societie. Ann. 1615. 1616,' in Samuel Purchas, ed., *Hakluytus Posthumus, or, Purchas, His Pilgrimes*, 20 vols, Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905, IV, pp. 269, 272. See also Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, pp. 172–73.

<sup>59</sup> Surendranath Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1949, p. 79.

<sup>60</sup> Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172–73.

modern era. In a more recent study Steensgaard returns to the issue of the overland caravan trade between India and Iran and he notes that, although the caravan journey between Isfahan and Lahore was arduous and commonly took between five and six months, it was still *cheaper* than maritime transport and, from the turn of the seventeenth century, it benefited from the opening of a new road connecting Agra and Lahore with Isfahan through Qandahar.<sup>62</sup> Contemporary merchants reported that the safety of travelers along these caravan routes was ensured by imperial mandate, the roads were generally secure and well maintained, and the customs fees and other dues were not excessive. According to Steensgaard, these accounts demonstrate that the overland routes through Qandahar were heavily traveled from the sixteenth century onwards, especially when maritime disturbances prompted merchants to shift their mode of transport from ships to camels.<sup>63</sup> These routes were a conduit for a considerable amount of Indian merchandise, most notably cotton textiles and indigo, which were transported to Iranian and Near Eastern markets in return for silver, much of which had been brought to Iran from Europe to be exchanged for Iranian silk.<sup>64</sup>

Caravan routes were also commonly used alongside maritime routes in the rather considerable early modern Mughal-Ottoman trade. In an effort to emphasize this very point, Gilles Veinstein notes that the movement of large quantities of Indian textiles to Ottoman markets was ‘a constant of Ottoman history’ even into the nineteenth century; that textiles comprised some 92 percent of Indian merchandise brought to the markets of the Levant; that, at the end of the eighteenth century, the annual consumption of Indian textiles in the markets of Istanbul alone was valued at some fifteen million French francs; and that the overland and maritime routes were used simultaneously for this trade.<sup>65</sup> Veinstein’s conclusion is supported by the estimate of the

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<sup>62</sup> Niels Steensgaard, ‘The route through Qandahar: the significance of the overland trade from India to the West in the seventeenth century,’ in Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau, eds, *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 61, 66.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67, 73.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 71–72. For discussions of Iran’s role in the movement of precious metals to India, cf. Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 67–68; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah’s Silk for Europe’s Silver: the Eurasian Trade of the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1530–1750)*, University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies, no. 15, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999, *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> Gilles Veinstein, ‘Commercial relations between India and the Ottoman Empire (late fifteenth to late eighteenth centuries): a few notes and hypotheses,’ in Chaudhury and Morineau, eds, *Merchants, Companies and Trade*, pp. 110, 112.



English East India Company agent Sir Josiah Child that, in 1690, there was five times more Indian textiles transported to the Ottoman Empire by Asian merchants using the overland routes from Basra and the Red Sea than was transported by the Dutch and British.<sup>66</sup>

The continued importance of the indigenous caravan trade alongside seventeenth-century European maritime activity in the western Indian Ocean is underlined by the considerable interest the Europeans expressed in investigating the viability of expanding their commercial activities to these overland routes.<sup>67</sup> It is also supported by *late* seventeenth-century English diplomatic agreements with members of the highly active Armenian merchant community of New Julfa who, in return for a share in the English Company's trading privileges 'pledged to give up exporting Indian goods by the land-route and promised to send these on Company ships.'<sup>68</sup> It is worth noting that neither the Armenians nor the English remained faithful to this agreement. Armenian merchants continued transporting goods between India and Iran along the overland trade routes to the end of the eighteenth century.

Turan also was neither isolated nor external to the changing early modern global markets and economic trends. Already in the late seventeenth century, agriculturalists in Bukhara and Balkh had begun cultivating tobacco, a New World crop.<sup>69</sup> As late as the 1840s the Russian traveler Nikolai Khanikoff visited Bukhara and reported that there were still three or four annual caravans from Meshed to Bukhara, and more which came via Kabul, Herat and Kashmir. According to Khanikoff, these caravans stocked the Bukharan markets with a number of Indian commodities, including shawls, dyes (especially indigo), medicines, and various Indian textiles (especially muslins as they were worn by both men and women).<sup>70</sup> Largely because of state support, the caravan trade between India, Iran and Turan continued throughout the early modern era with only brief interruptions.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>67</sup> See Robert McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1996, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' pp. 214–15. Cf. R. W. Ferrier, 'The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation, 22nd June 1688,' *Revue des Études Arméniennes* n.s., 7 (1970), pp. 427–43; *idem*, 'The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,' *The Economic History Review* 2d ser., 26, 1 (1973), pp. 38–62.

<sup>69</sup> McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>70</sup> Nikolai Khanikoff, *Bokhara: its Amir and its People*, translated by Clement A. de Bode, London: James Madden, 1845, pp. 224–27. Indian medicines were also prized in the markets of medieval Russia. P. M. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus: An Introduction to Indo-Russian Contacts and Travels from Mediaeval Times to the October Revolution*, Delhi: Iscus, 1958, p. 66.

*State Policy and Overland Trade*

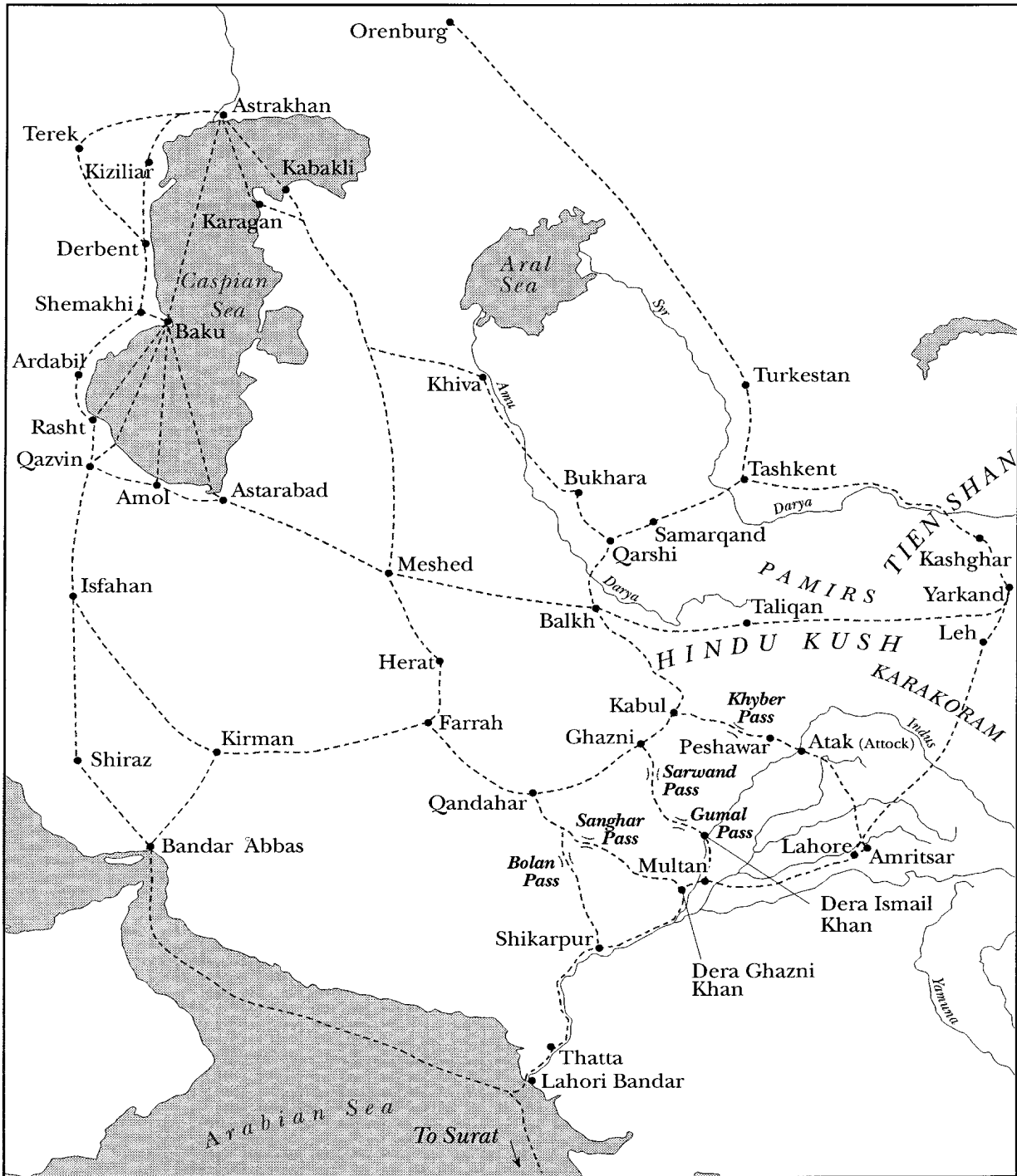
The imperial chronicles and other sources from the period document a lively trade in luxury goods between the social and political elite of early modern India, Turan and Iran. Most often this took the form of expensive gifts sent between rulers with diplomatic embassies, although occasionally ambassadors were explicitly charged with acquiring unique, difficult to find goods. Well-known examples include Akbar's instructions to one Mughal ambassador to Bukhara to return with 'rare books on pigeons' and Jahangir's demand that, while in Turan, his ambassador Mir Baraka should 'purchase mottled walrus teeth [tusks] from any place at any price.'<sup>71</sup> In addition to promoting the exchange of luxury goods, however, the Mughals, Uzbeks and Safavids all appreciated the economic benefits to be gained from fostering a climate conducive to transregional trade and, toward this end, made considerable investments in their commercial infrastructure. An extensive comparative analysis of the policies of these regimes and their effects on the regions' transregional trade relations and respective economies is a topic worthy of further investigation—indeed it merits a monograph of its own—but such a study is beyond the purview of the present work. The discussion below is limited to demonstrating that the Mughal, Uzbek and Safavid states purposefully implemented a number of efforts designed to improve transregional trade, and that this facilitated the growth of India's commercial relations with Turan and Iran in this period.

State investment in the maintenance of trade routes, commonplace throughout the Mughal period, was a regular practice long before the consolidation of Mughal control in the subcontinent. The Delhi Sultans were also very interested in maintaining a positive climate for transregional traders, as demonstrated by Wink's observation that Iltutmish (r. 1211–36) and Balban (r. 1266–87) both made special efforts to suppress predatory tribal groups that had been hindering commercial traffic along the caravan routes.<sup>72</sup> State investment in trade routes

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<sup>71</sup> See Audrey Burton's recent study of Bukharan trade in this period, *The Bukharans: a Dynastic, Diplomatic and Commercial History, 1550–1702*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 57, 151. See also idem, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies: Papers on Inner Asia, no. 23, Bloomington, 1993, p. 25.

<sup>72</sup> According to Wink, under the Delhi Sultans 'the whole purpose of the *iqtā'* system and the garrison towns was to safeguard the flow of traffic, revenue and precious metals throughout the conquered realm.' André Wink, *Al-Hind: the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 2, *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th Centuries*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997, p. 216.



Map 2. Trade Routes

in this period also involved clearing paths through forests, planting trees alongside roads to provide shade for travelers as they passed through the hot plains, constructing caravanserais (dormitory-style quarters established in urban centers and along trade routes for travelers) and forts of various sizes, digging wells, and protecting travelers from highway robbers. The success enjoyed by the Delhi Sultans in these ventures resulted in a process of urbanization in the Punjab, Multan, Sind and the areas north of Delhi which, it will be seen, fostered growth in the industrial production of these regions. Another result is the emergence in this period of what Alam calls a ‘mercantile culture’ in northwest India, represented by the development of the commerce-minded Sikh religion and the increasing prosperity of Khatri merchants, an important component in both the Indian merchant diaspora and the Sikh religion.<sup>73</sup>

Delhi Sultans continued to benefit from their investments in the northwest caravan trade even as late as the reign of Sher Shah Suri (r. 1540–55), the Afghan adversary of the Mughal emperor Humayun (r. 1530–40, 1555). According to ‘Abbas Khan Sarwani, the chronicler of his reign, in 1542 Sher Shah financed the construction the Rohtas fort on the road to Khurasan in an effort to facilitate the pacification of the Ghakkars, an unruly tribe occupying the Salt Range that had been disrupting the trade routes between Lahore and the Khyber Pass.<sup>74</sup> Sher Shah is also reported to have constructed thousands of miles of roads (*rāhs*) traversing north India, both sides of which were adorned with shady fruit trees, ‘so that travellers might travel under the shade while hot winds blew.’<sup>75</sup> He further fostered commerce along his caravan routes by financing the construction of some 1,700 caravanserais across north India, said to have been located just six to seven kilometers (two *kurohs*) from each other and equipped with services for both Muslim and Hindu travelers.<sup>76</sup> Sher Shah also implemented a policy by which his *muqad-*

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. W. H. McLeod, ‘Trade and Investment in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Punjab: The Testimony of the Sikh Devotional Literature,’ in Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier, eds, *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Dr Ganda Singh*, Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976, pp. 81–91; Alam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 221.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tārīkh-i Shēr Shāhī*, 2 vols, edited by S. M. Imamuddin, Dacca: University of Dacca Press, 1964, I, p. 218. For Imamuddin’s English translation, refer to *Tārīkh-i Shēr Shāhī*, II, p. 172.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 216–17; II, pp. 170–72.

<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Sher Shah’s son, Islam Shah, is reported to have doubled that number. Jean Deloche is most certainly correct that, if one is to assume that these structures were made of permanent materials, these figures are exaggerated. He goes on to qualify, however, that the figures ‘are more feasible if one considers that they refer to simple relays, summarily

*dams* (village revenue officers) were made responsible for any unrecovered merchandise stolen by highway robbers. Efforts to motivate local administrators to promote safe commerce through their domain took an even stricter form in the instance of murder. According to Sarwani, the policy of Sher Shah was that, 'if they produced the assassins or showed the place of their residence, the *muqaddams* were set free and the murderers were killed. But if the *muqaddams* of a village in the jurisdiction of which murder was committed failed to do this, they were put to death.'<sup>77</sup>

The continued construction of new routes of commerce and communication and the maintenance of long-established ones is among the defining characteristics of Mughal economic policies.<sup>78</sup> Abul Fazl records in the *Āīn-i Akbarī* that, in the late sixteenth century, there were no fewer than seven routes frequented by travelers between Turan and Kabul and five routes which were commonly used for transport between Kabul and 'Hindustan,' the most favored of which was directed through the Khyber Pass.<sup>79</sup> By way of explaining the preference merchants held for this particular route, Abul Fazl credits his patron, the Mughal emperor Akbar, with improving the road through the Khyber to facilitate the use of wheeled vehicles. It is important to note that ruling elite were not the only parties willing to invest their capital in improving the commercial infrastructure. For example, in the seventeenth century the French traveler Thevenot observed that, in Kabul, Indian merchants themselves commonly financed the digging of wells and the construction of caravanserais along trade routes.<sup>80</sup> In the nineteenth century, Mohan Lal likewise cites the

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built with palms or in clay, intended to shelter the personnel and animals of the postal service.' Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communication in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol. 1: *Land Transport*, translated by James Walker, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 167–68 and notes.

<sup>77</sup> 'Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tārīkh-i Shēr Shāhī*, I, pp. 216–21; II, pp. 170–75. Sher Shah held to be true that 'theft and robbery did not take place but with the cooperation of the *muqaddam*.' He therefore dictated that, 'if a *muqaddam* gives shelter to thieves and robbers or their protectors from the governor and maintains secrecy, he should be tortured to death by way of harsh punishment so that others might take lesson from him and abstain from evil acts.'

<sup>78</sup> During the reign of Aurangzeb, Niccolao Manucci noted, for example, that 'since the time of Humayun many more *saraes* have been built upon the royal highways throughout the realm, from one end of it to the other.' Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor, or Mogul India 1653–1708*, 4 vols, translated by W. Irvine, London: John Murray, 1907–8, I, pp. 114–15.

<sup>79</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *The Āīn-i Akbarī*, 3 vols, translated by H. Blochmann, 2d edition, reprint, Delhi, 1997, II, p. 405.

<sup>80</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 81.

case of a Hindu merchant in Iran during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas who earned the goodwill of travelers, Hindu and Muslim alike, for constructing a bridge in northeastern Iran, near Meshed.<sup>81</sup>

Akbar’s efforts to protect trade through India’s northwest passages dates to early in his reign. In 1557–58, just two years after his ascension to the Mughal throne, Akbar strategically occupied the northwestern cities of Multan and Lahore and constructed great forts, such as the one at Atak (Attock), near the crossing of the newly established Grand Trunk Road and the Indus river, and a network of smaller forts, called *thānās*, throughout the northwest frontier. While Akbar was certainly not oblivious to the importance of maritime trade, as demonstrated by his annexation of the Indian Ocean port of Surat, he made concerted efforts to improve Indo-Iranian overland trade. Following reports that caravan merchants en route to Qandahar were being harassed by Afghan and Baluch tribesmen, Akbar unleashed the Mughal army on the ‘unruly’ pastoralists, tens of thousands of whom were killed or enslaved and exported for sale in foreign markets.<sup>82</sup> In some cases the Mughals were able to negotiate the pacification of the pastoral tribes by offering economic incentives, granting clan leaders administrative posts, or even taking them hostage ‘to ensure good behavior on the part of their followers.’<sup>83</sup> Mughal administrators also fostered a climate conducive to transregional commerce by continuing the policy of Sher Shah which required that local administrators provide restitution to caravan traders for goods stolen while in their territory. In order to minimize such incidents, the Mughals enlisted bands of highway police, *rāhdārs*, to patrol their roads and ensure the safety of travelers.

The Mughals were not alone in their efforts to protect the international caravan trade. The Safavids also employed *rāhdārs* to secure their commercial arteries and, according to a number of foreign visitors, merchants who were robbed in Safavid territory were also able to seek recompense from the governor of the province in which the crime occurred, and it was the duty of the state administrators to find the assailants or repay the merchant for his losses.<sup>84</sup> Rudolph Matthee adds to this that merchants in Safavid Iran could

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<sup>81</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab, Afghanistan, Turkistan, to Balkh, Bokhara and Herat...*, 1846, reprint, Patiala: Punjab Language Department, 1971, pp. 220–21.

<sup>82</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 128.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128–29.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et Autres Lieux de l’Orient*, 10 vols, Paris: Le Normant, 1811, VI, p. 129; Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Ecuyer Baron d’Aubonne...*, 2 vols, Utrecht: Guillaume and Jacob Poolsum, 1712, I, p. 688. Cf. Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ pp. 20–21; Rudolph

generally count on the judicial system for the reliable dispensation of justice.<sup>85</sup> Still, even considering the impressive commercial infrastructure and caravan route network in Mughal India, Burton argues that, in general, the roads in Safavid Iran were safer than those in India. She attributes this to the higher taxes levied on the merchants who used the Safavid roads, the proceeds from which financed road security and theft insurance.<sup>86</sup> The French Catholic Monk Raphaël du Mans, who lived in Iran from 1647 until he died in 1696, reported to the court of King Louis XIV that merchants in Iran appreciated the need for these taxes and paid them without complaint.<sup>87</sup>

One must be careful not to overstate the facility with which travelers moved between regions, nor to overestimate the control of the state over the activities of traders. The relationship between the state and the mercantile elite was symbiotic. The state needed merchants to foster a healthy economy and the merchants benefited from the efforts of the state to maintain a positive commercial climate. Thus, as state support of transregional traders waned during periods of economic and political crisis, there was still a conscious effort on the part of the ruling administrators to maintain control of the trade routes and foster trade to the greatest extent possible. Burton suggests, for example, that even when political relations between neighbors were tense, governments continued to share information about road safety and merchants were still able to cross political boundaries. Thus, despite the great sectarian contempt and political rivalry between the Sunnī Uzbeks and Shīʿa Safavids, even at the end of the sixteenth century, as the Uzbek and Safavid armies were in a pitted struggle over the province of Khurasan, Bukharan merchants were still conducting business in Kashan.<sup>88</sup> Dale likewise notes that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Akbar and Shah ʿAbbas I made mutual efforts to increase protection along caravan routes and financed ambitious caravanserai and bridge construction projects in an effort to create an improved climate for overland commerce.<sup>89</sup> In the chronicle of his reign, Shah ʿAbbas I is said to have held to be true that ‘the greater part of governing is the

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P. Matthee, ‘Politics and Trade in Late Safavid Iran: Commercial Crisis and Government Reaction under Shah Solayman (1666–1694),’ Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1991, pp. 81–83.

<sup>85</sup> Matthee, ‘Politics and Trade in Late Safavid Iran,’ pp. 79–81.

<sup>86</sup> Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 20.

<sup>87</sup> Raphaël du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1890, p. 246.

<sup>88</sup> Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 41.

preservation of stability within the kingdom and security on the roads.’<sup>90</sup> With this in mind, especially during the early part of his reign, Shah ‘Abbas put forth considerable effort apprehending those peoples who had been prospering as highway robbers.<sup>91</sup> Akbar likewise financed the construction of many caravanserais, and his placement of a bridge over the Indus river near his fort at Atak, begun in 1588, was most certainly designed to improve caravan traffic through India’s northwest frontier.<sup>92</sup>

Like Mughal India, Safavid Iran was also known to have caravanserais established at convenient locations along the trade routes traversing the country. A multitude of these buildings were constructed on old and new caravan routes under the direction of Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) and Shah ‘Abbas II (r. 1642–66).<sup>93</sup> Iranian caravanserais were usually two stories, square, and equipped with a pool in the courtyard. Merchants were required to pay an entrance fee and a small daily fee, for which they received private eight-square-foot rooms with a fireplace and rooms for their servants. The caretaker of the caravanserai was responsible for collecting sales taxes and for supervising sales to make certain that all commerce was conducted within the legal parameters set by the Shah. These caretakers were known to have occasionally overtaxed or otherwise cheated merchants for their own benefit, but they were also held responsible for all thefts and losses that occurred within their caravanserais.<sup>94</sup> Matthee notes that travelers to Safavid Iran ‘marveled at Iranian caravanserais and compared them favorably with those of the Ottoman Empire.’<sup>95</sup> However, according to Niccolao Manucci, Indian caravanserais were more numerous and tended to be much larger than those in Iran. Manucci observed that Indian caravanserais resembled fortresses more than

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<sup>90</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great (Tārīk-e ‘Ālamārā-ye ‘Abbāsī)*, vol. 1, translated by Roger M. Savory, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978, p. 523.

<sup>91</sup> Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 67. It is commonly cited that Shah ‘Abbas I was responsible for the construction of 999 caravanserais. Matthee suggests that, although ‘his building activity is impressive nonetheless,’ this is an exaggeration as ‘many caravans built before or after his reign are habitually attributed to Shah ‘Abbas.’

<sup>92</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl*, 3 vols, translated by Henry Beveridge, reprint, Delhi, 1998, III, pp. 520–21.

<sup>93</sup> Matthee, ‘Politics and Trade in Late Safavid Iran,’ p. 78; idem, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 67.

<sup>94</sup> Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, I, pp. 119, 446–47, 686. For further discussion, see Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> Matthee, ‘Politics and Trade in Late Safavid Iran,’ p. 78.



hostels; they were constructed of brick with a grand gate entrance and some could house as many as ten thousand travelers, including their pack animals and carts.<sup>96</sup> Although available sources do not mention whether or not the individual in charge of these massive institutions in India were held responsible for stolen goods, Manucci does report that robbery in Indian caravanserais was an offense punishable by execution.

The commercial climate of Turan, both domestic and international, was likewise markedly improved under the policies of ‘Abd Allah Khan II. In addition to granting tax-free status to a number of influential merchants, ‘Abd Allah is himself known to have been actively engaged in trade, to have implemented a number of monetary reforms, and to have financed the construction of a number of commercial institutions in the Bukharan Khanate, including caravanserais and a moneychangers’ bazaar (*tāq-i šarrāfān*).<sup>97</sup> Mukminova also notes that, in the 1570s, as Akbar’s armies occupied Badakhshan and the Uzbeks did the same in neighboring Balkh, there was considerable construction of new caravanserais and covered bazaars along the road between Samarqand and Bukhara.<sup>98</sup> The general appreciation in Turanian society for the value of transregional traders and the hardships they underwent is represented in Alisher Navoi’s fifteenth-century *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*. Navoi, the celebrated father of the modern Uzbek language, differentiates merchants into three categories; first were the transregional traders whom he designates ‘real men,’ then the retail merchants whom he derogatorily characterizes as ‘housewives,’ and finally the market sellers whom he dismisses as ‘godless liars.’<sup>99</sup>

Although the monetary policies of the seventeenth-century rulers of Bukhara were less successful than those of ‘Abd Allah, Burton has observed that such notable Ashtarkhānid *khāns* as Imam Quli (r. 1611–41), ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (r. 1645–81) and Subhan Quli (1681–1702) also appreciated the need to maintain open routes for traders.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, the seventeenth-century correspondence of

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Niccolao Manucci, *A Pepys of Mogul India*, edited by Margaret Irvine, translated by William Irvine, London: John Murray, 1913, p. 34; Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 25.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. E. A. Davidovich, ‘Dve denezhnie reformi v gosudarstve Sheibanidov,’ in *Trudi Sredneaziatskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, new series, 23, 1951, pp. 105–41; Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. O. A. Sukhareva, *Kvartal’naia obshchina pozdnefeodal’nogo goroda Bukhari*, Moscow: Nauka, 1976, p. 51; Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>99</sup> Alisher Navoi, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, Moscow: Nauka, 1948, pp. 42–43. See also Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 114–15.

<sup>100</sup> Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 3.

Mughal and Uzbek rulers demonstrates that it was common to appeal openly for mutual investment in trade routes and request that efforts be made to ensure that the roads were kept safe for merchants.<sup>101</sup> The Bukharan *khāns* also regularly sent letters to the Mughals on behalf of merchants and other travelers making an expedition to India, most commonly, it seems, for the purchase of textiles. Thus, in a letter written on behalf of the merchant Mehtar Hamdam and sent to Nawab Fateh Allah Khan, the *hakīm* of Kabul, the Bukharan *khān* requested that the *hakīm* ‘please help Mehter Hamdam to quickly purchase textiles and other things and take them back to Bukhara.’ In another letter, Subhan Quli Khan reported to an Iraqi noble that, ‘we have sent your humble servant to India for the purchase of textiles and goods for you who are the axis of the universe. At this time it was heard that this person completed his duties in the traditional manner and has returned to Kabul, the threshold of the universe.’<sup>102</sup>

Shortly after ascending the throne in 1605, Akbar’s son Jahangir implemented a number of aggressive policies designed to attract merchants from Turan and Iran.<sup>103</sup> These include the abolition of the port dues, the *tamghā* (a commercial tax of 2.5 percent applied to goods in transit), and, in Kabul province, the highly profitable dues on manufactured articles and the *zakāt*, the proceeds from which were, by Islamic tradition, reserved for the poor. Jahangir further improved the situation of merchants by ordering the construction of more caravanserais at isolated locations along trade routes where robberies had taken place in the past and by forbidding customs officials to open merchants’ bales for inspection without their permission.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps because of a need to finance military ventures and such ambitious construction projects as the Taj Mahal, these taxes, and others, were reintroduced during Shah Jahan’s reign (r. 1628–58).<sup>105</sup> This most certainly had a negative effect on transregional commerce, but it is worth noting that, following Shah

<sup>101</sup> See the collection of the international correspondence of the Ashtarkhānid *khāns* in *Maktūbāt munsha’āt manshūrāt*, especially fols 5b–6a, 25a–b, 33b.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 67b, 73a.

<sup>103</sup> Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 445–46.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem*, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 26.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Shireen Moosvi, ‘Expenditure On Buildings Under Shahjahan—A Chapter of Imperial Finance History,’ *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress 46th Session*, Amritsar, 1985, pp. 285–99; Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, p. 145; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 127; Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 26. Shah Jahan is reported to have spent roughly forty million rupees on his unsuccessful Balkh campaign and nearly thirty million rupees on his various architectural projects.

Jahan's highly disruptive Balkh campaign in 1646–47, formal relations between the Mughals and the Uzbeks were quickly revived when, in the 1650s, the new ruler of Bukhara, 'Abd al-'Aziz Khan (r. 1645–81), sent an embassy to India.<sup>106</sup> In a letter to emperor Aurangzeb, 'Abd al-'Aziz proposed that, 'before this period, in the time of the great ones, there was a steady relationship which had become our tradition. We would like the same relations to be protected and continued in this time. The sending of messengers and goods on both sides should be the practice.'<sup>107</sup>

At least in terms of his economic policies, emperor Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan's son and successor, seems to have followed more in the footsteps of his grandfather than his father. After confining Shah Jahan to the Agra Fort, Aurangzeb promptly set to work on improving the commercial climate of his realm. Burton observes that, 'early in his [Aurangzeb's] reign he abolished the ḥāṣil [market tax] and the raḥdārī [transit tax between provinces], the rate of the ḥāṣil having become so extortionate that, according to a contemporary, merchants were giving up their trading activities altogether.'<sup>108</sup> Apparently finding these policies successful, he later eliminated and decreased several other taxes. Aurangzeb also placed a great emphasis on maintaining control of the trade routes in order to ensure the safety of caravan traders. Echoing the early difficulties of his great-grandfather Akbar, in 1672 the Afridi Afghans rebelled against Aurangzeb's authority and the Khyber Pass remained closed for almost two years, until the Mughal army, under the leadership of Aurangzeb himself, was finally able to suppress the insubordinate tribesmen. Aurangzeb returned to Delhi just over a year later, having left a new governor in Kabul, Amir Khan, charged with wielding Mughal influence over the Afghan tribes to ensure that such events did not recur. Amir Khan regularly dispensed large grants to pastoralists in an effort to purchase the safety of caravan traders traveling through the Afghan mountain passes. According to Richards, 'Amir Khan proved to be so adroit that no further large tribal rebellions flared up during the two decades he remained as governor at Kabul.'<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> This is according to the seventeenth-century Turanian source, the *Silsilat al-Salatin*. See A. Ziaev, 'Tsennii istochnik po istorii vzaimootnoshenii Bukharskogo khanstva i indii XVII–nachala XVIII veka,' *Obshchestvennii nauki v Uzbekistane*, 3–4 (1992), p. 49.

<sup>107</sup> *Maktūbāt munsha'āt manshūrāt*, fol. 7a.

<sup>108</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' pp. 26–27.

<sup>109</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, pp. 171, 246.

*Commodities*

Whereas the abundance of materials on European trade in the Indian Ocean in well-organized European archives has for many years provided scholars of Indian Ocean trade with new grist for the mill, it is a common complaint among those who study early modern overland Asian trade that statistics are largely unavailable and, in the instances that they are, their reliability is questionable. The present work is no exception. However, as noted above, in recent years there has been a dramatic improvement in our general understanding of early modern overland Asian trade and its relation to maritime trade. By augmenting the commendable achievements of a number of authors with additional research, we are now in a position to synthesize this material in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the general magnitude of the overland trade relations between early modern India and Turan and the more important commodities involved.

Throughout the early modern era Indian agricultural production was immense. The production in India of a large quantity of spices for export to distant markets has been a topic of study for many years, but only recently has attention been shifted to India's cotton production, which supported a great textile industry and sustained hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of artisans throughout the subcontinent, especially in the Coromandel Coast, Gujarat, Punjab and Bengal. It is a defining feature of early modern Asian trade that markets around the world were stocked with India's textile surplus. These textiles included linen, silk, muslin, chintz, and calico, all of which were made available to international markets in various qualities and colors at comparatively low prices.<sup>110</sup> It is perhaps most surprising to find that, despite the rather sizeable silk industry of early modern Turan, Bukharan merchants are reported to have imported considerable amounts of Indian silk.<sup>111</sup> Some insight into this can be found in the 1671 report of the Russian dignitary Boris Pazukhin to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (r. 1645–76) that the Bukharan

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<sup>110</sup> Steensgaard notes the importance of Indian cotton in the Iranian markets, citing an estimate from 1639 that roughly 20–25,000 camels annually traveled to Isfahan, most of which were carrying Indian cottons. Steensgaard, 'The route through Quandahar,' p. 63 and note 17.

<sup>111</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' p. 30. Both India and Turan are also noted to have imported Iranian silk, identified by Matthee as 'Iran's most important export commodity and the mainstay of trade between the Safavid realm and the outside world.' Cf. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 4, 28, 55.

silk production was insufficient to satisfy even the domestic demand.<sup>112</sup> While in India in the latter half of the seventeenth century, Tavernier also observed that ‘the merchants of Tartary’ objected to the efforts of the Dutch to export more than 6,000 to 7,000 bales of silk from India as ‘these merchants [the Turks] took as much as the Dutch.’<sup>113</sup>

Conversely, precious metals, especially gold and silver, were most in demand in India. This can be attributed to the fact that India itself has few gold and silver deposits, a deficit which gave foreign merchants with specie premium purchasing power in Indian markets. Thus, in exchange for textiles, spices and other Indian agricultural and industrial products, merchants from across Europe and Asia flooded India’s bazaars with dinars, tangas, ducats, guilders, reals, francs, rixdollars (reichsthalers) and countless other varieties of coins, all of which were reminted into rupees. Or, in the words of Manucci:

It ought to be remembered that the whole of the merchandise which is exported from the Mogul kingdom comes from four kinds of plants—that is to say, the shrub that produces the cotton from which a large quantity of cloth, coarse and fine, is made. These cotton goods are exported to Europe, Persia, Arabia, and other quarters of the world. The second is the plant which produces indigo. The third is the one from which comes opium, of which a large amount is used on the Java coast. The fourth is the mulberry-tree, on which their silk-worms are fed, and, as it may be said, that commodity (silk) is grown on those trees. For the export of all this merchandise, European and other traders bring much silver to India.<sup>114</sup>

Even Safavid Iran, which generally enjoyed a positive trade balance with neighboring Russia and Ottoman Turkey, suffered from a constant effluence of silver and gold to India.<sup>115</sup> This is clearly demonstrated by the Safavid Shahs’ repeated prohibitions to export silver and gold from Iran, and the numerous references to the efforts made by merchants to circumvent these restrictions in their trade with India.<sup>116</sup> In the words of the mid-seventeenth-

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<sup>112</sup> Capt. R. A. Clarke, ed., ‘A Voyage to Uzbeistan in 1671–1672,’ in Sir Duncan Cumming, ed., *The Country of the Turkoman: An anthology of exploration from the Royal Geographical Society*, London: Oguz Press and the Royal Geographic Society, 1977, p. 86.

<sup>113</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, 2d ed., 2 vols, 1676, reprint, edited by William Crooke and translated by V. Ball, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995, II, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, p. 418.

<sup>115</sup> Steensgaard, ‘The route through Quandahar,’ pp. 61, 66; Mathee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, pp. 67–68; McCabe, *The Shah’s Silk for Europe’s Silver*, p. 121.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Steel and Crowther, ‘A Journall of the Journey,’ p. 274; du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, p. 193; Tavernier, *Travels in India*, I, pp. 19–20; Mehdi Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period: Contributions to the Social-Economic History*

century French traveler François Bernier, ‘it should not escape notice that gold and silver, after circulating in every other quarter of the globe, come at length to be swallowed up, lost in some measure, in *Hindoustan*.’<sup>117</sup> Raphaël du Mans similarly likened Persia to a great caravanserai equipped with two doors, with European traders bringing New World silver from the west only for it to be re-exported eastward to India, ‘where all the money in the Universe is unloaded as if into an abyss.’<sup>118</sup>

Even considering the remarkable number of horses and the great caravans bringing vast arrays of fruits and other goods from Turan to Indian markets, the general balance of trade appears to have remained in India’s favor well into the nineteenth century. This is supported by the accounts of the Indian traveler Mir Izzat Ullah, who visited Bukhara in 1812–13, and the Russian traveler P. L. Jakovlev who arrived in the region in 1820. According to these travelers, in exchange for the large quantities of indigo, sugar and textiles—including Indian calicos, muslins, silks and Kashmiri shawls—that Indian and Afghan merchants regularly imported to Bukhara, they returned to India loaded principally with gold and silver, especially Dutch ducats which had been taken to Bukhara from Russia.<sup>119</sup> In 1835–36 the Russian traveler I. V. Vitkevich similarly observed that, although Indian merchants in Bukhara had been forbidden to export gold and silver, in reality, they already had it all.<sup>120</sup>

### *A. General Commodities of the Early Modern Indo-Turanian Caravan Trade*

It has been mentioned that Indian textiles and slaves enjoyed great demand in

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*of Persia*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 65, Berlin: Klaus Schwartz, 1982, p. 230; *EIr*, s.v. ‘Commerce: vi. From the Safavid through the Qajar Period.’

<sup>117</sup> François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, AD 1656–1668*, translated by Irving Brock and edited by Archibald Constable, Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1891, p. 202.

<sup>118</sup> du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, p. 192 and note. This translation, and the original 1660 French text, can be found in McCabe, *The Shah’s Silk for Europe’s Silver*, pp. 157–58 and note 59.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Mir Izzet Ullah, ‘Travels beyond the Himalaya, by Mir Izzet Ullah. Republished from the Calcutta Oriental Quarterly Magazine, 1825,’ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* VII (1843), pp. 339–40; Jakovlev’s account in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1823, pp. 40–41, 56. Mid-eighteenth-century accounts of Indian rupees in Orenburg should be attributed to Nadir Shah’s massive exportation of wealth from the Mughal capital of Delhi, estimated to have totaled between 500 million and 1 billion rupees. See Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 29 and note 44.

<sup>120</sup> N. A. Khalfin, ed., *Zapiski o Bukharskom khanstve (Otcheti P. I. Demezona i I. V. Vitkevicha)*, Moscow: Nauka, 1983, p. 104.

Turanian markets and that there was a corresponding demand in Indian markets for horses. These are clearly the most important commodities to have been exchanged between India and Turan, and they will be discussed in detail below. There is no conclusive way to determine every other commodity to have been transported across the early modern Indo-Turanian caravan routes, but a survey of available sources reveals a number of the more important goods and illuminates another important facet of the commercial bonds connecting early modern India and Turan.

The Indian textile industry was complemented by the large-scale production and exportation of indigo, another commodity that enjoyed considerable demand in foreign markets throughout early modern Asia and Europe.<sup>121</sup> From the ancient period various qualities of indigo were produced throughout the subcontinent and exported to foreign markets. During the period of our study, large amounts of indigo were produced for export in Bengal, but the best varieties were the ‘Bayana’ indigo, produced near Agra, and the varieties produced in Gujarat.<sup>122</sup> In the early modern era, Lahore was an especially attractive indigo market for caravan traders from Iran and Turan and, despite the existence of a distinct ‘Lahori’ indigo, the demand for the celebrated ‘Bayana’ indigo was so great that Lahore is reported to have actually developed into an international ‘clearing house’ for Agra’s indigo production.<sup>123</sup> The movement of this commodity to markets in Turan is supported by an English traveler to the region in 1611 who reported that it was, in fact, indigo from Agra that was available in the markets of Samarqand at that time.<sup>124</sup> Indian and European traders were not the only merchants to have engaged in the exportation of large quantities of indigo from India. Armenian merchants were also active in the overland transportation of indigo and, through their diaspora network—centered in the New Julfa suburb of Isfahan—they took Indian indigo to markets in the Levant, the Caucasus and on to Russia.<sup>125</sup> Of

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<sup>121</sup> Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan: Cities and Industries, 1556–1803*, 2d ed., Karachi, 1974, p. 63. See also Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 202.

<sup>122</sup> Pelsaert gives a rather detailed account of indigo production and the indigo trade in early seventeenth-century India. Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir’s India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, translated by W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1925, pp. 10–18. See also Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, pp. 63–74; Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 105; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 197.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, p. 52; Singh, *Region and Empire*, p. 105.

<sup>124</sup> See Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ p. 30.

<sup>125</sup> According to the account of Pelsaert, Armenian, Lahori and Kabuli merchants were particularly active in this trade. Pelsaert, *Jahangir’s India*, p. 15. See also Naqvi, *Mughal*

the numerous Indian dyes imported to Turan, indigo was most in demand for both domestic use and for further transport to Russian markets.<sup>126</sup>

Sugar was another commodity that was exported from the subcontinent in large quantities, probably long before the beginning of the sixteenth century when Babur included both raw and refined sugars in his list of goods commonly transported from India to Turan.<sup>127</sup> Already in the third century of the common era Indians produced sugar from sugar cane. By the Mughal period sugar cane was grown throughout north India and was considered, alongside cotton and indigo, to be one of the principal cash crops of the Mughal Empire and an important export commodity.<sup>128</sup> Two major centers of Indian sugar production were Lahore, reputed to have produced a very high quality variety, and Delhi, famous for its refined sugars.<sup>129</sup> Perhaps because of the rather mundane nature of this commodity, references to the exportation of sugar along the overland routes are scarce, but the magnitude of its production in India and its encouragement by the Mughal rulers, as well as its exportation to Iranian and other Asian markets by the Dutch and English, seems to suggest that Indian sugar continued to enjoy a constant demand in foreign markets throughout the early modern era.<sup>130</sup>

Other commodities that were regularly strapped to the backs of camels and horses and transported from India to the distant markets of early modern Turan include spices, specifically pepper, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, cloves and ginger, as well as medicinal herbs, jewelry, precious stones, weaponry and ornate tents made from Indian cotton cloth for use on campaigns.<sup>131</sup> Later, in 1833–34, the Russian official P. I. Demezov ventured from his post in the

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*Hindustan*, pp. 69–70; McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*, pp. 276, 292.

<sup>126</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' p. 42. Burton suggests that 'the margin of profit on indigo must have been high if one considers that it originated in India and that merchants were still prepared to take up to 213 kgs. all the way to Kazan.'

<sup>127</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 202.

<sup>128</sup> Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, p. 278.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 287–88; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 193, 195.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 202; Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, pp. 49–50; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' pp. 29–31; Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' pp. 206–7; Askarov et al, eds, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, p. 124. Tents were especially expensive, costing upwards of 10,000 rupees. Still, the Juybari Sheikh Khwaja Sa'id bin Khwaja Islam is reported to have owned between seventy and eighty such tents. *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 80, fol. 78b.



Russian frontier town of Orenburg to visit Bukhara and left a rather detailed account of the Indian commodities available in the Bukharan markets at that time. In addition to sugar, indigo and an impressive variety of textiles of both Indian and English origin, Demezou noted that Bukharan markets also boasted a significant supply of Indian ammonia, various herbs, henna and other dyes, including Hyderabadi cornelian. Indian rice, considered to be higher-quality than the Bukharan variety, was also available and Demezou stressed that, at that time, Indian indigo was abundant in caravanserais in Qandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Qunduz, Balkh, Andkhui, Qarshi, Maimana, Shabarghan, Bukhara and Khiva, and that it was brought to these locations primarily by Lohani Afghans.<sup>132</sup> Demezou's account concludes with the remark that, at the time of his visit, Indian merchants brought many goods to the Bukharan markets but were interested in exporting only gold and, when that was not available, then silver.<sup>133</sup> Just a few years later, in the 1840s, Mohan Lal noted that, in just one year, Lohani and Shikarpuri merchants sent to Khurasan some 1,500 loads of indigo and that tea was commonly transported from India to Bukhara via the overland routes traversing Khulum.<sup>134</sup> Later that century, in 1869, another Russian author reported that tea was commonly transported from Bombay up the Indus river to Peshawar, and from there by caravan through Kabul, Balkh, Qarshi and Bukhara to Tashkent.<sup>135</sup> An English traveler subsequently reported that, because of a breakdown in trade relations with China, roughly 10,000 camel loads of tea, or nearly five million pounds, was annually transported from India to Bukhara.<sup>136</sup> By 1880 this had dropped considerably, although, according to the figures presented by Rasul'-Zade, Bukhara still imported more than three million pounds of tea annually.<sup>137</sup> Dmitriev likewise notes that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were some seventy registered Indian wholesale tea merchants who collectively enjoyed a monopoly of the tea market in the Bukharan Khanate.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Khalfin, ed., *Zapiski o Bukharskom khanstve*, pp. 77–80.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>134</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 107, 404.

<sup>135</sup> 'Indiiskii Chai v' Tashkente,' *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 27, p. 151. Originally published in *Moskov. vedomosti*, 1869, no. 131. The anonymous author reported that, although the tea was commonly known as 'Indian' because it arrived via Bombay, it actually originated in Canton and Shanghai.

<sup>136</sup> Bayard Taylor, ed., *Central Asia: Travels in Cashmere, Little Tibet and Central Asia*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881, p. 232.

<sup>137</sup> P. N. Rasul'-Zade, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh sviazei vtoroi poloviny XIX–nachala XX veka*, Tashkent: Fan, 1968, p. 87. For a discussion of the Indian tea trade in Bukhara in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see *ibid.*, pp. 86–93.

<sup>138</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 238. Even in the beginning of the twentieth

Conversely, numerous travelers' accounts and the Mughal chronicles mention that large amounts of fruit, both fresh and dried, regularly arrived in Indian markets from beyond the northwest frontier. Akbar arranged to have Bukharan merchants supply him with melons, apples and pears from Samarqand in the summer months, and melons from Badakhshan in the winter.<sup>139</sup> In the *Āīn-i Akbarī*, Abul Fazl noted that, with the Mughal conquest of Kabul, Qandahar and Kashmir, Indian fruit imports increased dramatically. The *Āīn* lists a considerable variety of fruits and nuts imported from Turan, among which are included two varieties of melons, apples from Samarqand, quinces, guavas, dates, two varieties of raisins, plums, dried apricots, figs, jujubes, almonds, pistachios and hazelnuts.<sup>140</sup> Abul Fazl also reported that Akbar 'looks upon fruits as one of the greatest gifts of the Creator and pays much attention to them.' For that reason, Akbar even resettled in his empire some fruit growers from Iran and Turan. The *Āīn* reports that these fruit growers enjoyed great success, but in the long term their efforts to reproduce the high-quality crops of Turan were futile as neither the Indian climate nor the soil were agreeable for the Turanian vines and trees.<sup>141</sup> Indian retailers therefore remained dependent upon caravan traders for regular supplies of fresh and dried fruits and nuts. Writing in the mid-seventeenth century, Bernier, for example, recorded that '*Hindoustan* consumes an immense quantity of fresh fruit from *Samarkand*, *Bali* [Balkh], *Bocara*, and *Persia*; such as melons, apples pears and grapes, eaten at *Dehli* and purchased at a very high price nearly the whole winter;—and likewise dried fruit, such as almonds, pistachio and various other small nuts, plums, apricots, and raisins, which may be procured the whole year round.'<sup>142</sup> The same author elsewhere observed that, in Delhi:

there is, indeed, a fruit-market that makes some show. It contains many shops which during the summer are well supplied with dry fruit from *Persia*, *Balk*, *Bokara*, and *Samarkande*; such as almonds, pistachios, and walnuts, raisins, prunes, and apricots; and in winter with excellent fresh grapes, black and white, brought from the same countries, wrapped in cotton; pears and apples of three or four sorts, and those admirable melons which last the whole winter. These fruites are, however, very dear; a single melon selling for a crown and a half. But nothing is considered

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century, three of the ten wholesale tea businesses operating in Samarqand, identified by Dmitriev as the greatest center of the tea trade in the Turkestan Krai, were owned by Indians.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Abul Fazl Allami, *The Āīn-i Akbarī*, I, p. 68; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' p. 27.

<sup>140</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *The Āīn-i Akbarī*, I, p. 69.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, I, pp. 68–69; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' p. 27.

<sup>142</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, pp. 203–4.

so great a treat: it forms the chief expense of the *Omrahs*, and I have frequently known my *Agah* spend twenty crowns on fruit for his breakfast.<sup>143</sup>

Just a few years later, Manucci reported that, shortly after his ascension to the throne, Aurangzeb received an embassy from Subhan Quli Khan which included one hundred camels loaded with fresh fruit (melons, apples, pears, pomegranates, and seedless grapes) and one hundred camels loaded with dry fruits (Bukharan plums, apricots, and a number of varieties of raisins and nuts).<sup>144</sup> Alam notes that, as the transregional caravan routes became increasingly stable under Mughal and Uzbek patronage, Indian markets even as far south as the Deccan enjoyed a regular supply of fruit from Turan.<sup>145</sup> This trade continued well into the nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup>

There were, of course, a number of other commodities available in Turan that enjoyed regular demand in India. Much as Indian silk enjoyed considerable demand in Bukharan markets, there was a corresponding demand for Turanian silk in Indian markets. During his visit to Bukhara in the 1550s the English merchant Anthony Jenkinson observed that Indian merchants in Bukhara commonly purchased leather ('redde hides'), slaves and horses for export to India.<sup>147</sup> Fur, especially sable, was another product of the steppe brought to Bukhara from Siberia and Moscovy and further transported on to Indian markets. Also in demand were camels, which were reputed to have been able to carry over 50 percent more than the Indian breeds, as well as such luxury goods as rubies and other precious stones, hunting birds (falcons) and dogs, and Chinese porcelain.<sup>148</sup> Finally, Burton notes that paper produced in Bukhara,

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>144</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, pp. 36–39. The gifts from Subhan Quli Khan also included *Turkī* horses and additional camels.

<sup>145</sup> Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' p. 210.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Shah Mahmud Hanifi, 'British Capital and the Transformation of Social Relations in 19th Century Afghanistan,' Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, forthcoming; Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997, pp. 280–88. Both Hanifi and Noelle note that Hindu merchants played an important role in this trade.

<sup>147</sup> Anthony Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia...*, edited by E. Delmar Morgan and C. H. Coote, Hakluyt Society Publications, 2 vols, 1st ser., nos 72–73, London, 1886, I, p. 88 and notes 5 and 6. Jenkinson was an agent of the fledgling 'Russia Company,' a group of English merchants chartered to investigate the potential of establishing overland trade relations with India. The leather was probably brought to Bukhara from Russia.

<sup>148</sup> Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, p. 47; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' pp. 28–29. One informed author noted in the 1880s that, whereas Persian camels could ordinarily carry 320 pounds and Indian camels could carry 400 pounds, the 'Khurasanian' breed—and here he most certainly means the larger, two-humped

Balkh and especially Samarqand was reputedly of very high quality and enjoyed great international demand.<sup>149</sup> This paper was available in an extraordinary variety of colors and patterns, some of which was marbled or speckled with silver, although the best was silvery white. It is interesting to note that a common ingredient in this paper was cotton, usually recycled from old shirts and rags which had been sold to the paper mills.<sup>150</sup> Thus, after having fallen into disuse, some of the very cotton textiles imported from India were most likely converted into Turanian paper, and they may even have been re-exported to Indian markets in this new form.

### *B. The Horse Trade*

Horses are undoubtedly the single most important commodity to have been produced by Inner Asian pastoral nomads. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of horses to the nomadic life in the steppe; they were the primary means of transportation, an important source of food, and the pastoral economy centered around the breeding of these animals. Pastoralists took pride in the fact that their children frequently learned to ride even before they could walk, and riding skills were the focus of the pastoralists' many competitive sports. Furthermore, the wealth of a tribe was measured not by its reserves of precious metals, but by the size of its herd, and pastoralists relied upon this commodity as the primary currency in their commercial exchanges with sedentary peoples, from whom they acquired necessary agricultural and industrial products not available in the steppe.<sup>151</sup>

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Bactrian variety—could carry on average between 600 and 700 pounds. Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart, 'The Country of the Tekke Turkomans and the Tejend and Murghab Rivers,' in Sir Duncan Cumming, ed., *The Country of the Turkoman*, p. 141. In the early nineteenth century, Meyendorff also estimated that the average camel in the steppe could carry 18 puds (1 pud equals 36 pounds), equal to about 650 pounds. E. K. Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie iz Orenburga v Bukharu*, Russian translation by N. A. Khalfin, Moscow: Nauka, 1975, p. 124. For an excellent discussion on the use of camels as draft animals, see Richard W. Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1975. While Bulliet notes that the standard camel load in the Roman Empire was set at 430 pounds, he also observes that 'the two-humped animal was better suited to plying the route over the Hindu Kush into India.' *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 169.

<sup>149</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' p. 20.

<sup>150</sup> Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, p. 70.

<sup>151</sup> For detailed discussions of pastoral economies, the importance of horses in the Inner Asian steppe, and the relations shared by nomadic and sedentary communities, see Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2d ed., Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

Because of their availability and reputation for strength and stamina, Inner Asian horses enjoyed widespread international demand throughout much of the known world. Gommans has noted that, even during the epic period of Indian history (the early centuries of the common era), the *Mahabharata* associates the pastoral peoples living beyond India's northwest frontier with horses, referring to them as *aśvaka* (horsefolk).<sup>152</sup> In the middle of the fourteenth century, the famous Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta wrote that the steppe people from around Asaq Azaf in southern Russia, the territory of the Mongol Golden Horde at the time, made their living by raising large numbers of horses. According to this account, horses could be purchased in the steppe at the very reasonable price of fifty or sixty dirhams, equal to about one Moroccan dinar. Among these tribes horses were so numerous that it was not uncommon for a single Turk to own several thousand, and some claimed to own as many as ten thousand.<sup>153</sup> Ibn Battuta further reported that:

These horses are exported to India [in droves], each one numbering six thousand or more or less... When they reach the land of Sind with their horses, they feed them with forage, because the vegetation of the land of Sind does not take the place of barley, and the greater part of the horses die or are stolen. They are taxed on them in the land of Sind [at the rate of] seven silver dinars a horse, at a place called Shashnaqār, and pay a further tax at Multān, the capital of the land of Sind... In spite of this, there remains a handsome profit for the traders in these horses, for they sell the cheapest of them in the land of India for a hundred silver dinars (the exchange value of which in Moroccan gold is twenty-five dinars), and often sell them for twice or three times as much. The good horses are worth five hundred [silver] dinars or more.<sup>154</sup>

As one can surmise from Ibn Battuta's account, great profits could be made in the horse trade, even as much as 2,500 percent of the initial investment, although this does not take into account the considerable losses which were regularly suffered due to starvation or theft. Still, Gommans determines that a number of Afghan confederacies, including the Lodis (1451–1526), Suris (1540–55) and the eighteenth-century Durrani, flourished as mediatory horse merchants and, because of this, 'carved out their states along the trade routes to Central Asia.'<sup>155</sup> The Afghans did not, however, monopolize this trade. In

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<sup>152</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 16.

<sup>153</sup> Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354*, translated by H. A. R. Gibb, 3 vols, New Delhi, 1993, II, p. 478.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 478–79 and note 242. According to Gibb, 'Shashnaqār' is probably a reference to the city of Hashtnagar, located some sixteen miles northwest of Peshawar, very near the Khyber Pass.

<sup>155</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 17.

1558 Anthony Jenkinson noted that, prior to returning home, Indian merchants also commonly invested their capital in horses to be sold in the Indian markets.<sup>156</sup>

It should also be noted that the overland routes through the Hindukush mountain passes were not the only way that horses reached India. Already in the thirteenth century, even before Ibn Battuta observed the movement of large numbers of horses across Afghanistan into India, Marco Polo reported that the rulers of Malabar annually received as many as 10,000 horses by sea, for which they reportedly spent some 2.2 million dinars.<sup>157</sup> At the time of his visit in 1442, ‘Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi considered the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz, also known as ‘Dāralaman’ (‘The Abode of Security’), to have been an important horse market and a remarkable international entrepôt that attracted merchants from throughout Egypt, Syria, Rome, Fars, Azerbaijan, Khurasan, Turan, Turkestan, the Dasht-i Qipchaq, India, China, and port cities throughout the Indian Ocean.<sup>158</sup> Just a few years later, in 1466, the Russian traveler Afanasi Nikitin began his lengthy journey to India via the maritime route through Hormuz, which he likewise considered to be ‘a vast emporium of all the world.’<sup>159</sup> Nikitin visited a number of kingdoms during his four years in central India, although he spent by far the most time in Bidar, the capital of the Bahmanid Sultanate. While in Bidar, Nikitin observed that the markets of the Deccan were full of horses, and that, as ‘horses are not born in that country,’ they were imported in large numbers from Arabia, Khurasan and Turkestan.<sup>160</sup> These numbers must have been very large indeed as, according to Nikitin’s account, on the occasion of an important military engagement the Bahmanid Sultan Muhammad III (r. 1463–82) was able to

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<sup>156</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 88.

<sup>157</sup> Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 2 vols, edited and translated by Sir Henry Yule, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903, II, pp. 340, 348–49.

<sup>158</sup> The author observed that horses comprised an important commodity in the trade of Hormuz with India, noting that ‘as the men and horses could not all be contained in the same vessel, they were distributed among several ships.’ ‘Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, *Narrative of the Journey of Abd-er-Razzak, Ambassador from Shah Rokh*, in R. H. Major, ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century*, Hakluyt Society Publications, 1st ser., no. 22, London, 1857, part 1, pp. 5–6. See also Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, p. 45.

<sup>159</sup> Afanasi (Athanasius) Nikitin, *The Travels of Athanasius Nikitin of Twer*, in Major, ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century*, part 3, p. 19.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 12, 20. Nikitin mentioned that horses from Mysore and Neghostan were also available at the port of Dabul.

raise military forces which included roughly 500,000 cavalry soldiers.<sup>161</sup>

The types of horses brought to India therefore fall into two general categories: *Bahrī*, Iranian or Arabian horses brought to India by sea (*bahr*), and *Turkī*, those brought overland from Inner Asia. Because of their celebrated strength and stamina, better availability and relatively low price, *Turkī* horses enjoyed greater popularity than *Bahrī* and comprised the majority of the Indian equestrian population.<sup>162</sup> According to Gommans, ‘the bulk of the supply was produced by pastoral nomads in the Kalmuk and Qazaq steppes of southern Russia, the Turkoman wastes east of the Caspian Sea, and further to the southeast, [in] Afghan Turkistan.’<sup>163</sup> Still, a significant number of the horses taken to India originated in Iran, generally in the vicinity of Dashtestan, Kazarun and Shiraz.<sup>164</sup> Even into the nineteenth century, horses were transported from Iran to India via both the caravan routes through Qandahar and the maritime routes through Surat.<sup>165</sup>

Indian demand for *Turkī* horses appears to have increased over the early modern period. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Babur reported that between 7,000 and 10,000 horses were annually taken to Kabul for sale in Indian markets.<sup>166</sup> Writing in the mid-seventeenth century, François Bernier estimated that over 25,000 horses were annually brought to India from Uzbek territory, and additional numbers were brought overland from Iran through Qandahar and from Iran and Africa by sea.<sup>167</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and Jean de Thevenot independently place the figure higher, each suggesting

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., pp. 27–28. According to Nikitin, the Sultan himself was in command of 100,000 cavalry soldiers, the Sultan’s brother added to this another 100,000 horses, and the Sultan was able to enlist the aid of twenty-six *vazirs*, each of whom commanded between 10,000 and 15,000 horses.

<sup>162</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, pp. 38–39, 390–91. See also the essay on the importance of the horse trade to the Mughal economy in Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595: A Statistical Study*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 231–35.

<sup>163</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 79.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., pp. 74–90; Marco Polo reported that ‘in this country of Persia there is a great supply of fine horses; and people take them to India for sale, for they are horses of a great price.’ It should be noted, however, that for Polo ‘Persia’ included the territory of Bukhara, which he described as ‘a very great and noble city...the best in all Persia.’ See Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, I, pp. 9–10, 83, 86.

<sup>165</sup> Edward Scott Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz...*, London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807, pp. 76–77.

<sup>166</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 202.

<sup>167</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 203.

that Uzbek merchants brought over 60,000 horses per year to Kabul.<sup>168</sup> The Italian traveler Niccolo Manucci ventured the highest estimate, reporting in the second half of the seventeenth century that over 100,000 horses were annually imported to India from Balkh, Bukhara and Kabul, with 12,000 going directly into emperor Aurangzeb's stables.<sup>169</sup> Even as late as the 1770s the French traveler Comte de Modave reported that some 45,000 to 50,000 horses were annually imported to India from Central Asia and Iran.<sup>170</sup>

The reason behind India's insatiable demand for horses is not difficult to imagine. Since the early Turko-Afghan invasions horses played an important role in Indian warfare, and by the Mughal period cavalry had become arguably the most important element in the Indian military.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Indian horse breeds were of comparatively poor quality; in the words of John Richards, the Mughal military required 'standard Central Asian or Persian breeds—not the scrub mounts of the subcontinent.'<sup>172</sup> Gommans clearly demonstrates that, although efforts were made to breed horses in India, these were largely unsuccessful.<sup>173</sup> This is attributed to the climate of India which, although suitable for the development of an impressive agrarian-based civilization, proved detrimental to the health of horses. Not only did horses suffer in the severe heat, but in India the best soil was devoted to agriculture, not pastureland. Unlike Turan and Iran, in India only fields which were purposefully reserved for pasture and irrigated during the dry season could support the growth of nutritious grasses beneficial to horses. Such irrigated pastureland was rare and, according to Gommans, 'normally, the extreme differences between the rainy and dry season made the soil at one time a swamp and at another hard, parched, and cracked. As a result, the grass-fields grew rapidly during the rains but the subsequent dryness rendered them unsuitable for pasture at the end of the year.'<sup>174</sup> Instead of hay or the nutritious, broad-leaf grasses found in the Inner Asian steppe, horses in India were fed a variety of grains, including wheat, barley and gram. These were

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<sup>168</sup> Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, II, p. 63; Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 80.

<sup>169</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, pp. 390–91.

<sup>170</sup> Comte de Modave, *Voyage en Inde du Comte de Modave, 1773–1776*, edited by J. Deloche, Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971, p. 327.

<sup>171</sup> See the essay on the horse trade and the importance of cavalry in medieval Indian warfare in Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 79–95.

<sup>172</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 64.

<sup>173</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 17.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.



sometimes mixed with clarified butter or brown sugar to fatten the animal and improve its outward appearance, although it is likely that this diet inflicted liver damage.<sup>175</sup> Due to a poor diet, lack of adequate grazing grounds and insufficient exercise during India's lengthy hot season, mares in India quickly became infertile, further decreasing the ability of Indian breeders to maintain their own indigenous stock.<sup>176</sup>

The substantial numbers of horses annually brought into India is explained by Gommans' estimate that, on average, India's entire horse population needed to be replaced every seven to ten years, depending on the intensity of military conflict in the subcontinent.<sup>177</sup> The eighteenth century did not bring any significant decline in this trade. To the contrary, the Mughal imperial crisis, political instability, and widespread rebellion prompted increased military conflict which intensified India's demand for horses and provided an important source of income for the emerging Indo-Afghan Durrani confederacy. In an effort to quantify this trade, Gommans estimates that, at any given time in eighteenth-century India, the total number of horses was between 400,000 and 800,000.<sup>178</sup> Extrapolating from this information, Gommans calculates that the annual value of the overland horse trade was around twenty million rupees, amounting to 'more than three times the total of Bengal exports to Europe by the English and Dutch East India Companies together.'<sup>179</sup> Admittedly an estimate based on limited evidence, Gommans clearly demonstrates the continuity of the Indo-Turanian horse trade throughout the eighteenth century and its general magnitude in comparison with the maritime trade of the European Companies. It was not until the British pacified the subcontinent in the nineteenth century that demand for this commodity subsided and the flow of horses to India diminished to a trickle.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Marco Polo also reported that, of the 10,000 horses annually imported to Malabar, 'by the end of the year there shall not be one hundred of them remaining, for they all die off. And this arises from mismanagement, for those people do not know in the least how to treat a horse.' Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, II, pp. 340, 348–49.

<sup>176</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 73.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* Gommans' estimate actually seems conservative, especially considering Nikitin's above-mentioned report from the 1470s that the Bahmanid Sultanate alone possessed a cavalry forces of some 500,000 horses.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> It should be noted that, just as not every horse led across the overland passes to India was bred in the Inner Asian steppe, not every *Turkī* horse was taken to India. Although India was likely to have been the largest market for this commodity, large numbers of *Turkī* horses were also sold in Muscovy and, according to Burton, horses were the most important

The impressive size of the horse trade may appear to suggest that early modern Indo-Turanian commercial dynamics, although substantial, were rather one-sided. Gommans has even suggested that, ‘in the light of the overall importance of [India’s] horse trade with Central Asia, we should perhaps modify the idea that India was the ultimate sink for bullion from all over the world... It seems that, at least as far as the middle of the eighteenth century is concerned, the balance was in favour of Central Asia.’<sup>181</sup> Gommans is certainly correct that the widely held belief that Indian currency did not circulate beyond the frontiers of the subcontinent needs revision; not only because of India’s demand for *Turkī* horses, but also because it is directly refuted by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century numismatic evidence.<sup>182</sup> Still, as noted above, Bukharan specie was regularly exported to Mughal mints and, throughout the early modern era, there were thousands of Indian diaspora merchants in Turan who remitted vast amounts of wealth to India. Furthermore, as suggested by Jenkinson, rather than exporting Indian specie to purchase horses, it was common for Indian merchants to settle their accounts in Turan and transport their wealth back to India in the form of horses, or some other commodity available in Turan and in demand in Indian markets.<sup>183</sup>

### C. The Slave Trade

Discussions of the movement of peoples between India and Turan generally focus on the activities of merchants, scholars, religious figures, political elites and invaders. While these groups can be credited with establishing and maintaining the bonds which in many ways formed a cultural and economic bridge uniting both north India and Turan, one must be careful not to overlook slaves as another group of people who, despite their low status, wielded their own unique brand of influence in Indo-Turanian relations. The

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commodity taken by Bukharan merchants to China, *The Bukharans*, p. 455.

<sup>181</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, p. 20.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. E. A. Davidovich, *Istoriia monetnogo dela Srednei Azii, XVII–XVIII vv.*, Dushambe: Nauka, 1964, p. 92; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 74; Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade,’ p. 60. The presence of Mughal coins in Turan is especially remarkable considering the frequency with which the Uzbek *khāns* ordered remintings. In the seventeenth century, for example, Imam Quli Khan (r. 1611–41) ordered fifty-seven remintings and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (r. 1645–81) ordered thirty-nine. Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 420–23. Burton suggests that the Uzbek *khāns* ordered frequent remintings in an effort to collect fees for the minting process, to keep coins circulating and avoid hoarding, and, most importantly, to devalue the coinage in times of silver scarcity.

<sup>183</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 88.

movement of people as a commodity across India's northwest frontier dates to ancient times, and, alongside Qalmaqs, Russians, non-Sunnī Afghans, and the predominantly Shī'ā Iranians, Hindu slaves were an important commodity in the highly active slave markets of early modern Turan. The history of the institution of slavery in early modern Turan is a subject that merits much more attention than can be offered in this brief study. Its treatment here is intended only to demonstrate that the slave trade between India and Turan was significant, that the presence of considerable numbers of Hindus in the slave markets of Turan was largely a product of Islamic expansion in early modern India, and that it merits consideration in any discussion of early modern Indo-Turanian commercial and cultural relations.<sup>184</sup>

There is no doubt that the movement of slaves from India to Turan long predates the mid-sixteenth-century emergence of the Indian diaspora communities in Turan. The early Ghaznavid and Ghurid invasions of north India included considerable slave-raiding, and sources from the eleventh century mention the exportation of tens of thousands of enslaved Indian captives.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, a Bukharan *waqfnāma* of 1326 repeatedly lists Indian slaves together with slaves from various other parts of Asia.<sup>186</sup> A similar document dating to 1489 from the archive of the great Naqshbandi Sufi Sheikh Khwaja Ahrar (1404–90), the Timurids' highly influential spiritual leader, mentions a group of Indian slaves working as agricultural laborers and artisans on an estate near Bukhara.<sup>187</sup> The early presence of Hindu slaves even among the Turkic pastoral groups is demonstrated by an account of Shaibani Khan's victory over the Qazaq ruler Tanish Sultan.<sup>188</sup> According to this account, in the winter of 1509–10, a fourteen-year-old Indian slave escaped from his cruel master in a Qazaq *qishlaq* (winter encampment) near the city of Turkestan and, while wandering through the steppe, he fortuitously came across the encampment of Shaibani Khan and informed the Uzbeks of the location of

<sup>184</sup> For a social analysis of slavery in nineteenth-century Bukhara, complete with facsimiles of Persian-language archival records, see T. Faiziev, *Bukhoro feodal jamiyatida qullardan foidalanishga doir hujjatlar (XIX Asr)*, in Uzbek, Tashkent: Fan, 1990.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, p. 126 and note 76; Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, (c.1200–c.1750), 1982, reprint, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 1984, pp. 89–90.

<sup>186</sup> O. D. Chekhovich, *Bukharskie dokumenty, XIV veka*, Tashkent: Nauka, 1965, pp. 108–10; Russian trans., pp. 184–85; facs., pp. 315–16.

<sup>187</sup> Idem, *Samarkandskie dokumenty, XV–XVI veka*, Moscow: Nauka, 1974, p. 172; Russian trans., pp. 232–33; facs., p. 575.

<sup>188</sup> Fazl 'Allah ibn Ruzbihan Isfahani, *Mihmānnāma-i Bukhārā*, translated by R. P. Zhalilova, Moscow: Nauka, 1976, fols 105a–7a; Russian trans., pp. 135–37.

the enemy Qazaq *qishlaq*. This enabled the Uzbeks to defeat Tanish Sultan's forces, for which the slave earned the favor of Shaibani Khan, who renamed him 'Khush Khabar' ('Good News').

In early modern Turan slaves were used for such purposes as soldiering, maintaining irrigation canals, working in brick factories, and many were trained as skilled construction engineers.<sup>189</sup> Virtually every affluent household included several slaves to look after its affairs and maintain the garden, and wealthy landowners commonly owned much larger numbers of slaves.<sup>190</sup> The slave population of early modern Turan was, therefore, not restricted to urban centers such as Samarqand and Bukhara; slaves were also used to cultivate the land and watch over animals on the plantation-style farms of wealthy dynastic families, such as that of Khwaja Ahrar.<sup>191</sup> The seventeenth-century *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn* also records, for example, that one Juybari Sheikh (a Naqshbandi Sufi leader) owned three hundred slaves, another owned four hundred, and a third owned over five hundred, forty of whom were specialists in pottery while the others were engaged in agricultural work, watching over livestock, and carpentry.<sup>192</sup> Skilled slaves were especially valuable, accounting for the common practice of rival political powers enslaving and relocating skilled artisans following successful invasions.<sup>193</sup> Thus, during Timur's late fourteenth-century sack of Delhi, several thousand skilled artisans were put into bondage and taken to Turan. Timur presented many of these slaves to his subordinate elite, although he is reported to have reserved all of the Indian masons for the construction of the Bibi Khanum mosque in his flourishing capital of Samarqand.<sup>194</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that young female slaves demanded an even higher market price than those skilled at construction engineering.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 123–24.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122; Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 89, note 2.

<sup>191</sup> According to Mukminova, the majority of slaves mentioned in sixteenth-century *waqfnāmas* were used for agricultural purposes or to watch over animals. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, p. 123.

<sup>192</sup> Muhammad Talib, *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, fols 48a, 117a–18a, 198b.

<sup>193</sup> Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, p. 125.

<sup>194</sup> Beatrice Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 80, 90; Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 91; Surendra Gopal, 'Indians in Central Asia, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,' Presidential Address, Medieval India Section of the Indian History Congress, New Delhi, February 1992, Patna: Patna University, 1992, p. 4. To this day the Bibi Khanum complex, magnificent even in ruins, is the largest religious structure in ex-Soviet Central Asia.

<sup>195</sup> According to Meyendorff, in the 1820s a skilled craftsman was valued at approximate-

Because of their identification in Muslim societies as *kāfirs*, ‘non-believers,’ Hindus were especially in demand in the early modern Bukharan slave markets. They were by no means, however, the only ethnic or religious group present in large numbers. The slave markets were also stocked with a considerable population of Iranians, as their association with the Shī‘a sect of Islam made them fair game for the Sunnī Muslim Uzbek and Turkman slave traders. The abundance of Iranian slaves in early modern Turan is generally attributed to the great number of prisoners taken during the Uzbeks’ wars with the Safavids and, in later years, to repeated Turkman raids on the poorly protected villages of northeastern Iran.<sup>196</sup> Christian Russians were similarly abducted from their frontier settlements by Qalmaq, Crimean Tatar, Nogay and Bashkir pastoralists and brought to the markets of Khiva, from where many were further transported to Bukhara and Balkh.<sup>197</sup>

As noted above, a considerable number of Indians were enslaved by such Turko-Afghan invaders as Mahmud of Ghazna and Timur, and forcibly relocated to regions beyond India’s northwest frontier. Many more were also exported by caravan merchants, who either purchased them outright or received them in trade for other commodities in demand in India, such as horses.<sup>198</sup> In 1581 the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Father Antonio Monserrate traveled from Lahore to Kabul and reported that one tribe in the Punjab, identified as the ‘Gaccares’ (Ghakkars), had made trading Indian slaves for horses such a regular practice that they had even become associated with the proverb, ‘slaves from India, horses from Parthia.’<sup>199</sup>

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ly 100 tillas, whereas an attractive young woman could fetch 150 tillas. Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, p. 145.

<sup>196</sup> In addition to Shī‘a slaves, there is also reported to have been a number of Zoroastrian slaves in sixteenth-century Turan. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, p. 122.

<sup>197</sup> See Audrey Burton, ‘Russian Slaves in 17th-Century Bukhara,’ in Touraj Atabaki and John O’Kane, eds, *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998, pp. 345–65. One Russian account claims that, in the 1660s, there were 20,000 Russians held captive in Bukhara, Balkh and Urgench. This is most certainly an exaggeration designed to spark the Tsar’s interest in investing in their freedom. A later source, dating to the 1720s, places the figure at the more believable 2,000. *Ibid.*, pp. 355–56, 362. See also Clarke, ed., ‘A Voyage to Uzbegistan in 1671–1672,’ p. 87.

<sup>198</sup> Alam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 207; Gopal, ‘Indians in Central Asia,’ p. 13.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Father Antonio Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J., on His Journey to the Court of Akbar*, translated by J. S. Hoyland, annotated by S. N. Banerjee, London: Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 117; Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 11.

There were still other means by which significant numbers of Indians found themselves in the slave markets of Turan. These markets swelled with Indians following Shah Jahan's aborted annexation of Balkh in 1646-47 and the capture and enslavement of many of the retreating Indian soldiers. According to the Uzbek chronicler Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, following a four-month siege of the Indian army in Balkh during the unusually severe winter of 1646-47, Shah Jahan recalled his starving army to India and, during their retreat, the Turanian 'wolves' captured the fleeing Indian 'slave-sheep' from every direction and took them to Samarqand, Turkestan and Tashkent.<sup>200</sup> Although this event was unique in the history of the region, it resulted in the influx of a large number of Indians into Turanian society. Thus, whereas in 1589 a thirty-three-year-old Indian slave in good health was sold in Samarqand for 225 tanga, after the Mughal retreat in 1647 the Turanian slave markets were flooded and the price of an Indian slave dropped to 84 tanga, or even less.<sup>201</sup>

Smaller numbers of skilled slaves were also commonly included in the gifts sent between the rulers of India and Turan. For example, in the sixteenth century, Badr al-Din Kashmiri reported that the gifts given by the Mughal emperor Akbar to the Bukharan ruler 'Abd Allah Khan II included four slaves skilled at masonry.<sup>202</sup> Almost a century later, Shah Jahan is reported to have sent 100 Indian slaves to the Ashtarkhānid rulers Imam Quli Khan and Nadir Muhammad.<sup>203</sup> Also, in addition to their regular employees, Indian merchants commonly brought slaves into the diaspora, many of whom were likely to have been sold in the Turanian markets. Sources further demonstrate that, while traversing dangerous caravan routes, some unfortunate Indian travelers were occasionally captured and, if not killed, sold into slavery.<sup>204</sup> The

<sup>200</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, fols 323a-24a.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 1386, fol. 3a-b; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' p. 30 and note 137. Whereas the entry in the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq* ('Collection of Judicial Decrees'), a judicial record of a late sixteenth-century Samarqandi *qāḍī*, clearly states the the slave was thirty-three, the Russian translation cited by Burton apparently mistakenly suggests that he was thirty.

<sup>202</sup> Badr al-Din al-Kashmiri ibn 'Abd al-Salam al-Hussain, *Rauḍat al-riḍwān wa hadīqa al-ghilmān*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 2094, fol. 261a.

<sup>203</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' p. 31, note 138.

<sup>204</sup> See, for example, the account of the Indian merchant 'Ala al-Din Khan, who was captured while returning to India from Balkh in 1646. Living as a slave in Bukhara, and then in Khiva where he was owned by a Tatar woman, he eventually escaped to Chernov Yar where he was arrested by Russian authorities in 1661. He was then sent to Astrakhan where he applied to the Tsar for permission to convert to Christianity. Antonova I, doc. 62, 1661,

association of one Indian slave mentioned in the *Majmū‘a-i-wathā‘iq* as being from Multan suggests that, if he himself was not a Multani merchant fallen from grace, then he was most likely a slave that had been brought to Samarqand by a Multani merchant and subsequently sold in the local slave market.<sup>205</sup> Nearly a century earlier, Babur recorded coming across a colony of between 200 and 300 households of Indian slaves forced by a descendant of Timur to relocate from near Multan to the banks of the Baran river, a tributary of the Kabul river in Afghanistan, where they were engaged in the business of catching birds.<sup>206</sup>

Probably the greatest factor contributing to the considerable supply of Indian slaves for export to markets in Central Asia in this period was Islamic expansion in the subcontinent. Although it was recorded several centuries later, the *Tārīkh-i-Firishta* reports that, following the Ghaznavid capture of the Indian city of Thanesar in the year 1014, ‘the army of Islam brought to Ghazna about 200,000 captives (*qarīb do sīt hazār banda*), and much wealth, so that the capital appeared like an Indian city, no soldier of the camp being without wealth, or without many slaves.’ The same source also mentions that, several decades later, the Ghaznavid ruler Sultan Ibrahim led another raid into the Multan area of northwestern India and returned to Ghazna with 100,000 captives.<sup>207</sup> It is important to note that Firishta’s assertions are supported by the reports of contemporary observers. For example, in his early eleventh-century *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, al-‘Utbī records that, following his twelfth expedition into India in 1018–19, Mahmud of Ghazna returned to his capital with such a large number of slaves that their value was placed at between two and ten dirhams each. This price was apparently so low that, according to al-‘Utbī, ‘merchants came from distant cities to purchase them, so that the countries of Mā warā’ an-nahr (Central Asia), ‘Irāq and Khurāsān were filled with them, and the fair and the dark, the rich and the poor, mingled in one common slavery.’<sup>208</sup> Irfan Habib similarly notes that, as a part of their expansion into new territories, Turko-Afghan armies of the Delhi Sultans commonly abducted large numbers of Hindus. Thus, at the beginning

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pp. 134–35. Cf. Alam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 207; Gopal, ‘Indians in Central Asia,’ pp. 17–18.

<sup>205</sup> *Majmū‘a-i-wathā‘iq*, fol. 37a.

<sup>206</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 225.

<sup>207</sup> *Tārīkh-i-Firishta*, Lucknow, 1864, pp. 27–28, 48–49. Cited in Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 126–27, note 76.

<sup>208</sup> Al-‘Utbī, *Tārīkh al-Yamīnī*, Delhi, 1847, pp. 395–408. Cited in Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, p. 126, note 76.

of the fourteenth century, Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji owned some 50,000 slaves and later that century Sultan Firuz Tughluq is reported to have owned 180,000 slaves, 12,000 of whom were skilled artisans.<sup>209</sup>

By and large, the exportation of Hindu slaves to Turan continued unhindered throughout the Mughal period. Although emperor Akbar attempted to prohibit the practice of enslaving conquered Hindus, his efforts were only temporarily successful.<sup>210</sup> According to the early seventeenth-century account of Pelsaert, ‘Abd Allah Khan Firuz Jang, an Uzbek noble at the Mughal court during the 1620s and 1630s, was appointed to the position of governor of the regions of Kalpi and Kher and, in the process of subjugating the local rebels, ‘beheaded the leaders and enslaved their women, daughters and children, who were more than 2 lacks [200,000] in number.’<sup>211</sup> Whether agriculturalists or pastoralists, following their enslavement such individuals were sent in large numbers to markets beyond India’s northwest frontier, far away from their family support systems. Even appreciating that the figures presented in the chronicles and other accounts are likely to be exaggerated, it seems reasonable to accept the estimation that, over the years, Mughal expansion in India accounts for the enslavement and exportation of hundreds of thousands of individuals, or more, including not only those men who militarily resisted the Mughals, but also vast numbers of women and children.

Several sources mention significant numbers of Indian slaves in early modern Turan. Already at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Uzbek ruler Kuchkunchi Khan (an uncle of Shaibani Khan and ruler of Samarqand from 1510–30) used ninety-five Indian slaves for the construction of irrigation canals in the vicinity of the city of Turkestan.<sup>212</sup> Muhammad Talib, author of the *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, reported that the late sixteenth-century Juybari Sheikh Khwaja Sa‘id, son and successor of the great Sheikh Khwaja Islam (c. 1492–1563), had in his possession ‘1,000 slaves of Indian, Qalmaq, and Russian origin,’ many of whom tended his fields and animal herds, while

<sup>209</sup> Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, pp. 89–90. Habib cites Shams Sirāj ‘Atīf, *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī*, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1890, pp. 267–73.

<sup>210</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbar Nama*, II, pp. 246–47.

<sup>211</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, *A Dutch Chronicle of Mughal India*, translated and edited by Brij Narain and Sri Ram Sharma, Lahore, 1978, p. 48. See also Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 12–14; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 128.

<sup>212</sup> P. P. Ivanov, *Khoziaistvo dzhuibarskikh sheikhov: k istorii feodal'nogo zemlevladieniia v Srednei Azii v XVI–XVII vv.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1954, p. 24.



others were engaged in construction and in household services.<sup>213</sup> In 1558 Anthony Jenkinson noted the vitality of the Bukharan slave market in his observation that slaves were a commodity commonly purchased and exported by Indian and Iranian merchants who visited Bukhara.<sup>214</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no means by which to determine how abundant Indian slaves were in early modern Turan. It is, however, possible to establish a rough estimation of the proportion of slaves of Indian origin in relation to those of other regions, at least in terms of the slave population of late sixteenth-century Samarqand. A survey of seventy-seven letters regarding the manumission or sale of slaves in the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq* reveals that slaves of Indian origin (*hindī al-āṣl*) account for an astounding 58 percent of those whose region of origin is mentioned.<sup>215</sup> It must be emphasized that the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq* provides a relatively small, restricted sample. It would be irresponsible to suggest that, based on the information elicited from this source, 58 percent of the population of slaves in all of Turan was of Indian origin. The general significance of Indian slaves in the early modern markets of Turan is supported, however, by information found in the *Khuṭūṭ-i mamhūra bemahr-i qaḍāt-i Bukhārā*, a smaller collection of judicial documents from early eighteenth-century Bukhara which includes several letters of manumission.<sup>216</sup> Again, over half of these letters refer to slaves 'of Indian origin.'<sup>217</sup> It is also revealing that, even in the model of a legal letter of manumission

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<sup>213</sup> Muhammad Talib, *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, fol. 81a–b. Unfortunately, Talib does not mention the proportions of each. Although Indian slaves are not mentioned specifically, it is reasonable to assume that they were part of the contingency of roughly 3,000 slaves used by Yalangtosh Bey, the *vazir* of the Ashtarkhānid ruler 'Abd al-'Aziz Khan (r. 1645–80), to construct the Sherdar and Tillakari madrasas in Samarqand. Cf. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, p. 125; P. P. Ivanov, *Ocherki po istorii Srednei Azii (XVI–seredina XIX v.)*, Moscow: Nauka, 1958, p. 71.

<sup>214</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, pp. 88–89. According to Morgan and Coote, the editors of Jenkinson's account, the Bukharan slave market was the largest in the region. *Ibid.*, I, p. 89, note 2.

<sup>215</sup> See *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fols 3a–50b. Of the seventy-seven slaves referred to in these entries, twenty-nine are identified as being 'born of the house' (*khānahzād*) with no information given as to their ethnic origin. Twenty-eight of the remaining slaves are identified as being 'of Indian origin' (*hindī al-āṣl*); fifteen as being 'of Afghan origin' (*āfghānī al-āṣl*); four as being 'of Russian origin' (*rūsī al-āṣl*); and one as being 'of Badakhshani origin' (*badakhshī al-āṣl*).

<sup>216</sup> Sa'id 'Ali ibn Sa'id Muhammad Bukhari, *Khuṭūṭ-i mamhūra bemahr-i qaḍāh-i Bukhārā*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 8586/II. For bibliographic information, see Semenov et al, eds, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, VIII, pp. 57–58.

<sup>217</sup> Sa'id 'Ali, *Khuṭūṭ-i mamhūra*, fols 182a–83b. A single entry refers to a Russian slave.

written by the chief *qāḍī* for his assistant to follow, the example used is of a slave ‘of Indian origin.’<sup>218</sup>

The Turanian slave trade continued during the course of the eighteenth century, although fewer Indian slaves were exported to Turan. Rather, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the slave markets of Bukhara and Khiva were stocked almost exclusively with Iranians. Later, in 1821, Baron Meyendorff visited Bukhara and wrote that, at that time, there were in excess of 25,000—and perhaps as many as 40,000—Iranian slaves in Bukhara.<sup>219</sup> The number of slaves in Turan remained rather considerable up to, and even beyond, the late nineteenth-century Russian colonization of the region. The Russian academician A. A. Semenov estimates that when the Russians annexed the Samarqand *vilayat* in 1868 there were still some 10,000 slaves in just that district.<sup>220</sup> In the early 1860s an Indian merchant reported to the British that the Bukharan Amirate was home to 100,000 slaves, 20,000 of whom lived in the city of Bukhara.<sup>221</sup> In 1880 Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart likewise related that, prior to the Russian prohibition of the slave trade, the total number of slaves in the Khivan, Bukharan and Turkman territories exceeded 100,000.<sup>222</sup> Despite the prohibition of the slave trade according to the Russo-Khivan treaty of 1873, a Russian report from the mid-1870s estimates that there were still approximately 10,000 Iranian slaves in Khiva.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 181a.

<sup>219</sup> Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, p. 145. According to Meyendorff, there were, at that time, between 500 and 600 Russian slaves in Bukhara.

<sup>220</sup> See A. A. Semenov’s introduction to his translation of Muhammad Yusuf Munshi bin Khwaja Baqa, *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 609/II, under the title *Mukimkhanskaia istoriia*, Tashkent: Nauka, 1956 p. 18 and note 2. The institution of slavery continued beyond its formal abolition by the 1868 treaty between Russia and the Bukhara. The practice diminished, however, as slaves were no longer used as agricultural labor. Ivanov, *Khoziaistvo dzhuibarskikh sheikhov*, p. 83.

<sup>221</sup> Sir Robert Montgomery, comp., *Report on the Trade and Resources of the Countries on the North-Western Boundary of British India*, Lahore: Government Press, 1862, appendix XXII, pp. clix–clxxvi.

<sup>222</sup> Stewart, ‘The Country of the Tekke Turkomans,’ p. 156. According to this account, the Russians are said to have released 40,000 slaves from Khiva alone, but Iranian slaves were still being held in Bukhara. Another source relates that the Russian treaty with the Khivans dictated that ‘Khiva was supposed to repatriate some 20,000 male slaves to Persia.’ Mary Holdsworth, *Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century: A Brief History of the Khanates of Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva*, Oxford: Central Asian Research Centre, 1959, pp. 24–25. According to the account of John Mouraviev, an Armenian merchant from Derbend, in 1813 Khiva was home to 3,000 Russian slaves and 30,000 Iranian slaves. See Mouraviev’s account in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, pp. 94, 110.

<sup>223</sup> A. P. Khoroshkhin, ‘Raby Persiiane v’ Khivinskom’ khanstve,’ in *Turkestanskii*

Muzaffar Alam attributes the decline in the exportation of Indian slaves in the eighteenth century to both economic and social factors, specifying that as India produced more textiles for export, it was no longer necessary for Indian merchants to trade slaves for *Turkī* horses.<sup>224</sup> Although Alam's assertion about the magnitude of Indian textile production is well-founded, it does not wholly explain the unwillingness, or inability, of merchants to continue exporting large numbers of Indian slaves to Turan, presuming the availability of an adequate supply at an agreeable price. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to suggest that, as the Mughal Empire decentralized and Islamic military expansion in the subcontinent came to a close, the supply of Indian slaves dwindled. This left Turanian slave traders little recourse but to look elsewhere for a viable source to satisfy the market's nearly insatiable demand. It was for this reason that, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the infamous Turkman raiders increasingly turned their attention to the numerous comparatively close, and poorly defended, Iranian cities and villages bordering their territory for their unfortunate merchandise.

That is not to say, however, that the movement of Indians to the Bukharan slave markets came to a complete halt. Smaller numbers of Indian slaves continued to be sold in the markets of Bukhara well into the nineteenth century. Turgun Faiziev has uncovered several nineteenth-century records documenting the presence in Bukhara of slaves of Indian origin, some identified as 'Hindu' and others as 'Chitrari' (i.e. from Chitral, a region deep in the mountains of far northwestern India, modern Pakistan, bordering Afghan Badakhshan).<sup>225</sup> Writing in the early nineteenth century, 'Abd al-Karim Bukhari also mentioned that Balkh and Bukhara regularly sent weaponry and clothing to Badakhshan in exchange for 'black-faced slaves' who, Bukhari says, came from Chitral and were not Muslims.<sup>226</sup> In the early nineteenth century, Josiah Harlan reported that frequent slave raids into Chitral were organized by Murad Beg, the Afghan ruler of Qunduz and a 'great wholesale dealer in this unholy merchandise.' According to Harlan's account, the slave trade in Central Asia 'opens an insatiable outlet for the disposal of Muraad's insubordinate subjects, thousands of whom, with the useful and inoffensive Hazarrahs and the natives of Chitraul, are sold into distant and irredeemable bondage!'<sup>227</sup>

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*sbornik'*, vol. 116, pp. 483–87.

<sup>224</sup> Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' p. 208.

<sup>225</sup> Faiziev, *Bukhoro feodal jamiyatida*, pp. 65–66, 79, 110, 118, 119, 124.

<sup>226</sup> I. Gh. Nizomiddinov, *Abdulkarim Bukharii*, Tashkent: Fan, 1966, pp. 39–40.

<sup>227</sup> Josiah Harlan, *Central Asia: Personal Narrative of General Josiah Harlan, 1823–1841*, edited by Frank E. Ross, London: Luzac & Co., 1939, pp. 44–45, 82–84. Harlan further

The profit to be made in the slave markets of Bukhara at this time was so great that Murad Beg reportedly required his subjects to pay their taxes in slaves, a demand which exacerbated wars, feuds and slave-raiding.

The many thousands of Indian slaves sold in the markets of early modern Turan affected that society in ways that cannot be measured solely in terms of their commercial value, which must have been immense, or even their role as skilled craftsmen, architectural engineers, or laborers in the plantation-style estates of Turan's great dynastic families. One must also consider the impact these individuals had as they eventually earned, purchased, or were otherwise granted their freedom and became part of the ethnic landscape of Turan. The slave trade is an important feature of the economic and cultural history of the region, and not only because slaves were largely utilized in agricultural production.<sup>228</sup> In his description of early nineteenth-century Bukhara, Alexander Burnes repeated the popular tradition that 'three fourths of the people of Bokhara are of slave extraction,' implying that, although most people were not themselves slaves, they were likely to have had antecedents who were.<sup>229</sup> Burnes attributed this to the great number of Iranian slaves brought to Bukhara, the limited numbers of whom ever returned to Iran. The same could likely be said of Indian slaves in earlier centuries.

Although the life of a slave was a difficult one, slaves were manumitted for any of a number of reasons. Sources such as the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq* and the *Khutūt-i mamhūra* demonstrate that it was relatively common for slave owners to stipulate in wills and legal contracts that their slaves would be set free upon their death, or after a certain number of years of indentured servitude.<sup>230</sup> Perhaps most commonly, slaves were manumitted after they

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observed that Chitrali women were especially in demand as they were considered, by nature of their physical features, to be even more beautiful than the famed Circassian women. Meyendorff also records the presence of Chitrali slaves in early nineteenth-century Bukhara. Meyendorff, *Putshestvie*, p. 145. Mohan Lal likewise reported meeting a thirteen-year-old Chitrali slave girl in Qarshi who was 'carried off by the ruler of the country, who reduced her to slavery.' Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 123. See also *ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>228</sup> According to one visitor to Bukhara, in the early nineteenth century, 'the majority of the slaves here, that is, many many thousands, are Persians... The labour of agriculture, in Bucharia, is performed exclusively by Persian slaves.' See Jakovlev's account in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, p. 39.

<sup>229</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, p. 276.

<sup>230</sup> See, for example, Sa'id 'Ali, *Khutūt-i mamhūra*, fols 182a–83b, where it is recorded that a female Indian slave and a slave of unknown origin are to be freed upon the death of their masters and another slave is to be freed after a specified period of time. Another entry records the directive of an individual in regards to his Indian slave which stipulates that, 'if, after three years, he does everything I say, he will be free.' The institution of the indentured

reached a certain age, usually around fifty. Although the language of these documents suggests that the slaves were emancipated as a religiously meritorious act, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that, as the expense of clothing and feeding slaves began to outweigh the work they could do, less altruistic motives contributed to such manumissions. Finally, it should be noted that, although most manumitted slaves lived out their days in poverty, slaves could, and some did, purchase their freedom, own property, and even become prosperous citizens of their new homeland.<sup>231</sup>

#### *D. Cotton Textiles*

The belief that the cotton plant is indigenous to India is supported by the discovery of a cotton textile fragment attached to a silver vase in the ruins of Mohenjo Daro (c. early third, late second millennium B.C.E.), a finding which suggests that Indians have used the fiber of this plant to make textiles for over four thousand years.<sup>232</sup> In the fifth century B.C.E., Herodotus mentioned cotton as a kind of wool procured from trees that grow wildly in India and, a century later, Theophrastus (c. 350 B.C.E.) suggested that Indians were already cultivating cotton.<sup>233</sup> It is widely held that the army of Alexander the Great introduced cotton textiles to Europe after conquering part of northwest India in the fourth century B.C.E. Furthermore, considerable insight into the lively Roman trade with India can be found in the *Periplus*, a unique handbook for Indian Ocean traders written in the Roman Empire, probably in Egypt, during the first century C.E. According to its translator, Lionel Casson, 'Roman Egypt's trade with India was so much more important than that with Africa or Arabia that the author devoted almost half his book to it.'<sup>234</sup> The author of the *Periplus* noted that Indian cotton textiles constituted an important part of this trade, and that they were commonly purchased in the ancient Indian port of Baryagaza, located in Gujarat, near the much later port

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servitude appears to have been an answer to those slaves who willingly converted to Islam and therefore required different legal status. Cf. Burton, 'Russian Slaves,' p. 353.

<sup>231</sup> McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*, p. 60.

<sup>232</sup> Lallanji Gopal, 'Textiles in Ancient India,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 4, 1 (1961), pp. 60–61.

<sup>233</sup> Haripada Chakraborti, *Trade and Commerce of Ancient India, c. 200 B.C.–650 A.D.*, Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1966, p. 236.

<sup>234</sup> Lionel Casson, tr., *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 16–27.

of Surat.<sup>235</sup> The general dynamic of this relationship continued for many centuries. For example, according to S. D. Goitein, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Egyptian cotton production ‘was of no great consequence.’ Instead, Egyptian markets were dependent upon India and Tunisia for regular supplies of this commodity.<sup>236</sup> Rather than digress too far into the ancient history of Indian cotton textiles, however impressive it may be, it is sufficient to note that a number of references mention the regular exportation of large amounts of Indian cotton textiles to markets throughout the ancient and medieval world.<sup>237</sup>

In the medieval and early modern eras, India’s cotton textile industry benefited from a number of advancements in production technology.<sup>238</sup> The early modern era especially was a period of considerable expansion in terms of India’s population, economic potential, and agricultural and industrial production. Irfan Habib estimates that the population of India in 1600 was 150 million and, despite recurrent famine and disease, by 1800 had increased to roughly 200 million, some 85 percent of whom lived in rural areas.<sup>239</sup> Agricultural and industrial production increased apace and, as Mughal India’s leading manufactured commodity, cotton textiles were turned out in unsurpassed quantities for both domestic and foreign markets.<sup>240</sup> This was at least partially by design, as the Mughal revenue system provided incentives to those farmers

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 16. The author also lists indigo as an important commodity available in Baryagaza in his time.

<sup>236</sup> S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 5 vols, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–88, I, p. 105. According to Goitein, in the Geniza documents of Fustat (Cairo), ‘we hear much about the trade in cotton, but next to nothing about its manufacture.’

<sup>237</sup> Cf. R. S. Agarwal, *Trade Centres and Routes in Northern India (c. 322 B.C.–A.D. 500)*, Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1982, pp. 131–33; D. Schlingloff, ‘Cotton-Manufacture in Ancient India,’ in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, 1 (1974), pp. 81–90. For general trade between classical India and the Roman Empire, see Vima Begley and Richard De Puma, eds, *Rome and India: the Ancient Sea Trade*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Irfan Habib, ‘The Technology and Economy of Mughal India,’ in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 17, 1 (1980), pp. 6–10; Vijaya Ramaswamy, ‘Notes on the Textile Technology in Medieval India with Special Reference to the South,’ in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 17, 2 (1980), pp. 227–41.

<sup>239</sup> Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, pp. 167–69.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, pp. 190–91; the chapters on the cotton textile industry in Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, pp. 154–259; and Tapan Raychaudhuri’s essay on non-agricultural production in Mughal India in Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, pp. 268–71.

who produced such profitable ‘cash crops’ as cotton, indigo, sugar and opium.<sup>241</sup> Summarizing the importance of Indian cotton textiles in the pre-Industrial Revolution world, K. N. Chaudhuri suggests that, ‘before the discovery of machine spinning and weaving in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Indian subcontinent was probably the world’s greatest producer of cotton textiles.’<sup>242</sup>

Referring to the early modern Indian textile industry, Tapan Raychaudhuri has noted what he considers to be a ‘bewildering variety of cotton fabrics mentioned in the contemporary sources.’<sup>243</sup> That is, in a survey of just the first ten years of the English factory records, Raychaudhuri has identified 150 designations used to describe different types of cotton textiles. Thankfully, these can be divided into the more manageable categories of piece-goods (ready-made articles), muslins, and calicos, the latter two differing in that muslin is notably thinner than calico. These can then be subdivided into dozens, even hundreds, of categories based on the region, city or village of origin, the quality of the fabrics, and whether or not the cotton had been bleached or otherwise treated or dyed. Numerous varieties of chintz are frequently encountered in sources in reference to painted or printed Indian calico.<sup>244</sup>

While cotton textiles were produced in many regions throughout the world, prior to the Industrial Revolution in Europe no other region could compete

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<sup>241</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 190. Grover also notes that ‘crops such as indigo, sugar-cane, cotton, oilseeds and opium were in heavy demand for export as finished industrial products to the foreign markets.’ Like cotton, the indigo trade was especially profitable and indigo farmers received considerable incentives from the Mughals. B. R. Grover, ‘An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of North India during the 17th–18th Centuries,’ *Indian Historical Records Commission: Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Session*, Delhi, 1966, pp. 129–30.

<sup>242</sup> K. N. Chaudhuri, ‘The Structure of Indian Textile Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,’ *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 11, 2–3 (1974), p. 127.

<sup>243</sup> Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 269. Naqvi surveys fifty varieties of cotton cloth produced in Mughal India, each available in a number of qualities, and she provides each variety’s name, region of production, approximate prices, and the source in which it is mentioned. Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, pp. 204–10. See also the excellent discussion and photographs of Indian textiles in Mattiebelle Gittinger, *Master Dyers to the World: Technique and Trade in Early Indian Dyed Cotton Textiles*, Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum, 1982.

<sup>244</sup> The word ‘chintz’ is a European derivation of the Indian word ‘*chīt*,’ a type of painted calico. The word ‘calico’ takes its name from Calicut, a port city on the Malabar coast of south India.

with Indian textiles in terms of price or quality. India's premodern cotton production was extensive and naturally predisposed by climate and an abundance of river networks. The transformation of cotton into textiles took place throughout the subcontinent by hundreds of thousands of highly skilled Indian weavers whose labor costs, K. N. Chaudhuri notes, added very little to the final price of the commodity.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, the advancement of the Indian textile industry was facilitated by the availability of relatively inexpensive Indian dyes and hundreds of thousands of skilled laborers engaged in other aspects of textile production for a comparatively paltry recompense. These included: agriculturalists, who adeptly used available technology—advanced for the time—to produce impressive crop yields; spinners, whose knowledgeable treatment of the cotton fibers efficiently produced an unsurpassed variety of thread qualities; as well as dyers, bleachers and printers.<sup>246</sup> Thus, in his seventeenth-century description of the cotton textile industry in Iran, the French traveler Jean Chardin noted that, although the Iranians produced some cheap calico, they had no motivation to expand their textile industry into finer qualities as they would be unable to produce textiles equivalent to those of India for a comparable price.<sup>247</sup>

Available statistics provide only an occasional glimpse into the actual magnitude of India's early modern cotton textile production. It is generally accepted that the average piece of finished cloth was just over ten square yards, that the average early modern weaver household annually produced as much as 1,600 yards of cloth, and that weavers and other laborers involved in textile production were located in urban centers and rural areas across the entire subcontinent.<sup>248</sup> Indian cotton cloth produced for export, however, generally

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<sup>245</sup> Chaudhuri, 'The Structure of Indian Textile Industry,' pp. 127–30. In terms of a comparison to the pre-Industrial Revolution English industrial production, Chaudhuri cites an anonymous pamphlet dated to 1701 which states that, 'The cheapest things are ever bought in *India*...as much Labour or Manufacture may be had there for two Pence, as in *England* for a shilling. The Carriage thence is dear, the Customs are high, the Merchant has great gains, and so has the retailer; yet still with all this Charge, the *Indian* are a great deal cheaper than equal English Manufactures.'

<sup>246</sup> See Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, pp. 155–56.

<sup>247</sup> John Chardin, *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia*, London: The Argonaut Press, 1927, pp. 278–79.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 270; Joseph J. Brenning, 'Textile producers and production in late seventeenth century Coromandel,' in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 23, 4 (1986), p. 343; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 202. The calculation belongs to Brenning and is in reference to late seventeenth-century weavers of the Coromandel Coast. Richards suggests that the



came from one of four regions: the Coromandel Coast, Bengal, the Punjab and Sind, and Gujarat.<sup>249</sup> In the 1640s the Coromandel Coast, for example, is reported to have boasted a ‘burgeoning’ textile industry which supported thousands of weavers, dyers, and other craftsmen who produced millions of yards of cloth for growing overseas markets.<sup>250</sup> Joseph Brenning has calculated that, in 1682, combined English and Dutch exports from the northern Coromandel alone exceeded nine million yards of cloth.<sup>251</sup>

An impressive figure, this was considerably less than the amount of cloth correspondingly dealt with by indigenous merchants. Recently, Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau have argued that, in the early modern ‘Age of Competition’ between European and Asian merchants (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), neither enjoyed an inherent advantage and the vast majority of the commerce remained in the hands of Asian merchants engaged in both maritime and overland trade.<sup>252</sup> According to Richards, even as the Dutch and English demand for Indian textiles increased dramatically at the end of the seventeenth century—with just the English cloth exports in 1684 exceeding 18 million yards—the English and Dutch together still employed less than 10 percent of the ‘full-time weavers and other workers in the textile sector of Bengal.’<sup>253</sup> It

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annual production of a weaver household was marginally lower, at between 1,300–1,500 yards of cloth per year. In reference to the dispersion of weaver households throughout the subcontinent, Naqvi notes that, ‘no city, town, *paraganah*, *casbah* or village seems to have been devoid of this industry.’ Naqvi, *Mughal Hindustan*, pp. 155–56.

<sup>249</sup> Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 270.

<sup>250</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, pp. 155, 199.

<sup>251</sup> Joseph Brenning, ‘The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel: A Study of a Pre-Modern Asian Export Industry,’ Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975, pp. 44–45.

<sup>252</sup> See the introductory essay to Chaudhury and Morineau, eds, *Merchants, Companies and Trade*, pp. 7–9. See also Sushil Chaudhury’s chapter in the same volume, ‘The Asian merchants and Companies in Bengal’s export trade, circa mid-eighteenth century,’ pp. 300–320.

<sup>253</sup> According to Richards’ calculations, already in the 1620s the English East India Company was annually selling some 250,000 pieces of Indian cloth in London. Although this had increased only marginally by 1664, when English cloth imports from India were placed at 273,746 pieces, in 1684 this had increased by over 600 percent to 1,760,315 pieces, amounting to over 18 million yards, annually. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, pp. 198, 203. See also Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630–1720*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. In Bengal, K. N. Chaudhuri calculates that, in 1776, there were some 25,200 weavers and 80,000 spinners in just the Dakha district who annually produced 180,000 pieces of cloth: over 1.8 million yards. Chaudhuri, ‘The Structure of Indian Textile Industry,’ pp. 161–62. The estimate of the number of yards produced is based on Brenning’s calculation that an average textile ‘piece’

is also important to note that, even after the Industrial Revolution brought about a reversal in the flow of finished textiles between India and Great Britain in the early nineteenth century (for the first time, India received large quantities of finished textiles from British factories), these textile imports were largely made out of Indian cotton. In his 1840 monograph on the Indian cotton textile industry, Major-General John Briggs estimated that the annual domestic raw cotton consumption in India was roughly 750 million pounds. Additional statistics made available by Briggs, based on British customs records, also enable us to calculate that, over the seventeen years from 1817 to 1834, the average annual cotton exports to markets in England and China was over 77 million pounds, and in one year exceeded 139 million pounds.<sup>254</sup>

The Arabian Sea port of Thatta was the most important textile production and trade center in medieval and early modern Sind.<sup>255</sup> Textiles exported through India's northwestern mountain passes were mostly produced in the Punjab, a major industrial center during the Mughal era where, Richards notes, 'thousands of weavers produced specialized cotton cloth for various markets in Central Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.'<sup>256</sup> Indeed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was considerable urbanization throughout northwest India and many towns in the Punjab, such as Lahore, Bajwara, Batala, Machhiwara, Samana, and Sialkot, began to specialize in textile production.<sup>257</sup> Cotton production in that region was abundant, but even that did not limit the development of the textile industry in the Punjab. Rather, the cotton crops of the Punjab were regularly augmented by raw materials from as far away as south India, imported by itinerant Banjara

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measured 0.75 yards wide by 13.5 yards long.

<sup>254</sup> John Briggs, *The Cotton Trade of India*, London: John W. Parker, 1840, pp. 1–2, 11.

<sup>255</sup> This was the case prior to the movement of the capital of Sind to Hyderabad and the late eighteenth-century emergence of the port of Karachi. According to a report of 1809, when Nadir Shah traveled through the Arabian Sea port of Thatta in 1742, there were some 40,000 weavers operating in that city alone. See Henry Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan and Sindh...*, 1816, reprint, Karachi: Indus Publications, 1976, p. 352.

<sup>256</sup> Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 50.

<sup>257</sup> Alam, 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' p. 222; Singh, *Region and Empire*, pp. 173–203. Alam and Singh both note considerable urbanization throughout the Punjab in this period, especially along the trade routes leading to India's northwest frontier. Bayly similarly notes that, during the period from 1660 to 1750, there was a growth in the number of trading towns in the north Indian region of Awadh. He attributes this to an increase in the movement of goods and the further centralization of merchant communities. C. A. Bayly, 'Indigenous Social Formations and the "World System": North India Since c.1700,' in Sugata Bose, ed., *South Asia and World Capitalism*, p. 122.

caravans. These boisterous nomadic teamsters of medieval India were known to traverse the subcontinent with large amounts of bulk goods strapped to the backs of their tens of thousands of bullocks. In addition to raw materials, Banjaras are also known to have supplied the commercial centers of the Punjab with finished textiles from other regions of India, and it was probably through their mediation that, in the late seventeenth century, a particular shipment of Gujarati cloth was carried to the northwest frontier, from where it was further transported on to Turan and spread beneath the feet of the Uzbek ruler Subhan Quli Khan to honor him during a visit to the city of Qarshi.<sup>258</sup>

Considering the magnitude of the Indian textile industry, it is not surprising to find that no commodity figures more predominantly than Indian cotton textiles in the lengthy list of goods transported from India to the markets of early modern Turan. Indeed, pre-colonial Turan's reliance upon India for cotton textiles is analogous to India's dependency upon Turan for horses. As noted above, India's cotton textile industry was predisposed by climate and geography and was sufficient to satisfy all domestic needs and still support a sizeable export trade. Conversely, Turanian agriculturalists were dependent upon irrigation agriculture and, prior to the twentieth century, devoted the majority of their agricultural land to grains and other foodstuffs.<sup>259</sup> Thus, although cotton has been grown in Turan since antiquity, it does not appear to have constituted a significant export commodity until the second half of the nineteenth

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<sup>258</sup> Samander Termezi, *Dastūr al-mulūk*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 1437, translated with facs by M. A. Salakhedinova, Moscow: Nauk, 1971, p. 138 (fols 125b–26a).

<sup>259</sup> Cf. McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*, p. 43; V. V. Bartol'd, 'Khlopkovodstvo v Srednei Azii s istoricheskikh vremen do prikhoda Russkikh,' in Bartol'd, *Sochineniia*, II/I, pp. 434–48; Igor Lipovsky, 'The Central Asian Cotton Epic,' *Central Asian Survey* 14, 4 (1995), p. 529. Lipovsky notes that, 'although cotton has been cultivated in Central Asia for more than two thousand years, it began to play an important role in the Central Asian economy only after the region became part of Russia.' One notable exception was the celebrated *zandanīchī*, a type of cotton textile originally produced in the village Zandana, near Bukhara. According to the mid-tenth-century author Narshakhi, this luxury commodity was exported to 'Iraq, Fars, Kirman, Hindustan and elsewhere,' where it enjoyed great popularity among the elite and sold at the same price as brocade. Abu Bakr Muhammad 'Narshakhi,' *The History of Bukhara*, translated by Richard Frye, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, pp. 15–16. The nature and value of this textile, however, appears to have changed over time. See D. G. Shepherd and W. B. Henning, 'Zandanījī Identified?,' in Richard Ettinghausen, ed., *Aus der Welt der Islamischen Kunst*, Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1959, pp. 15–40. See also Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 71–72, 84.

century.<sup>260</sup> Even as late as the 1860s, as agriculturalists in the Khanates of Bukhara and Khoqand were producing cotton for export to Russian markets, the Hungarian scholar and traveler to the region, Arminius Vámbéry, glorified their use of irrigation networks for the abundant production of fruit and grains, yet he characterized the indigenous cotton textiles as overpriced and of poor quality.<sup>261</sup>

Assertions of the importance of early modern India's overland trade in cotton textiles are corroborated by the above-mentioned 1639 report that some 20,000 to 25,000 camels annually brought Indian goods, mostly cotton textiles, from Qandahar to Isfahan and the Dutch report of a few years later that 25,000 to 30,000 camel loads of cotton textiles were annually brought to Iranian markets from India.<sup>262</sup> Although these estimates are among the highest for the period, it should be stressed that the supply obtained through the overland trade was regularly supplemented by maritime traders, both Asian and European, and, in years when the caravans were smaller, the difference was likely to have been transported through the ports. Therefore, considering that on average each camel carried between 400 and 500 pounds, the statistics suggest that, in this period, Iran annually received well over 5,000 tons of Indian cotton textiles, amounting to more than 72 million yards of cloth, for both domestic use and to be further transported on to markets in Turan, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and beyond.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> There are, of course, a number of exceptions to this rule. Bukharan textiles such as *zenden'*, and *byaz'*, for example, are noted by Burton to have been regularly transported to early modern Russian markets. The Bukharan calico *kindiak* also enjoyed some demand in Russian markets and among the pastoral tribes of the steppe, but Burton suggests that it was not exported by Bukharans in significant quantities, perhaps because it was too expensive to compete with Indian calicos. Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' pp. 11, 41.

<sup>261</sup> Arminius Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865. For this citation, see the reprint edition, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970, pp. 469–73.

<sup>262</sup> Steensgaard, 'The route through Quandahar,' p. 62; idem, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 410.

<sup>263</sup> During Akbar's reign the amount that camels could carry was fixed according to their categorization by size. There were three categories: the smallest could be loaded with 6 *man* (148 kilograms/325 pounds), the second category could be loaded with 8 *man* (198 kilograms/435 pounds) and the third could be loaded with 10 *man* (247 kilograms/543 pounds). Abul Fazl Allami, *The Ā-in-i Akbarī*, I, p. 156. See also Deloche, *Transport and Communication in India*, I, p. 238; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 48; Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 40. As mentioned above, in the 1880s Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart reported that Persian camels could carry 320 pounds, Indian camels could carry 400 pounds, and Khurasanian camels could carry between 600 and 700 pounds. Stewart, 'The Country of

It should perhaps be stressed that Indian textiles were exported not only by caravan traders, but also by the very Indian diaspora merchants who are the focus of this study. This is another factor that contributed to their value in the eyes of the ruling administrators of their host societies. For example, an English traveler to Iran in 1618 reported that, ‘the banians [are] the chief merchants who vend linen of India of all sorts and prices which this country cannot be without, except the people should go naked.’<sup>264</sup> Raphaël du Mans likewise observed that Hindu merchants from Multan, commonly known by the Persian designation ‘*bazzaze*,’ were the premier cloth merchants in Iran.<sup>265</sup> Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Edward Waring noted that there was still ‘a very considerable sum of specie’ annually exported from the Persian port of Bushehr to Bombay, Masulipatam and Bengal in return for Indian textiles.<sup>266</sup> Returning the focus to Turan, Burton includes cotton textiles in her list of the commodities merchants regularly imported to Bukhara from Iran. Considering their domination of the Iranian markets at the time, it seems reasonable to conclude that a considerable proportion of these textiles were Indian in origin and part of a well-established Indo-Iranian transit trade.<sup>267</sup>

The reliance of early modern Turan upon India for regular supplies of cotton textiles can be supported in several ways. In 1504–5 Babur includes white cloth in his list of Indian goods regularly transported through Kabul to the markets of Turan and, as has been noted above, in 1558 Anthony Jenkinson observed that the Indian merchants established in Bukhara were engaged in the sale of white cloth.<sup>268</sup> In the will of Tangri Berdi, a wealthy

the Tekke Turkomans, p. 141. The statistics regarding the weight of cloth are taken from Briggs, *The Cotton Trade of India*, p. 1. According to Briggs, 32.5 yards of Indian cloth weighed 5 pounds.

<sup>264</sup> Cited in Steensgaard, ‘The route through Quandahar,’ p. 63 and note 25.

<sup>265</sup> du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, pp. 180–81. *Bazzāz* (بزاز) is Persian for ‘cloth merchant.’

<sup>266</sup> Waring lists ‘*Guzerat Kincobs, chintz, long cloths, muslins, &c.*’ He also mentioned that the efforts of the King of Persia to end the outflow of specie from his realm by motivating Persian textile production had been unsuccessful. Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>267</sup> Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade,’ p. 24. Throughout the early modern era, Iran and Turan continued to share cultural and economic relations despite the widely accepted belief that, with the rise of the Safavid state, there was a severance of ties between Shī‘a Iran and Sunnī Turan. Robert McChesney, “‘Barrier to Heterodoxy’?: Rethinking the Ties Between Iran and Central Asia in the 17th Century,” in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: the History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, Pembroke Persian Papers, vol. 4, London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1996, pp. 231–67.

<sup>268</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 202; Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 88.

merchant who died in Samarqand in the year 1589, it was mentioned that he was in possession of 429 pieces of striped Indian cloth.<sup>269</sup> In 1639 the Englishman Henry Bornford visited the Punjab and noted that the cotton production of the outlying areas was largely transported to the markets of Lahore, which he described as ‘the prime city of traffick in India.’ Bornford then goes on to report that, in Lahore, these commodities ‘are bought by the Wousbecks [Uzbeks] or Tartarrs and soe transported by Cabull into those parts.’<sup>270</sup> In 1671 Pazukhin included cloth first in his list of the commodities in greatest demand in the markets of Khiva.<sup>271</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting demonstration of the Turanian demand for Indian textiles is found in seventeenth-century diplomatic letters sent by the Bukharan *khāns* to India on behalf of Bukharan and other merchants traveling to India for the express purchase of textiles.<sup>272</sup> In a letter from one Bukharan *khān* to a Mughal emperor (probably from ‘Abd al-‘Aziz to Aurangzeb), the *khān* appealed for mutual commercial exchanges and explained that, ‘at this time textiles are difficult to find in the boundaries of Bukhara.’ The letter goes on to request that, as soon as the merchant Mubarak had entered Mughal territory and procured the necessary textiles, he be sent back to Bukhara without delay.<sup>273</sup> In another letter, written to Shah Jahan by a merchant identified as Khwaja Awaz, the merchant requested permission to annually send agents between Balkh and Kabul, offering to supply Kabul with fruit, horses and camels in return for Indian cloth.<sup>274</sup>

<sup>269</sup> *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq*, fol. 229a. According to the *qādī* records, each piece was valued at precisely 3,432 tanga khani

فوطه (فوتہ) تلولى چہار صد و بیست و نہ عدد ہر يك معین قیمت سہ ہزار و چہار صد و سی دو عدد سگہ خانى موصوفہ.

It is, however, difficult to accept this as a valid estimate of the value of the cloth considering the extraordinarily high price affixed by the *qādī*.

<sup>270</sup> See William Foster, ed., ‘Henry Bornford’s Account of his Journey from Agra to Tatta,’ in *The English Factories in India 1637–1641*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, pp. 134–35. Bornford excepts, however, the chintz produced in the town of Samana (‘Semiano’) which was taken by Persian and Armenian merchants directly to Isfahan via Qandahar.

<sup>271</sup> Clarke, ed., ‘A Voyage to Uzbekistan in 1671–1672,’ p. 87.

<sup>272</sup> *Maktūbāt munsha‘āt manshūrāt*, fols 4b–6a, 67b, 73a.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 5b–6a.

<sup>274</sup> The letter requests permission to pass tax free, avoiding Shah Jahan’s general 7.5 percent tax, the tax on loaded pack animals, the *zakāt* tax according to Islamic law, the customs payments, and the *tamghā* tax levied on travelers. See manuscript number 102 in

Indian textiles found in Turan originated from all over the subcontinent and included such finished products as turbans, napkins, handkerchiefs, robes, towels, Banarasi wraps, silk brocade, and Kashmiri shawls, as well as bulk quantities of linen, muslin, calico and chintz of various qualities and printed patterns.<sup>275</sup> With the obvious exceptions of the expensive Banarasi wraps, silk brocade, and Kashmiri shawls, Indian textiles were utilized by the general population as well as the elite.<sup>276</sup> In 1620–21 the Mughal emperor Jahangir sent a letter to the third Juybari sheikh, Taj al-Din Hassan, in which he announced a gift to the sheikh of 50,000 khani worth of cotton cloth and other goods sent to Bukhara with the Mughal ambassador Mir Baraka.<sup>277</sup> The Indian elite's practice of sending textiles to the Turanian elite is often mentioned in the primary sources.<sup>278</sup> Such gifts were further distributed to the recipient's retinue or warehoused for distribution, or sale, at an advantageous time. For example, in 1639 Shah Jahan's ambassador to Balkh delivered 600 pieces of red calico and, in the same year, the Ashtarkhānid ruler of Balkh, Nadir Muhammad, is reported to have distributed several hundred Indian turbans and pieces of *qutnya*, a Deccani striped cloth made of a cotton and silk blend,

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the archive of the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences, cited in Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, p. 50.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, pp. 87–88; *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fols 26a, 182a, 183a, 189a; Samander Termezi, *Dastūr al-mulūk*, p. 138 (fols 125b–26a); Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, fols 315a–16b; Muhammad Talib, *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, fols 69a, 70b, 96a, 131b–32a, 195a; Muhammad Badi' 'Maliha' Samarqandi, *Mudhakkir al-āshāb*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 4270, fol. 301a. See also I. Nizamutdinov, *XVI–XVIII asrlarda Orta Osiyo–Hindiston munosabatlari*, in Uzbek, Tashkent: Fan, 1966, pp. 14, 41; idem, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, pp. 49–50; Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' p. 29.

<sup>276</sup> Kashmiri shawls enjoyed considerable demand in Central Asia and beyond. According to Mohan Lal, for example, in the 1840s Kashmiri shawls were in such demand in Russia that one merchant transported 17,000 rupees worth to Moscow where he sold them for a price high enough to cover all his duties and still double his initial investment. Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 142.

<sup>277</sup> Muhammad Talib, *Maṭlab al-ṭālibīn*, fol. 132a. See also Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 151–52, although in this account the total value of gifts from Jahangir sent to the Juybaris is 30,000 rupees with an additional 5,000 given to Khwaja Salih and 5,000 more devoted to the maintenance of Timur's tomb.

<sup>278</sup> For two similar examples of elite gift-exchanges, see Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 450. Riazul Islam suggests that the motivation behind the Mughals' repeated embassies and generous gifts to the Bukharan *khāns* was their interest in enlisting the Bukharans in an alliance against the Safavids. Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, pp. 86–92. In a Mughal embassy to the Safavid Shah Safi, Shah Jahan included a gift of high-quality Indian textiles from Ahmadabad, Banaras and Bengal. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

to the attendees of a banquet in honor of his brother, Imam Quli Khan.<sup>279</sup> There was no corresponding tradition of sending bulk quantities of Turanian textiles to India for use by the general population.<sup>280</sup>

It is an important feature of early modern Indo-Turanian commercial relations that, while Indian cotton textiles were imported in large quantities to Bukharan markets, Bukharan traders were meanwhile actively engaged in the exportation of raw cotton, cotton thread, and various types of cotton textiles and piece goods to pastoralists and urban markets in Siberia and Moscovy.<sup>281</sup> Burton suggests that this trade was rather considerable, noting that contemporary sources mention individual Bukharan merchants annually importing hundreds, even thousands, of pieces of cotton cloth to markets in Moscovy and that cotton cloth was the single most important commodity exported from Bukhara to Siberia. Although supporting evidence is lacking, considering the dynamics of the cotton textile trade in this period it seems reasonable to suggest that a considerable proportion of the textiles reported as being 'Bukharan' in these sources was in reality produced in India or, equally likely, the textiles may have been produced in Bukhara, but with Indian cotton or thread.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has challenged the notion that the arrival of the European Companies to the Indian Ocean commercial arena in the seventeenth century, and their subsequent usurpation of the movement of commodities between Europe and Asia, resulted in the corresponding decline of the 'Silk Road' trade and the economic peripheralization of Turan. While the commercial activities of the Europeans clearly had an impact on the movement of Asian commodities to European markets, it has been argued above that the indigenous Asian trade remained lively, and much larger in its totality. Throughout the early modern era there was a steady movement of people and commodities across the caravan routes connecting India and Turan, and this was fostered by the investments of the Mughal, Safavid and Uzbek states, as well as by the merchants themselves. By digging wells, planting trees, improving the quality

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<sup>279</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' p. 29.

<sup>280</sup> Jenkinson, for example, is careful to note that cloth was exclusively transported from India to Bukhara; there was no demand in India for common Bukharan cloth. Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 88.

<sup>281</sup> See the essays on Bukhara's trade with nomadic peoples, Siberia and Muscovy in Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' pp. 10–16, 41–85.



of existing roads, building new roads, bridges and caravanserais, and working to ensure that the roads remained safe for travelers, these rulers deliberately and effectively promoted the transregional trade of their regions. It should also be stressed that Mughal, Safavid and Uzbek rulers actively encouraged foreign merchants to establish communities in their realms. Much as the Indian diaspora communities enjoyed the support of the Uzbek and Safavid administrators, both the Mughal Emperor Akbar and the Safavid Shah 'Abbas I can be attributed with inviting communities of Christian Armenian merchants to settle in their territories in an effort to improve international trade through their agency.<sup>282</sup>

Geography and climate had much to do with the commodities exchanged between India and Turan. From the early Turko-Afghan advances into the subcontinent it became generally understood that horses provided a tactical military advantage, and they quickly became an important component of the Indian military. However, largely because of the excessive heat and lack of nutritious grasses and suitable pastoral lands in India, mares rapidly became infertile and efforts to breed horses met with little success. It is for this reason that Indian cavalry were largely comprised of the fast, sturdy *Turkī* horses bred in abundance in the Inner Asian steppe, tens of thousands of which were annually imported to the subcontinent even into the nineteenth century. Visitors to Mughal India were also astonished by the multitude of fresh and dried fruits, nuts and other Turanian goods that, despite the Mughals' efforts, could not be reproduced in the Indian climate.

While India's climate was not conducive to horse breeding, it did foster the development of an impressive agrarian economy and a cotton textile industry which, already in the ancient period, supported a sizeable export trade. Every year, as nomadic mediatory traders supplied India with horses, thousands of camel loads of Indian textiles were correspondingly transported across the overland routes to Turan, Iran, and beyond. Throughout our period of study, and probably long before then, the markets of Bukhara and Samarqand were stocked with vast arrays of Indian cotton textiles, as well as thread, dyes, and other goods associated with the textile industry. It will be observed in chapter five that this continued even into the nineteenth century, when the demand for Indian textiles waned as the Industrial Revolution enabled the British and Russian textile mills, both of which relied heavily upon Indian supplies of raw cotton, to produce finished textiles much more cheaply than their non-industrialized Indian competitors.

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<sup>282</sup> Cf. Mesrovb Seth, *Armenians in India*, Calcutta, 1937, pp. 1–2; McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*, passim.

While the dynamics of the trade in horses and cotton textiles can largely be attributed to geography and climate, these factors had little to do with the fact that, over the centuries, hundreds of thousands of Indians were enslaved and transported to Turan and Iran, where they comprised a remarkably high proportion of the slave population. It is well recorded that Indian slaves skilled at architectural engineering were especially sought after, and it was common for Mughal emperors to include such individuals as gifts in their frequent diplomatic exchanges with the Bukharan *khāns*. Following his infamous sack of Delhi, Timur himself is reported to have taken several thousand skilled artisans back to Turan, many of whom were used for the construction of his grandiose Bibi Khanum mosque complex. However, the evidence presented above suggests that the overwhelming majority of the Indian slaves taken to Turan were the unfortunate victims of the expansionist policies of the Delhi Sultans and Mughal emperors. In Turan, these Indians worked in brick factories, as soldiers, and in common households where they maintained the gardens and took care of other menial tasks. The majority, however, appear to have been put to work as unskilled agricultural laborers on the plantation-style farms of wealthy dynastic families.

In summation, even accepting Gommans' calculation that the annual value of the horse trade should be placed at roughly twenty million rupees—over three times greater than the combined total of the Dutch and English East India Companies' annual exports from Bengal—the magnitude of the trade in Indian cotton textiles and slaves still places the balance of Indo-Turanian trade in India's favor. This is clearly demonstrated by the observation that, with the exception of the massive exportation of specie from India following Nadir Shah's sack of Delhi, gold and silver figure prominently on the list of commodities regularly transported to India from Turan and Iran. In terms of the repatriation to India of much of this wealth, one should also not overlook the important role of the Indian diaspora merchants, the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EMERGENCE AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE INDIAN MERCHANT DIASPORA

#### *Introduction*

From the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century the lively caravan trade which had previously defined much of India's commercial relationship with its neighbors to the north and west was augmented by the commercial activities of thousands of Indian diaspora merchants. These individuals were agents of homogeneous caste-based family firms who had been assigned to extend their firms' business interests to any of the many dozens of semi-permanent Indian trading colonies in the distant markets of Afghanistan, Turan and Iran. Some of the more intrepid merchants even ventured to the Caucasus and the emerging markets of Russia where, for over two centuries, they maintained a diaspora community in Astrakhan, Russia's Caspian Sea port on the mouth of the Volga river. These merchants typically spent several years away from their homeland and families while they engaged in a variety of commercial activities and operated one of the most important merchant networks in early modern Eurasian history. The Indians' maintenance of this diaspora for over three centuries is a testament to their successful organization, their ability to quickly adapt to changing political and economic circumstances, their relentless quest for commercial opportunities, and the high value placed on their financial services by the state administrators of their host societies.

It is a central argument of this work that the several thousand Indian merchants who at any given time populated diaspora communities in cities and villages throughout Turan comprised the single most important facet of Turan's early modern commercial relationship with India. This is attributable to the commercial activities of the diaspora merchants, which differed from those of the earlier caravan traders in several important respects. A detailed discussion of this distinction is reserved for subsequent chapters. The present objective is to explore the diverse ethnic composition of the diaspora merchants, the vast majority of whom were originally identified by the more general

designation ‘Multani.’ Also, despite suggestions that the Multani diaspora had atrophied by the end of the eighteenth century, it is argued here that there is no qualitative difference between the early modern ‘Multani’ diaspora and the ‘Shikarpuri’ diaspora of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ethnically, geographically and organizationally these two designations referred to merchants and commercial institutions of the same extraction. Before we turn to the specifics of the Indian merchant diaspora, however, it is first necessary to consider the recent and growing usage of the ‘diaspora’ concept and clearly define how it will be used in the pages that follow.

### *Defining ‘Diaspora’ for the Present Purpose*

In recent years the term ‘diaspora’ has been frequently used to characterize peoples existing away from their homeland. Khachig Tölölyan, editor of the journal *Diaspora*, asserts that ‘the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, [and] ethnic community.’<sup>1</sup> Others have even more broadly defined diaspora as ‘that segment of a people living outside the homeland.’<sup>2</sup> Expanding the definition to include virtually any group of people living beyond the boundary of its perceived homeland has enhanced the term’s utility for the emerging discipline of transnational studies by facilitating comparative studies and providing new topics of inquiry and a model for understanding such phenomena. However, the rather amorphous and potentially confusing nature of the term’s contemporary usage risks diminishing its effectiveness, motivating a narrower definition for the present discussion.

The etymology of the word ‘diaspora’ can be traced to the Greek ‘*diásporá*,’ derived from the combination of *dia*, meaning ‘over,’ and *speiro*, ‘to sow,’ as in scattering or planting. The term was probably first used in the third century B.C.E. by Greek-speaking Jews in reference to their exile from the

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<sup>1</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, ‘The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface,’ *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, 1 (Spring 1991), p. 4. For further discussion, see idem, ‘Rethinking *Diaspora(s)*: Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,’ *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 5, 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 3–36.

<sup>2</sup> Walker Connor, ‘The Impact of Homelands Upon Diasporas,’ in Gabriel Sheffer, ed., *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986, p. 16.

holy land and dispersion among the Gentiles in the sixth century B.C.E.<sup>3</sup> In this context the term refers to a situation in which a number of communities sharing a common national, religious, or ethnic identity exist apart from a common homeland. The term also implies that, over time, the communities maintain their distinctive identity, despite their existence as a minority living in a host society. A diaspora community may avoid assimilation through continued identification or interaction with its unique homeland, use of a specific language, identification with a socio-religious system other than that of the host society, the maintenance of a residence in a communal settlement separate from the host society, economic specialization, and the pursuit of bilateral relations with similar, geographically dispersed diaspora communities. Members of diaspora communities are, of course, susceptible to some cultural assimilation, and individuals may even leave the community and adopt the culture of the host society. In the present discussion, however, the use of the term 'diaspora' implies that the community in question maintains an identification with its homeland, an internal cohesiveness as an exclusive community, and continues to be perceived by members of the diaspora and the host society as a cultural 'other.' This follows Abner Cohen's use of the term as:

distinct as a type of social grouping in its culture and structure. Its members are culturally distinct from both their society of origin and from the societies among which they live. Its organization combines stability of structure but allows a high degree of mobility of personnel. It has an informal political organization of its own which takes care of stability of order within the one community, and the co-ordination of the activities of its various member communities in their perpetual struggle against external pressure. It tends to be autonomous in its judicial organization. Its members form a moral community which constrains the behaviour of the individual and ensures a large measure of conformity with common values and principles. It also has its own institutions of general welfare and social security. In short, a diaspora is a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed, communities.<sup>4</sup>

Multiple historical processes may motivate groups of people to leave their homeland and form a diaspora. These can most generally be divided into the

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997, p. ix; André Wink, 'The Jewish Diaspora in India: Eighth to Thirteenth Centuries,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 24, 4 (1987), p. 351; Tölölyan, 'Rethinking *Diaspora(s)*,' p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Abner Cohen, 'Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas,' in Claude Meillassoux, ed., *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 267. For further discussion, see William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,' *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, 1 (Spring 1991), pp. 83–84.

categories of provocation and attraction. Briefly, factors which would provoke the formation of a diaspora include social, economic or political coercion which motivate groups of people to leave their homeland in search of improved opportunities elsewhere ('victim diasporas'). Conversely, diasporas may also arise out of a group's attraction to a region promising greater recompense for their labor ('labor diasporas') or, as in the case of the present study, where they may be in a position to pursue lucrative commercial endeavors involving the mediation of cross-cultural trade ('merchant diasporas'). The latter process requires the individuals involved to physically relocate and regularly participate in the cultural arena of their host society. When their efforts prove successful, other individuals may be attracted to similarly profitable locations and, over time, form what has come to be known as a merchant diaspora: a network of interrelated communities established in locations strategic to their engagement in specific types of commerce and transregional trade.<sup>5</sup> The early modern dispersion of Armenian merchant communities mediating cross-cultural trade across much of Eurasia provides a classic example of a merchant diaspora.<sup>6</sup>

In practical application, to some degree the dichotomy established above may prove to be a false one. That is to say, the motivation of communities to live a collective expatriate existence can sometimes be ascribed to more than just one factor. For example, the migrations of Armenian merchant communities are commonly attributed to commercial incentives stemming from the convenient location of their Transcaucasian homeland, situated on overland trade routes connecting Iran and Russia with Anatolia, Syria and the Levant.<sup>7</sup> Armenians capitalized on their geography by actively participating in transregional trade and establishing merchant diaspora communities in numerous distant markets.<sup>8</sup> Yet Armenian migrations were also known to have been motivated by factors of socio-political provocation, such as the Safavids' sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century resettlement of a large number of Armenians from their home in the Armenian town of Julfa to a dedicated

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<sup>5</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984; Christine Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities: Conjoint Communities in the Making of the World-Economy, 1570–1940*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, no. 71, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, pp. 179–206; Edmund Herzig, 'The Rise of the Julfa Merchants in the Late Sixteenth Century,' in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: the History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, Pembroke Persian Papers, vol. 4, London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1996 pp. 305–22.

<sup>7</sup> For a map of these routes, see 'Figure 1. Julfa, routes and silk producing areas ca 1600' in Herzig, 'The Rise of the Julfa Merchants,' p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, pp. 185–86.

suburb of Isfahan, named New Julfa.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it is not unknown for diaspora networks that formed in response to factors of provocation to capitalize on their spatial dispersion by initiating long-distance, cross-cultural commerce between pre-existing communities.<sup>10</sup>

Merchant diasporas tend to differ from other types of diasporas in several important respects. Most notably, they are characterized by a higher degree of mobility, more communication between communities, and a higher degree of interaction with the indigenous population. Unlike other diaspora categories, merchant diasporas may even be peopled by a rotating, gender-specific population. A useful list of topics of inquiry relevant to the study of modern merchant diasporas is provided by Abner Cohen:

What are the criteria of distinctiveness and of recruitment? How is the demographic adjustment between the sexes and the ages achieved? What mechanisms for communication between the members of one community and between one community and another within the same diaspora are employed? How, when denied resort to the regular exercise of organized physical coercion, is authority organized? What kinds of power are mobilized to support this authority? What is the nature of the relationship of trust between the various types of businessmen operating in them? How is credit made possible and how is it regulated? What are the procedures underlying decision-making in communal affairs? What are the characteristics of the articulating ideologies employed and what are the mechanisms by which these ideologies are kept alive? How do structure and culture affect one another in the historical development of these diasporas?<sup>11</sup>

It can be seen that a study of even a *contemporary* merchant diaspora is a difficult, complex endeavor. How is one to conduct a thorough analysis of a premodern merchant diaspora? The effort necessarily requires a nearly impossible wealth and variety of information unlikely to be found in archives or to have survived the centuries. Furthermore, considering the secretive attitude premodern merchants held toward their commercial transactions, especially those merchants vulnerably dispersed in diaspora communities, much of the information about individuals' commercial activities and the communities' social operations was either never recorded or was intentionally destroyed after it lost its usefulness.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the deportation of Armenians from their Transcaucasian homeland by the Safavid Shahs, see McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*, pp. 35–66.

<sup>10</sup> See Wink, 'The Jewish Diaspora in India,' pp. 349–66.

<sup>11</sup> Cohen, 'Cultural Strategies,' p. 268.

<sup>12</sup> A remarkable exception to this rule can be found in S. D. Goitein's study of the social and economic operation of medieval Jewish merchant diaspora communities operating out of Fustat, modern Cairo, in his *A Mediterranean Society*.

Without a comprehensive source of information providing insight into the activities of a single Indian diaspora community at a specific time, one must instead take a broader approach and extrapolate from information regarding related communities scattered throughout diverse sources. Although inadequate for a sociological study of a single diaspora community, this methodology embraces the sources' temporal and spatial inconsistencies and improves our ability to investigate the development of the diaspora and its transformation over the *longue durée*. In the context of the Indian diaspora communities in Turan, this approach is a useful one for gaining insight into the dynamics of early modern Indo-Turanian relations as they changed over the centuries, and it also illuminates several processes relevant to the general history of the region.

### *The Emergence of the Indian Diaspora in Early Modern Turan*

#### *A. Historical Background: Indo-Turanian Relations Prior to the Diaspora*

The regular movement of people, ideas and commodities between India and Turan dates from long before the early modern period. Nearly two millennia ago Buddhist literature and traditions were transmitted across the north Indian frontier to Turan in a remarkable confluence of cultures under the Kushana Empire (first to third centuries C.E.). The Kushanas spanned the Indo-Turanian frontier from their capital at Purushapura, near present-day Peshawar.<sup>13</sup> The Indo-Buddhist legacy in Turan is still noticeable in the archaeological remains of stupas and other Buddhist structures dispersed along the ancient caravan routes connecting the two regions.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For a recent study of cultural transmissions between India and Central Asia during the Kushana period, see Sanjyot Mehendale, 'Begram: along ancient Central Asian and Indian trade routes,' in Pierre Chuvin, ed., *Inde-Asie centrale*, Cahiers d'Asie centrale, nos 1–2, Tachkent: IFEAC, 1996, pp. 47–64. For a discussion of the early medieval transmission of Buddhism to Turan by Indian merchants, see André Wink, *Al-Hind: the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 1, *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, Seventh to Eleventh Centuries*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990, pp. 42–43.

<sup>14</sup> The most famous of such ancient monuments, the two great statues of Buddha in Bamiyan, were destroyed just months prior to the completion of this book. The smaller of the two stood at thirty-five meters and dated to the second or third century C.E. The larger, and younger, of the two reached a towering fifty-three meters and is estimated to have dated to the fifth century. Another grandiose monument to Central Asian Buddhism was in northern Afghanistan, in the city of Balkh, described in the late sixteenth century as the ancient temple of Nawbahar and identified by V. V. Bartol'd as a Buddhist monastery



Although no sources have been found to statistically quantify the population of Indians beyond the frontier during the medieval era, the movement of people and commodities along the Indo-Turanian caravan routes continued, and is likely to have increased, especially during the unprecedented unification of much of Eurasia under the Mongol Empire. For example, the Arab geographer Yaqut al-Rumi (1179–1229) observed that a contemporary merchant maintained warehouses in Gujarat, Khwarezm, and Bulghar on the Volga.<sup>15</sup> In a *waqfnāma* (a legal letter stipulating a charitable endowment) of 1326, Indians are mentioned alongside Turks, Tajiks and Mongols as visitors to a Bukharan *khānaqāh*, or Sufi hostel.<sup>16</sup> The same *waqfnāma* also mentions a place in Bukhara known as the ‘Hill of the Indians.’<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Ruy Gonzalez, the Spanish ambassador to the court of Timur, reported the presence of an Indian settlement in Samarqand, although he did not say whether it was comprised of merchants or of the soldiers and artisans (principally masons) forcibly relocated by Timur during his campaigns in India a few years earlier.<sup>18</sup> Whether or not there were Indian merchant communities in Samarqand active in Indo-Turanian transregional trade, Gonzalez also reported that Indian goods were readily available in

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(‘Nawbahār = *nava vihāra*’ = new monastery). Mentioned in the seventh-century travel account of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsüan-tsang, the Nawbahar temple measured some 100 by 100 *gaz* and was over 100 *gaz* high (one *gaz* is approximately equal to one meter). Its walls were richly embedded with semi-precious stones and in the ninth century the Arab geographer Ibn al-Faḥih reported that the building was topped with a large dome and surrounded by some 300 cells for temple servants. According to Hafiz Tanish, the chronicler for the Uzbek ruler ‘Abd Allah Khan II, even at the time of Firdawsi (c. 940–1020), Nawbahar drew pilgrims from all over Turan and Iran and was a well-known commercial center where fine silk and brocade were available. Cf. Hafiz Tanish bin Mir Muhammad Bukhari, *Sharaf-nāma-i-Shāhī*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 2207, Russian translation by M. A. Salakhedinova, 2 vols, Moscow: Nauka, 1983–89, II, p. 136 (fol. 178a–b); V. V. Bartol'd, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, translated by Svat Soucek and edited by C. E. Bosworth, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 14–15. According to Bartol'd, ‘in Hsüan-tsang’s time there were in Balkh up to one hundred Buddhist monasteries and up to three thousand monks.’

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Richard N. Frye, *Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement*, Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1997, pp. 71–72. Frye suggests that this individual was involved in the spice trade.

<sup>16</sup> Chekhovich, *Bukharskie dokumenty, XIV veka*, p. 91; Russian trans., p. 169; facs., p. 302.

<sup>17</sup> ‘تلّ هندوان,’ *ibid.*, p. 40; Russian trans., p. 120; facs., p. 262. It is important to note that the term ‘Hinduwan’ is used in historical literature from this period as a geographical, not religious, identification. It is therefore more accurately translated as ‘Indians’ rather than ‘Hindus.’

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Gonzalez, *Narrative of the Embassy*, p. 165; Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, pp. 80, 90.

Samarqand and that taxes on merchants coming to Samarqand from India provided Timur with a significant source of revenue.<sup>19</sup>

Epigraphic evidence further demonstrates that the presence of Indian settlements in Turan predates the early modern period. For example, documents regarding the property of the great Naqshbandi Sufi Sheikh, Khwaja Ahrar (1404–90), include numerous references to places and structures named ‘Hinduwan,’ including resthouses, canals, neighborhoods, and villages of various sizes.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that Indian settlements in the vicinity of Samarqand and Shahr-i Sabz (Timur’s birth-city, also known as Kish, located some sixty kilometers south of Samarqand) pre-date the fifteenth century. A similar phenomenon is encountered in Balkh, which is known to have shared such a close commercial relationship with India that the anonymous author of the tenth-century *Hudūd al-‘Ālam* referred to that city as ‘the emporium (*bar-kadha*) of Hindustan.’<sup>21</sup> The Arab geographers report that one of Balkh’s gates was named *bāb-i hinduwān* (‘Hinduwan Gate’) and the city’s major east-west thoroughfare was known as *saraq-i hinduwān* (‘Hinduwan Road’).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Balkh’s citadel, the most prominent structure in the inner city (the *madīna*, or *shahr-i darūn*), was known as *qal‘a-i hinduwān* (‘Hinduwan Fortress’), a name which was occasionally applied to the entire inner city.<sup>23</sup>

Several theories have been presented to explain the etymologies of these names. Considering the presence in Balkh of gates named *bāb-i hinduwān* and *bāb-i yahūdān* (‘Gate of the Jews’), and the presence of some two hundred Jewish families in the vicinity of the Gate of the Jews, Bartol’d concludes that, ‘clearly these appellations point to quarters inhabited by Indian and Jewish merchants.’<sup>24</sup> This interpretation is, however, contrary to that of the twelfth-century Arab geographer al-Sam‘ani (d. 1167), who suggested

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<sup>19</sup> Gonzalez, *Narrative of the Embassy*, pp. 122, 165. According to Gonzalez, ‘these “gates of iron” [a mountain pass north of Termez] produce a large revenue to the lord Timour Beg, for all merchants, who come from India pass this way.’ He also states that ‘in this city of Samarcand there is much merchandize, which comes every year from Cathay, India, Tartary, and many other parts.’

<sup>20</sup> Chekhovich, *Samarkandskie dokumenty, XV–XVI veka*, pp. 66, 72, 125, 244, 247–48. See also p. 383, note 36; p. 402, note 219; p. 403, note 233.

<sup>21</sup> Minorsky, tr., *Hudūd al-‘Ālam*, p. 108 (fol. 21a).

<sup>22</sup> Mukhtarov, ‘Balkh in the Late Middle Ages,’ pp. 27–28, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30; Bartol’d, *An Historical Geography*, pp. 13–14; *EIr*, s.v. ‘Balkh, History from the Arab Conquest to the Mongols.’ Even at the end of the nineteenth century, Balkh still boasted a Jewish quarter and an active Indian merchant diaspora community of some twenty families. Adamec, ed., *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, IV, p. 107.

that the etymology of *bāb-i hinduwān* should be traced not to the presence of a merchant community in its vicinity, but to the large number of Indian slaves settled in that quarter of the town.<sup>25</sup> Regarding the citadel, Hafiz Tanish repeated a legend traceable to Firdawsi's *Shāhnāma* that the *qal'a-i hinduwān* was named after the great number of Indian masons responsible for its construction, brought from India by the mythical Kai Qubad's vice-regent, Luhrasp.<sup>26</sup> Although the citadel's date of construction remains uncertain, it suggests a significant Indian presence of some sort in Balkh prior to the eleventh century, long before Timur's invading armies destroyed the *qal'a-i hinduwān* in 1369–70.<sup>27</sup>

### *B. The Emergence of the Diaspora*

Writing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the young Timurid prince Babur reported that some ten to twenty thousand Indian merchants annually traveled in caravans to Kabul where they met with other caravans coming from 'Kashghar, Ferghana, Turkistan, Samarqand, Bukhara, Balkh, Hisar, and Badakhshan.'<sup>28</sup> Near the end of that century, in 1584, Hafiz Tanish similarly noted the presence of several caravans in Peshawar which had originated in the Deccan, Gujarat, Multan and other regions of India, and were transporting goods destined for Khurasan, *Mā warā' al-nahr* and Turkestan.<sup>29</sup> Whether these merchants traveled on to Turan themselves or exchanged their commodities in the frontier markets of Afghanistan and returned to India, these accounts suggest a strong Indo-Turanian commercial relationship. They do not, however, demonstrate the presence of an Indian merchant diaspora in Turan.

In his work on the Indian communities in nineteenth-century Central Asia, G. L. Dmitriev suggests that the earliest information available regarding

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Mukhtarov, 'Balkh in the Late Middle Ages,' pp. 27–28.

<sup>26</sup> Hafiz Tanish, *Sharaf-nāma-i-Shāhī*, II, p. 136 (fol. 178a–b).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mukhtarov, 'Balkh in the Late Middle Ages,' p. 19; Bartol'd, *An Historical Geography*, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, we have no information regarding the specific commodities involved, all of which were lost in a fire while the caravans were waiting for the route to open. Hafiz Tanish, *Sharaf-nāma-i-Shāhī*, fol. 451a–b. Cited in Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, p. 47. According to the Indian chronicler Nizam ud-Din Ahmad, the fire occurred in 1586 and destroyed some one thousand camel loads of merchandise. *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, translated by B. De and Bains Prashahd, 3 vols, Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927–39, II, p. 602.

Indian merchant diaspora communities in Turan may be found in an anecdote in the *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī* regarding one of the great Uzbek rulers of the Bukharan Khanate, Imam Quli Khan (r. 1611–41), which specifically refers to the presence in Bukhara of an ‘Indian quarter.’<sup>30</sup> Whether the existence of an actual ‘Indian quarter’ of seventeenth-century Bukhara is factual or apocryphal, the earliest available evidence suggests that there were Indian merchant diaspora communities present in Turan already when Anthony Jenkinson visited Bukhara in 1558–59. Jenkinson stayed in Bukhara for just over three months, and he reported that an annual trade fair in that city drew Indians from as far away as the Ganges River and Bengal and that these merchants would generally stay in Turan for two or three years to conduct their trade.<sup>31</sup> It will be demonstrated below that these merchants were operating in concordance with the standard diaspora techniques of later years. Other sixteenth-century sources illuminate a highly active Indian merchant community in Samarqand and specifically Indian caravanserais in Tashkent and Bukhara.<sup>32</sup> The sixteenth-century development of diaspora communities in the territory of the Bukharan Khanate is further supported by a tradition of the Hindu community in the town of ‘Yang Arekh’ (Yangi Ariq) in northern Afghanistan, some fifteen kilometers east of Khulum (Tashkurgan), which suggests that their heritage in that city should be traced to the late sixteenth-century reign of the Bukharan ruler ‘Abd Allah Khan II who, they reported, encouraged many Hindus to settle there.<sup>33</sup> It is perhaps related to ‘Abd Allah’s efforts to

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<sup>30</sup> Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ p. 234; Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, fols 311b–14a. A complete translation of this anecdote can be found in chapter three. In the early nineteenth century, Alexander Burnes similarly observed that the Indian merchants in Bukhara lived in their own ‘quarter of the city.’ Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 285–86.

<sup>31</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 87 and note 1.

<sup>32</sup> The presence of an Indian caravanserai in Tashkent perhaps dates to that city’s sixteenth-century emergence as an important center of trade and production. Mukminova is the first scholar to have utilized the judicial documents in the *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq* to study the Indian community in Samarqand. Some of these documents have been reproduced, with Russian translations, in *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 54–61. See appendix one for English translations. Mukminova also mentions that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Samarqand there was a Christian quarter known as Tarsan, a Jewish quarter known as Musaviyan, and, in addition to Hindus, Samarqand boasted communities of Afghans, Gypsies, Khurasanians and other minorities. Cf. *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq*, fols 182a–b, 187b, 189a–b; Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 20, 36–37, 62–63, 112–14.

<sup>33</sup> W. Moorcroft and G. Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladak and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; by Mr. William Moorcroft and Mr. George Trebeck, from 1819 to 1825*, 2 vols, 1841, reprint,

attract Indian merchants and moneylenders that he had moneychanging bazaars built in Bukhara and Samarqand.<sup>34</sup>

The emergence and development of the Indian merchant diaspora in Turan in the years following the establishment of the Mughal Empire and the Bukharan Khanate is a product of the conjunction of several historical processes. These include increasingly active Eurasian commercial markets, the advancement of Indians' economic influence both inside and outside of the subcontinent, and a general intensification of Indo-Turanian cultural and commercial contacts.<sup>35</sup> Although one cannot make the argument that there was unobstructed, continual growth in the development of Indo-Turanian commercial bonds during this period, it was argued in the previous chapter that these commercial relations continued, in general, at an elevated level from the early sixteenth century well into the nineteenth century. This is related to increased state investment in improving and maintaining caravan routes initiated by Akbar, emperor of Mughal India (r. 1556–1605) and 'Abd Allah II, Bukharan Khan (r. 1561/1583–98), and also to the growing European control of maritime routes which pushed many indigenous traders to caravan routes.

The most notable result of this intensification was the growth and development in Turan of the Indian merchant diaspora itself. Thus, sixteenth-century sources mention Indian communities settled in the urban centers of Bukhara, Samarqand and Tashkent, as well as in certain cities in Iran. But, as the number of Indians willing to invest their time, effort and capital in commercial ventures throughout the diaspora increased, communities emerged in dozens of urban centers and villages throughout Turan and a number of other Eurasian regions.

### *Diaspora and Identity*

#### *A. The Multanis*

Stephen Dale's discussion of the Indian diaspora communities of Russia and Iran from 1600–1750 clearly establishes that these communities were multi-ethnic, but that a dominant position was held by Indian merchant-moneylenders

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New Delhi: Sagar, 1971, II, p. 415. It is ironic that, although 'Yangi Ariq' is Turkic for 'New Canal,' Moorcroft and Trebek reported that the area 'remains sterile through want of irrigation.'

<sup>34</sup> Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 119–20.

<sup>35</sup> The socio-economic circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Indian family firms will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

identified as ‘Multanis.’<sup>36</sup> Considering the Multanis’ similar preponderance in the Indian communities of Turan, it is necessary to revisit this issue. While the present study largely confirms many of Dale’s well-researched and sensible conclusions, it is informed by augmentary sources which significantly further our understanding of the ethnic composition and social dynamics of the Indian diaspora communities of Turan.

The identification of the majority part of the Indian merchant diaspora population as ‘Multanis’ reflects their connection to the northwest Indian region of Multan and its capital of the same name. Multan is today a dry and dusty, though prosperous, industrial town in the southern Punjab region of Pakistan. During the medieval and early modern eras, however, the term ‘Multan’ (or ‘Multanistan’) referred to a flourishing province situated between the Punjab (to the north) and Sind (to the south). As early as the eighth century B.C.E. the city of Multan was an important commercial center on India’s northwestern frontier and, in the centuries that followed, it was an attractive target for a number of invaders of India, among the more famous of whom were Darius I in the sixth century B.C.E. and Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.E. Prior to the Arab conquest of Sind in the eighth century C.E., the city was known by the designation ‘Mulastana,’ or the Indianized ‘Mulastanapura,’ in reference to the presence in that city of the Sūrya sun temple of the same name.<sup>37</sup> In the beginning of the eighth century, Muhammad bin Qasim captured the city in the name of the Umayyad Caliph Abu al-‘Abbas al-Walid I bin ‘Abd al-Malik, renamed it ‘Multan,’ and ushered in an era of Muslim control which lasted uninterruptedly for over a millennium.<sup>38</sup> Historical accounts attribute Multan’s early prosperity to monetary offerings to the city’s famous Temple of the Sun God, which is reputed to have drawn pilgrims from throughout India. In the years that followed the Arab invasions, however, Multan grew both as a commercial and cultural center, and the

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<sup>36</sup> See the essays ‘Multan and the Multanis’ and ‘The Multanis of Isfahan’ in Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 55–64, 66–75.

<sup>37</sup> For information on Mulastana, cf. Heinrich von Stietencron, *Indische Sonnenpriester, Sāmba und die Śākadvipiya-Brāhmana*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, pp. 227, 279; *EI2*, s.v. ‘Mūltan.’

<sup>38</sup> See Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, *History of Multan (From the early period to 1849 A.D.)*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1991, pp. 1–9. According to Durrani, the city dates at least as far back as 800 B.C.E. and since roughly that time has existed as a frontier town, sometimes under Iranian authority, sometimes under Indian. See also the essay on the historical background of Multan in Humaira Dasti, *Multan, a Province of the Mughal Empire (1525–1751)*, Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1998, pp. 1–16.

patronage of its wealthy Muslim rulers attracted migrants from throughout the Islamic world. Many of these individuals settled permanently in Multan and even today their tombs exist as a monument to the history of Islam in northwestern India.

In the medieval era, Multan prospered as an important outpost for the caravan traders who traversed Afghanistan, entering and leaving the subcontinent through the Khyber Pass (traveling through Kabul), the Gumal Pass (traveling through Ghazni, south of Kabul), and either the Bolan or Sanghar Passes (both of which connected Indian cities with Qandahar, the most important commercial center in southern Afghanistan).<sup>39</sup> Despite their seasonal and potentially dangerous nature, these trade routes facilitated caravan traffic between a number of India's northwestern urban centers and distant markets in Turan and Iran. The city of Multan historically benefited from its strategic location near these mountain passes and the confluence of the Ravi and Chenab rivers (the rivers have changed courses and currently join some forty kilometers north of the city). For many centuries, this facilitated the movement of goods down the Indus to the Arabian Sea ports of Lahori Bandar and Thatta. Furthermore, Multan was also an important agricultural center, renowned in the early modern era as today for its cotton production and textile industry.<sup>40</sup>

Following his visit to Multan in 915 the Arab geographer Mas'udi reported that Multan played a central role in India's overland trade with other regions of the Muslim world, including Khurasan, Zabulistan (an eastern region of modern Afghanistan which includes the city of Ghazna, the celebrated capital of the Ghaznavids) and Sijistan (also known as Sistan, a region in southwestern Afghanistan bordering Iran). This is confirmed by other medieval Arab geographers, including Istakhri, ibn Hawqal, and Maqdisi and also by the famous Turanian scientist and traveler al-Biruni.<sup>41</sup> By the thirteenth century, merchants and merchant communities associated with that region were known as 'Multanis' and, as these merchants directed their commercial enterprises northwestward in later centuries, the Multanis became increasingly associated with their commercial activities outside of the subcontinent. Thus, according to Irfan Habib, the eighteenth-century lexicon *Bahār-i 'Ajam* defines the term

<sup>39</sup> Refer to Map 2, 'Trade Routes,' p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> See Map 4B in Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, 1982, reprinted with corrections, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, pp. 166–89; Durrani, *History of Multan*, pp. 11–12; Humaira Dasti, 'Multan as a Centre of Trade and Commerce During the Mughal Period,' *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 38, III (July 1990), pp. 247–48.

‘Multani’ as ‘the general name for a Hindu in Central Asia and Persia’ because the Indians who lived in those regions originated in Multan.<sup>42</sup>

The significance of Multan and the Multanis grew dramatically under the dominance of the Turko-Afghan Delhi Sultanate (1206–1555). Multanis are first mentioned in association with large-scale merchant-moneylending in the historical work of the Indian author Zia al-Din Barani who, in the early fourteenth century, identified them as important financiers and transregional commercial agents for the Delhi Sultanate. Barani mentioned the Multanis in conjunction with *sūdāgars* (large-scale merchants), although he distinguishes between the two, and he elsewhere refers to the Multanis’ propensity toward moneylending, mentioning them in relation to *sāhs* (large-scale Hindu moneylenders).<sup>43</sup> According to Barani, in an effort to both lower and standardize the price at which textiles were sold in the Sultanate, the Delhi Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji (r. 1296–1316) issued a *farmān* (mandate) which required Multanis and *sūdāgars* to sell their textiles at fixed prices (the *sulṭāni* rate). Toward this end, ‘Ala’ al-Din advanced wealthy Multanis two million tanga (the currency in circulation at the time) from the treasury to subsidize their commerce in textiles throughout the Sultanate.<sup>44</sup> Considering the Khaljis’ Turko-Afghan origins, it is not unreasonable to conclude that, even in the fourteenth century, commercial ventures took many Multanis to the markets of Turan.<sup>45</sup> This is

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<sup>42</sup> See Irfan Habib, ‘Usury in Medieval India,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6, 4 (July 1964), pp. 406–7 and note 60.

<sup>43</sup> TFS, pp. 120, 164, 310–11.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Ala’ al-Din further dictated that all Hindu and Muslim *sūdāgars* must be registered at the office of the *dīwān-i riyāsat* (the royal accounts register) and given permits. This *farmān* clarified that the *sulṭāni* rate on textiles did not apply to special varieties not intended for the common populace, and it explicitly excluded gold-embroidered textiles (*zar-baft*), gold-painted textiles (*zar-nigār*), silken textiles, textiles from Tabriz and China, and a number of other varieties. Furthermore, merchants who dealt in such expensive textiles and desired to sell them above the *sulṭāni* rate were required to acquire a special permit to do so. TFS, pp. 310–12. See also Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 85 and note 11; L. C. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1929, p. 10; Dasti, ‘Multan as a Centre of Trade,’ p. 249. For a detailed discussion of ‘Ala’ al-Din’s financial policies, see Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 245–49.

<sup>45</sup> André Wink has cast some doubt on the Khaljis’ supposed Turkic ethnogenesis. Indeed, the name ‘Khalji’ itself is derived from the Khalaj, a region in Afghanistan encompassing both sides of the Helmand river. Although earlier Arab geographers liken the Khaljis to the Turks, Barani differentiates the two, suggesting that the Khaljis were likely to have been of Afghan heritage. Cf. Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, p. 70; TFS, pp. 175–76.



likely to have increased during Timur's fourteenth-century diversion of many Inner Asian caravan routes through Samarqand.<sup>46</sup>

It is important to reiterate that, although Indian merchants from Multan are likely to have frequented commercial centers in Turan already in the thirteenth century, there is no available evidence which suggests that, at that time, they had begun to establish diaspora communities there. Multanis are first identified as having settled and owned property in Bukhara in documents dating to 1559 and 1561, nearly contemporary with Anthony Jenkinson's 1558 report of merchants regularly coming to Bukhara from throughout north India and staying there for periods of two to three years.<sup>47</sup> Some twenty-five years later, in 1584, merchants from Multan were included among those unfortunate Turan-bound caravaneers who lost their goods in a warehouse fire in Peshawar.<sup>48</sup> Only a few years later, in 1589–90, several Multanis are mentioned in the record of a *qāḍī* (Islamic judge) in Samarqand in reference to their commercial activities in that city.<sup>49</sup> The Multanis' importance continued to grow, and seventeenth-century sources mention an astounding number of Multanis (among other Indian merchant groups) living in communities outside of India. In 1623 the Russian merchant F. A. Kotov referred to all of the Indian merchants in Isfahan, the capital of Safavid Iran, as Multanis, as did Raphaël du Mans some four decades later.<sup>50</sup> In the 1660s Jean Chardin reported that the total number of 'Multani Indians' residing in the Shah's territory was in excess of 20,000.<sup>51</sup> In 1684–85 Englebert Kaempfer estimated the population of Multanis in Isfahan alone to be 10,000.<sup>52</sup> A more detailed

<sup>46</sup> For a contemporary account describing Timur's commercialization of Samarqand, see Gonzalez, *Narrative of the Embassy*, pp. 165–66.

<sup>47</sup> Ivanov, *Khoziaistvo dzhuibarskikh sheikhov*, doc. 49, pp. 122–23, dating 20 Shauwāl 968 (3 July 1561) and docs 28 and 265, pp. 109–10, 247–48, dating 18 Shauwāl 966 (24 July 1559); Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 87 and note 1.

<sup>48</sup> Hafiz Tanish, *Sharaf-nāma-i-Shāhī*, fol. 451a–b. Cited in Nizamutdinov, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh otnoshenii*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fols 182a–b, 187b, 189a–b. See appendix one for English translations of these entries.

<sup>50</sup> P. M. Kemp, tr., *Russian Travellers to India and Persia [1624–1798]: Kotov, Yefremov, Danibegov*, Delhi: Jivan Prakashan, 1959, pp. 36–37; du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, pp. 180–81.

<sup>51</sup> John Chardin, *The Coronation of this Present King of Persia, Solyman the Third*, 1671, appended to *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indes...*, microfilm, London: Moses Pitt, 1686, p. 100.

<sup>52</sup> Engelbert Kaempfer, *Am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs 1684–1685*, edited by Walter Hinz, Tübingen, Basel: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1977, p. 204; see also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 57 and notes 50–52.

discussion of the magnitude and expanse of the diaspora is reserved for chapter three.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Indian merchants spread northward from Iran into the Caucasus and neighboring Russia, where they established a rather significant diaspora community in Astrakhan, the Caspian Sea port on the mouth of the Volga and a Russian possession since 1556. From the arrival in Astrakhan of the first Indian merchants they are documented as having maintained trade relations with other Indian communities in Daghestan (in the northeastern Caucasus), Shirwan (in southeastern Transcaucasia, modern Azerbaijan) and numerous cities on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea.<sup>53</sup> Although the earliest record of Indian merchants in Astrakhan identified specifically as ‘Multanis’ belongs to the 1670s, this should be attributed more to the infrequency of references to the Indian merchants’ region of origin or caste affiliation in the seventeenth-century Russian records than to any uniqueness in the ethnic composition of the Astrakhan community.<sup>54</sup> Based on information from the 1747 Russian census of Astrakhan’s Indian *dvor* (literally a ‘courtyard,’ although in form and function this structure resembled a standard caravanserai, especially following its reconstruction as a stone building in 1673), Dale demonstrates that nearly all of the Indian merchants in Astrakhan at that time came from the city of Multan or from villages in its vicinity.<sup>55</sup> This continued to be the case up to the turn of the century, even as the Astrakhan Indian community was dwindling in numbers. Peter Pallas begins his 1794 account of the Hindus’ religious practices in Astrakhan with the statement that, ‘during my stay at Astrakhan, I attended with pleasure at the idolatrous worship of those Indian merchants of Multanistan.’<sup>56</sup> Three years later Count Ivan Potocki noted that the Indian *dvor* was home to some sixty-seven individuals, identified as being ‘for the most part from Multan and...subjects of the Afghan ruler.’<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>54</sup> Antonova I, doc. 105, 1673, p. 185.

<sup>55</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 57. For this census, see Antonova II, doc. 132, 1747, pp. 265–69.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Simon Pallas, *Travels through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire, in the Years 1793 and 1794*, 2 vols, translated by Francis L. Bludgon, London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1802–3, I, p. 254. See appendix two for the complete account of Pallas’ experience with the Hindus in Astrakhan.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in David N. Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations, 1466–1917*, New York: Vantage, 1970, p. 95.

### *B. Religious and Community Identity in the Diaspora*

The designation ‘Multani’ identifies the geographical origin of the greater part of the early modern Indian diaspora, but says nothing of the diaspora’s ethnic composition in terms of merchants’ caste or even religious identity. This has been the source of some confusion in previous efforts to explain the ethnic complexities of the Indian diaspora communities. Because of the presence of Muslim Multanis in early references to the Indian communities in Turan, Muzaffar Alam has suggested that, during the Indian diaspora’s early stages of development in Turan, it was common for Hindu merchants to abandon their Indian identity, forgo Hinduism for Islam, marry into the local community, and permanently settle in Turan.<sup>58</sup> Contrary to this notion, both Hindu and Muslim merchants from Multan province were identified as ‘Multanis’ regardless of their religious or caste identity. Already in the fourteenth century, Barani noted that the chief *qāḍī* of Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji, a man identified as Hamid al-Din, was the son of a Multani moneylender.<sup>59</sup> Although sources disclose individual cases of conversion, these were the exception rather than the rule. It will be illustrated below that the Hindu merchants living in the diaspora are known to have gone to great lengths to keep their compatriots from renouncing their ancestral religion.

Available information suggests a significant Muslim Multani presence in sixteenth-century Turan. In fact, the earliest available accounts of Multanis in Turan are in reference to two individuals with the decidedly Muslim names of Maulana ‘Omar Multani bin Maulana ‘Abd al-Wahab Multani and Baba Multani bin ‘Ali, both of whom are identified in relation to their ownership of immovable property in Bukhara.<sup>60</sup> Some thirty years later, documents in the *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq* (‘Collection of Judicial Decrees’), the register of a *qāḍī* in Samarqand, illuminate the activities of a number of Muslim Multanis engaged in the textile

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<sup>58</sup> Alam suggests that Nanu Multani, ‘identified with his local wife, Sandal bint ‘Abd Allah,’ was a convert to Islam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 219 note 79; *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq*, fol. 186a. However, the fact that Nanu’s father’s name was Isma‘il (نانوی ملتانی بن اسماعیل) casts some doubt on his supposed conversion. It is possible, as Alam suggests to have been the case, that Nanu was identified not by his biological father, but by his Muslim in-laws. This does not, however, explain his adoption of the patronymic Isma‘il.

<sup>59</sup> TFS, pp. 298, 353.

<sup>60</sup> Ivanov, *Khoziaistvo dzhuibarskikh sheikhov*, doc. 49, pp. 122–23, dating from 20 Shawwāl 968 (3 July 1561) refers to a store owned by Maulana ‘Omar Multani bin Maulana ‘Abd al-Wahab Multani. Docs 28 and 265, pp. 109–10, 247–48, dating from 18 Shawwāl, 966 (24 July 1559) refer to the home of Baba Multani bin ‘Ali which was located next to the homes of non-Indians.

industry in Samarqand. The leader of this organization was an individual identified as Janab Darya Khan Multani bin Janab Sheikh Sa'adi Multani.<sup>61</sup> Darya Khan is mentioned in eight entries in the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, seven of which directly relate to his involvement in the textile industry, and his business associates almost exclusively include people who shared his Indo-Islamic, possibly Afghan, heritage. Examples include Ustad Rajab Kazar Multani bin Ustad Hussain Multani, Mankui Kazar Multani, Ustad Gujar Multani bin Khwaja Ya'qub, and Mullah Hussain bin Paina Multani.<sup>62</sup> Other entries in the same source refer to individuals identified as Allahdad bin Jahan Shah Multani and Khwaja Ibrahim Multani bin 'Abd Allah Multani.<sup>63</sup> References to Muslim Multanis are not restricted to the Indian diaspora communities in Turan. In 1617 Pietro Della Valle observed that a portion of the Multani population of Isfahan was Muslim, an observation repeated by the Russian merchant Fedot Kotov in 1623 and Adam Olearius in 1637.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 61–68; Gopal, 'Indians in Central Asia,' pp. 11–13; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 63–64, 75–76.

<sup>62</sup> استاد رجب کازر ملتانی بن استاد حسین ملتانی، منکوی کازر ملتانی، استاد کجر ملتانی بن خواجه یعقوب، ملا حسین بن پینا ملتانی: *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fols 182b, 187b, 189a–b. See appendix one for translations of these documents. Based on his patronym, the cloth-printer identified as Lahori Chitgar bin Lalu was most likely a Hindu. 'Gujar' was the name of a predominantly pastoral Panjabi tribe subject to a policy of sedentarization by emperor Akbar in the late sixteenth century. Singh, *Region and Empire*, pp. 112, 132 and note 175, 259, 265, 291 and note 55. Babur came across members of this tribe, which he identified as Gujūr, while passing through southeastern Afghanistan, *Babur-nama*, p. 250 and note 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fols 2a–b, 192a. Alam also suggests that Multanis had to take legal recourse in the local *qāḍī*. In addition to establishing an Indo-Muslim commercial presence in the *muḥallas* (neighborhoods) of sixteenth-century Turan, however, the preponderance of references to Muslim Indians in Turanian legal records seems to suggest that, unlike their non-Muslim counterparts, Muslim Indians in Turan were expected to conduct their business within the parameters allowed by the *sharī'at* as interpreted by the local legal administration. The social distinction between non-Muslim Indians on one hand, and Muslims on the other, should not be interpreted to suggest that these communities did not interrelate. For example, commercialists such as Darya Khan are known to have employed non-Muslim Indian artisans, such as 'Lahori Chitgar bin Lalu.' See also the case of the Muslim Indian Hamid who had partnerships with two Hindus, Ardas and Banda Minkab, in Astrakhan and Moscow. Antonova I, doc. 141, 1675, pp. 241–48.

<sup>64</sup> Pietro Della Valle, *I Viaggi Di Pietro Della Valle: Lettere Dalla Persia*, Il Nuovo Ramusio, vol. 6, edited by F. Gaeta and L. Lockhart, Rome: Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, 1972, p. 39; Kemp, tr., *Russian Travellers to India and Persia*, p. 36; Adam Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors Sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy, and the King of Persia...*, translated by John Davies, London, 1667, p. 299.

A significant number of these Muslim Multanis were most likely Indo-Afghan merchants belonging to the largely nomadic tribe known as the Lohani (Lohana, Luharni).<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that there is some confusion regarding the Lohani ethnicity. While some authors refer to the Lohani as a Muslim Afghan Powinda tribe, others recognize the designation as a reference to a sedentary Hindu merchant caste, or conglomeration of castes, of Sind engaged in Indo-Turanian commerce.<sup>66</sup> Some insight into this issue can be found in the *Chachnamah*, a source which purports to be a Persian translation of an eighth-century Arabic manuscript detailing the Arab conquests of Sind under Muhammad bin Qasim, written in 1216–17 by ‘Ali bin Muhammad Kufi, originally a resident of Kufa, in Iraq, but subsequently a resident of Uch, located roughly one hundred kilometers south of Multan.<sup>67</sup> This source refers to what appears to have been a rather sizeable confederation of unsettled tribes in northwestern India known as the ‘Lūhāna.’<sup>68</sup> It remains unclear how sizeable the confederation was at that time, although, according to Richard Burton, in the mid-nineteenth century the Lohani of Sind included at least fifty sub-groups.<sup>69</sup> While the subject certainly merits further investigation, it seems reasonable to suggest that the Lohani underwent a process of bifurcation since the eighth-century Arab conquests. That is to say that, over the centuries, some of the Lohani sub-groups in Sind settled, adopted a commercial economy, and maintained a version of their ancestral religion, while others continued

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, ‘The Role of the Pathans During the Sikh Period in Multan (1818–1849),’ *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 38, II (April 1990), p. 103; Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, pp. 166–69; idem, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 115–19; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 62–64.

<sup>66</sup> See especially the excellent discussions on the generalized use of the term Lohani (Lohana) in reference to Hindu merchants of Sind in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 46–47, 251–52. See also R. V. Russell, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, 4 vols, 1916, reprint, Oosterhout, N. B., The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1969, II, pp. 441–42; Richard Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, London: William H. Allen and Co., 1851, pp. 310–17; V. S. Pandey, *Himalayan Trade Routes to Central Asia*, Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1992, pp. 129–30; Rajat Kanta Ray, ‘The Bazar: Indigenous Sector of the Indian Economy,’ in Dwijendra Tripathi, ed., *Business Communities of India: A Historical Perspective*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1984, p. 244.

<sup>67</sup> Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, tr., *The Chachnamah, an Ancient History of Sind*, 1900, reprint, Delhi, 1979.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37, 170–71.

<sup>69</sup> Burton, *Sindh*, p. 315. For a discussion of this frontier merchant caste and some of its atypical characteristics in relation to mainstream Hindu traditions, see Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 46–49.

their pastoral economy and eventually became associated with Islam.

Regardless of such conjecture, it is clear that, by the sixteenth century, the Lohani Powindas (a term referring to Afghan nomadic communities involved in mediatory commerce) had for centuries participated in India's northwestern transregional trade by incorporating commercial ventures and the transportation of bulk commodities in their annual migrations between north India and Turan.<sup>70</sup> In the nineteenth century, the British traveler G. T. Vigne reported that, according to Lohani tradition, they had been active in the transit trade between Hindustan and Kabul since the Ghaznavids granted them the territory of Deraband in the eleventh century and that, since the time of Babur, Lohani caravans had been engaged in the transportation of various commodities between Bukhara, the major Afghan commercial centers, and 'Hyderabad, Calcutta, Benaras, Delhi, Jypore, and the other large cities of India.'<sup>71</sup> Following a raid on a group of Afghan traders crossing the routes between India and Turan, Babur himself refers to the recently deceased Khwaja Khizr Lohani as 'a well-known and respected Afghan merchant,' and it is likely that many of the 10,000 to 20,000 Indian merchants mentioned by Babur as annually traveling to Kabul were Lohani Powindas.<sup>72</sup> The identification of the leader of the above-mentioned Indian commercial organization in Samarqand by the title 'Darya Khan' further suggests that at least some of the Muslim Multanis in Turan were Lohani. This designation appears in reference to Afghan Lohani in historic literature dating at least as far back as the fifteenth-century Darya Khan Luharni (Lohani), an important official in the Afghan Lodi Sultanate.<sup>73</sup> Centuries later, during a visit to Multan in the 1830s, Mohan Lal, the Kashmiri-born British intelligence agent and companion of the British explorer and agent Alexander Burnes, came across a merchant involved in India's northwestern transregional trade also identified as Darya Khan Lohani. Mohan Lal reported that Lohani and Shikarpuri merchants (the latter identity will be discussed below) dominated the mediatory trade between Bukhara and Multan and that, were it not for these merchants, Multan 'would not become the rival of the markets of Hindusthan, the Panjab, and Khorasan.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For further discussion of nomadic mediatory trade, with references to Afghan Powindas involved in Indo-Turanian trade, see Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 64–66.

<sup>71</sup> G. T. Vigne, *A Personal Narrative of a Visit to Ghuzni, Kabul, and Afghanistan...*, 1840, reprint, Lahore, Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1982, pp. 54, 68–70.

<sup>72</sup> Babur, *Babur-nama*, pp. 202, 235. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 62–65.

<sup>73</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 62–64.

<sup>74</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 391–96.

Focusing his attention on Afghanistan, Alexander Burnes also recognized that the Lohani dominated the movement of goods in and out of India's northwest frontier. According to Burnes:

the merchants, who carry on the trade from India to Cabool, are principally Lohanee Afghans, whose country lies westward of the river, between Dera Ismael Khan and Cabool; and they now make an annual journey to and from these places, bringing with them the productions of Afghanistan, and taking back those of India and Europe. Being a pastoral race, they are their own carriers; and being brave, they require no protection but their own arms... Lohanees pass into India, and even to Calcutta and Bombay.<sup>75</sup>

Indo-Afghan Powinda tribesmen clearly played an important role in Indo-Turanian transregional trade, although this was generally limited to the buying, selling and transportation of goods.<sup>76</sup> In 1751, for example, a Tatar from Astrakhan visited Khiva, Bukhara and Balkh and reported that Afghan Powindas were active in the transportation of bulk goods to these areas from as far away as Calcutta.<sup>77</sup> However, neither Lohani Afghans, nor any other Muslim group, comprised an ethnic component of primary importance in the diaspora. The vast majority of the diaspora was comprised of Hindu merchants who belonged to any of a number of mercantile-oriented castes engaged in trans-regional trade, brokering or moneylending, and who, in some accounts, are collectively referred to as 'Banias' (or 'Banians'), a designation derived from the Sanskrit word *vāṇijya*, meaning 'trade.'<sup>78</sup>

Although in some nineteenth-century literature the term 'Bania' refers to a specific caste affiliation, in earlier literature it is used more generally to refer to individuals, or groups of individuals, whose economic activities focused on commerce.<sup>79</sup> Bania communities operated trading networks from several

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Burnes, *Cabool: A Personal Narrative of a Journey to, and Residence in that City, in the Years 1836, 7, and 8...*, 2d ed., London: John Murray, 1843, appendix I, pp. 284–85. See also Amalendu Guha, ed., *Central Asia: Movement of Peoples and Ideas from Times Prehistoric to Modern*, Delhi: Vikas, 1970, p. 258.

<sup>76</sup> According to the report of Faujdar Khan, Nawab of Dera Ismail Khan, even as late as the 1860s Powinda tribesmen were actively involved in the movement of goods and money between India and Turan, although much of their commerce was conducted through 'commissioned agents' in Multan and Karachi. Montgomery, *Report on the Trade*, p. 43.

<sup>77</sup> A. Sh. Shamansurova, 'Noviie dannii po istorii Afganistana (Orenburgskii Gosudarstvennii Arkhiv),' in M. G. Nikulin, ed., *Ocherki po novoi istorii Afganistana*, Tashkent: Fan, 1966, pp. 111–12.

<sup>78</sup> Denzil Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes...*, 1883, reprint, Lahore: Government Printing, Punjab, 1916, p. 242. Russell traces the etymology to the Sanskrit word *vanija*, 'a merchant,' *Tribes and Castes*, II, p. 112.

<sup>79</sup> In the Central Provinces alone, Russell identified twenty 'sub-castes' of Banias, both

commercial centers throughout Gujarat, Sind, Punjab, Rajasthan and the Indus basin, but Multan was the primary focal point in their northwestern trade. Thus, in the 1660s the French traveler and geographer Jean de Thevenot observed that, although the political elite and the majority of the population of Multan were Muslims, ‘it contains a great many Banians also, for Multan is their chief rendezvous for trading into Persia, where they do what the Jews do in other places; but they are far more cunning, for nothing escapes them, and they let slip no occasion of getting the penny, how small soever it be.’<sup>80</sup> In 1676 Tavernier similarly reported that ‘Multân is the place from whence all the Banians migrate who come to trade in Persia, where they follow the same occupation as the Jews...and they surpass them in their usury.’<sup>81</sup> As noted by Dale, at this early date Europeans were still ill-informed about the complexities of the Indian social system and their widespread use of the occupational term ‘Bania’ to refer to the members of the Indian diaspora suggests little more than that the individuals in question were probably non-Muslim Indian merchants.

Thevenot provides a rare exception to this rule in his careful observation that ‘at Multan there is another sort of gentiles whom they call Catry. That town is properly their country and from thence they spread all over the Indies.’<sup>82</sup> Here, Thevenot is referring to the Hindu Khatri caste, long considered to be among the most important merchant communities of early modern India. Because of the Khatri’s increasingly important role in India’s transregional trade under the Mughal Empire, partly a result of Mughal patronage, it seems

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Hindu and Jain, the most important being Agarwala, Oswal and Parwar. Despite Russell’s identification of the Banias as a distinct caste, he acknowledges the possibility that it is ‘merely an occupational term applied to a number of distinct castes.’ See Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, II, pp. 111–61. According to Ibbetson, ‘the word Banya is generally used for “shop-keeper” all over the Panjáb, not excepting even the frontier where Kirár is the more usual term; and it is just possible that in some cases other mercantile castes have been included in this figure... It is sometimes said that Banya is no true caste at all, but merely an occupation term equivalent to “shop-keeper,” and that the great divisions of the Banyas, the Aggarwáls, Oswáls, and the like, really occupy the position of castes; and this is in a sense true.’ Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, pp. 242–43. Timberg also argues it to have been much more likely that, based on their similar occupations, the term was applied to a variety of castes, the members of which, over time, acknowledged a common identity as Banias despite their various endogamous caste affiliations. Thomas Timberg, *The Marwaris: From Traders to Industrialists*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1978, pp. 148–60.

<sup>80</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 77.

<sup>81</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, I, p. 74. For the original citation, see idem, *Les six voyages*, I, p. 62. This is echoed in Della Valle, *I Viaggi Di Pietro Della Valle*, p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 78.



reasonable to suggest that many of the Multanis and Banias referred to in the historical sources can more specifically be categorized as Khattris.<sup>83</sup> Dale locates Khattris in Astrakhan during the late seventeenth century and, in the 1830s, the British imperial proconsul and past governor of Bombay, Mountstuart Elphinstone, was informed that Khattris were still highly involved in northwest India's transregional commerce and that they maintained communities throughout Afghanistan and as far away as Astrakhan.<sup>84</sup> In the early twentieth century the economic historian L. C. Jain noted that the Aroras, a sub-caste of the Khattris, were known to 'control the finance of much of the commerce of India with central Asia, Afghanistan and Tibet.'<sup>85</sup> The British ethnographer Ibbetson likewise observed that the Arora-Khattris were centered in Multan and Derajat and were involved in business throughout Afghanistan and Turan.<sup>86</sup> George Campbell's mid-nineteenth-century *Ethnology of India* provides an even more impressive image of the Khattris' role in the diaspora:

besides monopolising the trade of the Punjab and the greater part of Afghanistan, and doing a good deal beyond those limits, they [Khattris] are in the Punjab the chief civil administrators, and have almost all literate work in their hands... Even under Mahomedan rulers in the west they have risen to high administrative posts... No village can get on without the Khatri who keeps the accounts, does the banking business, and buys and sells the grain. They seem, too, to get on with the people better than most traders and usurers of this kind... I do not know the exact limits of Khatri occupation to the West, but certainly in all Eastern Afghanistan they seem to be just as much a part of the established community as they are in the Punjab. They find their way far into Central Asia... They are the only Hindus known in Central Asia. In the Punjab they are so numerous that they cannot all be rich and mercantile; and many of them hold land, cultivate, take service, and follow various avocations.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Muzaffar Alam argues that 'the extraordinary strong Khatri participation in this trade, it should be noted, seems to have coincided with the rise and growth of Mughal power in India.' Alam 'Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,' p. 211. The best-known example of Khattris rising to high status under Mughal patronage is that of Todar Mal, Emperor Akbar's Hindu minister of finance.

<sup>84</sup> Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and its Dependencies, in Persia, Tartary, and India...*, 3d ed., 2 vols, London: Richard Bentley, 1839, I, pp. 413–14 and note. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 58–59 and notes 59, 64.

<sup>85</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, pp. 250–52. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 65–66.

<sup>87</sup> Cited in Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, III, pp. 458–59. This is confirmed by Elphinstone who reported that, in Afghanistan, Hindus 'are often employed about the court in offices connected with money or accounts; the duty of steward and treasurer about every great man, is exercised either by a Hindoo or a Persian. There have even been Hindoo governors of provinces, and at this moment the great government of Peshawer has been put into the hands of a person of that religion.' Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 414–15.

It is clear that Khatriis were an important element in the ethnic composition of the diaspora. Regardless of Campbell's claim, however, Khatriis were not the only Hindu community to establish themselves in Central Asia. Despite their participation in occupations similar to those of the Bania communities, Khatriis were considered to be Kshatriyas, the second-highest *varna* in the Indian social hierarchy, below only the Brahmans. Banias, however, were generally associated with either the Vaishya (merchant) class, the third-highest position, or with communities affiliated with the commercially oriented Jain religion.

Whereas Banias and Khatriis were both commonly identified as 'Multanis' because of their commercial centralization in that city, another component of the Indian diaspora was identified as 'Marwari.' This designation indicates these merchants' relationship to the urban centers of Marwar and, considering the predominance of Jain merchants in that region, suggests that many of the 'Marwari' merchants are likely to have been adherents to the Jain religion.<sup>88</sup> The Marwaris were probably active in the diaspora from the late seventeenth century, prior to which Marwari family firms seem to have restricted their commercial interests to domestic markets. They began to appear in Astrakhan only from the early eighteenth century and probably arrived in Turan at roughly the same time. It is interesting that the classic paradigm of the Indian family firm, the *jagatseth* ('world banker') house, originated in Marwar and operated under the direction of the acknowledged leader of the Jain Oswal caste. This firm was founded in the second half of the seventeenth century

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, III, pp. 456–63; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 58; G. D. Sharma, 'The Marwaris: Economic Foundations of an Indian Capitalist Class,' in Tripathi, ed., *Business Communities of India*, pp. 185–207. Sharma notes that 'the term Marwari dates back to the establishment of Marwari business houses outside Rajasthan, particularly in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, since the time of Akbar and Shahjahan.' It has been argued by Max Weber that, due to the strict restrictions of their faith, Jain merchants' commercial activities focused on banking and moneylending and they rarely ventured far from their home. Dale, however, locates members of the Marwari Jain Oswal caste in seventeenth-century Astrakhan. Furthermore, Sharma and L. C. Jain both note that business ventures did, in fact, frequently take Jain merchants to distant markets. Thus, although L. C. Jain notes that the designation 'Marwari' could refer to either Jains or Hindus, specifically Vaishnavites, at least some of the Marwaris who constituted a minority of the population of the Indian merchant diaspora were most certainly adherents to the Jain religion. Cf. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–86; Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992, p. 200; Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 29–30; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 58–60. See also the recent dissertation on the Marwaris by Anne Hardgrove, 'Community as Public Culture in Modern India: The Marwaris in Calcutta c. 1897–1997,' Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1999.

and, following its move to Bengal (first to Murshidabad and then to Dhaka), rose to commercial prominence at the beginning of the eighteenth century, roughly at the same time that an individual identified as ‘Marwar Baraev’ (‘Great Marwari’), appears in archival documents from Astrakhan.<sup>89</sup> This individual was most certainly the leader of the Jain merchants in that diaspora community at the time, a conclusion equally applicable to another individual similarly identified as ‘Marwari Baraev’ who lived in Khojand, in the Farghana Valley, some 150 years later.<sup>90</sup>

Marwaris in Astrakhan are known to have participated in diverse economic activities, focusing especially on moneylending ventures and long-distance trade. As was common among all of the Indian merchants in Astrakhan, much of their transregional trade was conducted by means of *commenda* partnerships (various types of trade agreements between partners supplying capital investment and labor) and other arrangements with their colleagues, Marwaris and others.<sup>91</sup> Their partners were most commonly located in a number of Iranian cities dotting the shores of the Caspian Sea, situated on the trade routes connecting Astrakhan with Bandar ‘Abbas (also referred to in historical sources as Gombroon). The presence of Marwaris in Iran is further suggested by George Forster’s late eighteenth-century statement that, in the Iranian town Tarshish (Turshiz/Kashmar, located some 300 kilometers south-

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<sup>89</sup> Antonova II, doc. 35, 1721, pp. 56–57; doc. 40, 1724, pp. 61–62; doc. 42, 1725, pp. 65–67; doc. 49, 1727, pp. 82–84; doc. 57, 1730, pp. 113–14; doc. 58, 1731, pp. 114–15; doc. 69, 1735, pp. 128–33; doc. 72, 1735, p. 135. See also Gopal, *Indians in Russia*, pp. 7–8; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 59–60 and note 65.

<sup>90</sup> Although Marwaris were likely to have been present in Turan long before then, the earliest documents available specifically referring to Marwaris in Turan date to the nineteenth century. CSHARU, fond I–1, opis’ 11, delo 200, lists 1–14ob. In these documents, dating from 29 May 1881 to 11 December 1884, are mentioned Nukra Marwari, Marwari Parieva (Baraev), Marwari Mutti and Marwari Naru.

<sup>91</sup> It should be noted that the term ‘*commenda*’ refers to such business partnerships as practiced in medieval Europe. Recently, Murat Çizakça, principally drawing on materials from the Ottoman archives, has demonstrated that medieval European merchants learned such techniques from their Muslim counterparts, who generally referred to the partnership system as ‘*mudaraba*,’ from the word *mudarib* (Turk.), meaning ‘an agent’ (Ar., *muḍāraba*). For further discussion of the variety of Islamic commercial partnerships, cf. the important studies of Çizakça, *A Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships: The Islamic World and Europe, with Specific Reference to the Ottoman Archives*, volume 8 of *The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage: Politics, Society and Economy*, edited by Suraiya Faroqhi and Halil İnalcık, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, pp. 4–62; Abraham Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 170–248; idem, ‘Bankers with Banks: Commerce, Banking, and Society in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages,’ in *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 255–74.

west of Meshed), he came across approximately one hundred families of Indian merchants identified as being from Multan and Jaisalmer, the latter of which was an important Marwari Jain outpost in western Rajasthan.<sup>92</sup> Devendra Kaushik's research into nineteenth-century Russian colonial documents confirms the presence of a significant number of Marwari merchants in the Indian diaspora communities in Turan. Thus, in addition to Hindus and Muslims, the Indian diaspora in Turan is likely to have included Jain communities, although it must be acknowledged that this is to some degree conjectural as the Marwari merchants' religion is not specifically mentioned in Kaushik's sources.<sup>93</sup>

Archival records from the Russian colonial period demonstrate even greater ethnic diversity among the diaspora communities in Turan. Based on research in the Russian colonial archives and the Office of the Bukharan Khushbegi, the Russian historian G. L. Dmitriev suggests that the majority of the Indians present in Turan in the colonial period were Bhatias, a merchant caste associated with Sind, especially the area around Multan, since the seventh century.<sup>94</sup> In the nineteenth century, many Bhatia caste members were located in the northwest frontier town of Dera Ismail Khan and were known to have traveled to Kabul, Bukhara and even as far as Arabia.<sup>95</sup> Their centralization in Dera Ismail Khan is most certainly related to that city's position as the renowned winter headquarters of Powinda nomads and its convenient location on the west bank of the Indus river, approximately 100 kilometers northwest of Multan, near the Gumal Pass.

The presence in the diaspora of adherents to another Indian religion, Sikh-

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<sup>92</sup> George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, 2 vols, 1808, reprint, Delhi, 1970, II, p. 186.

<sup>93</sup> Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, p. 31.

<sup>94</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 235. Ibbetson reported that in the nineteenth century the Bhatias were numerous in Sind and Gujarat, but that their region of origin appears to have been Bhatner, Jaisalmer and Rajputana. Wink also notes that, 'there was a close connection between the Bhattīs or Bhātīs of Māda (modern Jaisalmer district) and the Caulukyās of Gujarat in the mid-twelfth century.' In an effort to locate the Bhatia homeland, Anthony O'Brien establishes the presence of the Bhatia as a community 'in or adjacent to Sindh from the 7th century onwards.' This is supported by a reference in the *Chachnamah* to the king of Batiah in eighth-century Sind. According to Ibbetson, they were distinctly below the Khattris in social status but, like the Khattris, the Bhatia had a long tradition of maintaining widely dispersed commercial communities to the northwest. Cf. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, p. 250; Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 231–32; Anthony O'Brien, *The Ancient Chronology of Thar: The Bhāttika, Laukika and Sindh Eras*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 30–58; Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, tr., *The Chachnamah*, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, I, p. 350.

ism, is not surprising considering that a significant percentage of the Sikh community has roots in the Khatri caste and, like the Khatri, the Sikh tradition places a great emphasis on commerce. The participation of Sikh communities in Indo-Turanian trade was facilitated by the location of the Sikh capital at Amritsar, a Punjabi city situated some thirty kilometers east of Lahore on trade routes leading through the Khyber Pass to Turan. Also known to have been active in Indo-Turanian commerce are Muslim Khojas and members of the mixed Hindu-Muslim trading caste from Gujarat, the Bohras.<sup>96</sup> Already in the eleventh century, there was a significant number of converts to the Ismā'īlī sect of Shī'a Islam in Gujarat, and these were the progenitors of the modern Ismā'īlī Bohra community.<sup>97</sup> However, the Bohra communities in the Punjab, those most likely to be involved in Indo-Turanian commerce in the early modern and colonial eras, were predominantly, if not entirely, Hindu. Another Muslim commercial caste engaged in Indo-Turanian commerce were the Parachas, a name derived from the word *pārcha*, Persian for 'cloth,' the principal commodity in which they traded.<sup>98</sup> According to Ibbetson, in the nineteenth century, Paracha communities inhabited the area around the northwestern town of Rawalpindi, and there were also large communities further to the northwest in Atak (Attock) and Peshawar, from where they conducted 'an extensive trade with the cities of Central Asia, chiefly in cloth, silk, indigo, and tea.'<sup>99</sup> Nineteenth-century Russian archival documents record that Indian merchants in Turan originated from throughout northwestern India, including Multan, Shikarpur, Peshawar, Lahore, Haripur, Ludhiana, Amritsar, and the urban centers of Kashmir, as well as from the more distant cities of Delhi, Allahabad, and Bombay.<sup>100</sup>

It is difficult to establish definitively for how long each of these communities

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<sup>96</sup> CSHARU, fond I-1, opis' 31, delo 677, lists 9-10; opis' 32, delo 280, list 473. Ibbetson identified the Khojas, who resided primarily in Multan, as 'any Hindu trader converted to Mahomedanism' and therefore the only Muslim Khatri. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, pp. 245, 248, 252-53. For further discussion of the Bohras, see also Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, II, pp. 345-50.

<sup>97</sup> Wink suggests that this was likely to have been a result of the Fatimids' efforts to spread Ismā'īlī Islam in India and the continued interaction of the Bohras with Ismā'īlī Yemenites. Conversely, in 1175 Muhammad Ghuri suppressed the spread of Ismā'īlī Islam in Multan. Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, p. 217.

<sup>98</sup> Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, pp. 252-54.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> CSHARU, fond I-1, opis' 32, delo 280, lists 1-14ob; Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 234. According to Ibbetson, Ludhiana, east of Amritsar, was the Khatri's primary center of activity in nineteenth-century Punjab. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, p. 248.

was involved in the Indian diaspora in Turan, but Khattris and Banias, especially of the Bhatia, Bohra and Lohani castes, are known to have emerged as great merchant communities prior to the seventeenth century and probably participated in the diaspora from its inception.<sup>101</sup> The Marwari Oswals (almost certainly adherents to the Jain religion) seem to have achieved great commercial prosperity during the seventeenth century and to have spread throughout the diaspora in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>102</sup> References to Sikhs do not appear in the sources until the nineteenth century. During the early modern and colonial periods, agents of these various communities dispersed throughout the subcontinent and beyond, establishing an impressive trade and moneylending network that extended across Afghanistan, Turan, and eventually reached even beyond the Arabian Peninsula to East Africa in the west, and to Southeast Asia and China in the east.<sup>103</sup>

### *C. From Multan to Shikarpur*

During the late eighteenth century, the identification of the majority of the Indian diaspora merchants changed from ‘Multani’ to ‘Shikarpuri.’ It has been suggested that the designations ‘Multani’ and ‘Shikarpuri’ referred to Indian merchants who operated two distinct merchant networks.<sup>104</sup> A contrary thesis, put forth here, argues that the merchants referred to by the designations in question were of the same extraction. The change in terminology was precipitated not by the emergence of one diaspora over the ashes of another, but by a combination of factors which contributed to the decline of Multan as the financial capital of northwest India and the corresponding rise of Shikarpur as, for reasons to be detailed below, many of the Multani firms relocated their centers of operation to that city.

Multan (Mulastana) was an important frontier commercial center already during the ancient period, and this importance increased under Delhi Sultanate

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<sup>101</sup> As noted above, the Bhatias were established in Sind even prior to the thirteenth century, when many of them converted to Islam under Firuz Shah Tughluq. Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 231–32. According to Russell, however, in the nineteenth century, the Bhatia merchants in the diaspora were exclusively Hindu, Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, I, p. 350. Markovits suggests that the term ‘Lohana’ was actually used as a sort of general designation for all merchants of Sind, except Khattris and Bhatias. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 251.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Sharma, ‘The Marwaris,’ pp. 186–87; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 60 and note 68.

<sup>103</sup> See Ray, ‘The Bazar,’ pp. 252–54.

<sup>104</sup> See Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 29–30, 37–38, 60–69.

and Mughal patronage. The province of Multan was frequently granted to Delhi Sultanate and Mughal heirs apparent, a position indicative of its political, strategic and economic stature.<sup>105</sup> During the Mughal era, Multan was also a mint town and an important center of agricultural production and manufacturing. Cotton textiles enjoyed an especially prominent position among the region's manufactures, with the outlying towns and villages supplying the Multani commercial houses with finished materials destined to be exported to any of a number of distant markets.

Even during the Mughal era, however, Multan's prosperity was occasionally threatened. The city's importance as a frontier trading center somewhat diminished during the periods when the Mughals occupied Qandahar, a coveted military outpost and the most important commercial center on the Indo-Iranian caravan routes. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the commercial advantage of Multan was further challenged by the silting and shifting of the Indus, a development which denied merchants access to the important riverine routes of commerce customarily used to transport merchandise from Multan to the Arabian Sea ports of Thatta and Lahori Bandar.<sup>106</sup> Qandahar, however, suffered from a chronically turbulent political climate. Throughout the Mughal era, Qandahar was the object of a nearly perpetual contest between the Mughals and the Safavids, and this resulted in the city being placed under siege some fifteen times and changing hands on a dozen separate occasions.<sup>107</sup> Thus, even during the Mughals' extended periods of occupation of Qandahar (such as 1595–1622 and 1638–49), Indian family firms chose to keep their central offices in the more predictable markets of Multan.

Multan continued to function as northwest India's primary commercial center throughout most of the eighteenth century, remaining largely unaffected even by Nadir Shah's 1739 invasion of the Mughal Empire. As the Mughals weakened and lost their ability to maintain control of their territories, however, the protracted process of Mughal decentralization sent the city into a century-long period of crisis. Between 1749 and 1849 Multan suffered from a series of Afghan, Maratha, Sikh and finally British invasions and occupations, reducing it from a position among the greatest early modern international money

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<sup>105</sup> The tradition of granting Multan to the heir apparent was common among the Delhi Sultans and Mughal emperors alike. In addition to its commercial value, these rulers attached a great strategic value to the province in terms of protecting their territory in India from foreign invasions. See Dasti, *Multan, a Province of the Mughal Empire*, passim.

<sup>106</sup> Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, p. 62. For further discussion, see Singh, *Region and Empire*, pp. 187–91.

<sup>107</sup> Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, p. 14.

markets and commercial centers to a regional trading town.<sup>108</sup>

As the commercial climate in Multan worsened during these invasions, many Multani financial houses chose to relocate to Shikarpur, a smaller city in the neighboring province of Sind. Of paramount importance to this decision was Shikarpur's location in Durrani Afghan territory and the need of the Multani financial houses to maintain their close relationship with the Durrani ruling elite and Afghan Powinda nomads, the primary carriers of bulk commodities from India to Turan. Compared to Multan, Shikarpur was a young urban center of minor importance (it was founded circa 1616 as a hunting retreat). The merchant households, however, found the city's location agreeable as it was situated southwest of Multan, near the Indus river, and therefore offered access to the Indian Ocean ports as well as a convenient proximity to the Bolan Pass route to Qandahar, the first capital of Durrani Afghanistan, from where caravan traffic could continue westward to Iran or northward to Turan. Furthermore, the region was heavily populated by the Lohani, some of whom participated in this trade as sedentary commercialists operating financial houses while others carried on commerce as transporters of bulk commodities between India and Turan. The decision of the Multanis to move to Shikarpur was greatly encouraged by the achievements and patronage of the Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Abdali, founder of the Durrani dynasty (r. 1747–73), who, by 1768, had assumed control over much of northwest India and extended his northern border as far as the Amu Darya.<sup>109</sup> During the period of Durrani control, the commercial activities of Indian merchants from Shikarpur were pervasive throughout urban and rural

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<sup>108</sup> For a discussion of these invasions, see Ahmad Nabi Khan, *Multan: History and Architecture*, Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History, Culture & Civilization, Islamic University, 1983, pp. 111–66.

<sup>109</sup> For Shikarpuri-Lohani trade associations, see Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 392, 396. According to Mohan Lal, 'the principal marts of the country of Multan are Amritsar, Bahawalpur, Khairpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Laiya, Shujabad, Mitankot, &c., which have a commercial communication with the merchants of Shikarpur, Candahar, Herat, Bokhara, Kabul, Peshawer, Sindh, Hindusthan, &c. The commerce of Multan is really carried on by Lohanis or Shikarpuris. The latter have their agents in the above places, and also in the towns which are in the vicinity of the mouths of the river Indus.' See also Ashiq Muhammad Khan Durrani, *Multan Under the Afghans (1752–1818)*, Multan: Bazme Saqafat, 1981, pp. 29–33; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, pp. 281–82 and note 281. Noelle notes that, 'a great part of the [Afghan] trade conducted with India via the Bolan Pass and Jalalabad was controlled by Hindu merchants and bankers with mercantile connections reaching as far as Astrakhan, Yarkand, Calcutta and Hyderabad. The center of their financial web was Shikarpur on the Indus.'



Afghanistan, and Shikarpuri merchants are reported to have played a dominant role in the financial administration of Afghanistan even after the decline of the Durrani state. We will return to this subject in the following chapter.

Noting his impressions of northwest India during his travels in the 1820s and 1830s, Charles Masson reported that Shikarpur was a very wealthy city and that its principal citizens were Hindu bankers and moneylenders who maintained close commercial connections with their agents, dispersed throughout Iran and Turan. Summarizing the Multani firms' migration to Shikarpur, Masson suggested that:

as the city [Shikarpur] is not understood to be one of great antiquity, it is possible that the influx of Hindús to it is not of very distant date, and that it was occasioned by the fluctuations of political power. As the existence of some great centre of monetary transactions, in this part of the world, was always indispensable for the facilities of the commerce carried on in it, it is not unlikely, looking at the facts within our knowledge connected with the condition of the adjacent country during the last two centuries, that Múltân preceded Shikárpúr as the great money mart, and that from it the Hindús removed, converting the insignificant village of the chace [hinterland] into a city of the first rate and consequence.<sup>110</sup>

Masson goes on to refer to Shikarpur as 'the great money-mart of Central Asia' and, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, sources repeatedly refer to Shikarpuri merchants as the dominant agents in the Indian diaspora.<sup>111</sup>

In 1831 Alexander Burnes observed that Shikarpuris even had agents in Multan, and he reported meeting in that city 'forty Shroffs, (money changers) chiefly natives of Shikarpoor.'<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab, & Kalât...*, 4 vols, London: Richard Bentley, 1844, I, p. 353.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 354, 360. For discussions of Hindu Shikarpuris in nineteenth-century Turan, see Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, passim, but especially chapter three, 'The Gate of Khorassan: the Shikarpuri network, c. 1750–1947,' pp. 57–109; N. Likoshin, 'Pis'ma iz Tuzemnogo Tashkenta,' *Turkestanskije vedomosti* 9 (1894); Mir Izzet Ullah, 'Travels beyond the Himalaya, by Mir Izzet Ullah. Republished from the Calcutta Oriental Quarterly Magazine, 1825,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7 (1843), pp. 335, 339–40; Montgomery, *Report on the Trade*, p. 41; Hafiz Muhammad Fazil Khan, *The Uzbek Emirates...*, edited and translated by Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1993, pp. 28, 38–39; J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Beloochistan...*, edited by H. D. Seymour and translated by Capt. William Jesse, 1857, reprint, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 454; Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 438; Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*, 2 vols, New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877, I, p. 111.

<sup>112</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, III, p. 111.

In an effort to distinguish the Shikarpuris of his study from the earlier Multani merchants, Markovits endeavors to cast doubt upon Masson's assertion that the two designations were at different times applied to individuals of the same extraction. Instead, he suggests that the Multani network had largely atrophied by the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Shikarpuri diaspora emerged *sui generis* in response to developments in Durrani Afghanistan.<sup>113</sup> However, there seems to be no compelling reason to contest the conclusion advanced by Masson that the position of Shikarpur as the 'great money mart' of that time was a product of the migrations of Multani merchants who, during the late eighteenth century, relocated their firms to Shikarpur in order to benefit from a more stable political environment and take advantage of new opportunities under Durrani patronage. In terms of the decline of the Multani network, while it is certainly the case, as observed by Markovits, that the Multani communities in Iran underwent a period of decline in the eighteenth century (for reasons to be discussed below), it should also be stressed that there is no available evidence suggesting any disruption in the continuity of the Multani communities in eighteenth-century Central Asia. Furthermore, there is no clear ethnic distinction between the Shikarpuris and Multanis. Markovits recognizes that the term 'Shikarpuri' was applied to merchants who came to Shikarpur from many different regions (he fittingly describes the city as a kind of late eighteenth-century Bania 'melting-pot'). As noted above, the designation 'Multani' also was not a static ethnonym. Both of these terms referred to a diverse, dynamic conglomeration of merchant communities that incorporated Khattris, as well as Bhatias, Bohras Lohanis and various other castes associated with the designation 'Bania.' Considering the available evidence, it seems more convincing that the vast majority of the Indian merchants attracted to Shikarpur came from Multan, either directly or via their posts in the diaspora.<sup>114</sup>

It should also be noted that, while many Multanis migrated to Shikarpur in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, those Multanis whose commercial interests in the diaspora would not have benefited by relocating

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<sup>113</sup> In his own words, Markovits suggests that 'Shikarpur was the centre of a financial network which developed in the second half of the eighteenth century in direct relation to the rise of the Durrani Empire.' He apparently, and rather confusingly, contradicts this by elsewhere stating that 'Hindu merchants who lived in dispersed colonies in the Islamic lands of Central Asia who had been known as Multanis...gradually became known as Shikarpuris.' Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 29–30, 60–62 and note 9.

<sup>114</sup> Jain's mutual identification of them as '*Shikarpuri Multanis*' further suggests that the former is derived from the latter. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 33.

to Shikarpur and associating with the Durrani administration stayed in Multan. This explains why, as considerable numbers of merchants identified as Shikarpuris took advantage of commercial opportunities in locations in and adjacent to Durrani territory in Afghanistan, far eastern Iran and Central Asia, reports of 'Multanis' conducting commercial operations which were focused outside of the Durrani sphere of influence, primarily in western Iran, the Caucasus and Russia, continued well into the nineteenth century. Considering this, Markovits concludes that the Multani network in nineteenth-century Russia 'was apparently distinct from the Shikarpuri network operating in the Central Asian khanates.'<sup>115</sup> The degree to which this was actually the case is open to question. It should not be overlooked, for example, that while Alexander Burnes was in the office of an Indian firm in Kabul in the 1830s, he was offered the opportunity to purchase bills of exchange (*hundis*) cashable at branch offices in Nizhny Novgorod, Astrakhan and Bukhara.<sup>116</sup> Thus, while it will be seen below that diaspora communities in various locations differed considerably in terms of their commercial specializations and the social conditions in which they lived, there is insufficient evidence to support any argument for a qualitative dichotomy in the Shikarpuri-Multani merchant diaspora; it existed as a singular phenomenon.

It is, however, generally agreed upon that Shikarpur emerged as the financial capital of northwestern India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Still, first-hand accounts report that Multan, Lahore, Amritsar, and other large cities continued to function as the premier centers for the transportation of commodities from northwest India. According to Masson, 'Multan is said to have decreased in trade since it fell into the hands of the Sikhs, yet its bazars continued well and reasonably supplied with articles of traffic and consumption. There are still numerous bankers, and manufacturers of silk and cotton goods, and...[Multan] has an extensive foreign trade with the regions west of the Indus.'<sup>117</sup> The trade of Multan did indeed undergo a decline following the Sikh conquest, but this recession was temporary and Multan quickly reclaimed its role as a commercial center, although without the distinction of being the northwestern center of India's great family firms.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 62.

<sup>116</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 169–70.

<sup>117</sup> Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, I, p. 395.

<sup>118</sup> The re-emergence of the designation 'Multani' among Indians in Bukhara at the end of the nineteenth century suggests that some of the Shikarpuri firms may have moved their central offices back to Multan. See O. Olufsen, *The Emir of Bokhara and His Country: Journeys and Studies in Bokhara*, London: William Heinemann, 1911, p. 297. George

Mohan Lal confirms this, reporting that ‘Shikarpur cannot rival Bahawalpur, Multan, and Dera Ghazi Khan in commerce, but it is inhabited by a race of people who conduct a prosperous trade in Afghanistan, Turkistan, Khorasan, and part of Persia. It has no manufacture of any description, but derives its distinction solely from its situation in the midst of the commercial routes.’<sup>119</sup> Relating his impressions of Shikarpur, Mohan Lal described a commercial climate so tense and competitive that he was unable to find an informant willing to provide him with details on the nature of the commerce in that city. Still, his visit to Shikarpur’s bazaar evoked a marvel unsurpassed in this experienced traveler’s numerous accounts of Indian, Afghan and Turanian markets:

I feasted my eyes with the beauty of the bazar at Shikarpur. After passing through lanes closely peopled, I stepped into the large bazar, and found it full. There was no shop in which I did not observe half a dozen Khatri merchants, who appeared to me to have no time to speak to the purchasers. Such was the briskness of trade going on in the bazar... It occurred to me that the reason why Shikarpur surpasses Amritsar in wealth is, that its inhabitants, who are for the most part Khatri, have spread themselves in almost all the regions of Central Asia, whence they return loaded with gains to their families at Shikarpur. There is not so much commerce carried on at Shikarpur, I believe, as in Multan and Amritsar, but you will see all the shopkeepers writing Hoondees, or bills of exchange, which you can take in the name of their agents at Bombay, Sindh, the Panjab, Khorasan, Afghanistan, part of Persia, and Russia.<sup>120</sup>

This account is corroborated by the observation of Alexander Burnes that Shikarpur’s ‘importance to the trade of the Indus...does not result from any superiority in its home manufactures, but from its extensive money transactions, which establish a commercial connection between it and many remote marts.’<sup>121</sup>

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Curzon also identified the Hindu moneylenders he met in late nineteenth-century Bukhara as ‘Multanis.’ Curzon incorrectly attributed this to ‘a prevalent idea that Multan is the capital of India.’ George Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889, p. 172. Alam has uncovered a few ‘Multani’ financial houses that maintained their identification with that city even after having moved the center of their commercial activity to Shikarpur. Alam ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ pp. 223–24 note 86. See also Ray, ‘The Bazar,’ pp. 253–55.

<sup>119</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 411.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438. It is important to note that in India the geographical designation ‘Khorasan’ was commonly used rather vaguely to refer to any region to the north and west of India, including parts of Central Asia and Iran, even as far west as the Sulayman mountains. Cf. Alam ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 212; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 62 note 77.

<sup>121</sup> Burnes, *Cabool*, p. 54.

The agents of these Shikarpuri financial houses were dispersed throughout major and minor urban centers, and even into the agrarian countryside, across north India, Iran and Turan. Mohan Lal's account places them in 'Haidarabad, Bombay, Jaipur, Bahawalpur, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Amritsar, Peshawer, Kabul, Qunduz Khulum, Balk, Bokhara, Mashad, Herat, Sistan, Candahar, &c. &c.'<sup>122</sup> Burnes' account provides a more detailed, although by no means exhaustive, list of cities serviced by the Shikarpuri firms, including: 'Muscat, Bundar, Abbass [*sic*], Heeman, Yezd, Meshid, Astracan, Bokhara, Samarcand, Kokan, Yarkund, Koondooz, Khooloom, Sulzwar, Candahar, Ghuzni, Cabool, Peshawur, Dera Ghazee Khan, Dera Ismael Khan, Bukkur, Leia, Mooltan, Ooch, Bhawulpuoor, Umritsir, Jeypoor, Becaneer, Jaysulmeer, Palee, Mandivee, Bombay, Hydrábád (Deccan), Hydrábád (Sinde), Kurachee, Kelat, Mirzapoor, and Calcutta.'<sup>123</sup> These are only a few of the many dozens of urban centers served by these Indian merchant moneylenders. The dispersion of Indian diaspora communities will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### *Conclusion*

For millennia there has been a regular movement of people and commodities between India and Turan. This relationship grew considerably after the eleventh-century Ghaznavid invasions of India and their establishment of the first of a series of Turko-Afghan dynasties to rule in north India for over seven centuries. Throughout this period, Multan functioned as northwestern India's premier commercial center for international trade and, in the years that followed, the economic opportunities offered by this frontier town fostered the development of a number of great merchant family firms, the agents of which were collectively identified in historical literature as 'Multanis.' These caste-based firms enjoyed several centuries of economic prosperity during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal eras. One result of this prosperity was the extension of the Multanis' commercial activities beyond the boundaries of the subcontinent. By the middle of the sixteenth century, they had established diaspora communities in a number of locations in Turan and Iran and, within just one century, the population of Multanis living abroad grew to number in the tens of thousands.

In an effort to uncover the numerous caste and religious identities of the

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<sup>122</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 412.

<sup>123</sup> Burnes, *Cabool*, pp. 58–59.

groups that comprised the diaspora, the discussion above has deconstructed such vague terms as ‘Multani,’ ‘Shikarpuri’ and ‘Bania’ as used by early modern authors. It has also been argued that, for nearly four centuries, the Indian diaspora exhibited a remarkable historical continuity. It will be seen that variations in political and economic climates prompted the Indians to extend their diaspora in search of new commercial opportunities, and to evacuate problem regions and re-establish themselves elsewhere when necessary. Still, whether they were designated ‘Multani’ or ‘Shikarpuri,’ the Indian merchants involved in diaspora commerce were a part of a unique, unified entity. We are now in a position to direct our discussion to the ways in which the Indian diaspora merchants, belonging to a number of castes and no fewer than four religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Islam and Sikhism), interacted with each other, with other commercial communities, and with their host societies.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE INDIAN MERCHANT DIASPORA BEYOND THE HINDU KUSH

### *Introduction*

The wide dispersal of Indian merchant diaspora communities in cities and villages across much of Eurasia resulted in considerable variations in their social organization and operation. Social conditions for individual diaspora communities are also known to have occasionally undergone abrupt, radical changes. It is a testament to these Indians' persistence, determination, and ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances that, even in locations where their social liberties were most restricted, they maintained active communities for several centuries. This was achieved under the auspices of well-organized, caste-based commercial organizations, commonly referred to as 'family firms.' Investing one's time and capital in diaspora commerce could be a highly profitable venture, but it could also be extremely risky. Family firm directors and their agents stationed in distant diaspora communities (referred to as '*gumāshṭas*') minimized these risks by maintaining regular communication through the mediation of other agents. The rotating population of the diaspora, with new agents regularly arriving to replace those whose tenure had been completed, enabled merchants to communicate to the directors information about political developments and newly emergent or under-exploited opportunities, and likewise to receive the directors' instructions.

The following discussion will focus on the Indian communities' social organization and diasporic lifestyle, whenever possible comparing spatial and temporal similarities and differences. This approach is intended to demonstrate the unity of the diaspora as a whole and the clear cultural distinction between the Indian merchants and their various host societies, while illuminating the diverse social contexts in which the Indian diaspora merchants operated and the importance attributed to them by the rulers of their host societies. Toward this goal, no source of information has been more important than the numerous accounts of the Indian merchant communities left by adventurous European travelers who visited the communities, described the circumstances under

which the Indians lived, and marveled at the expertise with which they conducted their business. In an effort to better appreciate the context in which these travelers presented their first-hand accounts, whenever possible the relevant observations have been left in the original words of the authors.

The second part of this chapter will turn to many of the same sources to sketch the diaspora's dispersion throughout urban centers and the agrarian (as opposed to the pastoral) countryside. Diaspora communities established in major early modern commercial centers were populated by several hundred to several thousand Indians. The vast majority of the diaspora, however, was comprised of communities populated by only a few dozen individuals, or even less. That is not to say, however, that the total number of individuals involved in the diaspora was insignificant. On the contrary, the rather impressive number of Indian diaspora communities and their dispersion across much of Eurasia has led us to estimate the total number of Indian merchants populating diaspora communities to have been perhaps even in excess of 35,000.

### *Life in the Diaspora*

During the mid-sixteenth century, considerable numbers of Indian merchants began relocating to diaspora communities in Turan. Not surprisingly, a social distinction existed between Indian Hindu and Muslim merchants. This was manifest in their living arrangements. Whereas the Indian Muslim merchants active in the diaspora generally lived alongside local citizens or stayed among their co-religionists in common caravanserais, Hindu merchants began to dominate, and even purchase, their own caravanserais. Even in Astrakhan, the Indian *dvor* appears to have been exclusively occupied by Hindus and Jains. The few Indian Muslims that came to Astrakhan lived alongside other Muslim merchants, generally in the Bukharan *dvor*.<sup>1</sup>

An exception to this dichotomy was the institution of the *agrizhan*, a specifically Indo-Tatar suburb of Astrakhan.<sup>2</sup> The establishment of this suburb

<sup>1</sup> See Antonova II, doc. 44, 1726, pp. 69–71, where one Ismail Khalil(ev) Multani is identified as living in Astrakhan's Bukharan *dvor*. Of the fifty-two Indians mentioned in the census of 1747 as living in Astrakhan's Indian *dvor*, not one can be identified by name as a Muslim. Antonova II, doc. 132, 1747, pp. 265–69.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the word *agrizhan* itself may be etymologically traced to the Tatar word *oğlu*, meaning son, although it was applied to all offspring of Indian-Tatar unions. See P. M. Shastiko, ed., *Russia and India: Ancient Links between India and Central Asia*, English edition, Calcutta: Vostok, 1991, p. 49, although Shastiko misspells the word as 'ogly' and mistranslates it as 'child.' Kemp translates *agrizhan* as 'The Bastard,' although



seems to have been a product of a growing number of such unions in the eighteenth century, partially attributable to some Indians leaving the diaspora, marrying Tatar women, declaring Russian citizenship, and permanently settling in Astrakhan. The overwhelming majority of the *agrizhan* population, however, was a product of a rather different circumstance. This is described in the early nineteenth-century account of Nikolai Ozertskovsky who observed that, ‘when they (Tatars) are put in debt as a result of their dealings with them [Indian merchants] by the usurious rates of interest they charge, they become poor and are eternally in their (the Indians’) debt; they often pay their creditors by handing over their wives to the Astrakhan Indians so that the Indians—all of them do not have their own wives here—beget children with the Tatar women, the wives of their debtors.’<sup>3</sup> The *agrizhan* children do not appear to have benefited from the wealth of their fathers. Rather, they were raised as Muslims and, after several generations, eventually blended in with the Tatar community. This process was not yet complete in the 1840s when Xavier Hommaire de Hell visited Astrakhan and made the following report on the *agrizhan* community:

The Indians who were formerly rather numerous in this city, have long since abandoned the trade for which they frequented it, and none of them remain but a few priests who are detained by interminable lawsuits. But from the old intercourse between the Hindus and the Kalmucks [indigenous Turko-Mongol people] has sprung a half-breed now numbering several hundred individuals, improperly designated Tatars... They serve as porters, waggoners, or sailors, as occasion may require, and shrink from no kind of employment however laborious. Their white felt hats, with broad brims and pointed conical crowns, their tall figures, and bold, cheerful countenances, give them a considerable degree of resemblance to the Spanish muleteers.<sup>4</sup>

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efforts to elucidate why she chose to do so have been unsuccessful. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, pp. 102–3. For further discussion of Astrakhan’s *agrizhan* suburb, see Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 101–8. See also Antonova II, doc. 41, 1725, pp. 62–65; doc. 44, 1726, pp. 69–71; doc. 108, 1744, pp. 203–4; doc. 112, 1744, pp. 207–8; doc. 120, 1745, pp. 247–49; doc. 121, 1745, pp. 249–50; doc. 190, 1774, pp. 362–63; doc. 191, 1774, p. 364; Gopal, *Indians in Russia*, pp. 9–11.

<sup>3</sup> Nikolai Yakovlevich Ozertskovsky, *Opisanie koli i Astrakhani*, St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoi Akademiiia Nauk, 1804. Cited in Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 97. A similar method of using one’s wife as collateral was common practice among the Uighur debtors of nineteenth-century Sinjiang. See Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 267–68.

<sup>4</sup> Xavier Hommaire de Hell, *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus, &c.*, microfilm, London: Chapman and Hall, 1847, p. 179.

The majority of Indian merchants that visited Turan were *gumāshatas* of the great financial houses of Multan who were stationed in dormitory-style living quarters in caravanserais. Another component of the Indian diaspora, however, opted to work and reside in the *muḥallas* (neighborhoods) of early modern Turan's urban centers. As noted above, already in the mid-sixteenth century, Multanis are documented as owning immovable property in Bukhara and there is mention of an 'Indian quarter' in that city already during the reign of Imam Quli Khan (r. 1611–41). The existence of an Indian quarter of Bukhara even into the nineteenth century is further supported by the account of Alexander Burnes.<sup>5</sup> These individuals settled in Turan for long periods of time and they owned commercial and residential property alongside the indigenous population. Evidence suggests that some Indian-Muslim merchants even invested in the community. For example, one history of Bukhara mentions an Indian merchant identified as Badr al-Din Ayulab who financed the construction of a *madrassa* (an Islamic college) in Bukhara.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in the late seventeenth century, the Dutch traveler John Struys reported that a wealthy Indian merchant, identified by the decidedly Persian name of Aga Riza, financed the construction of a mosque in Shiraz. This individual, perhaps a convert to Shī'a Islam, also devoted a large sum of money to erect a tomb for himself in the vicinity of the mosque, indicating that he had permanently migrated to Iran.<sup>7</sup>

It has been suggested that the tendency of Indians in Bukhara to live close together in closed communities was a collective effort at a self-defense system that became necessary due to a fear of 'feudal arbitrariness' in the years preceding Russian colonization.<sup>8</sup> This argument can quickly be dismissed. The existence in Bukhara of an 'Indian quarter' already during the first half of the seventeenth century demonstrates that even the Indians living outside of the caravanserais had a long tradition of establishing residences near each other. Furthermore, as will be discussed below, the Indians' unique economic function in their host societies nearly always earned them the favor and protection of the local government administrators. Indians were aware that capriciousness on the part of the ruling elite was always a potential threat. However, the

<sup>5</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 285–86.

<sup>6</sup> *Tārīkh al-Bukhārā va tarjuma al-ʿulama*, Orenburg: Dīn va maʿīshat, 1908, p. 11. I am indebted to Thierry Zarcone for bringing this source to my attention.

<sup>7</sup> John Struys, *The Voyages and Travels of John Struys Through Italy, Greece, Muscovy, Tartary, Media, Persia, East-India, Japan, and other Countries in Europe, Africa and Asia...*, translated by John Morrison, microfilm, London: Abel Sovalle, 1684, pp. 321, 339.

<sup>8</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' pp. 235–36.

Indians generally had little to fear in terms of the state administrators' abuse of power. Their motivation for living in the same vicinity and protecting their community residences should instead be attributed to their strong community consciousness and, because of their stereotypically wealthy status, their fear of common criminal activities. This is demonstrated by a genre of Turanian folklore in which Indian merchants are portrayed as the unenviable victims of individuals in dire need of money, frequently for romantic pursuits. See, for example, the above-mentioned anecdote regarding the 'Indian quarter' of Bukhara:

A holiday was approaching and a teacher in Bukhara wanted to buy a gift of some fine clothing for the subject of his love. He was very upset that he could not afford to buy the clothing and afraid that should he not produce a gift he would be left alone. The teacher and two of his students decided to go to the Indian *muḥalla* where they would break into the house of a wealthy Indian and steal his money. They quietly snuck into the house, foot on shoulder, and found the box (of jewels) they wanted. As they were quietly climbing back onto the road the Indian awoke; they jumped down from the house and took off running down the street. Hearing the Indian man's cry, the Mir Shab (nightwatchman) ran to the street and grabbed the three men. One of them threw a rock at the policeman's lantern and exclaimed, 'Barak Allah, Nadir Divan Begi!' To which another replied, 'Hey, Emperor of the Universe! It wasn't me. It was 'Abd al-Wasi Qurchi.' Thinking that he had made a mistake and stopped Imam Quli Khan, Nadir Divan Begi and 'Abd al-Wasi Qurchi, the nightwatchman allowed the three thieves to pass, along with the valuable box, without any problems. The next day the enraged Indian went to the court of Imam Quli Khan wearing black felt around his neck and with his shirt ripped open [expressing that he was angry and had been wronged]. Pleading for justice, he explained that three men had robbed him and he had almost caught up with them when the nightwatchman put out his own lantern and let the men go. Imam Quli Khan looked from the Indian to the nightwatchman and asked, 'Why did you do this?' The nightwatchman did not answer and, getting upset, Imam Quli Khan asked again. The nightwatchman requested a private discussion and Imam Quli Khan called him forward and commanded, 'Alright, speak!' He explained what he saw to Imam Quli Khan and told him that he thought that the three perpetrators were he himself and his two companions, Nadir Divan Begi and 'Abd al-Wasi Qurchi, out getting information about the city. After an investigation the box was recovered and returned to the Indian merchant.<sup>9</sup>

It is reasonable to conclude that the Indians were better able to organize their protection by living in the same vicinity. It also seems logical to suggest that, as the Indians in question were generally wealthy merchants, they gravitated toward the neighborhoods of those involved in similar economic activities,

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Munshi, *Tadhkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, fols 311b–14a (pp. 84–86).

including other Indians and wealthy Turanian householders.<sup>10</sup>

The vast majority of references to Indian merchants in Turan, however, are to Hindu merchants living in Indian caravanserais. This can be attributed to their more considerable numbers, their cultural distinctiveness, and their centralization in caravanserais located near the main urban market centers. This appears to have been the case as early as Jenkinson's 1558 reference to Indian merchants coming to Bukhara and staying for two to three years.<sup>11</sup> The caravanserais in Turan that were dominated by Indians conformed to the standard architectural styles of the region and era, and the Indians maintained a clandestine exterior with no external markings to draw attention to the tenants' cultural and religious uniqueness. This was apparently the norm throughout the diaspora as, according to Ozertskovsky, even in the comparatively liberal environment of Astrakhan the Indians' cells inside the *dvor* were secluded and equipped only with windows opening to the internal courtyard and small openings in the ceilings, presumably for ventilation and to allow sunlight to enter.<sup>12</sup> The interior of the caravanserais, however, replicated a Hindu microcosm within Islamic Turanian society. The German traveler Max von Albrecht visited an Indian caravanserai in Bukhara in the 1880s and reported that the internal walls were whitewashed and decorated with paintings specifically Indian in character.<sup>13</sup> Indian merchants were, of course, the primary residents of the Indian caravanserais, but the caravanserais are also known to have housed Indian cooks and bakers, barbers, jewelers, bookbinders, clothiers, servants and retail shops where the Indians acquired much of their necessary goods, including religious paraphernalia, from other Indians.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, within the Indian caravanserais, Indians were exempt from many legal restrictions which applied to the general Turanian populace. For example, visitors to the caravanserais commonly noted that, whereas alcohol and tobacco were prohibited in the religiously conservative climate of Bukhara, inside of their caravanserais Indians smoked and drank alcohol freely.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Elphinstone noted that, in Afghanistan, Hindus were also known to be very wealthy and that they lived in the most enviable homes in the cities, save those of the nobility. Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, p. 415.

<sup>11</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 87 and note 1.

<sup>12</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Max von Albrecht, *Russisch Centralasien*, Hamburg: Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei A. G., 1896, pp. 123–25.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 237; Sadr al-Din 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, 4 vols, Stalinabad (Dushambe): Daulat-i Tajikistan, 1959, III, pp. 75–77.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 127–28; 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, p. 75.



An Indian caravanserai in Bukhara, 1890s<sup>16</sup>

Hindus throughout the diaspora were generally allowed the freedom to practice their religious traditions, but in only a few locations were they allowed to construct temples. In Turan, Hindus dedicated special rooms in their caravanserais to function as religious libraries and places of worship. Dmitriev argues that the conservative religious climate in Turan motivated its Muslim rulers to forbid Hindus to construct temples, lest they upset the Muslim populace.<sup>17</sup> Whether it was the administration that restricted the Hindus from building a temple or their own desire to refrain from investing in immobile, non-commercial property, nineteenth-century sources include several descriptions of such makeshift temple rooms in the Indian caravanserais of Bukhara, Tashkent, Khoqand and Qarshi. These rooms were generally equipped with a small altar surrounded by stone figures of Hindu deities. In the comparatively recently established Indian caravanserai of Khoqand, however,

<sup>16</sup> Andrei G. Nedvetsky, comp., *Bukhara, Caught in Time: Great Photographic Archives*, series editor Vitaly Naumkin, Reading, UK: Garnet, 1993. This photograph, and those that follow, have been reproduced with the generous permission of Garnet Publishing. For other photographs of Central Asia in this era, see the volumes *Samarkand* and *Khiva* in the *Caught in Time* series.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 101; Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' pp. 239–40.

instead of the icons there was a large image of Vishnu kept in an armoire. The English traveler Henry Lansdell reported in the 1880s that the temple room in a Hindu caravanserai of Bukhara had carpets and included ‘a looking-glass...a musical-box, a lectern, and a cupboard with books.’<sup>18</sup> In the temple room of a much older Hindu caravanserai in Tashkent there was an ‘ancient’ icon of Kali, one *arshin* (approximately seventy-one centimeters) tall by three-quarters of an *arshin* wide, which had reportedly been brought from Banaras, although nobody could say when.<sup>19</sup> This icon was carefully protected behind thick glass held by a wooden frame connected to a wall by a heavy chain.

Some Indian communities in the diaspora enjoyed more latitude in their ability to outwardly practice their religious traditions. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, the social climate for Hindus in Kabul was rather tolerant. At that time Kabul was one of the few cities where Hindus felt comfortable relocating with their families and, according to Mohan Lal, there was a ‘magnificent’ Hindu temple known as Gorakh Nath in nearby Jalalabad, west of the Khyber Pass on the caravan route between Kabul and Peshawar.<sup>20</sup> Elphinstone summarized the Afghans’ treatment of their Hindu guests as follows:

whatever may be their conduct in war, their treatment of men whom they reckon infidels, in their own country, is laudable in Mahommedans. Their hatred to idolaters is well known; yet the Hindoos are allowed the free exercise of their religion, and their temples are entirely unmolested; though they are forbidden all religious processions, and all public exposing of their idols. The Hindoos are held to be impure, and no strict man would consent to eat meat of their dressing; but they are not treated with any particular contempt or hardship: they are employed in situations of trust and emolument, and those who reside in Afghaunistaun appear as much at their ease as most of the other inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

Hindu communities in Iran are also known to have periodically enjoyed

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<sup>18</sup> Henry Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia*, 2 vols, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1885, II, pp. 100–101. This directly contradicts the rogue assertion by another traveler to the region in the early 1870s that the Hindus in Bukhara ‘are not suffered to build temples or set up idols, or indulge in religious processions.’ J. Hutton, *Central Asia: from the Aryan to the Cossack*, London, 1875, pp. 288–89. Cited in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 254 and note 12.

<sup>19</sup> This is according to a journalist for the Tashkent newspaper *Prosveshchenie* (‘Enlightenment’), cited in Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 64, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 263–64.

considerable religious liberty. At the end of the seventeenth century, John Fryer recorded the existence of two Hindu temples in the village of Naoband, a short distance northeast of Bandar ‘Abbas, where the large number of Hindus living in that busy port city celebrated their festivals.<sup>22</sup> There was also a remarkable and somewhat famous Hindu temple in Baku, an important commercial center on the Russo-Iranian trade routes crossing the Caspian Sea and the location of a rather considerable Hindu diaspora community.<sup>23</sup> This temple, situated some twenty-five kilometers to the northeast of the city, was quite well-known in its time and regularly drew pilgrims from India. In 1784 George Forster traveled overland to Baku and encountered five Hindus who, like himself, were traveling on to Astrakhan. Forster identified two of these Hindus as Multani merchants and the other three as ‘mendicants’ on a religious pilgrimage.<sup>24</sup> In 1824 George Keppel also passed through Baku on his way to Astrakhan and, although he did not mention Indian merchant activity, his account affirms Forster’s observation with a detailed description of the still-active Hindu temple.<sup>25</sup>

This temple was located in the vicinity of a wealth of liquid petroleum deposits, or naphtha, the flammable gases from which were incorporated into the Hindus’ religious rituals. Because of its association with fire worship, this temple is frequently misrepresented in historical sources as an *ateshgah*, or Zoroastrian fire-temple. While traveling undercover through Afghanistan in 1810, British Lieutenant Henry Pottinger met a Hindu on his way to this reputedly ancient temple. This pilgrim informed Pottinger that the temple was properly known by the Indian name *ḵvālā mukhī* (Sanskrit: ‘flame-mouthed’), one of the less-common names of the Hindu goddess Durga, also known as Kali, the horrific consort of the Hindu god Shiva. Interestingly, the term ‘*ḵvālā mukhī*’ also translates as ‘any place where subterranean fire or inflammable gas breaks forth (such places being held sacred by the Hindûs as

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<sup>22</sup> John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, Being Nine Years’ Travels, 1672–1681*, 3 vols, edited with notes by William Crooke, Hakluyt Society Publications, 2d ser., no. 72, London, 1912, II, pp. 336–37.

<sup>23</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, pp. 256–59, 262.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 291. Forster identified one of the mendicants as a ‘Sunyasse’: one who has renounced worldly goods for spiritual pursuits. See also the account of the Hindus who traveled to Baku, and on to Moscow, in Jonathan Duncan, ‘An Account of Two Fakeers, With their Portraits,’ in William Jones, ed., *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 5, reprint, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979, pp. 37–52.

<sup>25</sup> George Keppel, *Personal Narrative of a Journey from India to England...in the Year 1824*, London: Henry Colburn, 1827, pp. 291–94. See appendix two for the detailed descriptions of this temple by Forster and Keppel.

indicating the presence of a form of Durgâ).<sup>26</sup> A few years later, Alexander Burnes also crossed paths in Afghanistan with a Hindu pilgrim traveling to this very temple. Burnes excitedly described this intriguing character as a deserter from the Indian army who ‘had set out on a pilgrimage to all the shrines of the Hindoo world, and was then proceeding to the fire temples on the shores of the Caspian!’<sup>27</sup>

The Hindu merchants in Astrakhan also enjoyed the privilege of practicing their religious traditions in a small temple. This structure, more permanent in form and function than those of the Turanian communities, was located in the interior of the rather spacious Indian *dvor* and was in use even into the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> While in Astrakhan in 1784, Forster reported that:

the Hindoos also enjoy at Astracan very fair indulgence; nor could they in the most celebrated places of worship in India, perform their rites with more freedom... In the karavanserai allotted to them, which is commodious and detached, they make their ablutions and offer up their prayers, without attracting even the curiosity of the Christians; and they do not fail to gratefully contrast so temperate a conduct with that of Persia, where their religion, persons, and property, are equally exposed to the attacks of bigotry and avarice.<sup>29</sup>

A decade later Peter Pallas traveled through Astrakhan and left a detailed description of the Hindus’ religious practices at this temple, complete with a lithograph and a sketch of the various Hindu icons located in the altar.<sup>30</sup> Further demonstrating the rather liberal environment in Astrakhan is that, whereas Hindus in Turan were generally forced to conduct their religious rituals within the walls of the caravanserai, relying on small canals running through the caravanserai for their daily ablutions, every evening the Hindus in Astrakhan were permitted to march *en masse* to the banks of the Volga for

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<sup>26</sup> (ज्वालामुखी: ज्वालामुखी) Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, p. 165; Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997, p. 428; John Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988, p. 394. For more on the *javālā mukhī* temples, see Duncan, ‘An Account of Two Fakeers,’ pp. 41, 46. See also the account of another temple identified by the same name located near the north Indian town of Kangra in Henry Beveridge, ed. and Alexander Rogers, tr., *Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī or Memoirs of Jahāngīr*, 2 vols, reprint, Delhi, 1989, II, pp. 224–25.

<sup>27</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, p. 286.

<sup>28</sup> Antonova II, appendix three, 1777, pp. 518–21.

<sup>29</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, pp. 304–5.

<sup>30</sup> Pallas, *Travels through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire*, I, pp. 254–59. See appendix two for his account and copies of the lithograph and sketch.



this purpose.<sup>31</sup> With a few known exceptions, the thousands of Hindus in Safavid Iran also enjoyed considerable tolerance, demonstrated by their ability to openly practice their religious traditions in their own temples near Bandar ‘Abbas and Baku. The direction of ‘bigotry and avarice’ toward Hindus in Iran, mentioned in Forster’s account, should be understood in the context of the traumatic socio-political climate in Iran during the second-quarter of the eighteenth century (to be discussed below), and not as representative of any general cultural hostility directed toward Hindu communities.

That is not to say that relations between the Hindus and the Safavid Shahs was always amicable. Indeed, on one occasion it was brought to the attention of Shah Sulayman (initially enthroned as Shah Safi II, r. 1666–94) that two Multanis in Isfahan had been spying for the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). According to Jean Chardin, these Indians had learned that the Safavid military was at that time weak and disorganized, and they intended to report this to Aurangzeb by placing a letter for him in the care of a group of wandering dervishes who were traveling by caravan to India via Qandahar.<sup>32</sup> Having learned of this security breach, and fearing an impending Mughal invasion of Qandahar, the Shah had the caravan intercepted and the dervishes brought to his court. The Shah became incensed at the dervishes’ inability to recall the names of the Multanis responsible and, according to Chardin, ‘he resolved to put to death one part of the *Multani Indians*, and to exterminate the rest out of his Dominions, tho they were above twenty thousand.’ Fortunately for the Indians, the General of the Army and the Shah’s Chief Minister came to their aid and persuaded the Shah to spare the lives of the innocent. Chardin reported that, ‘it was thought sufficient to confiscate a part of so much of their Estates as they could discover, which they found to amount to vast Sums.’<sup>33</sup> In general, however, the policies of the Safavid Shahs toward Hindu merchants in their realm were designed to protect the Hindus’ rights and maintain an agreeable commercial environment, demonstrating the Shahs’ appreciation for the Indians’ importance to the economy of their realm.

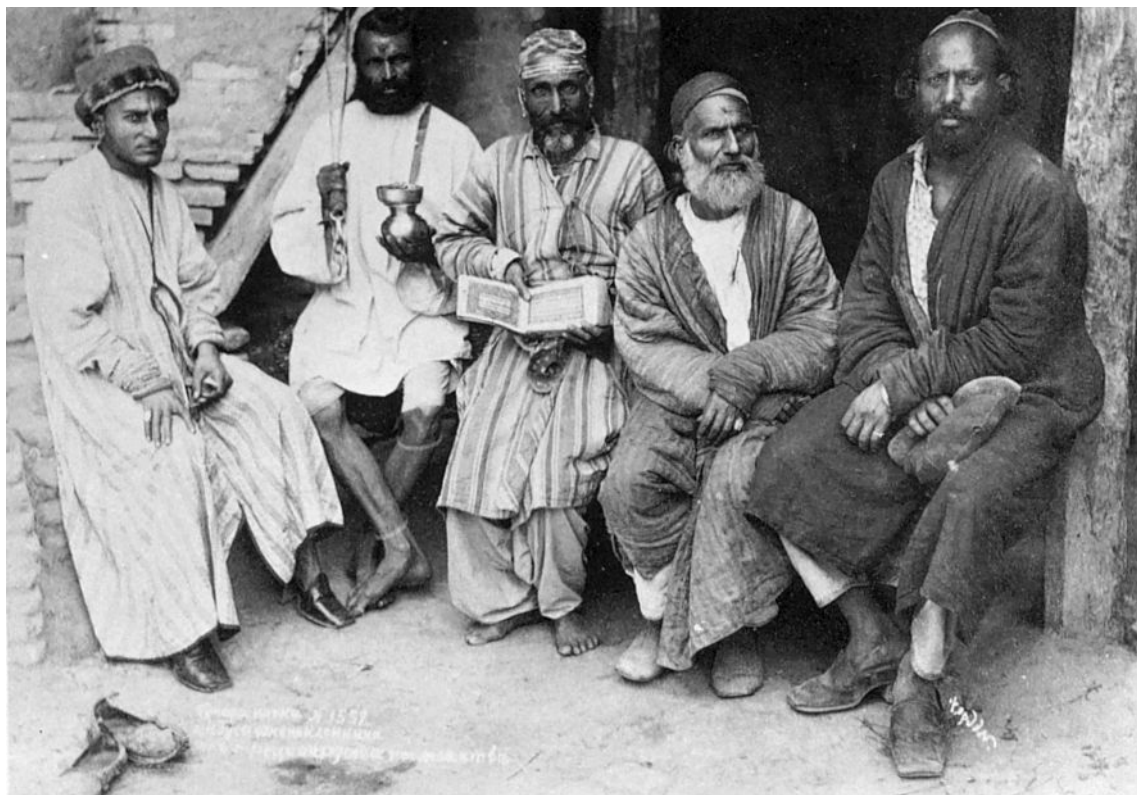
Throughout the diaspora, religious ceremonies of Hindus were generally overseen by Brahmans, commonly referred to as *pirzadas* (religious saints or priests) by Muslims of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup> Russian

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., I, p. 254.

<sup>32</sup> Chardin, *The Coronation of this Present King of Persia*, pp. 98–101.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> For Hindu *pirzadachs* in Turan, see CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 32, delo 286, list 330; fond I–126, opis' 1, delo 93; Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ pp. 240, 241; in Iran, see Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, pp. 186–87. For Brahmans in Baku, see Keppel,



Indians in a Bukharan caravanserai

colonial archival records mention a *pirzada* living in Tashkent named Missar Amanomal and two in the Farghana Valley, one of whom lived in old Margilan in the 1880s and the other, identified as Tulsamala Sabraj, whose report indicates that he came to Namangan in 1907 to serve as the priest in the prayer room of the Hindu devotees.<sup>35</sup> Even during their commercial expeditions, Indian merchants are known to have traveled with a retinue of hired workmen which sometimes included Brahmans. This is illustrated by early eighteenth-century Russian archival documents regarding the request for permission of an Indian merchant, identified as Matu Danilev, to travel from Moscow to Saint Petersburg with his workmen and a ‘priest’ named Balaram.<sup>36</sup>

*Personal Narrative*, p. 294; in Astrakhan, see Hommaire de Hell, *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea*, pp. 182–84; in Qalat, see Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, p. 78. In 1794 Peter Pallas was careful to identify the religious leader of the Astrakhan community as ‘not a regular Bramin, but a Dervise,’ perhaps implying that a *sanyasi* was in charge of the religious leadership of the Astrakhan community at that time. Pallas, *Travels through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire*, I, p. 254.

<sup>35</sup> CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 32, delo 248, ll. 179; fond I–23, opis' 1, delo 239, ll. 6–7; Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ pp. 240–41.

<sup>36</sup> Antonova II, docs 29–34, 1720, pp. 52–56. The retinue described in these documents

These Brahmans appear to have been sent by the firm directors to service the religious needs of the diaspora merchants. This was achieved by contracting individual Brahmans to live in a specific diaspora community for a stipulated period of time, following which they were replaced by other recruits, much like the merchants themselves. The operation of this system is demonstrated by the Brahman Baba Nachal Das(ov)'s application to Russian colonial authorities to establish residence in the Farghana Valley, in which he declared his intention to replace another priest, named Ibkmala Harirama, who would return to India upon his arrival.<sup>37</sup> While the family firm directors ensured the financial security of the Brahmans' families back in India, the Brahmans themselves were dependent upon the Indian merchants for their livelihood; there is no indication that they, at any time, participated in commercial activities.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Thevenot reported in the 1660s that, although the Hindus in Qandahar did not have a public temple, 'their assemblies for religion are kept in a private house, under the direction of a *Bramen*, whom they entertain for performing their ceremonies.'<sup>39</sup> Two centuries later, upon their arrival in the Turkestan Krai, Brahmans willingly declared their intention to commit themselves to religious endeavors and to refrain from conducting commercial activities.<sup>40</sup>

The degree to which Hindus were able to show their religious beliefs outwardly varied depending on the location and circumstances of the time. Among the more common manifestations of the Hindus' religious distinctiveness was their aversion to the killing of any animal, but especially cows. Thus, in 1617 Pietro della Valle observed that Indians in Iran were in such opposition to the slaughtering of a cow that their commercial contracts were invariably sworn on the life of one. According to della Valle:

if an Indian has to swear anything (whether the contract be among Indians or with Christians or others), it is not customary for the Indian to adopt any other method

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included four workers, two Indians from Astrakhan, a Russian and a Tatar, as well as the Hindu priest Balaram. Such workers were sometimes recipients of loans repaid through a contracted period of servitude. Antonova II, doc. 58, 1731, pp. 114–15.

<sup>37</sup> CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 32, delo 261, list 26.

<sup>38</sup> Although he does not provide a specific example, Markovits suggests that some Brahmans actually did conduct trade in the diaspora. Still, as one might expect, Brahmans comprised a rather small proportion of the diaspora population. Markovits notes that, 'in 1890, out of a total of 124 passports given to Shikarpuri Hindus, 3 were given to Brahmins.' Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 253, note 8.

<sup>39</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' pp. 240–41.



Indians in their Bukharan caravanserai, 1880s

of swearing the oath than taking hold of a knife in the presence of a cow and saying, that if such is not true, or the contract not kept, then the knife being held can butcher the cow. And this form of taking an oath is used not only in India but here in Persia also, and for every contract where an Indian is involved.

The same author likewise noted that, in Iran:

when artful people want to make a little cash, they take a live chicken or other bird and go among the simple little Indians crying out, ‘now I’ll kill it, now I’ll wring its neck.’ And at once all the poor Indians run up and pay very dear through bidding for the bird so as to give it its liberty. They count it as very pious work to keep animals alive.<sup>41</sup>

In the late seventeenth century, the Hindu community of Shemakhi (Rus., Shemakha, the capital city of Iran’s northwestern province of Shirwan and an important commercial center on the Caucasian trade routes to Astrakhan), was described as harboring an aversion to killing animals so great that they offered local hunters money to go home without killing any animals and even

<sup>41</sup> Pietro Della Valle, *The Pilgrim, the Travels of Pietro della Valle*, translated, abridged and introduced by George Bull, London: The Folio Society, 1989, pp. 133–34.

went so far as to interfere in a hunter's game at their own personal risk.<sup>42</sup> In June 1797 Count Jean (Ivan) Potocki noted that the Astrakhan Indian community, Vishnu devotees, did not eat beef, fed stray dogs, and frequently bought caged birds for the sole purpose of setting them free.<sup>43</sup>

In the 1860s Arminius Vámbéry reported that Hindus of Bukhara were 'worshippers of Vishnoo.'<sup>44</sup> The rather devout Vaishnavite identity of the Hindus in the diaspora is further supported by the observation of Lieutenant-Colonel James Tod that, even in the nineteenth century, the Nathdwara temple in the Mewar region of India annually received considerable income from foreign communities, including, apparently, the Indian merchant community of Astrakhan. According to Tod, in Nathdwara:

a deputy resides on the part of the high priest at Multan... Even from Samarkand the pilgrims repair with their offerings; and a sum, seldom less than ten thousand rupees, is annually transmitted by the votaries from the Arabian ports of Muscat, Mocha, and Jiddah; which contribution is probably augmented not only by the votaries who dwell at the mouths of the Volga [in Astrakhan], but by the Samoyede of Siberia.<sup>45</sup>

Conversely, other accounts suggest that Hindus in some diaspora communities may have become rather lax about maintaining traditions which they probably would have more diligently observed at home. Henry Pottinger, for example, observed during his early nineteenth-century visit to the Hindu community of Qalat, southeast of Qandahar in Baluchistan, that:

The Hindoos here are by no means strict in their observance of the Brahminical laws, and I was astonished to find that, both the Brahmins and their disciples eat every kind of flesh-meat except beef, even though killed by a Moosulman: they likewise drink out of leathern bags, and some of them wear caps made of Bokhara skins, all of which are breaches of, and in direct opposition to the strict religion they profess.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Struys, *The Voyages and Travels*, p. 275. In the early eighteenth century, Shemakhi was destroyed by Nadir Shah although, due to the city's important role in Iran's transregional trade, he later founded a new market city some fifteen kilometers to its southwest and named it New Shemakhi. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 261. See also Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, 1813, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973, pp. 358–59.

<sup>43</sup> Count Jean Potocki, *Voyage dans les steppes d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, edited by M. Kloploth, Paris: Merlin Librairie, 1829. Cited in Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 96.

<sup>44</sup> Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372.

<sup>45</sup> James Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, vol. 2, edited by William Crooke, London: Oxford University Press, 1920, pp. 614–17 and notes.

<sup>46</sup> Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, p. 78.



Indian musicians in the Bukharan Khanate, 1880s

Whether or not all Hindus in the diaspora conscientiously followed their religious traditions and supported religious institutions at home, it is perhaps more interesting to observe that, even in Turan's rather conservative religious climate, Hindus were generally permitted to celebrate their religious festivals. An exception to this is found in General Josiah Harlan's early nineteenth-century report that they were forbidden to conduct public processions and religious ceremonies.<sup>47</sup> Such restrictions appear to have been only temporary, however, as other sources relate the Hindus' celebration of their festivals in Turan with considerable detail. For example, several nineteenth-century sources describe the Hindu communities' celebrations of Diwali, a festival in honor of the goddess Lakshmi, and another celebration which appears to have been Holi, a festival celebrating the approach of spring. While living in Tashkent in October 1895 a Russian observer identified as N. Likoshin visited a Hindu caravanserai and joined in the inhabitants' celebration of Diwali. According to his account, the Hindus celebrated this holiday by abstaining from drinking alcohol, maintaining a strictly vegetarian diet of ceremonial Indian cuisine, illuminating the caravanserai with hundreds of petroleum lamps, and enlisting musicians, singers and dancers to perform devotional songs.<sup>48</sup> Likoshin's

<sup>47</sup> Harlan, *Central Asia*, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> N. Likoshin, 'Pis'ma iz Tuzemnogo Tashkenta,' *Turkestanskije vedomosti* 92 (1896).

report also notes that the Hindus invited Turanian and Russian guests. The Russian guests, important administrative officials, were welcomed by the Indians and even enticed by another, smaller Indian community to visit their caravanserai as well. Likoshin identified the Indians of this other caravanserai as ‘adherents to another religion’ and described his host there as a tall, slender man with a beard and a white turban, suggesting that he was perhaps a guest of Tashkent’s Sikh community. In February 1896 Likoshin returned to the Hindu caravanserai in Tashkent for the celebration of the festival of Holi, which he referred to as a festival ‘with alcohol.’ This affair drew large numbers of indigenous spectators to the roof of the caravanserai, some of whom even joined the celebration. It is perhaps not surprising that such festivities occasionally got out of control. On March 9, 1879, for example, the Hindu community in Khoqand held a celebration dedicated to Krishna with such fervor that it resulted in a brawl and the interference of the courts.<sup>49</sup>

One may be tempted to attribute the ability of the Hindus to indulge in such religious displays to a Russian tolerance of non-Muslim minorities in their newly acquired colonial territory. The celebration of these festivals, however, was not restricted to the Turkestan Krai. In Bukhara as well the Muslim population had a tradition of allowing, and even participating in, Hindu religious celebrations. For example, prior to the commencement of festival activities in Bukhara, farmers are reported to have brought their cows to Indian caravanserais so that the Hindus could sprinkle them with dry red dye and pray near them. In return, the Indians fed the cows cottonseed, an unusual delicacy for the animals. Diwali was also documented as having been celebrated in an Indian caravanserai in Bukhara, where the holiday was popularly referred to as the ‘Festival of Lights.’<sup>50</sup>

Because of the limited number of years individual Indian merchants generally spent abroad, only a small percentage of the diaspora population died outside of India. On occasion, however, this did happen and it invariably produced another source of potential conflict: the Hindu tradition of cremating the dead. Common in India, this tradition was considered abhorrent by the members of the Hindus’ various Muslim and Christian host societies. Still, even in the diaspora Hindus placed a great spiritual importance on this tradition and went to great lengths to acquire permission from the relevant administration to conduct ritual cremations. In 1617 Pietro della Valle recorded the earliest available account of a Hindu cremation ceremony in the diaspora.<sup>51</sup> This observation is supported by Fedot Kotov, who just a few years later

<sup>49</sup> CSHARU, fond I-510, opis' 1, delo 26, list 1.

<sup>50</sup> ‘عيد چراغان,’ Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ p. 242.

<sup>51</sup> See della Valle, *The Pilgrim*, p. 135.

visited the Multani community in Isfahan and reported that, ‘when any one of these Indians dies they carry him outside the city and beyond the town settlement into the field, and burn him on wood and scatter the ashes; and they say that that man has gone to heaven.’<sup>52</sup> Several decades later Adam Olearius noted that this was still common practice among the Indian merchants in Isfahan.<sup>53</sup> In 1683 a special decree from the Tsar granted the Indian community in Astrakhan the right to cremate their dead, although only at a predetermined location outside of the city.<sup>54</sup> Despite the Tsar’s approval, the Russian population expressed disgust at the thought of human ashes being scattered in the air and water. As Dale suggests, however, these objections may have been motivated less by genuine offence than by the jealousy of some Russian merchants regarding the commercial privileges and freedom from certain taxes enjoyed by the Indians.<sup>55</sup> According to Potocki’s late eighteenth-century report, following these cremation ceremonies the ashes of the deceased were commonly returned to India.<sup>56</sup>

In 1671 John Struys visited Shemakhi where he recorded meeting a community of over one hundred ‘banians.’ Struys witnessed two cremation ceremonies in Shemakhi and his account includes a rare instance in the diaspora of the Hindu tradition of *sati*, the immolation of a dead man’s wife on his funeral pyre, adapted to diaspora circumstances:

On the 15 [January] died at *Scamachy*, one *Tzouke* a very rich *Indian*, whose Corps his Brother after their manner desired to burn, which by a very long and importunate intercession of the Prince was granted, he paying for the same about 1300 Crowns. The *Indian* having obtained this Grant the next day bought a Christian Woman, which he burned with the Corps. The Bodie and the Woman were carried together without into the Field where they had made up a great Staple of Wood and a place within for the Corps. The *Indian* Priests gave the Woman a potion to provoke sleep and then set her upon an Engine like a Crane or Whip, made on purpose letting her to fall into the Fire. In the mean time the *Bonzi* poured a great Vessel of Turpentine Oil upon the Wood and so set it on fire, and then gave the Engine a turn, upon which the woman fell into the fire. ’Tis true the woman seemed by vertue of that Potion to be fallen into a *Cataphor*, or Deep-sleep, yet I heard her shriek out several

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<sup>52</sup> Kemp, tr., *Russian Travellers to India and Persia*, p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels*, p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> Antonova I, doc. 223, 1683, p. 305.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Antonova I, doc. 225, 1684–85, p. 308; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 104. For other instances of religious bias against Indians in Astrakhan see Antonova II, docs 141–43, 1751 and 1765, pp. 285–86.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 96.



times till the Drums, Pipes, Trumpets and other Wind-Music began to play, which was so loud and altisonant, that I could not hear any longer, althô I got a place near the Pile which was erected for these Ceremonies... When the Fire had consumed all, the Ashes were thrown into the River... On the first of *March* was another *Indian* Corps burned with a Live-Woman, after the same manner as was said before; only the Wood was poured over with *Naphte*, in place of Turpentine Oil.<sup>57</sup>

Just over fifty years later, in 1722, the British military officer Peter Henry Bruce traveled to Astrakhan and witnessed another *sati* ceremony. Bruce's account is especially interesting as it records the presence in the Astrakhan community at that time of a number of Indian women, a rarity in the diaspora:

One of their [the Indians'] chief merchants dying at this time, his widow desired leave of the emperor [Tsar Peter I] to burn herself with his corpse, according to the custom of their country: but his majesty, unwilling to encourage so barbarous a custom, refused her request, and the Indian factory were so much dissatisfied with it, that they threatened to withdraw from the city, with their effects. His majesty, finding no argument could prevail on the woman to alter her resolution, at last gave them leave to do as they thought proper. The corpse being dressed in his cloaths, was carried to some little distance from the town, where a funeral pile of dry wood was raised, and the body laid upon it: before the pile were hung Indian carpets, to prevent its being seen. The wife in her best apparel, and adorned with ear-rings, several rings on her fingers, and a pearl necklace, attended by a great number of Indians of both sexes, was led by a bramin, or priest, to the funeral pile, which on her approach was kindled: she then distributed her upper apparel and jewels among her friends and acquaintances, of whom she took her last farewell with a great deal of ceremony; and the pile being in full flame, and the carpets taken down, she leaped into the midst of the fire: her friends then poured quantities of oil over her, which soon suffocated her, and reduced both corpse to ashes, which were carefully gathered, and put into an urn, to be conveyed to their relations in India.<sup>58</sup>

As one might expect, even in diaspora locations where Indian women were found, *sati* was not always allowed. This is noted by Thevenot who, during a visit to Safavid-controlled Qandahar, reported that 'the king of Persia suffers not the gentiles [Hindus'] wives there to burn themselves when their husbands are dead.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Struys, *The Voyages and Travels*, pp. 250, 256. See the description of Shirwan province, including Shemakhi and the region's naphtha deposits, in Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir*, pp. 357–62.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Henry Bruce, *Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce...*, Dublin: J. and R. Byrn, 1783, pp. 299–300.

<sup>59</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 79.



Hindu cremation ceremony in Bukhara, 1880s

Available accounts suggest that the Hindus' tradition of cremating their dead was occasionally disallowed in Turan. According to Captain I. V. Vitkevich, who was in Bukhara from November 1835 to April 1836, shortly before his arrival there Indians had been forbidden to burn their dead.<sup>60</sup> This prohibition was only temporary, however, and later in the century there are again accounts of Hindu cremations taking place in Bukhara, although not without some consternation and, in the Turkestan Krai, although not without first acquiring permission from the Tsarist administration. The requirement to gain the state's consent was probably related to the concern that, without state approval and protection, the indigenous population might violently interfere with the cremation ceremonies. This supposition is supported by Likoshin's report of the 1894 appeal of a group of Hindus to Russian administrators to attend such a ceremony. The Hindus' request drew several important Russian officials, including the mayor of Tashkent and, according to Likoshin's assessment, had the police not also been present the crowd of indigenous observers would have extinguished the ceremonial fire. Likoshin also reported

<sup>60</sup> Khalfin, ed., *Zapiski o Bukharskom khanstve*, p. 104.

that the Hindus returned to the funeral site three days after the ceremony to collect the ashes so that they could be sent to India and scattered in the Ganges.<sup>61</sup>

Accounts commonly refer to Indian merchants living in diaspora communities in Turan, and in the other regions of the diaspora, for periods of two to three years, following which they returned to their homes in India. Interestingly, this was also the norm among the Indian commercial communities which maintained a trade diaspora in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia.<sup>62</sup> It should be stressed that, although two to three years seems to have been a common length of time for individuals to spend in the diaspora, many Indians lived abroad for much longer periods, even decades, and in the course of their lifetimes agents commonly made a number of trips abroad. It is useful to note Dale's calculation that, in mid-eighteenth-century Astrakhan, the Indians' average length of stay was approximately eight years.<sup>63</sup> In some places the average stay may have been even longer. In the early nineteenth century, for example, a Russian visitor to Bukhara reported that many Indians had actually lived in their caravanserai in Bukhara for more than thirty years.<sup>64</sup> Even at the end of the nineteenth century, as the Indian diaspora community in Tashkent was coming to an end, a Russian census of fifty Shikarpuri merchants reveals that the average stay was still over six years.<sup>65</sup> In the 1840s the soldier-explorer J. P. Ferrier traveled to Herat where he came across a community of Hindu merchants from Shikarpur, all of whom reported having

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<sup>61</sup> Likoshin, 'Pis'ma iz Tuzemnogo Tashkenta,' *Turkestanskije vedomosti* 9 (1894).

<sup>62</sup> See David Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India: the Nattukottai Chettiars*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 116–18. According to Rudner, the Nattukottai Chettiars had a common practice of sending their agents abroad to diaspora communities in Southeast Asia for periods of three years. Following their tenure abroad, they would return to their homes in Chettinad and, after some time, form their own firms or return to the diaspora, either to the same office or a different one, although as an advanced agent of the same firm vested with more authority than before and entitled to a larger share of the profits.

<sup>63</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 105.

<sup>64</sup> See Jakovlev's account of the city of Bukhara in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> 'O spiske provzhivaiushchikh v g. Tashkente indusov: o syr dar'inskiy oblastnoi pravleniem ob organichenii ikh vo vsiakikh pravakh v vidu vrednogo ikh vlianiia na mestnie naseleniia,' 6 September 1897, CSHARU, fond 36, opis' 1, delo 3691, list 24–24ob. According to this census, although many of the Indians had been in Tashkent for only several months, seven individuals had been in Tashkent for eighteen years or more. One, identified as 'Matra Bey Nukraev,' reported that he had lived in Tashkent for forty years.

lived in that town for over twenty years ‘without ever leaving it.’<sup>66</sup>

Ferrier described the Indian community in Herat as small and extremely wealthy, although poor by appearance as they were careful not to draw attention to themselves by displaying their wealth. Despite their rather lengthy tenure abroad, Ferrier noted that the community was almost exclusively male. This is not a surprising observation as this was the dominant gender dynamic throughout the diaspora, but it was an understandable source of confusion to Ferrier as one of the Hindus claimed to have a fifteen-year-old son by his wife, whom he had not seen for twenty years. Ferrier’s Afghan merchant companion offered a solution to this conundrum by relating a tradition common among the Indian diaspora merchants and their wives which allowed them to start a family while separated:

an Indian, when he leaves his home, leaves also a pair of pantaloons with his wife, who puts them on when she is desirous of being in that condition so natural to, and, generally speaking, so much coveted by married women; no husband, it appears, would ever dream of repudiating a child obtained by this simple method: to do so would be a perfect scandal.<sup>67</sup>

This tradition is extremely interesting as it provides a rare insight into the cultural methods used by families of Indian merchants to adapt to the lengthy periods of time that men were away from home. Soon after Ferrier recorded the explanation above, Richard Burton made a similar observation regarding the merchants who traveled from Shikarpur to Central Asia:

As it was not the custom for respectable individuals to travel about with their women, the latter were usually left under the charge of their parents and friends. The consequence was, that too often when the husband returned after a long sojourn in distant countries...he found his wife surrounded by a small family of her own. The offended party, however, seldom allowed this trivial incident to interfere with the domestic tie; and after inflicting corporal chastisement upon his faithless spouse, dismissed the subject from his thoughts, and treated the fatherless offspring with truly paternal kindness.<sup>68</sup>

It therefore seems probable that, just as there are accounts of Indian merchants in the diaspora enjoying the company of concubines, female slaves and even the wives of their debtors, some of their wives also had extramarital affairs in

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<sup>66</sup> Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys*, pp. 453–54.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>68</sup> Burton, *Sindh*, pp. 316–17 and note 9.

their absence and apparently even had the social latitude to become pregnant without drawing undesirable attention.<sup>69</sup>

The means used by Indians to resolve disputes likewise illuminates an important aspect of their community organization. Indians in the diaspora were, by nature of their occupation, constantly engaged in commercial relations with members of the local population as well as with each other. Whereas disputes between Indians and the local population were mediated by local legal administrators, Hindu communities throughout the diaspora enjoyed considerable autonomy in their internal commercial affairs and were equipped and encouraged to mediate legal disputes based on their own traditions.<sup>70</sup> In Turan this communal legal system centered around the acknowledged elder of each community, styled by Turkic tradition the *āqsaqāl*, literally the ‘white beard,’ or, in the Iranian diaspora communities, the *kalāntar*. The institution of an *āqsaqāl* as the leader of the Indian diaspora communities in Turan probably dates from the earliest days of the diaspora and it is recorded to have continued well into the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> A Bukharan *farmān* (official mandate), probably dating from the seventeenth century, declares that:

Regarding the Hindus who live in the territories of Bukhara, Balkh, Badakhshan, Qunduz, Taliqan, Aibek, Ghuri, Baghlan, Shabarghan, Termiz, Samarqand, Nasaf [Qarshi], Kish, Shahr-i Sabz, and wherever else they may live: whoever knows the *āqsaqāl* must obey and respect him as he is working for their best interest.<sup>72</sup>

Although the position was institutionalized by state decree, the individual *āqsaqāls* were probably senior agents of the family firms, more experienced than the other agents and vested with more authority by the firm directors. In addition to his legal responsibilities, the *āqsaqāl* functioned as the mediator between the Bukharan government administration, the specific Indian community, and any smaller satellite communities, for which he was responsible. *Āqsaqāls* served the interests of the Indian merchants, but they were also

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<sup>69</sup> For a more comprehensive treatment of the ‘sexual economy’ and the diversity of gender dynamics in the diaspora, see Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 265–85.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 104; Alam ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ p. 219; Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ p. 236.

<sup>71</sup> Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, pp. 42–43. In Khulum, Moorcroft and Trebek were informed of the presence of *āqsaqāls* of the Badakhshani, Kashmiri and ‘Indijan’ merchant communities, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, p. 465.

<sup>72</sup> *Maktūbāt munsha’āt manshūrāt*, fols 185b–86a. It is curious that the original document lists both Kish and Shahr-i Sabz, two names for the same city.

responsible for administering their communities on behalf of the Bukharan rulers by doing such things as maintaining a census so that the administration could collect the appropriate taxes. In the late nineteenth century, evidence suggests that many Indian communities were governed by a *panchayat* system, placing the communal authority in a council of (ideally) five elders.<sup>73</sup>

The Bukharans did not, however, leave the administration of the Indian communities solely to the Indians' own personnel. Later sources refer to a Bukharan officer appointed to watch over the local Indian diaspora communities, identified as the *yasāvul-i hindū* (Indian Guardian). According to Sadr al-Din 'Aini, this individual was responsible for ensuring the safety and welfare of the community and assisting in the collection of defaulted debts.<sup>74</sup> 'Aini further suggested that the Bukharan Amīr had several such agents who observed the business of the Hindus and reported back to the administration, especial in regard to any illegal or unreported activities in which they might be engaged.<sup>75</sup>

Although the Indians enjoyed great cultural autonomy within the confines of their caravanserais, the Bukharan administration required Hindus (and other non-Muslim minorities) to obey certain social restrictions when in public. Hindus were forbidden to own Muslim slaves and to ride on horseback in town, and they had to dress in a distinctive manner so that they could easily be distinguished from Muslims. According to F. M. Bailey, they were required to wear short, tight-fitting, single-colored (usually black) *chapāns* (a long, flowing outer robe) with minimal pattern and, whereas the fashion was to fasten one's *chapān* with a sash, Hindus and Jews were allowed to tie their clothes with only a hemp rope.<sup>76</sup> Bailey's account suggests that this was to ensure that Hindus and Jews did not carry concealed weapons in their sashes, such as a knife or pistol, as was common practice among the Bukharans at the time.<sup>77</sup> Hindus were also instructed to wear distinctive square hats, tight *shalwār* (pants), leather shoes, and a distinctive hair style, cutting hair only from their forehead and gathering the rest in knots which fell to their shoulders, whereas Muslim men at that time generally shaved their entire head.<sup>78</sup> Burnes

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<sup>73</sup> See the description of this in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 86–88.

<sup>74</sup> 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, p. 77.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> F. M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1946, pp. 242–43.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Cf. 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, pp. 73–75; Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 101; Olufsen, *The Emir of Bokhara and His Country*, pp. 296–97; Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh

spent considerable time among the Hindu communities in Bukhara and reported on these and other restrictions:

They are not permitted to build temples, nor set up idols, nor walk in procession: they do not ride within the walls of the city, and must wear a peculiar dress. They pay the “jizyu,” or poll-tax, which varies from four to eight rupees a year; but this they only render in common with others, not Mahommedans. They must never abuse or ill-use a Mahommedan. When the king passes their quarter of the city, they must draw up, and wish him health and prosperity; when on horseback outside the city, they must dismount if they meet his majesty or the Cazeer. They are not permitted to purchase female slaves, as an infidel would defile a believer; nor do any of them bring their families beyond the Oxus. For these sacrifices the Hindoos in Bokhara live unmolested, and, in all trials and suits, have equal justice with the Mahommedans. I could hear of no forcible instance of conversion to Islam, though three or four individuals had changed their creed in as many years. The deportment of these people is most sober and orderly;—one would imagine that the tribe had renounced laughter, if he judged by the gravity of their countenances. They themselves, however, speak highly of their privileges, and are satisfied at the celerity with which they can realise money, though it be at the sacrifice of their prejudices.<sup>79</sup>

Mohan Lal reported that those Hindus who wished to marry Bukharan women were required to inform the ruler and convert to Islam before they were granted permission.<sup>80</sup> In general, however, instances of Hindus’ conversion to Islam in Turan were infrequent and are poorly documented in the available sources. Isolated instances of Indians’ conversion to Christianity in Russia are more clearly documented, although evidence suggests that the Indian merchants exercised considerable social pressure to dissuade their compatriots from renouncing their ancestral religion. An example of this may be found in the case of a group of Hindus in Moscow who tried to forcibly remove to Astrakhan one of their colleagues, identified as ‘Jukki,’ who expressed his desire to convert to Christianity.<sup>81</sup> The issue was brought to the attention of the tsar, who ordered that Jukki should be placed in the Spaskii monastery for six weeks, following which he would be allowed to convert.

The community identities of the diaspora merchants contributed to their ability to establish and maintain their own cultural space within their host

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kolonii,’ p. 239.

<sup>79</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 285–86.

<sup>80</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 129–30. Records are available regarding several Indian merchants in Astrakhan who converted to Islam or, less commonly, Christianity. Cf. Antonova I, doc. 62, 1661, pp. 134–35; Antonova II, doc. 45, 1726, p. 72; doc. 129, 1745, p. 260; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 107.

<sup>81</sup> Antonova I, docs 140–42, 145, 1675, pp. 239–49, 252–53.

societies. Richard Foltz has recently argued that Islam provided a common source of identity among Muslims of India and Turan, transcending regional distinctions and facilitating the movement of people and ideas between the Mughal Empire and the Bukharan Khanate. Despite this common bond, Foltz acknowledges that Indian and Turanian Muslims also envisioned each other as belonging to different cultural realms. For example, in Mughal India Uzbeks had a reputation for being militarily superior, but they were also stereotyped as untrustworthy, unclean, simple-minded pederasts.<sup>82</sup> This depiction was probably, at least to some degree, a product of latent hostilities resulting from the ejection of Babur from the Timurid capital Samarqand by Shaibani Khan, the founder of the Uzbek state. Still, the culture of the numerous Uzbeks who visited Mughal India for diplomatic and commercial ventures is recorded as being radically different from that of their Indian hosts. This is nowhere better articulated than in the accounts of two seventeenth-century European travelers to the Mughal Empire, François Bernier and Niccolao Manucci, both of whom expressed their repulsion at the Uzbeks' table etiquette. According to Manucci:

it was disgusting to see how these Uzbek nobles ate, smearing their hands, lips, and faces with grease while eating, they having neither forks nor spoons... Mahomedans are accustomed after eating to wash their hands with pea-flour to remove grease, and most carefully clean their moustaches. But the Uzbek nobles do not stand on such ceremony. When they have done eating, they lick their fingers, so as not to lose a grain of rice; they rub one hand against the other to warm the fat, and then pass both hands over face, moustaches, and beard... The conversation hardly gets beyond talk of fat, with complaints that in the Mogul territory they cannot get anything fat to eat, and that the *pulāos* are deficient in butter.<sup>83</sup>

Bernier described the Uzbek nobles he met in Delhi as 'narrow-minded,' 'sordid' and 'uncleanly' and, following an experience as a guest of the Uzbeks, he reported that 'not a word was uttered during dinner; my elegant hosts were fully employed in cramming their mouths with as much *pelau* as they could contain; for with the use of spoons these people are unacquainted.'<sup>84</sup> Manucci sarcastically added to this that, among Uzbeks, 'he is most lovely who is most greasy.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See the chapter on Mughal-Uzbek 'Mutual Perceptions,' in Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, pp. 31–45.

<sup>83</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, p. 41.

<sup>84</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 121 and note 2.

<sup>85</sup> Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, p. 41.



It is less surprising to find that the Hindus who lived in Turan were viewed by their hosts as a cultural oddity. The account of Sadr al-Din ‘Aini offers some insight into the Turanians’ equally uncomplimentary perception of Hindus in Bukhara:

Hindu moneylenders are very filthy and bad smelling people. They wash every morning, but their smell was still such that it could not be endured (they say that every day after bathing they cover themselves with a special oil). There is a bad smell in front of the door of their residences whenever anyone crosses... Also, their profession is very filthy and they give money to the lowest and poorest of the people for great benefit... Every afternoon they would walk around the city collecting the money owed to them. After that they would go back home and drink Sabz-ob (Hindu alcohol)... After becoming drunk from the alcohol they make something similar to marijuana from grass and leaves. They wet the grass, filter and clean it, and beat it into balls like poppies. Then they mix it with clean water in a metal cup such as they use in India. From this they become greatly intoxicated. This drink is so strong that whoever drinks it loses their coordination and stumbles all over.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to stress that, despite the local populations’ negative perception of the Indians and the social restrictions forced on them, at least in terms of economic freedom Hindus in the diaspora generally enjoyed the state’s protection. This facilitated the Indians’ ability to successfully establish themselves in many urban and rural markets and, despite their rotating population, maintain a continual presence in many of these locations for several centuries while concomitantly expanding the diaspora into new territories. The value placed on these communities by the political administrations of their host societies was noted by Elphinstone in relation to the Hindus in Durrani Afghan territory:

No exactions were ever made on them, notwithstanding the King’s urgent wants; and in all transactions with government, they seemed to have no fears from the King or the prime minister, but only from their inferior agents. When any ordinary courtier was employed to negotiate a loan with them, they said he was likely to impose on or oppress them for his own profit; but when the affair was committed to a man of a respectable character, who would communicate fairly between them and the government, they met with very equitable treatment... The bankers must derive much security from the great Dooraunees putting money into their hands to be employed to the best advantage, a practice which identifies the interests of the bankers and the nobility. Needy nobles also afford their protection to bankers, and treat them with great attention, in the hope of being able to borrow money from them; and, like all other classes of industrious people, they derive benefit from the

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<sup>86</sup> ‘Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, pp. 73–75.

obvious interest which the King has in protecting them against individuals of his own nation.<sup>87</sup>

Already in the seventeenth century, and probably earlier, Hindus in the Bukharan Khanate had become highly valued by the nobility. This is clearly demonstrated in an earlier part of the seventeenth-century *farmān* cited above:

We are thinking about the condition of the greater community of people. Those of other religions [Hindus] obey the *farmāns* that we make and help us very much; for this reason we will weaken the grip of those who try to oppress them. The goods and property of these people should not become ruined; they are protected. Their protection will come from here and their aspirations should be directed to Bukhara.<sup>88</sup>

The deliberate protection of the Hindus by the Bukharan administration is nowhere made more clear than in the early eighteenth-century diatribe against Indian moneylenders by Mir Muhammad Amin Bukhari, the author of the *‘Ubaydāllāh-nāma*:

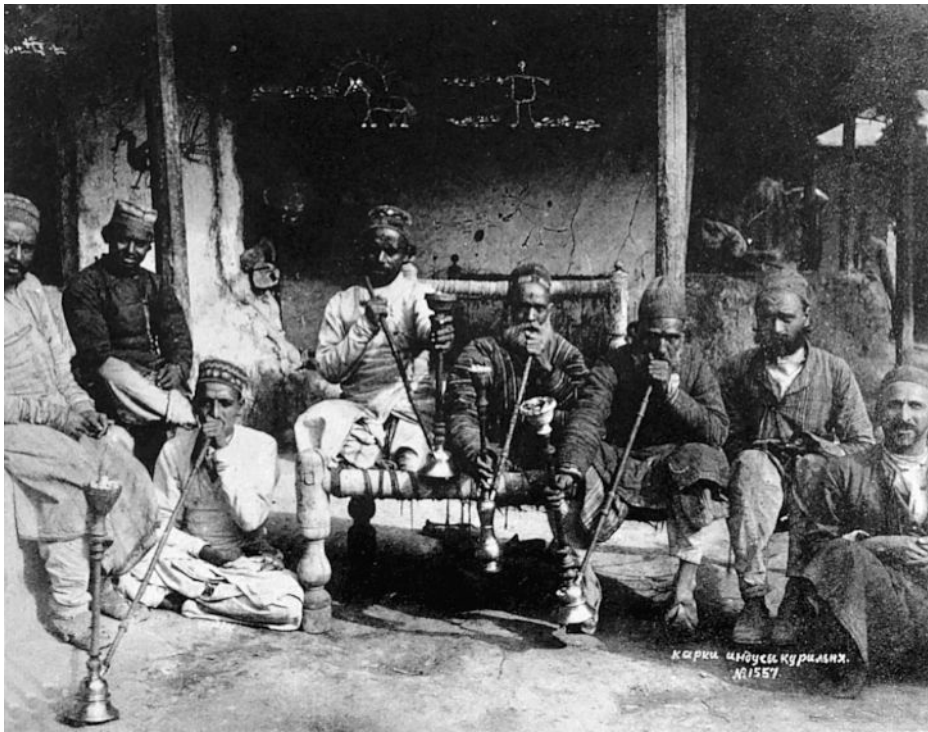
Indian people were masters above Muslims. In trade relations they, stain upon stain, lawlessly put Muslims through one unpleasantry after another. If, for example, a Muslim man in this trade [moneylending] showed some slowness, so the Hindu would send his horse of pride to the Muslim and nobody could find out how and why. If a Muslim appealed with a claim to a Hindu, or a Hindu to a Muslim, so a protector would defend the Hindu and decide the affair not according to the law, but simply according to the order of the *baltu-i serai*, and the property of the Muslim would be taken by force. If such an offense was proven, and people told the Khan about this, then his servants would show facts to be contrary. In these cases Muslims began to appeal for fairness to the true ruler, demanding strong retribution to the Kafir-Indians from Allah.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 334–35.

<sup>88</sup> *Maktūbāt munsha’āt manshūrāt*, fols 185b–86a.

<sup>89</sup> Mir Muhammad Amin Bukhari, *‘Ubaydāllāh-nāma*, OSIASRU, Ms. No. 1532, fol. 203a–b. See also the Russian translation, although there are several relatively minor discrepancies with the Persian text. *Ubaidullah-name*, translated by A. A. Semenov, Tashkent: Nauka, 1957, pp. 225–26. It should be noted that Bania moneylenders had quite a bad reputation for taking advantage of unsuspecting clients even in their native India. This is demonstrated by a number of Indian folk-sayings, such as: ‘a man who has a Bania for a friend has no need of an enemy,’ ‘the rogue cheats strangers and the Bania cheats his friends,’ ‘kick a Bania even if he is dead,’ and ‘if a Bania is drowning you should not give him your hand; he is sure to have some pecuniary motive for drifting down stream.’ For more examples, see Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, II, pp. 129–30.



Indians smoking in their Bukharan caravanserai

Despite such unpopularity, the regional elite continued to protect Hindu moneylenders, enabling them to enjoy commercial prosperity in Turan well into the nineteenth century. This is demonstrated by General Josiah Harlan's emphatic report from the beginning of the century that, 'wherever there is a bazaar Hindoos are a necessary part of the establishment! These people are always found amongst the buyers and sellers in all the cities of Central Asia and constitute the bankers or money changers in all commercial communities there.' Harlan further maintained that 'they form an indispensable part of the population. All financial affairs are entrusted to their management.'<sup>90</sup> Several decades later, this rather bold assertion was echoed by Arminius Vámbéry, who observed in the 1860s that Hindu merchants in the Bukharan Amirate had 'in some wonderful manner got all the management of money into their hands, there being no market, not even a village, where the Hindoo is not ready to act as usurer.'<sup>91</sup> He attributed their commercial success to good relations with the administration, and snidely suggested that, 'as the pious Kadi for the most part carries on business in common with the worshipper of

<sup>90</sup> Harlan, *Central Asia*, p. 65.

<sup>91</sup> Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372. Some fifty years later, Olufsen noted that the few remaining Hindus still 'usurped all money affairs in Bokhara' and were dispersed throughout the villages of the region. Olufsen, *The Emir of Bokhara and His Country*, pp. 296–97.

Vishnoo, it is rarely that the victim [debtor] escapes.’<sup>92</sup>

The state’s motivation to protect the interests of Hindu moneylenders is not difficult to understand. Referring to this bias, the eighteenth-century Turanian author Mirza Badi‘ Divan explained that foreign traders in general, and Hindus in particular, enjoyed a favorable position in Turan as they brought a considerable tax income to the state.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, even those Indian moneylenders who lived in the largest cities were known to spend part of the year traveling to other urban centers and rural markets, where they provided village industrialists (‘handicraft producers’) and agriculturalists with an important source of investment capital.<sup>94</sup> This topic will be discussed in detail in chapter four, although it is beneficial to briefly mention that the Indians facilitated the initiation of industrial and agricultural production when the producers could not by themselves afford the initial investment in such raw materials as cotton, dyes, livestock or seeds. In some instances Indians were known to provide the borrowers with cash, although it was also common for them to loan the necessary commodities themselves in return for a percentage of the final production, which Indians then sold either on the wholesale market or at a retail outlet. In other cases Indians provided village industrialists and agriculturalists the materials necessary for production with the understanding that the crop or finished product would be sold to the creditor, in part or in whole, by a certain date at a previously agreed-upon price.<sup>95</sup> In all of these situations Hindus functioned as an important intermediary class between producers and the market, earning the protection of the local administration because of their ability to bring to Turan much-needed investment capital and other economic services.

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<sup>92</sup> Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372.

<sup>93</sup> Mirza Badi‘ Divan, *Majmu‘a al-ārḩām*, reproduced in facsimile with Russian translation by A. B. Vil’danova, Moscow: Nauka, 1981, pp. 53–54 (fol. 34b).

<sup>94</sup> For one example, see ‘Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, IV, pp. 376–80. In this case the individual, a merchant from Peshawar, became known as a doctor whose treatments were particularly effective at extracting Guinea worms, endemic to Bukhara. This proved to be a rather profitable venture and, in order to concentrate on his medical career and maintain the faith of his clients, he gave up his commercial activities in Bukhara. According to ‘Aini’s report, however, at the end of the worm season he left town to oversee commercial ventures elsewhere.

<sup>95</sup> For documents demonstrating such Indian commercial activities in Samarqand during the late sixteenth century, see appendix one.

*The Magnitude and Dispersion of the Indian Diaspora*

Prior to turning to a discussion of the economic functions of the Indians in their host societies, it is first necessary to elaborate on the degree of dispersion of the diaspora communities and to arrive at an estimate of the number of Indian merchants involved. Although normal fluctuations in community populations and the fragmented nature of the sources preclude any effort to reach a precise conclusion, there is enough information available to venture a rough estimate. The impressive size of the diaspora, broadly dispersed across the urban and rural markets of numerous political realms, and the well-organized commercial activities of the diaspora merchants, the topic of the following chapter, will clearly illustrate the historical significance of this phenomenon.

As noted above, the epicenter of the Indian diaspora of the present study was the city of Multan, replaced by Shikarpur at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Agents of the Multani family firms had long been active in urban centers and villages throughout the subcontinent when, during the sixteenth century, they began to establish diaspora communities outside of India in those urban centers most conducive to mediating transregional trade, or offering other lucrative commercial opportunities. These cities included Kabul, Qandahar, Bukhara, Bandar 'Abbas, Isfahan and Astrakhan, each of which hosted communities of several hundred to several thousand Indian merchants. Many dozens of smaller, although still considerable, secondary diaspora communities developed in other regional capitals and important cities on the trade routes connecting many distant Eurasian markets. Throughout most regions of the diaspora tertiary diaspora communities developed as well, comprised of just a few dozen, or even less, Indian merchants who brought their commercial connections, investment capital and moneylending technology to the agrarian countryside.

The present goal is to sketch the varying degree of dispersion of these communities throughout Turan, Afghanistan, Iran and Russia. It should be stressed that the population of diaspora communities could, and did, change abruptly in response to any of a number of political or economic variables and that the information presented here has been elicited from sources temporally, spatially and topically diverse. There is, therefore, no pretense of this being an exhaustive investigation of every city and village to host an Indian diaspora community. The present discussion is intended only as an outline from which we may establish, in the broadest sense, the impressive



Map 3. Primary and (some) Secondary Diaspora Nodes

expansion of the Indian merchant diaspora from its mid-sixteenth-century inception to the end of the nineteenth century.

### A. Turan

The dispersion of Indian diaspora communities in urban centers and villages throughout Turan appears to have been unlimited. That is, although the focal point of Indian activity in Turan was Bukhara, Indian communities appear to have been active in most urban centers and many, if not most, of the agricultural areas. In the sixteenth century, there were Hindu merchant communities in Bukhara, Samarqand and Tashkent, and they were likely to have already been active in a number of other cities in the khanate. This is supported by the above-mentioned tradition of the Hindu community at Yangi Ariq, in northern Afghanistan, that their community's presence in that town should be traced to the late sixteenth-century reign of 'Abd Allah Khan II, the first ruler since Timur to politically unite Bukhara and Balkh.<sup>96</sup> It should also be remembered that the above-mentioned seventeenth-century *farmān* refers to Hindu communities in many of the regions and cities in the Bukharan Khanate, including Bukhara, Balkh, Badakhshan, Qunduz, Taliqan, Aibek, Ghuri, Baghlan, Shabarghan, Termiz, Samarqand, Nasaf [Qarshi], and Shahr-i Sabz.<sup>97</sup> The inclusion in this *farmān* of the phrase 'and wherever else they may live' suggests that this was not intended to be an exhaustive list of the Turanian cities to have hosted Indian diaspora communities at that time.

Unfortunately, estimates of the number of Indians living in diaspora communities in Turan do not become available until the nineteenth century. Those estimates that have been advanced are, however, surprisingly consistent. Mohan Lal did not venture an estimate of the Indian population in Bukhara, but his account suggests that Indians there were dispersed rather widely as, 'the caravansaraes, which have a grand appearance, exceed the number of those at Kabul, and most of them are inhabited by Hindu merchants.'<sup>98</sup> Dmitriev's research has disclosed nine caravanserais inhabited by Hindu merchants in nineteenth-century Bukhara, including Alimjan, Abdullajan, Ibrahimjan, Serai-i Kalan, Serai-i Poi Astan, Amir, Tamaku, Karshi and Fil'khana.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Moorcroft and Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, p. 415.

<sup>97</sup> *Maktūbāt munsha'āt manshūrāt*, fols 185b–86a. In this reference 'Ghuri' probably refers to the town Dahan-i Ghuri, situated some forty-five kilometers southwest of Baghlan.

<sup>98</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 137.

<sup>99</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Sredneaziasko-indiiskikh,' p. 88. Whereas some of these were

This is at odds with the account of Sadr al-Din ‘Aini, which mentions QwN three specifically Indian caravanserais in Bukhara during the late nineteenth century.<sup>100</sup> ‘Aini estimated that each of these caravanserais hosted as many as 150 Indian moneylenders, an assessment remarkably close to that of Armenius Vámbéry who, in 1863, suggested that there were approximately 500 Indians residing in Bukhara.<sup>101</sup> Some two decades later the British secret agent Ghulab Khan estimated that there were 400 Hindus and 200 Indian Muslims in Bukhara, the Muslims living in caravanserais other than those inhabited by the Hindus.<sup>102</sup>

The presence of Hindu moneylenders in villages throughout the countryside has been mentioned above. In the early nineteenth century, Harlan asserted that Hindus were active in virtually every bazaar in Turan, and Vámbéry likewise reported that Hindu merchants maintained a dominant commercial presence in both urban and rural markets.<sup>103</sup> Even as late as the turn of the century the Danish Geographer Olufsen noted that, although the Hindus were disliked and their commercial activities suffered from Russian political and economic interventions in the affairs of the Bukharan Amirate, they were still a dominant element in the moneylending industry in Bukhara and ‘their usurious operations were said to extend even to the Bokharan villages.’<sup>104</sup>

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exclusively Hindu, it is likely that several housed tenants of mixed religious and ethnic backgrounds. Dmitriev’s nineteenth-century archival sources also mention Indians living in caravanserais in Samarqand, Tashkent, Andijan, Khoqand, Khojent, Kitab, Kulab, Khatirchi, Chimkent and Uratebe.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Aini does, however, report that there were Hindu caravanserais in ‘Ghijduvan, Qarshi, Babkent and in other places in the state of Bukhara.’ ‘Aini, *Yáddāshthā*, III, pp. 77–78.

<sup>101</sup> Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372.

<sup>102</sup> Cited in Dmitriev, ‘Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,’ p. 235 note 2. Dmitriev hypothesizes that the majority of the Indian Muslims in Turan lived in Bukhara, the rather religiously conservative capital of the Amirate, but in Turkestan the diaspora population was almost entirely Hindu and Sikh.

<sup>103</sup> Harlan, *Central Asia*, p. 65; Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372.

<sup>104</sup> Olufsen, *The Emir of Bokhara and His Country*, pp. 296–97. Markovits also notes that Shikarpuri merchants maintained a considerable presence in villages throughout the Bukharan Khanate. According to his research in records of succession disputes in the Indian communities in Central Asia, ‘out of 81 successions in the khanate, 22 took place in Bukhara town, and the other 59 in a total of 22 localities, of which only 9 can be considered as urban (mostly small towns), thus revealing the widely spread-out nature of the Shikarpuri network in the khanate and its penetration of the rural areas.’ There was a similar settlement pattern of Indians in the Turkestan Krai. See Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 80.



First-hand accounts suggest that the only urban centers where the population of Indian merchants exceeded five hundred were Bukhara, Kabul, Isfahan, and probably Bandar 'Abbas, Qandahar, Herat, and Qalat. Even the smaller communities of Indians, however, are reported to have been extraordinarily wealthy as a result of their successful trade and moneylending ventures in the villages and surrounding countryside. For example, according to Henry Lansdell, in the 1880s there were about thirty Hindus in the Farghana Valley city of Khoqand, all engaged in moneylending. Although the number of Hindus in nearby Andijan was not likely to have been much greater than in Khoqand, in 1918 Lieutenant Colonel Bailey described the community of Shikarpuris in Andijan as having been extremely wealthy. According to Bailey, as the Bolsheviks tightened their grip in this region, these Shikarpuris feared that their wealth would be confiscated and asked him for assistance in transferring to India some two million rubles.<sup>105</sup> An earlier report mentioned a single Hindu merchant in Durrani-era Kabul whose personal wealth approached ten million rupees.<sup>106</sup> Small, yet extremely wealthy communities were the norm throughout the diaspora.

The pervasive dispersion of Indians throughout urban and rural Turan is confirmed by Dmitriev's research into nineteenth-century documents from the Office of the Bukharan Khushbegi and the Russian colonial archives, which reveal some of the cities and villages in the Bukharan Amirate and the Turkestan Krai where Indian communities lived and conducted their commercial activities. In the late nineteenth-century Amirate, Hindus are known to have lived in Ghijduvan, Vangazi, Babkent, Qarshi, Guzar, Yakkabagh, Chirakchi, Kerki, Baisun, Kitab, Kermin, Tashkupruk, Khatirchi, Nurata, Ziauddin, Shahr-i Sabz, Karakul, and a number of other cities in various regions. In the neighboring Turkestan Krai, there were Indian communities in cities and villages dispersed throughout the Samarqand, Syr Darya and Farghana Oblast's.<sup>107</sup> In the Samarqand Oblast', Indians are known to have lived in the cities of Samarqand, Kattakurgan, Jizak and Khojent as well as in such villages as Paishambe and Uzensakan. The Russian sources mention that, in the Syr Darya Oblast',

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<sup>105</sup> Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia*, II, p. 100 and note; Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, p. 30.

<sup>106</sup> Yuri Gankovsky, 'The Durrani Empire,' in USSR Academy of Sciences, *Afghanistan Past and Present*, Oriental Studies in the USSR, no. 3, translated by Evgeni Khazanov, Moscow: Nauka, 1981, p. 85 and note 24.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 235; Devendra Kaushik, *India and Central Asia in Modern Times*, New Delhi: Satvahan, 1985, p. 28; 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, p. 78.

Indians lived in Tashkent, Auleata and Chimkent, and in the villages of Telau, Ablik, Toitepa, Zengiata, Chinaz, and Merk. In Farghana, there were Indian communities in the urban centers of Old Margilan, Skobelev (Farghana city), Khoqand, Andijan, Osh, Namangan and Chust, as well as in a considerable number of villages, including Rishtan, Yengi Kurgan, Ichkurgan, Kuba, Aul, Bulakoshi, Khojevat, Chimion, Khoqan, and Kishlak. Indians are even known to have been established in the Semirechinski and Zakaspiiski Oblast's, and to have lived in Vernyi (Alma Ata), Tokmak and Kopal on the border of Sinjiang, China.<sup>108</sup> Again, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all of the Turanian cities and villages lived in by Hindu merchants. During the period of this study, diaspora communities emerged and declined into non-existence in dozens of urban and rural settlements, many of which are likely to have gone undocumented and to have been lost to history.

It is difficult to establish with any precision a cumulative population estimate for the Indian diaspora communities in Turan. Basing his conclusions on late nineteenth-century archival information, Kaushik suggests that the population of the vast majority of these communities was well under one hundred people.<sup>109</sup> The impressive number of communities throughout Turanian territory, however, brought Dmitriev to conclude that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the population of Indians in the Bukharan Amirate, both Hindus and Muslims, was approximately five thousand, with an additional three thousand Indians, almost exclusively Hindus, residing in the territory of the Turkestan Krai.<sup>110</sup> Although these figures are suggested for the nineteenth century, they can also be asserted with some confidence for the earlier centuries.

In addition to Turan, late nineteenth-century sources document the presence of Indian diaspora communities in various cities throughout Sinjiang, or Chinese Turkestan. At the turn of the century, Lady Catherine Macartney, wife of the British ambassador to Kashghar, George Macartney, reported the existence of 'a considerable colony of British-Indian merchants at Yarkand and Kashghar' as well as Hindu merchants and other Indians living in a number of cities and villages on the trade routes between India and Kashghar.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 236. See also Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, pp. 27–31. Kaushik also notes Indians living in Kulab, Khatirchi and Uratebe. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 234. See also Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, p. 26 notes 2–4.

<sup>111</sup> Catherine Macartney, *An English Lady in Chinese Turkestan*, 1931, reprint, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 30, 59–60.

This is supported by the account of the Swedish archeologist Sven Hedin, who stayed in an Indian caravanserai during his visit to Kashghar. According to Hedin, the caravanserai's 'principal inhabitants were half a score Hindus from Shikarpur, importers of cloth from India by way of Leh, Karakorum, Shahidula, and Yarkand. But their chief business was moneylending; and by exacting exorbitant rates of interest they had so completely got the people into their power, that the greater portion of the proceeds of the harvest flowed into their pockets.'<sup>112</sup> Markovits notes the comparatively late extension of Shikarpuri merchants into this region. Thus, in the 1830s Alexander Burnes observed some Shikarpuri activity in Yarkand and in 1900 George Macartney estimated there to be some 130 Shikarpuri moneylenders in all of Sinjiang. But over the next seven years, as their commercial prospects further to the west waned, this figure grew to some 500 individuals living in communities dispersed throughout southern Sinjiang. These communities remained active until their trade was disrupted by the tumultuous popular uprisings of 1933.<sup>113</sup>

Prior to moving on with our survey, it should be noted that, although Indian merchants are known to have maintained commercial connections in Khiva and Urgench and, especially during the mid-eighteenth-century turmoil in Iran, to have passed through the Khivan Khanate as they traveled between Bukhara and Astrakhan, there does not appear to have been, at any time, an Indian diaspora community in that region.<sup>114</sup> This aberration is attributable to the comparatively poor demand for loans and credit in Khwarezm due to the region's limited agricultural and village-industrial production, and also to the poor commercial climate fostered by the notoriously xenophobic and predatory Khivan Khans.<sup>115</sup> In his assessment of Khivan trade, Burnes reported that, 'Hindoos and Armenians pass through Khiva, but neither they nor foreign merchants, though Mahommedans, feel at ease while in the country. The bales are opened, the caravans delayed, and much property has been at times

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<sup>112</sup> Sven Hedin, *Through Asia*, 2 vols, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899, I, p. 251.

<sup>113</sup> See the discussion on Shikarpuri activity in Sinjiang in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 94–98.

<sup>114</sup> The Indian Sutar, identified as one of the greatest Indian merchant in seventeenth-century Astrakhan, is known to have maintained commercial connections in Khiva and Urgench as well as in the Iranian cities 'Kazbin' (Qazvin), Isfahan and Tabriz, in a number of Caucasian cities, and in such Russian cities as Moscow and Yaroslavl'. Surendra Gopal, 'A Brief Note on Business Organisation of Indian Merchants in Russia in the 17th Century,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 29, 1 (1986), p. 210.

<sup>115</sup> It should be remembered that neither Khiva nor Urgench was included in the lengthy list of cities populated by Shikarpuri merchants provided by Alexander Burnes, cited in chapter two. See Burnes, *Cabool*, pp. 58–59.

extorted; where the chief sets the example of plunder, the people will not be honest.’<sup>116</sup>

### *B. Afghanistan*

Much as was the case in Turan, Indian merchants in Afghanistan maintained communities in towns and villages of all sizes. In the centuries following Babur’s establishment of the Mughal Empire, Kabul hosted the largest Indian merchant community in Afghan territory. This can be attributed to both its central location on trade routes connecting India and Turan and its status as a Mughal regional capital on India’s northwest frontier. The pre-eminence of Hindu merchants in Kabul’s commerce led the early seventeenth-century English diplomat Thomas Herbert to characterize the city’s population as mostly Baniyas, further reporting that, other than two forts, caravanserais were the only notable structures in this important commercial center.<sup>117</sup> Several decades later, in the 1660s, Thevenot remarked that the region of ‘Caboulistan is full of small Towns, Burroughs and Villages; most of the Inhabitants are heathen [Hindu]: and therefore there are a great many Pagods [temples] there.’<sup>118</sup> While in Kabul, Thevenot witnessed the Hindus’ celebration of the festival of Holi, and he further noted that their ‘chief Charity’ was digging wells and maintaining rest stops along the trade routes ‘for the convenience of travellers.’<sup>119</sup>

As was the case of the Indian communities in Turan, estimates of the size of the diaspora communities in Kabul do not become available until the nineteenth century. In the 1840s Mohan Lal passed through the city and reported that, of Kabul’s total population of some 60,000 nearly 2,000 were Hindus.<sup>120</sup> Burnes casts some doubt as to the proper identification of all of these Hindus as merchants, however, by drawing a distinction between the Shikarpuri merchants of Kabul, who ‘never bring their families from their country,’ and other Hindus living in Kabul. Still, he observed in Kabul no fewer than eight

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<sup>116</sup> Idem, *Travels to Bukhara*, II, p. 387.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels into Divers Parts of Africa, and Asia the Great...*, microfilm, London, 1677, p. 77.

<sup>118</sup> Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot*, p. 81.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 64, 74.

‘great houses of agency’ (family firms) which were operated by some three hundred families.<sup>121</sup> Whether or not all 2,000 Hindus mentioned by Mohan Lal were agents of family firms, it is clear that Kabul was an important center of commercial activity and home to a considerable number of diaspora merchants.

Another large Indian diaspora node in Afghan-controlled territory was in Qalat, Baluchistan, an important city on the trade routes connecting Qandahar with Multan, Shikarpur and the Indian ports to the south. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Henry Pottinger left a rather detailed account of his impressions of Qalat’s Indian community:

The Hindoos who reside at Kelat are principally mercantile speculators from the cities of Mooltan and Shikarpoor, and are much respected both by the government and people in general: nor is any molestation offered to them in the free exercise of their religion. They do not, however, venture to bring their wives or female relations to this city, an unanswerable proof of their not themselves, having that entire confidence in the good faith of the government, which its toleration, and the encouragement it holds forth to them to colonize here might seem to authorize. Their numbers are very considerable, as they occupy between four and five hundred of the best houses within the city walls, and many of them are likewise extremely opulent... They have a pagoda and several Brahmins attached to it, who are maintained by voluntary contributions, and a duty which the Hindoos, by an ancient grant, are permitted to levy on goods entering the city; this is called Dhurum pysa or religious money.<sup>122</sup>

While traversing Afghanistan, Pottinger noted Hindu merchants conducting business in towns varying in size from small villages to regional capitals. These included Bela, on the northern bank of the Purali river; Khojar, which he described as being so dominated by Multani and Shikarpuri Hindus that ‘the keys of the town gate are entrusted in the hands of their senior Brahman every night’; and Tuman, which had a very small community of only six Hindu shopkeepers and their families. He also observed Hindus living in Sistan (a province on the border with Iran) and Makran (a southern province on the coast of the Arabian Sea), where they were engaged in a barter trade with the local population, exchanging various imports for the annual date crop, which they then shipped to markets in Bombay.<sup>123</sup> The central position of Qandahar in the caravan trade of Mughal India, Safavid Iran and Uzbek Turan has been noted above. The report of Angus Hamilton demonstrates that Qandahar continued in this role even into the twentieth century, when it

<sup>121</sup> Burnes, *Travels to Bukhara*, I, p. 169.

<sup>122</sup> Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, pp. 77–78.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 20, 35–37, 103, 110–11, 124–25, 307.

was still home to some three hundred Hindu families living in their own quarter of the town.<sup>124</sup> Other sources note the commercial dominance of Hindu merchants in Faizabad, Taliqan, Khanabad and Tashkurgan (Khulum), as well as their activities in Jalalabad, Maimana, Ghazni, La'lpura and, in the nineteenth century, Mazar-i Sharif.<sup>125</sup> The wealth of these communities is demonstrated by the report that, in the mid-1830s, the Afghan leader Dost Muhammad (r. 1826–39, 1843–63) raised nearly 500,000 rupees for his military by taking loans from merchants—Hindus and Muslims—and collecting the *jizya* (a tax levied specifically on non-Muslims in an Islamic state) from Hindus in Kabul, Ghazni and Jalalabad.<sup>126</sup>

The observations made by Mountstuart Elphinstone and George Campbell in the nineteenth century clearly establish the pervasive presence of Hindus throughout urban and rural Afghanistan at that time. According to Elphinstone, ‘the Hindoos...are to be found over the whole kingdom of Caubul. In towns they are in considerable numbers as brokers, merchants, bankers, goldsmiths, sellers of grain, &c. There is scarce a village in the country without a family or two who exercise the above trades, and act as accountants, moneychangers, &c. They spread into the north of Persia, but in small numbers, owing to the bad treatment they receive. They are encouraged in Bokhaura and other towns in Tartary.’<sup>127</sup> Again, Campbell adds to this that, in Afghanistan, ‘no village can get on without the Khatri who keeps the accounts, does the banking business, and buys and sells the grain. They seem, too, to get on with the people better than most traders and usurers of this kind... I do not know the exact limits of Khatri occupation to the West, but certainly in all Eastern Afghanistan they seem to be just as much a part of the established community as they are in the Punjab.’<sup>128</sup>

In Mohan Lal’s account of his experiences traveling through northern Afghanistan to Bukhara he recorded meeting Hindu merchants in many of the urban centers and villages through which he passed. He came across a number of Hindus in the village of Haibak (near the well-known medieval town of Samangan, situated on an important Hindu Kush caravan route two-days journey southeast of Khulum), a Hindu banker in Khulum (two-days

<sup>124</sup> Angus Hamilton, *Afghanistan*, London: William Heinemann, 1906, p. 194.

<sup>125</sup> Adamec, *Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, IV, pp. 398, 412; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, pp. 17, 63–64 and note 22, 184; Moorcroft and Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, pp. 413, 451.

<sup>126</sup> Noelle, *State and Tribe*, p. 17.

<sup>127</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 413–14 and note.

<sup>128</sup> Campbell, *Ethnology of India*, cited in Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, III, pp. 458–59.

journey east of Balkh), and a Hindu community occupying the caravanserais of the once-prosperous city of Balkh, the members of which were noted by Moorcroft as identifiable by 'a painted mark on the forehead.'<sup>129</sup> Near the city of Kafir Qil'a, in northwestern Afghanistan, Mohan Lal stayed at a fort known as Qil'a-i Hindu which, he reported, was built by a wealthy and charitable Hindu merchant to shelter and provide food and fodder for needy travelers and their animals.<sup>130</sup> His account also mentions meeting a Hindu in the small village Khail-i Akhund, and a Sikh in the larger village of Qil'a-i Jumah.<sup>131</sup>

Herat was another important center of Hindu commercial activity in the diaspora. Near the end of the eighteenth century, Forster reported that there were roughly one hundred Hindu Multanis in Herat living in two caravanserais and conducting 'a brisk commerce, and extending a long chain of credit.'<sup>132</sup> It is an interesting contradiction in the sources that, just a few years later, in 1810, the British Captain Charles Christie observed some six hundred 'highly respected' Hindu merchants in Herat, and less than forty years later Mohan Lal found in Herat a community of Shikarpuris restricted to only one of the city's seven caravanserais.<sup>133</sup> In the 1840s Ferrier also came across a rather small, but 'immensely rich' community of Shikarpuri Hindus in Herat. He reported that, in addition to their trade, these Hindus were active in the state administration as they enjoyed a privileged position in the government of Yar Muhammad and were even granted the rights to farm nearly all the taxes in the district.<sup>134</sup> Christie attributed the Hindus' privileged status to the government administrators' appreciation of their role as the primary suppliers of investment capital for the region and concluded that, because of this, 'the government is sensible of their value, and they have in consequence much influence. They live in the best Suraés, and have gardens outside, but do not venture to bring

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<sup>129</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 95–96, 107, 110; Moorcroft and Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, p. 494. See also Noelle, *State and Tribe*, p. 24. For an excellent geographical discussion of this area, see the essay, 'Geographical Survey of Transoxania,' in Bartol'd, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, pp. 64–179.

<sup>130</sup> Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 222.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 324, 326.

<sup>132</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 151.

<sup>133</sup> 'Abstract of Captain Christie's Journal,' in Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, p. 415; Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, pp. 263–64. The larger estimate is further supported by the assessment of Vartan Gregorian that there were roughly seven hundred Hindu merchants living in Herat in the early twentieth century. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 62–63.

<sup>134</sup> Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys*, p. 454.

their families with them to this city.’<sup>135</sup>

Herat was not the only location in the long history of the Indian diaspora in Afghanistan where Hindu merchant-moneylenders were active in the government administration. Indeed, the dominant role of Hindu merchants in the administration of Afghan state finances dates back at least to the early years of the eighteenth-century Durrani state. The Durrani ruling elite made it policy to farm-out tax-revenue collecting privileges throughout their realm and, according to the Russian academician Yuri Gankovsky, the tax-farmers were often Hindu merchant-moneylenders from Shikarpur.<sup>136</sup> Gankovsky notes that Indian merchants were in charge of many aspects of the financial administration of Durrani Afghanistan:

They were also in charge of deliveries for the army and purchased, sold and resold military booty; they even financed Ahmad Shah’s campaigns. Indian merchants supplied goods, mainly items of luxury, to the shah’s court and Afghan nobility. The Durrani sardars put them in charge of military booty and money; the money was then put into circulation. They made loans to Afghan khans who needed them, at high interest rates. Loans were also given (but not always voluntarily) to the Afghan government and vilayat hakims: quite often, taxes from entire provinces were used as a security of these loans. Gradually, Indian merchants and usurers came to occupy many important posts in the state financial body and the tax apparatus both in the centre and the provinces.<sup>137</sup>

Forster similarly reported that, during the reign of the Durrani ruler Timur Shah (1773–93), Indian merchants enjoyed the protection of the ruling elite and continued to play an active role in the financial administration of the state.<sup>138</sup> In the early 1820s Moorcroft and Trebek observed the activities of Atma Ram, a Hindu native of Peshawar who was the Afghan ruler Mir Murad Beg’s Diwanbegi (a high ranking officer of the state), and Atma Ram’s deputy, a Hindu customs officer named Bysakhi Ram.<sup>139</sup> According to Moorcroft, while traveling from Ghazni to Khulum he and his company had the ill-fortune to meet Bysakhi Ram, who blatantly abused his position by attempting to extort a bribe from the company and force them to sell their goods at Tashkurgan ‘in order that the Hindus might reap the profit of a

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<sup>135</sup> ‘Abstract of Captain Christie’s Journal,’ in Pottinger, *Travels in Beloochistan*, p. 415.

<sup>136</sup> Gankovsky, ‘The Durrani Empire,’ p. 84.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>138</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 73.

<sup>139</sup> See also Harlan, *Central Asia*, p. 65.



resale at Bokhara.’<sup>140</sup> Several years later, Atma Ram purchased the privilege to collect transit taxes on the Kabul-Bukhara caravan route for an annual payment of 25,000 rupees. By the late 1830s the caravan traffic was apparently deemed to be more valuable and the price of this privilege was raised to 40,000 rupees.<sup>141</sup> In addition to dominating the taxation of the Indo-Turanian transit trade through Afghanistan and nearly monopolizing Afghanistan’s trade with Yarkand, Atma Ram provides a rare example of a Hindu official in an Islamic administration whose influence was so great that he was even allowed to own a considerable retinue of Muslim slaves.<sup>142</sup>

The Hindus’ commercial influence in late nineteenth-century Afghanistan is further demonstrated by the establishment in Kabul of a secular court responsible for mediating all commercial disputes.<sup>143</sup> This tribunal, identified as a *panchayat* (again, an Indian term referring to a council ideally of five elders), was founded by Amīr ‘Abd al-Rahman (r. 1890–1901), who appointed seven magistrates, four Muslims and three Hindus, all of whom were identified as influential and trustworthy merchants.<sup>144</sup> Vartan Gregorian attributes ‘Abd al-Rahman’s motivation in this affair to an effort to improve Afghanistan’s commerce by removing the Hindu merchants from the jurisdiction of the religious courts.<sup>145</sup> Toward this end, it is worthwhile to note that, while ‘Abd al-Rahman was living in Tashkent in 1879, he was interviewed by a Hindu reporter named Ramchander. During this meeting, Ramchander talked with the Amīr about a number of issues relating to the Hindu merchant communities in Afghanistan and suggested that he could accumulate a great amount of wealth by protecting the commercial interests of the Hindus.<sup>146</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahman’s

<sup>140</sup> Moorcroft and Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, pp. 413, 437.

<sup>141</sup> Noelle, *State and Tribe*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>142</sup> Moorcroft and Trebek, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, II, p. 451; Mohan Lal, *Travels in the Panjab*, p. 101.

<sup>143</sup> I am greatly indebted to Amin Tarzi for bringing to my attention all of the information on the existence and operation of the *panchayat* system in Kabul.

<sup>144</sup> Faiz Muhammad Katib, *Siraj al-tawarikh*, 3 vols, Kabul, 1913–15, III, p. 921. The Muslim members were identified as Mulla Khwaja Muhammad Kabuli, Sayyid Mir Jan, Mulla Darwaysh Muhammad, Mulla ‘Abd al-Ghiyas Kabuli, with Sayyid Dust ‘Ali Shah Fushanji appointed as the commissioner (*muhtamim*). The Hindus were identified as Diwan Ishir Das, Yajal Das and Diwan Ramchand Shikarpuri.

<sup>145</sup> Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 136, 183.

<sup>146</sup> Ramchander (Rachmender), ‘Moi vazit Abdurakhman'-khanu v Tashkente,’ (‘My Visit to Abdurahman Khan in Tashkent’), *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 243, pp. 10–12. Originally published in *St. Petersburgskiiia vedomosti*, 1880, no. 21.

establishment of the secular *panchayat* tribunal over a decade later suggests that he seriously considered, and agreed with, Ramchander's advice.

### C. Iran

From the early years of the diaspora, Iranian cities attracted a great number of Indian merchants, facilitated by Iran's accessibility from India by caravan routes through Qandahar and maritime routes through the ports of Surat, Thatta, Lahori Bandar and Bandar 'Abbas. Already in 1562 Anthony Jenkinson mentioned meeting Indian merchants in Qazvin, the capital of Safavid Iran at the time.<sup>147</sup> Just a few years after Jenkinson's account, Thomas Bannister and Jeffrey Duckett passed through Russia on their journey to Iran (1568–74) and, although they visited Astrakhan and other cities later known to host Indian diaspora communities, their account mentions nothing of Indians until they reached the northern Iranian city of Kashan, which they describe as a major trade entrepôt 'greatly frequented by the merchants of India.'<sup>148</sup> Kashan's importance as an Iranian commercial center was likewise noted in 1603 by John Cartwright, who also observed that Indians were a predominant presence in that city's commercial community at that time.<sup>149</sup> Later documents show Indians to have continued their commercial activities in Kashan even to the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>150</sup>

The central role of the Safavid capital of Isfahan in the Indian merchant diaspora during the seventeenth century has been noted above. The earliest available observation suggesting the presence of an Indian merchant diaspora community in Isfahan, made by Pietro Della Valle in December 1617, also identifies Indians as the most important of the foreign trading communities in

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<sup>147</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 149. In 1555 Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76) moved the Safavid capital from Tabriz to Qazvin as it was less vulnerable to Ottoman aggression. Qazvin remained the Safavid capital until Shah 'Abbas transferred it to Isfahan shortly before his expedition to Khurasan to fight the Uzbeks in 1598. David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040–1749*, 1988, reprint, London: Longman, 1997, p. 137; Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 63, 83–84.

<sup>148</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, II, appendix IX, pp. 428–29.

<sup>149</sup> John Cartwright, 'Observations of Master John Cartwright in his Voyage from Aleppo to Hispaan, and backe againe...', in Purchas, ed., *Hakluytus Posthumus*, VIII, p. 509.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Antonova I, doc. 17, 1641, pp. 44–45 where one 'Lekunas' is identified as an Indian from Kashan visiting Astrakhan; Vera B. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry During the Afghan Invasion*, Stuttgart: Frans Steiner, 1990, p. 35, where in 1723 there were seven or eight Multani merchant families functioning in Kashan; Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 187.

Iran at the time.<sup>151</sup> Although Della Valle did not venture an estimate as to the number of Indians living in Isfahan, just two decades later, in November 1637, Adam Olearius observed that in Isfahan there lived ‘ordinarily about twelve thousand Indians.’<sup>152</sup> The presence of a rather large number of Indian merchants living in Iran at this time is supported by a report given to the Russian administration by an Indian merchant identified as ‘Sutur,’ who was among the first Indians to extend his commercial interests into the Russian markets. Sutur had close ties to the Indian merchant communities in Iran, as was common of the Indians in Astrakhan, and in 1647 he informed the Muscovite Embassies’ Department that there were 10,000 Indians who lived in Iran ‘without leaving.’<sup>153</sup> Sutur’s care in expressing that these Indians *lived* in Iran differentiates the diaspora merchants from the more common caravan traders, who went unaccounted in his estimation. This is supported by the estimate of Thevenot that in the 1660s there were some 15,000 Indian merchants in Isfahan alone, and also by the estimate of Englebert Kaempfer that in the 1680s the Indian merchant population in Isfahan should be placed at the lower, although still remarkable, figure of 10,000.<sup>154</sup> Considering these

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<sup>151</sup> Della Valle, *I Viaggi Di Pietro Della Valle*, p. 39. According to this account, ‘Gli habitatori di Persia son di Più sorti. Prima, gli avventitii, forestieri di più nationi, che vengono a trafficare; ma più di tutti, Indiani, et in particolare una gente che chiamano Baniani, di professione mercanti, e per lo più del paese di Guzaràt, che già haveva Re proprio, ma hora è del Gran Moghòl. Parte di costoro son mahomettani, com’è anche hoggidi il Re Lahòr, o Moghòl, che è signore della maggior parte dell’India; e parte son gentili, adorando diversi idoli, di che, perché io professo di scriver cose non intese, ma solo certamente vedute, non posso né voglio ancora dar relatione, non essendone infin adesso perfettamente informato.’ It is an interesting aberration in the sources that Della Valle reported that these Indians originated from Gujarat, not Multan.

<sup>152</sup> Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels*, p. 299.

<sup>153</sup> Antonova I, doc. 33, 1647, p. 85. Sutur reported to the Embassies’ Department that ‘...многие индейцы в шаховых городех живут безвыходно, есть де их 10,000 индейцов, живут без выезду’ (‘...many Indians in the Shah’s cities live without a way out, of them there are, they say, 10,000 Indians who live [there] without leaving’). It is important to note that, although Sutur presents a rather dismal portrait of these Indians’ plight in mid-seventeenth-century Iran, this should not be accepted unquestioningly as it is likely to have been part of a strategic effort to improve the Indians’ financial benefits in Astrakhan by suggesting that, should Astrakhan attract more Indian merchants from Iran, the Russian government would be in a position to collect more income in taxes. Furthermore, it is not confirmed by contemporary travelers’ accounts.

<sup>154</sup> Jean de Thevenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant*, translated by R. L’Estrange, 3 parts, London, 1687, II, p. 111; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs 1684–1685*, p. 204. See also Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life*, pp. 229–31

estimates it seems reasonable to accept Jean Chardin's assertion that the total population of Indian merchants residing in the Shah's territory in the 1660s, collectively identified as Multanis, was in excess of 20,000.<sup>155</sup>

The Indian merchants in Iran are described by Thevenot as 'Banians' whose commercial activities were entirely restricted to moneylending.<sup>156</sup> Chardin likewise characterized the Indian community in Isfahan as usurers who 'milked the people's wealth and cleverly smuggled it in the form of pure silver coins out of the country.'<sup>157</sup> This assertion is repeated by Tavernier who, as mentioned above, reported that the Hindus 'follow the same occupation as the Jews...and they surpass them in their usury.'<sup>158</sup> The Indian diaspora's commercial interests in Iran were not, however, restricted to moneylending. Indeed, Olearius entirely overlooked their moneylending activities and focused instead on their role as large-scale long-distance traders, remarking that their goods were of better quality and more expensive than those of the Iranian merchants.<sup>159</sup>

The impressive number of Indian merchant-moneylenders in seventeenth-century Isfahan may be attributed to its central location at the crossroads of latitudinal and longitudinal caravan routes traversing Iran, and to the patronage of Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629). Commodities passed through Isfahan as caravans moved goods between India and the Levant, from where they were further transported to north Africa and Europe, and between the Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea, from where they were taken to Ukraine and Moscovy, largely via Astrakhan. The Iranians endeavored to maintain control of the Caspian Sea route to facilitate Russo-Iranian trade relations and circumvent Ottoman territory during the frequent periods of Safavid-Ottoman or Ottoman-Russian hostility. This added commercial importance to the Iranian cities between Isfahan and the Caspian coast, especially in the Gilan and Shirwan provinces, the location of a number of Indian diaspora communities since shortly after the Safavids' reconquest of these provinces from the Ottomans at the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>160</sup> Information from seventeenth-

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and notes 75–82; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 57, 66–67.

<sup>155</sup> Chardin, *The Coronation of this Present King of Persia*, p. 100.

<sup>156</sup> Thevenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot*, II, p. 111.

<sup>157</sup> Cited in Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life*, p. 230.

<sup>158</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, I, p. 74.

<sup>159</sup> Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels*, p. 299.

<sup>160</sup> Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, pp. 196–97. During his travels throughout Iran in the late seventeenth century, Struys witnessed caravans coming from Bandar 'Abbas loaded with Indian goods destined for cities on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. See Struys,

century Astrakhan demonstrates the regular movement of Indian merchants between Astrakhan and the Iranian cities of Qazvin, Tabriz and 'Liangur' (probably Langarud, near Lahijan, on the Caspian coast in Gilan province).<sup>161</sup>

While in Iran in the 1620s, Thomas Herbert noted that there were Indian merchant communities in Isfahan and Amol, the latter of which was one of the principal towns of Mazandaran province, located near the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Herbert also reported that the great Persian Gulf port of Bandar 'Abbas was home to a number of foreign merchant communities, among which he rather confusingly included both Indians and 'Bannyans.'<sup>162</sup> Tavernier reported that, although the Bania moneylenders had offices in the ports of Bandar 'Abbas and Bandar Kung (an important port city prior to the rise of nearby Bandar Linga, located some 150 kilometers west of Bandar 'Abbas), their central offices were inland in Lar (some 200 kilometers west-northwest of Bandar 'Abbas, in Laristan province), Isfahan, and Shiraz, where the Indians owned one of the finest bazaars in the city and inhabited a rather large caravanserai, equipped with some 200 apartments.<sup>163</sup> Chardin's account adds to this that the population of Bandar 'Abbas was two-thirds Indian and that the Indians were, along with the Armenians, the premier long-distance traders of Iran, as well as active domestic traders.<sup>164</sup> The importance of the Indians to Iranian trade is affirmed by Raphaël du Mans. In his report, 'Estat de la Perse en 1660,' for the court of King Louis XIV, du Mans stated that 'Les principales factureries d'icy sont les toiles qui viennent des Indes, et des marchands forains les acheptent icy pour les transporter par toute la Turquie, la Tartarie et la Perse. Les plus grands Négociateurs de cette marchandise sont les Indiens, appellés icy Hindou ou Moultoni, ou et beaucoup de Persiens. Ces marchands, la loy les appelle *bazzaze*.'<sup>165</sup> Writing at nearly the same time

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*The Voyages and Travels*, pp. 329, 342.

<sup>161</sup> See, for example, Antonova I, doc. 57, 1654, pp. 123–30.

<sup>162</sup> Herbert, *Some Years Travels*, pp. 112, 161, 190–91.

<sup>163</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels en Perse et description de ce royaume*, Paris, 1930, p. 338. The presence of an Indian community in Shiraz at the end of the eighteenth century is noted in William Francklin, *Observations Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia, in the Years 1786–7*, London: T. Cadell, 1790, pp. 59–61. The citation regarding the caravanserai in Shiraz can be found in Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, p. 67.

<sup>164</sup> Chardin, *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia*, pp. 280–81. At the onset of a potential conflict between the Dutch and the English in Bandar 'Abbas in February 1678, the entire Bania community temporarily deserted for Bandar Kangun, about 160 kilometers to the west. Fryer, *A New Account*, II, pp. 325–26 and note 2.

<sup>165</sup> du Mans, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, pp. 180–81. It should be remembered that *bazzāz* is Persian for 'cloth merchant' and, even in the early fourteenth century, Barani

as du Mans, Fryer claimed that there were Banias ‘in all the cities of Persia.’<sup>166</sup>

Although no available evidence suggests any disruption of the Indian communities in eighteenth-century Turan or Afghanistan (where the Hindus’ situation appears to have actually improved under Durrani patronage), the Indian merchant communities in Iran suffered severely following the 1722 Ghilzai Afghan invasion and occupation of much of Iran. According to the chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz, an Armenian observer of the Afghan invasion, the Hindu community of Isfahan was decimated. The Afghans demanded 25,000 tomans from the Hindus as their ‘indemnity’ but, because the Hindus’ capital was engaged in investments, they were able to raise only 20,000. Mahmud, the Afghan leader, responded violently. Many Hindus fled to safer places or returned home, while others are reported as having been so distraught at their financial ruin that they drank poison or simply died of grief. Gilanentz reported that:

Only a few Indians were left in the town; these people had advanced money to the Muḥammadans against promissory notes (*sanad*) and jewels, gold, silver and house ornaments (*zinat*). Maḥmud took all these valuables from them without payment, not even regarding them as forming part of their indemnity. The shops of those Multanis who had died or had fled were consequently closed, but Maḥmud had them opened and seized all their contents.<sup>167</sup>

Anti-Hindu activities continued in the wake of the Afghans’ ejection from Iran by Nadir Shah Afshar (r. 1736–47). Information regarding Nadir Shah’s specific policies toward the Indian merchant communities is scanty, although reports from the Indian communities of later years suggest that Nadir Shah was attracted by the Hindus’ monetary reserves and used their unprotected status as a pretense for confiscating much of their wealth and property (by Islamic law Hindus, unlike Jews or Christians, were not considered *dhimmīs*,

associates the Multanis with their large-scale trade in textiles. TFS, pp. 310–11.

<sup>166</sup> Fryer, *A New Account*, II, p. 216.

<sup>167</sup> Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz, *The chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz concerning the Afghan invasion of Persia in 1722, the siege of Isfahan and the repercussions in northern Persia, Russia and Turkey*, translated from Armenian by Caro Minasian, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1959, p. 36. The Indian trader Kansiram’s appeal to the Astrakhan administration to increase the Indians’ trading privileges in Russia provides an image of the brutal social and economic condition of the Indian merchants in Iran in the anarchy following the death of Nadir Shah. Antonova II, doc. 134, 1750, pp. 272–73. See also the account of the Afghan occupation of Isfahan presented in Jonas Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea*, 4 vols, London: T. Osborne, 1753, III, pp. 159–65. According to Hanway the Indian merchants of Isfahan were ‘taxed at the rate of 27,000 tomans.’

‘people of the book,’ and were therefore not required to be protected).<sup>168</sup> This traumatic experience remained in the collective memory of the Hindus even as late as 1824, at which time the Hindus in Baku reported that, although they currently had no complaints about their treatment, ‘Nadir Shah treated their predecessors with great cruelty; impaling them, and putting them to several kinds of tortures.’<sup>169</sup>

Prosperity returned to Indian merchants in Iran following Nadir Shah’s assassination in 1747. The founder of the Zand dynasty, Muhammad Karim Khan (r. 1751–79), while technically *wakīl* (vice-regent) for the Safavid puppet ruler Ismail III, effectively seized power in southern Iran and brought an era of prosperity to much of the country. This was accompanied by the Zand administration’s reinstatement of a policy of tolerance toward foreign merchant communities, especially notable in its encouragement of British commercial activity in the Persian Gulf port of Bushehr and in the return of significant numbers of Hindu merchants to Iranian markets. Government-sponsored anti-Hindu activity in Iran had long come to an end by Edward Waring’s account of 1802, which reports that, in Bushehr, ‘the Hindoos live unmolested by the Persians, and are neither insulted nor oppressed by the government.’ Waring further exclaimed that ‘this wonderful and extraordinary race of people are spread nearly over the face of the globe.’<sup>170</sup> The Hindus’ return to Iranian markets is supported by Forster’s late eighteenth-century report that there were nearly one hundred Indian families from Multan and Jaisalmer living in their own private quarter in the Iranian town of Tarshish where, according to Forster, ‘they conducted business without molestation or insult.’<sup>171</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, George Curzon made several astute observations regarding the position of Hindus in Iran at the time. For example, he noted that, even though Jews were forbidden to live in Simnan, that city hosted a small community of some twenty-five Indian merchants who had settled there because of its location on a trade routes connecting Bandar ‘Abbas with the northern provinces.<sup>172</sup> He also mentioned coming across a

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<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that, at least during the period of Ghilzai Afghan domination, the *dhimmī* status of Iranian Jews and Christian Armenians did not save them from severe fines and hardship. Cf. Gilanentz, *The chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz*, pp. 35–36; Moreen, *Iranian Jewry During the Afghan Invasion*, passim.

<sup>169</sup> Keppel, *Personal Narrative*, p. 294.

<sup>170</sup> Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>171</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 186.

<sup>172</sup> George Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols, 1892, reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966, I, p. 291.

community of some forty Hindu merchants from Shikarpur, as well as Jews and Armenians, who enjoyed an agreeable commercial climate in late nineteenth-century Kirman, which he contrasted with Pottinger's rather depressed portrait of the city from the beginning of the century.<sup>173</sup> Most interesting, however, is Curzon's observation that, much as was the case in Afghanistan, Hindu merchants in Iran were also involved in the state's revenue collection system. According to this account, 'in the various maritime towns and villages, he [the governor of Bushehr] leases the customs for a stipulated sum, as a rule, to some enterprising local merchant, frequently a Hindu Buniah.' Curzon further asserted that the chief traders in the port cities of Bandar Linga and Bandar 'Abbas at that time were Hindu merchants from Shikarpur and Sind and that 'the customs are commonly farmed by them.'<sup>174</sup>

Waring's statement regarding the proliferation of Indian communities 'nearly over the face of the globe,' while intriguing, says little about the number of Indian merchant communities in Iran and their degree of dispersion throughout, and their activities in, the countryside.<sup>175</sup> This is a criticism which may be applied to the accounts of nearly all the European travelers of this era, as their experiences are generally restricted to the main urban centers and trade routes. While Forster's account is not an exception to this rule, it is comparatively well-informed. According to this report, in addition to Tarshish, in the late eighteenth century there were significant Hindu merchant communities in the Iranian towns of Meshed, Yazd, Kashan and Qazvin.<sup>176</sup> Forster also noted that a number of Indian communities were active in Iranian towns on the shores of the Caspian Sea, but that there were larger Indian communities engaged in maritime commerce in the numerous Iranian ports on the Persian Gulf.

During the early seventeenth century, Indian diaspora communities endeavoring to mediate Russia's growing trade with the East spread northward from their Iranian centers to the Gilan coastline in northwestern Iran (northwest

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 244.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 401, 407.

<sup>175</sup> This apparent exaggeration is actually supported by the recent work of Markovitz which demonstrates that, in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial global economy, the 'Hyderabadi' (Hyderabad-Sind) merchant network extended as far as Panama to the west and Japan to the east. Waring, *A Tour to Sheeraz*, pp. 3–4; Markovitz, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 112–13.

<sup>176</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, pp. 186–87. Nearly sixty years later, Ferrier passed through Meshed and, although he does not leave an account of a diaspora community, he mentioned coming across a rogue Hindu who caused considerable disorder by entering the tomb of Imam Reza without permission, Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys*, p. 126.



of Mazandaran province) and into the Safavid-controlled Caucasus, largely concentrating in the port cities on the Caspian Sea. Curzon noted that, in Gilan province, the town of Rasht hosted a community of Indian merchants, as well as communities of other foreign nationalities, until that town lost its commercial significance in the 1830s.<sup>177</sup> As mentioned above, in 1671 Struys visited Shemakhi, the old capital of Shirwan province (north of Gilan province), just over 100 kilometers west of Baku, where he came across a Hindu community consisting of ‘about 100 *banians*’ engaged in a religious ritual which Struys described as ‘performing Sacrifices to the Fowls and Fish.’<sup>178</sup> During his travels through the Caucasus, Struys also noted Indian communities in Baku, Ardebil and Derbent, the capital of Daghestan, on the northwest coast of the Caspian Sea.<sup>179</sup> A series of Russian archival documents dating from 1672 to 1687 demonstrate that at that time the Indian community in Derbent was especially active in the movement of goods between that city and Astrakhan.<sup>180</sup> Baku was also an important commercial center for merchants involved in the considerable trans-Caspian trade with Astrakhan, much of which was mediated by Hindu and Armenian merchants whom, over a century later, Forster jointly referred to as ‘the principal merchants of Shirwan.’<sup>181</sup> In terms of the geographical trajectories of these commercial networks, Forster reported that, although some Indian merchants came to Baku via the overland caravan routes traversing Afghan territory, most of those who traveled to the Caucasus did so via the Indian Ocean maritime routes, embarking at the Sindi port of Thatta, traveling by sea to Basra, and continuing northward through Iran by caravan.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Curzon, *Persia*, I, pp. 384–85.

<sup>178</sup> Struys, *The Voyages and Travels*, p. 275.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 250, 256, 275, 296. See also the discussion of Daghestan in Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir*, pp. 353–56. Kinneir does not, however, mention Indians in his description of the capital city, Derbent, during the early nineteenth century.

<sup>180</sup> Antonova I, docs 96–97, 1672, p. 174; docs 149–62, 1676, pp. 258–66; docs 164–65, 1676, pp. 266–67; doc. 171, 1677, pp. 275–76; doc. 196–97, 1680, p. 294; doc. 227, 1687, pp. 339–40; docs 230–31, 1687, pp. 341–42; doc. 237, 1688, p. 344.

<sup>181</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, p. 256.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 256–57. The English moved their factory from Bandar ‘Abbas to Basra in 1645. Shortly thereafter, Basra’s improved commercial potential and role as a Persian Gulf port attracted an Indian merchant community. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, p. 119.

*D. Russia*

There was an Indian merchant community in Astrakhan from the first half of the seventeenth century, long before Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725) actively encouraged Indians to trade inside Russia. Still, it was not until Peter's reign that the number of Indians settled in Astrakhan exceeded two hundred: a figure not accounting for the roughly two hundred other Indian merchants who annually visited Astrakhan from Iran and Bukhara without staying.<sup>183</sup> Although Indians are known to have extended their commerce well beyond Astrakhan, their activities in Russia were focused in this central diaspora node, which remained active into the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>184</sup> Archival documents dating from 1738 to 1765 discuss the activities of an Indian merchant community in Kiziliar, a Caucasian city situated between Derbent and Astrakhan near the northwest coast of the Caspian Sea. It is not surprising that these activities included moneylending, and Indians in Kiziliar are documented as having purchased from the local residents Nogai (Tatar) slaves and immovable property, including shops, farm buildings, houses and courtyards. This suggests a rather stable Indian community in that city. Furthermore, based on what is known of the Indians' moneylending techniques, it can be inferred that these properties were probably used as collateral on loans issued by the Indians which had defaulted, following which the property was remitted to the Indian moneylenders.<sup>185</sup> In the seventeenth century,

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<sup>183</sup> N. B. Golikova, *Ocherki po istorii gorodov Rossii, kontsa XVII–nachala XVIII v.*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1982, pp. 169–70; Antonova II, doc. 69, 1735, pp. 128–33. The second estimate comes from an Indian merchant identified as 'Marwari' who informed the Orenburg Dispatch Office that, because of the anarchy in Iran, the number of Indians annually coming to Astrakhan at that time had dropped to eighty, or less. He suggested that, should the territory between Astrakhan and Bukhara become safe for travel, they might expect as many as six hundred Indian merchants annually by that route.

<sup>184</sup> Even though the community had gone through considerable decline, in 1824 Keppel described Astrakhan as 'full of temples of Hindoos and Kalmucks' and continued to count Indians among the city's foreign populations. Keppel, *Personal Narrative*, p. 315. As noted above, by the 1840s the population had dwindled to just a few Brahmans who had been denied permission to leave due to legal problems. Honnaire de Hell, *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea*, p. 179. The reason for this decline, a topic to be discussed in chapter five, has more to do with Russia's role in changing Eurasian trade patterns and the establishment of Orenburg and the 'Orenburg Line' of trading-cum-military forts than an eighteenth-century decline of the role of Indian merchants in Eurasian trade.

<sup>185</sup> Antonova II, doc. 63, 1734, pp. 120–21; doc. 79, 1738, pp. 158–59; doc. 83, 1740, pp.

Indian merchants were known to have been active in Terek, an entrepôt and customs station for merchants entering Russian territory in the northern Caucasus. Indians were also known to have traveled between Astrakhan and the central Siberian trade town of Krasnoiarsk, and to have traveled up the Volga to Tsaritsyn, Saratov, Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod (where they attended the annual fair), even going as far as Moscow and Yaroslavl', and later to Saint Petersburg.<sup>186</sup> In 1679 groups of Indian, Iranian, Armenian, and Bukharan merchants were granted their own *dvor* in Moscow, and five years later there were twenty-one Indian residents in the city.<sup>187</sup> Although the number of Indians in Moscow probably never greatly exceeded that figure, reaching Moscow was not their final aspiration. In 1723 the Indian merchant Anburam Mulin requested permission from the tsar for Indians in Russian territory to regularly extend their commercial activities to Archangelsk, and from there to Germany and, via Siberia, to China.<sup>188</sup>

For reasons to be discussed in chapter five, during much of the 1680s and 1690s the mobility of the Indian, Iranian and Bukharan merchant communities in Russia was restricted to Astrakhan, hindering their ability to actively pursue commercial opportunities in other Russian urban and rural markets. The Indians adapted, however, and continued their economic activities outside of Astrakhan by attracting individuals in need of loans from throughout the countryside. They were also able to extend their commercial activities to towns and villages that they were not permitted to visit by establishing *commenda* agreements with Russian, Armenian and local merchants. Partnerships with Armenians were especially sought after for several reasons. Not only were the Armenians familiar with the mechanics of the *muḍāra-ba/commenda* contracts of long-distance trade partnerships through the operation of their own merchant diaspora (during the early modern era

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167–68; doc. 96, 1741, pp. 187–88; doc. 133, 1749, pp. 269–72; doc. 140, 1751, p. 284; doc. 181, 1765, pp. 343–45.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Gopal, *Indians in Russia*, pp. 13–14; Shastiko, ed., *Russia and India*, p. 51. For Indians traveling to Yaroslavl' and on to Moscow, see Antonova I, docs 44–46, 1650, pp. 94–96. For Indians traveling from Saratov to Moscow, see Antonova I, docs 42–43, 1649, pp. 93–94. For Indians in Krasnoiarsk, see Antonova II, doc. 63, 1734, pp. 120–21. For Indian commercial activities in Terek, see Antonova I, doc. 102, 1672, p. 181; doc. 170, 1677, pp. 273–75; Antonova II, doc. 44, 1726, pp. 69–71.

<sup>187</sup> Antonova I, doc. 182, 1679, p. 287. For further discussion, see Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 102.

<sup>188</sup> Antonova II, doc. 37, 1723, pp. 57–59. According to the statement of Anburam, by this time some Indians had already successfully traveled from Archangelsk to German territory and China for trade.

Armenian merchant diaspora communities were firmly entrenched in Iran and India), but in Russia Armenians also enjoyed privileges of mobility not shared by other foreign merchant communities as well as freedom from certain taxes, which significantly lowered their transaction costs.<sup>189</sup>

Although the number of Indians in Russia was not great and, in comparison to other regions of the diaspora, their mobility was rather restricted, they were substantial import-export agents. Despite political problems in Iran stemming from the Afghan occupation, in 1724 the Indians exported to Astrakhan goods worth nearly 100,000 rubles, over twice the value of the goods imported to this entrepôt by Russian merchants.<sup>190</sup> This dropped significantly in 1725, although in that year a mere forty-seven Indian merchants were responsible for importing to Russia goods valued at 35,659 rubles: more than *three times* the value of the goods imported by forty-three Armenian

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<sup>189</sup> Gopal, 'A Brief Note,' p. 208. For examples of Indians' *commenda* partnerships in Astrakhan, see Antonova I, doc. 203, 1681, p. 297, where the Indians Ramchand and Gordan sent their goods from Astrakhan to Iran with an Armenian merchant identified as Grigori; *ibid.*, docs 149–51, 1676, pp. 258–60, where Indian merchants contracted with two Tatars, Fatiev and Chiriachko, to carry their goods to Derbent; *ibid.*, docs 204, 206–7, 1681, pp. 297–98, where a Caucasian from Terek, identified as Enbulat El'murzin, carried goods to Iran for a number of Indian traders; *ibid.*, docs 242–44, 247, 1690–91, pp. 349–50, 352, where, immediately following the tsar's restriction of the Indians' movement in Russia, the Indians employed Russian merchants to transport their goods to Astrakhan. Indian merchants' *commenda* trading from Astrakhan continued throughout the eighteenth century. See Antonova II, doc. 44, 1726, pp. 69–71, where, according to receipts of the Astrakhan Public Notary Office, a Tatar from Yurtovsk, a Cherkash (Circassian) from Tersk, and a Greek from Tsaregrad received loans from Indians in Astrakhan. See also Antonova II, doc. 42, 1725, pp. 65–67, where Russian peasants traveled up the Volga with money from an Indian merchant to purchase Russian goods; *ibid.*, doc. 44, 1726, pp. 69–71, where three Indians invested 12,500 rubles in an Armenian mission to Amsterdam; *ibid.*, doc. 144, 1751, p. 287, where an Indian made a contract with a Russian peasant to carry his goods to Tsaritsyn for sale; *ibid.*, doc. 191, 1774, p. 364, where one Jinali Azhakaev, born in Qalmaq territory, although a resident of Astrakhan, is identified as an agent of the Indian merchant Ramdas and another resident of Astrakhan, Musa Aramazanov, is identified as an agent of the Indian merchant Bahari Archandas. For more on Armenian *commenda* trading, cf. Çizakça, *A Comparative Evolution*, pp. 20–21; McCabe, *The Shah's Silk*, *passim*; Edmund Herzig, 'The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa (Isfahan),' Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1991.

<sup>190</sup> Surendra Gopal, 'Trading Activities of Indians in Russia in the Eighteenth Century,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 5, 2 (1968), p. 142. In this article, Gopal provides a table displaying the value of goods annually imported and exported between Russia and Iran from 1737 to 1744 by Indian, Armenian, Russian and Iranian merchants, based on information elicited from Antonova II, doc. 114, 1745, pp. 211–34. The Indian traders clearly played an important role. In general, they were second only to the Armenians.

merchants that year.<sup>191</sup> In 1722 Peter Henry Bruce noted that the Armenians were important participants in Astrakhan's trade with Persia and that they even had their own suburb in the city but, according to Bruce, 'the Banyans without doubt contribute most to its [Astrakhan's] flourishing condition.'<sup>192</sup> This is perhaps because, whereas (up to that year) both Armenian and Indian merchants maintained merchant diasporas with large communities in Isfahan and had many well-established transregional trade connections, such ventures were for the most part the extent of the Armenians' economic activities. Indians, conversely, actively augmented their trade with moneylending ventures. The number of Indians in Astrakhan decreased throughout the eighteenth century, although they held an important commercial position in that city until much later. According to Ozertskovsky, of the three significant merchant communities active in Astrakhan at beginning of the nineteenth century, Russian merchants operated seventy-five shops, Armenians operated seventy-four, and Indians operated seventy-eight.<sup>193</sup>

To generalize, the movement of goods and people in Russo-Iranian commerce may be characterized as having largely been conducted along longitudinal caravan routes connecting a number of important commercial centers, including especially Bandar 'Abbas and Astrakhan. This is underlined by Forster's observation that only a minority of the Indian merchants who arrived at Baku did so via the caravan routes through Qandahar and Herat. By referring to the Indian community in the city of Tarshish as the 'extreme limit of their emigration on this [the eastern] side of Persia,' Forster also implied a distinction between the diaspora communities established along the overland routes traversing Afghanistan and those along the longitudinal routes connecting the Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, the Astrakhan documents clearly show that, up to the second half of the eighteenth century, most of the Indian goods and people coming to Russia did so via Iran. Some Indians did, however, travel to Iran via the caravan routes and they were also known to have accompanied Bukharan caravans coming to trade in Russia, a dynamic which increased dramatically from the late eighteenth century.

The overland trade passing through Afghanistan and Iran to Russia continued, with periodic disturbances, even throughout the politically turbulent eighteenth century. A testament to this is the continued presence and prosperity of

<sup>191</sup> Golikova, *Ocherki po istorii gorodov Rossii*, pp. 184–85.

<sup>192</sup> Bruce, *Memoirs*, p. 299.

<sup>193</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 96.

<sup>194</sup> Forster, *A Journey from Bengal*, II, pp. 151, 186–87.

numerous Indian merchant diaspora communities in urban centers located on the major overland trade routes connecting India with Iran and Turan, as well as in the important port cities. In the year 1800, P. Kh. Obolianinov prepared a report for Tsar Paul I (r. 1796–1801) about the development of Russia's trade relations with India and the Central Asian khanates over the previous century.<sup>195</sup> In this report, Obolianinov attributed a considerable importance to the caravan routes connecting Multan with Qandahar, and Kabul with Meshed, from where some merchants traveled to Bukhara and others to Astarabad, near the southeast coast of the Caspian Sea, and from there to Astrakhan. Obolianinov concluded that the merchants' preference for that route, or the routes from the Persian Gulf to the western coast of the Caspian Sea, depended primarily on the Afghan and Iranian political climates of the day and, should the situation be comparable, neither enjoyed a natural position of dominance.

### *Conclusion*

It has been demonstrated above that Indian diaspora merchants were perceived by their host societies as a cultural 'other' and that this was to a considerable extent a product of the Indians' own deliberate efforts to impede social integration and maintain a diasporic lifestyle. The Indians' clear communal distinction from their host societies equipped them with a strategic advantage over local merchant groups as it allowed them to act in ways inconsistent with indigenous social norms, especially notable in terms of their moneylending ventures. Thus, in many places in the diaspora, and even within India, the moneylending activities and business acumen of these communities earned them a reputation as draconian usurers. Still, the Indians almost uniformly enjoyed the pronounced protection of the political elites of their host societies. In some areas, at specific times, Hindus were allowed to construct temples and engage in religious traditions considered offensive by their host societies, including the cremation of their dead and even *sati*. This may be attributed to their important contributions in terms of transregional trade, providing much-needed investment capital, and orchestrating rural credit operations. Furthermore, because the 'outsider' status of the Indian diaspora merchants freed them from familial and other social relationships, regional ruling elite also viewed them as attractive candidates to handle aspects of the financial man-

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<sup>195</sup> Antonova II, doc. 216, 1800, pp. 414–19.

agement of their host states. This has been observed for Durrani Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, nineteenth-century Iran. In some locations, at certain times, the Hindu merchants were even confident enough in their social position to bring their families with them, but this was the exception, not the rule.

Accounts of Multanis and other Indian merchants in distant commercial centers during the mid-sixteenth century represent the early stages of the Indian diaspora, although it is, of course, unlikely that the individuals mentioned in the available sources were the first to establish themselves in semi-permanent residences in those distant cities. Still, the information presented above demonstrates that, from the early seventeenth century, Indian diaspora communities flourished throughout Turan, Afghanistan, Iran, the Caucasus, and Russia, where their commercial activities reached even as far as Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The eighteenth century witnessed some distinct transformations in the diaspora, such as the Indian merchants' abandonment of some regions and their expansion into other, new areas: developments precipitated by a variety of historical events and processes. It is important to note that these changes do not represent a general decline in the diaspora's socio-economic importance. Rather, the Indian merchants demonstrated an impressive ability to adapt quickly to changing socio-political realities; they continued to function in their unique role in the economies of their host societies through periods of growth, crisis, and transformation, maintaining diaspora communities in some of these areas even into the twentieth century. An exception to this general climate of prosperity is found in the second-quarter of the eighteenth century in Iran. Although late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century reports generally describe an environment tolerant to Indian merchants, following the disruptive Afghan invasions and the tumultuous reign of Nadir Shah, the diaspora communities in Iran never returned to their seventeenth-century numbers.

The Indians' ability to establish communities in cities and villages in Turan appears to have been virtually unlimited. Oral traditions suggest that Indian merchants were encouraged to migrate to the Bukharan Khanate in the late sixteenth century and, already in the seventeenth century, written sources mention that Indian communities were distributed throughout much of the khanate. Dmitriev calculates that in the nineteenth century there were some 8,000 Indians living in diaspora communities dispersed across urban and rural Turan, with perhaps a few hundred more residing across the Tien Shan mountains in Sinjiang. Considering that Indian merchants appear to have been equally well-established in Turan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this figure also seems applicable to the earlier period. Furthermore, Indian communities of several hundred or more were located in the Afghan

cities of Qalat, Qandahar, Herat, Ghazni, Balkh, and Kabul, and smaller communities could be found in other urban centers and dozens of villages. The population of Indian merchants in Afghanistan is likely to have swelled under Durrani patronage, but, in general, 8,000 also seems reasonable as a conservative estimate of the total number of Indian merchant-moneylenders living in early modern Afghanistan.

The population of Indian merchants in seventeenth-century Iran was astounding: much greater than in other regions, with more than 10,000 Indians living in Isfahan alone. Reports also mention large Indian communities in Bandar ‘Abbas and other Persian Gulf port cities, as well as numerous communities dotting the Caspian Sea coastline and extending into the Caucasus, and many other communities in cities along caravan routes. It therefore seems reasonable to accept Chardin’s report that, at the time of his travels in the second half of the seventeenth century, the total number of Indian diaspora merchants in Iran exceeded 20,000. From the early seventeenth century into the nineteenth century, an additional several hundred Indian merchants extended their commercial interests further north to Astrakhan and other Russian cities.

Thus, with some confidence we can estimate that the number of Indian merchants involved in the Eurasian diaspora at any given time from the beginning of the seventeenth century up to the end of the nineteenth century exceeded even 35,000. The havoc wrought against the Indian communities in Iran during the Ghilzai Afghan invasions of the 1720s and the subsequent reign of Nadir Shah resulted in a significant drop in the number of Indian merchants living in Iran, but to a great extent this was only a temporary setback. At roughly the same time that thousands of Multanis fled Isfahan they are seen extending their diaspora network to other regions offering economic opportunities. In the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, many Multani firms relocated to Shikarpur in order to gain a better proximity to Durrani Afghanistan, while others redirected their interests and established communities in India as far south as Madras and as far east as Burma. It should be noted, however, that the Multanis’ activities in Burma were generally restricted to Rangoon, whereas their occupational associates, the south Indian Nattukottai Chettiers, had a longer history of activity in that region and already had well-developed commercial networks throughout the countryside.<sup>196</sup>

Considering the information presented above, the image emerges of a vast constellation of Indian diaspora communities spread across much of urban

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. Ray, ‘The Bazar,’ pp. 254–55; Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism*, p. 91.



and rural Afghanistan, Iran, Turan, the Caucasus and Russia. The association of the Indian diaspora merchants with family firms was an element crucial to their success. The regular rotation of agents effectively enabled the communication of new developments and opportunities to the firm directors. This, in turn, enabled the directors to limit their risks by avoiding, or withdrawing from, potentially hazardous regions and extending their investments into more promising, under-exploited and emerging markets. In addition to participating in *commenda* partnerships, managing each others' accounts when necessary, living in communal residences or neighborhoods, and even praying together, the Indians in the diaspora belonged to an exclusive set of endogamous groups engaged in similar economic endeavors. For nearly four centuries lines of credit stretched from the great financial houses of northwest India, through tens of thousands of *gumāshṭas*, to ruling elite, village industrialists, agriculturalists, transregional traders, retail merchants, and other groups in need of capital. The organization of this system will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INDIAN FAMILY FIRMS AND THEIR ECONOMIC FUNCTION IN EARLY MODERN TURAN

#### *Introduction*

In the preceding chapter it was argued that, from the early seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Indian merchants occupied diaspora communities in urban centers and villages dispersed across Afghanistan, Iran, Turan, the Caucasus and Russia, with the total population of the diaspora perhaps exceeding even 35,000. It was also suggested that, with the exception of the more important commercial centers, the population of individual communities rarely exceeded one hundred, and in the rural areas was much less. Even in communities in which their numbers were rather small, however, these Indians typically commanded large amounts of capital which they used to finance numerous types of moneylending ventures. This placed them in an important economic position in their host societies, a position which almost always earned them the protection of the ruling groups under which they operated.

The Indian diaspora of the present study is one of a number of merchant diasporas and minority commercial communities to have controlled large amounts of capital and exercised a socio-economic influence disproportionate to their numbers. In a recent study of several merchant diasporas active in the Indian Ocean during the early modern and colonial periods, Christine Dobbin has demonstrated that, here too, ‘microscopic’ commercial communities controlled a remarkably large amount of the capital in circulation. In that context Dobbin reports that in Indonesia, as recently as the 1980s, ‘a Chinese population representing 3 per cent of the total was estimated to own, at the very least, 70–75 per cent of private domestic capital, while Chinese business groups, the so-called conglomerates, continued to dominate medium and large-scale corporate capital.’<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Parsi financial houses in India have emerged to enjoy a dominant role in the Indian commercial arena. Despite their 1965 population of barely over 90,000, Parsi communities at that time

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<sup>1</sup> Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p. 3 and note 9.

controlled some 4.7 billion rupees in capital, earning them a status second only to Marwari financial houses, which collectively controlled some 7.5 billion rupees in assets. Similar examples include the Ismailis in Pakistan who, with less than 1 percent of the country's population, by 1959 controlled over 50 percent of the country's industrial assets, and the Nattukottai Chettiars, an Indian commercial caste which as early as 1896 dominated the banking and textile trade of south India with a population of a mere 10,000, including women, children, and others not directly involved in commercial activities.<sup>2</sup>

Dobbin has focused on these socially marginalized, yet highly successful, communities because their commercial success was a product of their mediatory role as brokers for the European colonial powers. Indeed, Dobbin argues that it was specifically *because* of their social marginality that the colonial elite considered them to be more suitable partners in mutually beneficial, 'conjoint' commercial relationships.<sup>3</sup> This seems nowhere to have been more true than in the case of the Nattukottai Chettiars, a community which prospered under nineteenth- and twentieth-century British patronage and rose to a position of commercial dominance throughout south India and in parts of Southeast Asia. According to David Rudner, the Nakarattars, as the Nattukottai Chettiars were commonly called, were:

the major source of finance for myriad agrarian transactions between Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, and the Madras Presidency. They dominated the role of mercantile intermediary between foreign British rulers and local populations by monopolizing important components of the credit, banking, and agrarian systems of Southeast Asia, and by remitting huge amounts of capital from Southeast Asia back to their South Indian homeland for industrial investment and large-scale philanthropy.<sup>4</sup>

Leaving aside the Nakarattars' rise to commercial dominance under European patronage and their utilization of Shaivite temples as commercial clearing-houses, their mercantile-moneylending organization bears a striking resemblance to that of the Multani, Marwari and other Indian merchant-moneylenders operating in the early modern diaspora communities beyond India's northwest frontier. Like the Nakarattars, the Indian diaspora merchants of the present study were involved in a complex set of commercial activities. These focused on the

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<sup>2</sup> Prosperity begat growth, however, and by 1920 the Nattukottai Chettiars' population had grown to 40,000. By the 1950s their population had doubled to 80,000 and Rudner estimates the total Nattukottai Chettiar population in 1980 to have been 100,000. Cf. Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India*, p. 2; Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, pp. 3–4, and notes 10–13.

<sup>3</sup> Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India*, p. 3.

general use of their capital to increase profits by making a variety of types of loans to agriculturalists, village industrialists, merchants and other groups or individuals in need of cash or credit. Their interests also commonly included wholesale and retail businesses and import-export ventures involving the transregional transfer of large quantities of commodities. It is important to stress, however, that these merchants were successfully operating prior to, and independent of, the rise of the colonial powers in Asia. Studies of the Nakarattars and other colonial-era indigenous merchant communities emphasize these communities' willingness and ability to take advantage of socio-economic opportunities which developed under European hegemony.<sup>5</sup> The present study, however, demonstrates that indigenous Asian merchant institutions developed centuries before the arrival of the Dutch and English in the Indian Ocean, and they operated largely independent of European colonial interference even into the nineteenth century. Especially in regards to the Indians in Turan, it will be seen in the next chapter that, rather than rising on the backs of the colonial powers, as it were, socio-political changes implemented by the Russian colonial administration in the Turkestan Krai in the 1870s brought about a considerable decline in the number of Indians residing there.

Although our understanding of the complexities of early modern Asian trade techniques is far from complete, it has grown out of its infancy. This precludes the necessity to revisit old arguments portraying Asian merchants as ill-informed, poorly capitalized itinerant peddlers who hammered out a meager existence by buying cheap, transporting far, and selling dear.<sup>6</sup> Rather,

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<sup>5</sup> Rajat Ray contends that in Southeast Asia the emergence of immigrant Asian commercial groups was not a product of colonialism, observing that they even 'conducted autonomous operations in the Eastern Archipelago.' He argues that 'there were two basic factors which made for the success of these immigrant business groups in the nineteenth century: the Anglo-Dutch rivalry for the trade of the Archipelago, and the lack of a hereditary skill in the handling of money among the indigenous Burmese, Malay and Javanese races at a time when the islands and the deltas came under a fairly sudden process of monetization.' Rajat Ray, 'Chinese Financiers and Chetti Bankers in Southern Waters: Asian Mobile Credit during the Anglo-Dutch Competition for the Trade of the Eastern Archipelago in the Nineteenth Century,' *Itinerario* 11, 1 (1987), pp. 209–10. Christine Dobbin contends that Ray's argument 'minimises the dependent and collaborative role of these financiers in relation to European power and commercial interests and emphasises instead the use by both of their own sophisticated mercantile techniques derived from centuries' old experience with mobilising capital through long-established credit networks.' Christine Dobbin, 'From Middleman Minorities to Industrial Entrepreneurs: The Chinese in Java and the Parsis in Western India, 1619–1939,' *Itinerario* 13, 1 (1989), p. 109.

<sup>6</sup> The 'peddler thesis' was first presented in 1932 by J. C. van Leur. See the English translation, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*,

the merchant-moneylenders of the Indian diaspora in Turan are known to have been trained agents of numerous well-organized, heavily capitalized financial organizations, or family firms, largely centered in the Multan and Marwar regions of northern India. These firms first emerged as homogeneous, caste-oriented institutions long before Europeans were active in Asian markets. Their mode of operation, however, was in some ways similar to that of modern corporations. The goal of Indian family firms was to invest their resources in lucrative ventures in order to accumulate capital and to use that capital to take advantage of other emerging opportunities, while endeavoring to minimize their risks. They achieved this by diversifying their investments in various commercial ventures across a number of regions and by expertly utilizing the fiscal technologies of the time.

For the purposes of the present discussion, the most important means by which the directors of these family firms diversified their interests was by sending their agents to Turan, or any of a number of other foreign markets open to their business. While working in the diaspora, the agents invested the firms' capital and extended their sphere of activity to urban and rural markets where their financial services were in demand. In doing so, these Indians brought to their host societies much-needed commodities and an important source of investment capital and credit, both urban and rural, while earning considerable wealth for themselves and their firms. It can be argued that even more important than these merchants' transregional movement of commodities was their exportation to distant markets of large amounts of Indian investment capital and moneylending technology. The following discussion will describe the corporate-style organization of these family firms and the means by which they emerged as the dominant moneylending organizations in India and throughout the diaspora.

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The Hague: W. van Hove, 1955, p. 60. This thesis was aggrandized by Niels Steensgaard in his work, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: the East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, pp. 22–59. Although the peddler thesis is not wholly inapplicable to an understanding of premodern Asian trade, it was far from the only means of commercial organization used by Asian merchants. Stephen Dale's assertion that 'the peddler model is irrelevant as a guide to understanding the management of commerce in this diaspora' is as applicable to those Indians who operated in Turan as it is to those in Astrakhan. Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 126.

*Religious Law, 'Guest Peoples' and Moneylending Institutions*

It is deceptively tempting to wholly attribute the domination by Hindus of the moneylending business in Turan, and the other Islamic regions served by the Indian diaspora, to insufficient indigenous institutions for credit resulting from the Islamic prohibition of *ribāʿ*, the taking of interest or otherwise profiting from a loan.<sup>7</sup> This prohibition is found in the Qurʾān:

Those that live on usury shall rise up before Allah like men whom Satan has demented by his touch; for they claim that usury is like trading. But Allah has permitted trading and forbidden usury. He that receives an admonition from his Lord and mends his ways may keep what he has already earned; his fate is in the hands of Allah. But he that pays no heed shall be consigned to Hell-fire and shall remain in it for ever.<sup>8</sup>

Qurʾānic prohibition is certain to have discouraged many Muslims from engaging in profit-oriented moneylending activities. It is incorrect to conclude, however, that individual Muslims, or even Islamic commercial organizations, never loaned money or provided credit for profit. Indeed, there is no shortage of references to Muslim moneylenders openly engaging in 'usurious' activities, sanctioned by the religious judicature, throughout the medieval and early modern Indo-Islamic world.<sup>9</sup> In India, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Zia

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<sup>7</sup> A proponent of this view, Mehdi Keyvani, argues that 'in all Muslim countries, including Iran, the uncertainties of the *shariʿi* and customary laws, together with religious scruples, inhibited progress by Muslims in the provision of what would now be called commercial banking services. One result was that investment in this field was generally inadequate and that rates of interest (under whatever name was used) were generally high. Another result was that banking business tended to fall into the hands of non-Muslim minorities.' Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life*, pp. 229–30. This argument has not gone unsupported by first-hand observers, including Mountstuart Elphinstone, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, noted that 'the prohibition in the Koran against Mussulmauns taking interest, makes most of the business of banking fall into the hands of Hindoos, whose wary and penurious habits suit them admirably for the trade.' Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, p. 333.

<sup>8</sup> Qurʾān, 2:275. The translation is by N. J. Dawood, *The Koran*, fourth revised edition, reprint, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1986, pp. 363–64. See also *suras* 3:130 and 4:161.

<sup>9</sup> S. D. Goitein has established that Muslim moneylenders charged interest in eleventh-century Fatimid Egypt and that, in the twelfth century, interest was openly stipulated in Muslim banking accounts, 'Bankers Accounts from the Eleventh Century A.D.', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9, 1 (1966), p. 29. See also chapter three, section F, 'Money, Banking and Finance' in idem, *A Mediterranean Society*, I, pp. 229–66. The Muslim *karimi* spice merchants were widely known to have been the most important,

al-Din Barani observed that, while the majority of the Multani moneylenders were Hindus, those who were Muslims were also adept at lending money for interest, despite restrictions forbidding this practice. Underlining the *qādīs'* acceptance of lending money for profit, Barani cites the case of Hamid al-Din, the son of a Multani, who had been appointed to the office of chief *qādī* under Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Khalji (r. 1296–1316) and who, Barani quips, 'received (implying 'learned,' although literally 'ate') from his grandfather and father nothing other than interest (*ribā*).'<sup>10</sup> Bernard Lewis provides some insight into this issue:

The ban on usury, strongly expressed in the Qur'ān, is further emphasized in both traditions and commentaries, one of which even lays down that a single act of usury is worse than thirty-three acts of fornication. This ban has always been taken seriously by Muslims, and to this day makes banking and investment difficult for the truly devout. The overwhelming majority of theologians and jurists interpret the ban as applying to any interest, not just excessive interest—a rule which, strictly applied, would have prevented the development of credit and thus of large-scale

but not the only, moneylenders in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Mamluk state. Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 120–22. Likewise, Ronald Jennings has uncovered an elaborate moneylending industry operated by Muslims in seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkey, 'Loans and Credit in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: the Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16, 2–3 (1973), pp. 168–216. According to Jennings, the reason behind the small number of studies on Islamic loan and credit systems is that, 'because of the absence or inaccessibility of judicial and business archives, loans and credit in the history of Muslim peoples have been studied through religious law and commentary (sharia and fikh). Although such tomes may be good sources for legal and religious theory..., they often are far removed from the real business and commercial practices of the socio-economic order.' Jennings further asserts that, throughout seventeenth-century Anatolia, loaning money for interest was not only customary, 'but also was condoned, sanctioned, and certified by the ulema, the ayans and eşraf, and the Imperial Porte. In Kayseri, in Karaman, in Konya, in Burdur, in Amasya, and in Trabzon giving out money or credit to earn interest was accepted by the local Ottoman sharia courts.' *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 183. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 73–74. The economic historian L. C. Jain notes that Muslim Pathans, probably Powinda traders, were known to have loaned money for interest in India. Although generally in small amounts, these Pathan moneylenders commonly charged their clients one anna per rupee per week (sixteen annas is equal in value to one rupee), amounting to over 300 percent per year. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 34, 94.

<sup>10</sup> TFS, pp. 298, 353 (حمید ملتانی بچہ کہ از جد و پدر جز ربا چیزی دیگر نخورده است). Barani expresses his extreme dislike for Hamid al-Din 'Multani Bacha,' whom he accuses of favoring the greedy and materialistic rather than basing his legal judgements on religious law. Because of his materialistic and immoral practices, Barani directly warns Hamid al-Din to 'be afraid of Allah because you will not endure the hangover from this sin on Judgement Day' (الله الله بترس که خمار این گنه فردای قیامت طاقت نخواهی).

commerce. In this as in many other matters, merchants and jurists devised procedures—the technical term is *‘hīla shar‘iyya’* (‘legal device’)—whereby, while formally respecting the law, they were able to organize credit, investment, partnerships, and even banking.<sup>11</sup>

The acceptability of certain forms of moneylending among Muslim commercialists is demonstrated by the frequency with which Muslim moneylenders clearly stipulated interest rates in their loan contracts. It is important to note, however, that when required or otherwise motivated to do so Muslims could resort to any of a number of more covert contract-writing techniques to circumvent the prohibition of charging interest. One rather common technique was for the moneylender and borrower to verbally agree on an interest rate and deduct the total interest to be paid from the principal advanced to the borrower. For example, should a borrower desire a loan of twenty *tanga*, the moneylender would write a contract for twenty *tanga* and give the debtor eighteen *tanga* to be repaid at a rate of two *tanga* per week for ten weeks. Chardin noted that in seventeenth-century Iran this technique was common among Muslim moneylenders and readily approved by *qāḍīs*. According to Chardin:

As to Interest, the Parties have the way of eluding the Law just as they please. They go to the Judge and borrower, holding in the Hand a Bag of Money; one saith there is in it such a Sum, tho’ the Interest agreed on be wanting in it, the Judge without any further Enquiry, orders the Writing to be drawn up; ’Tis even enough, without so much Precaution, to own before Witnesses, that one has received so much (altho’ less) to make the Debt Authentick.<sup>12</sup>

Mukminova has uncovered another technique commonly used by merchants in sixteenth-century Samarqand by which borrowers signed over to their creditors ownership of a piece of property, such as a shop, house, caravanserai, or other item of value.<sup>13</sup> In such cases the contracts include no provisions for direct interest payments, but the agreements generally stipulate that the borrower must regularly pay a certain amount to the creditor as ‘rent’ to maintain the privilege of using the property and to keep the loan from going into default;

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<sup>11</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, New York: Scribner, 1995, pp. 172–73. See also the essay on ‘Prohibition against Interest’ in Udovich, ‘Bankers without Banks: Commerce, Banking, and Society in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages,’ in *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 256–58.

<sup>12</sup> Chardin, *Sir John Chardin’s Travels in Persia*, p. 281. A similar technique was popular among Muslim moneylenders in India, identified in Bihar as *Suttuwa-Puttuwa*. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>13</sup> Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 69–70.



the failure to do so would result in forfeiture of the property and potentially even imprisonment. The account of John Fryer provides a colorful description of the circumstances under which such a loan might be made in late seventeenth-century Iran:

Those who desire to secure their Money thoroughly, come to the *Cadi* for a Bond, being agreed first on their Contract among themselves to pay Fifteen, Twenty, and sometimes Thirty *Thomands* for the use of one Hundred for a year. When the Money is brought in Two Bags, with a Knife, Book, or Mantle, and the Owner *Zeid* cries out before the *Cadi*, sitting on the Seat of Justice: “I *Zeia* [*sic*] do give frankly for the space of one year One hundred Thomands; but I sell this Book for Fifteen, Twenty, or Thirty *Thomands* to *Ambre*, and he is content to give it; therefore I desire in the presence of the *Cadi*, that *Ambre* may be obliged at the years end to repay me my Hundred *Thomands*, according to agreement,” and then seizes the Fifteen, Twenty, or Thirty Thomands, according to agreement for the Book; or if he lets him have the whole hundred, the *Cadi* asks *Ambre*, “Art though content to give this Sum?” And he answering, “*aree*, yes,” goes on, “so though art Debtor to *Zeid* an Hundred and Fifteen, Twenty, or Thirty Thomands, payable this time Twelve Months, being fully expired”; to which he replying “*aree*,” it is valid in Law: In which Form of Writing such caution is used, that they trust not Figures, nor bare Words that express the Sum intire, and at length, but half it and part it to prevent equivocation.<sup>14</sup>

Variants of this practice were still in use among Muslim moneylenders at the end of the nineteenth century and, according to Eugene Schuyler, in Central Asia each deviation was identified by the name of the city in which it was popularized.<sup>15</sup> Considering the ability and willingness of many Muslims to profit from receiving interest, the question to be addressed, then, is how it was that Hindu merchants came to dominate this crucial sector of the early modern economies of Turan, Iran and Afghanistan.

In an effort to explain the unique socio-economic opportunities for such ‘guest peoples’ as diaspora merchants and moneylenders in host societies, Weberian theory suggests that an ethical dualism—present in all premodern societies—limited the commercial parameters within which members of a society could operate. The ancient roots of this ethical dualism are clearly demonstrated by the Old Testament passage which commands: ‘You shalt not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest on victuals,

<sup>14</sup> Fryer, *A New Account*, III, pp. 109–10.

<sup>15</sup> Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan*, I, p. 186. It has been argued that, at least according to Hanafite law, such practices were not considered illegal so long as the interest rates were not stipulated in the contracts. Nicholas J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, reprint, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, p. 100. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 73–74 and note 115.

interest on anything that is lent upon interest. To a foreigner you may lend upon interest.’<sup>16</sup> Randall Collins explains this dichotomy as follows:

In virtually all premodern societies there are two sharply divergent sets of ethical beliefs and practices. Within a social group, economic transactions are strictly controlled by rules of fairness, status, and tradition... The prohibition on usury reflected this internal ethic, requiring an ethic of charity and the avoidance of calculation of gain from loans within the community. In regard to outsiders, however, economic ethics were at the opposite extreme: cheating, price gouging, and loans at exorbitant interest were the rule.<sup>17</sup>

In recent years it has become common to question the validity of the Weberian dualistic thesis in favor of a more nuanced understanding that appreciates the contextual nature of internal communal identities. In the case of the Indian merchant diaspora, however, the evidence presented here demonstrates that a clear social dichotomy existed between the Indian merchants and their host societies. This can largely be attributed to the Indians’ diasporic lifestyle, which deliberately impeded cultural assimilation so as to allow for the maintenance of a very rigid, stable and unambiguous set of rules of exchange between the Indian diaspora merchants and their various hosts. That is, by maintaining their position as a ‘guest people’ in Central Asian society, and wherever else they were found, the Indian diaspora merchants were able to live according to social rules and expectations other than those which applied to indigenous merchants.

While the identification of the Indians as ‘outsiders’ facilitated their ability to operate outside of the generally accepted social parameters of their host societies, this does not, in and of itself, fully explain the Indians’ dominance of the moneylending trade. There are three other factors to be considered here. First—and most obvious—is that, in Turan and wherever else they were found throughout the diaspora, Indians combined their transregional trade with moneylending. It should be remembered that early modern Turan and Iran also boasted significant Jewish and Christian (Armenian) populations.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 23:19–20.

<sup>17</sup> Randall Collins, *Weberian Sociological Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 29 and note.

<sup>18</sup> It should be recalled that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Samarqand included a Christian quarter known as ‘Tarsan’ and a Jewish quarter known as ‘Musaviyan.’ The earliest presence of Jewish communities in Turan long predates the early modern period and, already in the thirteenth century, Armenians are known to have established diaspora communities in trading centers along the ‘silk routes’ stretching from Italy and Russia beyond Bukhara to Beijing. Cf. Mukminova, *Sotsial'naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 36–37, 62–63; Frye, *Bukhara*, pp. 19, 193–94; George A. Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*,

However, throughout the Armenian diaspora, commercial activities focused on long-distance trade exclusively, not moneylending, while the Jews in our region were known as retail merchants and cloth-dyers, not bankers and moneylenders.<sup>19</sup> The Indians thus had a more multifarious role.

The second contributing factor may be considered a cultural one. We have noted the early association of moneylending with immorality within the monotheistic tradition. Christian and Muslim theologians even went so far as to virtually outlaw all moneylending for interest.<sup>20</sup> Although various commercial techniques were developed in Europe and the Islamic lands to circumvent this prohibition, there was still a residual immorality associated with moneylending for profit. In the Indian ethical system, moneylending was also associated with immorality, but the Indian caste system provided a unique way of compartmentalizing ethics. Already by the early centuries of the common era, Indian religious and legal texts had validated the practice of lending money for interest among certain Indian communities. Moneylenders in India were not

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2 vols, Costa Mesa, California: Mazda, 1995, I, p. 139. Bournoutian attributes the Armenians' prosperity in the thirteenth century to the Mongols' rise to power. He argues that, as many Mongols had embraced Nestorian Christianity, they were inclined to allow the similarly monophysite Christian Armenian merchants to establish diaspora communities in Mongol territory.

<sup>19</sup> Whereas Chardin identified Jews and Christians (Armenians) as the primary long-distances traders in Ottoman Turkey, he suggested that, in Persia, the Indians had usurped the Jews' role as long-distance traders and moneylenders. Jews in Iran typically were not wealthy and are known to have been artisans, retail merchants and (along with the Armenians) wine-makers. Cf. Chardin, *Voyages*, IV, p. 161; VI, pp. 133–36; VIII, pp. 437–38; Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, p. 10. In the 1830s Alexander Burnes observed a community of four thousand Jews living in Bukhara whom he identified as 'emigrants from Meshid, in Persia, who are chiefly employed in dying cloth.' Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, p. 275. According to E. Delmar Morgan, in Bukhara the Jews were known as cloth dyers and traders of silk. Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, p. 88, note 5. In eleventh- and twelfth-century Egypt and Palestine, Jews were also associated with the silk industry. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I, p. 104. In Iran as well, moneylending was not among the Jews' more important economic activities.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of usury in premodern Christian Europe, see Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, vol. 2 of *Civilization and Capitalism*, translated by Siân Reynolds, New York: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 559–66. The topic of usury in the Judeo-Christian tradition has received considerable scholarly attention. For an insightful survey and some original treatises, cf. Benjamin Nelson, *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood*, 2d ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969; Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse Upon Usury...[1572]*, edited by R. H. Tawney, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1963; Leonard Silk, ed., *Religious Attitudes Toward Usury: Two Early Polemics*, New York: Arno Press, 1972.

free from the stigma associated with moneylenders in other agrarian societies, but in India it was generally accepted that the profit-oriented activities of the commercial castes was a part of their *dharma*.<sup>21</sup> The result was a more positive attitude to moneylending for certain groups.

The truly ancient origin of moneylending in Indian society is demonstrated in references to its institutionalized practice in a number of Indian religious texts dating to between the seventh and second centuries B.C.E. These include the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (a ritualistic-sacrificial interpretation of information presented in the Vedas, the earliest Indian religious texts), the Buddhist *Jātakas* (an ancient collection of stories regarding the Buddha's former births), the *Nirukta* (an ancient etymological treatise on obscure Vedic words) and the *Sūtras* (ancient philosophic treatises). According to Vasishtha's *Dharma Sūtra*, a Hindu legal treatise on accepted codes of conduct probably written between the sixth and second centuries B.C.E., Hindus of the Vaishya class (merchants) are permitted to lend money for interest, but the higher-class Brahmans (religious leaders) and Kshatriyas (ruler-warriors) are forbidden to do so.<sup>22</sup> Already by the third century, Indian moneylending technology had developed to include deposit banking and a number of laws had been established to legislate fair lending practices. The *Manu-smṛiti* (*The Laws of Manu*), a source probably dating to the early centuries of this era, dictates that the interest rate for loans against collateral was fixed at an annual rate of 15 percent, although other types of loans could be made at higher interest rates and these were fixed inversely to the social status of the borrower. Unsecured loans made to Brahmans were the lowest, not to exceed an annual rate of 24 percent, whereas Kshatriyas could be charged 36 percent, Vaishyas could be charged 48 percent, and the annual interest rate on loans to Sudras could be as high as 60 percent or, in the words of the author: 'Just two in the hundred, three, four, and five (and not more), he may take as monthly interest according to the order of the castes (*varna*).'<sup>23</sup>

The sanction of the Indian religious traditions is likely to have contributed to the ability of Indian family firms to incorporate moneylending ventures

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<sup>21</sup> J. Parry and M. Bloch, eds, *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 4–5. Again, despite doctrinal restrictions, references to non-Vaishya Hindu moneylenders are frequent in historical sources. As noted above, during the early modern era, the Khatris, a Hindu merchant-moneylending caste classified as Kshatriyas, were active throughout the diaspora.

<sup>23</sup> G. Bühler, tr. *The Laws of Manu*, vol. 25 of *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Müller, 1886, reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964, p. 278.

into their commercial portfolios more easily than family firms in Europe and the Islamic lands. Rather than religious doctrine, however, the development in medieval India of an extensive moneylending industry unrivaled by those of neighboring regions should *primarily* be attributed to our third factor: the sheer magnitude of India's agrarian economy. This enabled—even required—the development of a number of related industries, including a reliable system of rural credit. It could even be suggested that the doctrinal sanction referred to here was the product of an acknowledged societal need for credit institutions. In any event, ultimately, it was the Indians' access to vast reserves of capital wealth that equipped them with a commercial advantage in many foreign markets, which they expertly exploited.

### *The Emergence of India's Moneylending Industry*

To understand the emergence of India's moneylending industry it is first necessary to discuss the rise to commercial ascendancy of its primary functionary, the Indian family firm. This institution is identified as such because of its commercial nature and its composition of individuals belonging to a common caste (family) identity. There is a general scholarly consensus that, at least from the seventeenth century, Indian family firms controlled large amounts of capital which was used in a variety of commercial ventures, and that even today some firms continue to play an important role in the Indian economy. There has been little agreement, however, regarding the specific details of the early modern socio-economic function and organization of the firms, and almost no attention has been directed to the historical circumstances surrounding their earlier development. This is clearly demonstrated by the various interpretations of the Indian family firms in a debate focusing on their relations with the Mughal state.

Initiating this debate, Karen Leonard suggested that during the century from 1650 to 1750 the decentralization of the Mughal Empire was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the involvement in state finances of indigenous banking households, which she styled 'great firms.' Leonard argues that these firms played a central role in the Mughal state's revenue collection system and that they usurped considerable political power in the process. She further suggests that the decline of the Mughal Empire was directly related to the redirection of these firms' loyalty and financial services away from the Mughal establishment and toward the Mughal successor states.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Karen Leonard, 'The "Great Firm" Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire,'

Conversely, John Richards argues that Mughal decline was precipitated by socio-political rather than economic developments. Richards suggests that, in searching for the factors precipitating Mughal decline, agency should not be placed in the hands of India's indigenous banking firms.<sup>25</sup> Rather than being a factor in the decentralization of the Mughal Empire, according to Richards, 'private banking firms...contributed to the downfall of the empire indirectly—by providing essential fiscal services to the new provincial rulers of the early decades of the eighteenth century.'<sup>26</sup> While this line of argumentation is not objectionable in and of itself, in an effort to debunk Leonard's 'Great Firm' theory, Richards endeavors to cast doubt on the direct participation of indigenous banking firms in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mughals revenue system and political arena. According to Richards, in this period the Mughal finance system was internally centralized and functioned independent of private banking firms. It was only in the eighteenth century that family firms achieved a rather sudden and remarkable position of economic influence and political power.

Adding to this debate, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C. A. Bayly argue against Richards' eighteenth-century emergence theory. Considering early modern India's comparatively well-developed economy, high degree of monetization, indigenous trade networks, and the accounting technology and system of extending credit utilized by the indigenous financial firms, these authors hypothesize that, in order to have ascended to such an esteemed position in the eighteenth century, the family firms must have emerged to significance some time before then. Drawing on the most famous example of an Indian family firm, they suggest that, in the eighteenth century, 'the enterprise set up by the Marwari merchants Manikchand and Fatehchand in Bengal, and later titled the house of *Jagatseth* ["World-banker"], was only the most prominent among a series of great networks of Gujaratis, Multanis

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*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, 2 (April 1979), p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> Richards argues that the focus should instead be placed on eighteenth-century transformations in the political relationships of the peasants, the rural aristocracy, the Mughal nobility and the emperor, paying special attention to changes brought on by 'the dual forces of intrusive administrative consolidation on the one hand, and intrusive commercialization and monetization [*sic*] on the other.' John Richards, 'Mughal State Finance and the Premodern World Economy,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 2 (April 1981), p. 308. Also available as chapter five in Richards, *Power, Administration and Finance*. See also Karen Leonard, 'Indigenous Banking Firms in Mughal India: A Reply,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 2 (April 1981), pp. 309–13.

<sup>26</sup> Richards, 'Mughal State Finance,' p. 289.

and Agrawals, which must logically have been forming over a generation or two.’<sup>27</sup>

Subrahmanyam and Bayly attribute the emergence of these indigenous banking firms to the development in sixteenth-century north India of a ‘portfolio capitalist’ political economy: an economic arena in which Indian entrepreneurs actively diversified their commercial interests. They suggest that, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian merchant capitalists financially invested in agricultural production, labor and trade and, functioning in conjunction with indigenous banking firms, became more visible in state and military finance, a position which they held until the early modern economy was ‘swept away’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by the imposition of a colonial economy.<sup>28</sup> While this conclusion is not without merit, it is this author’s contention that, at least in regards to the emergence of the Multani family firms, their economic activities brought them into contact with the political elite, directly and indirectly, long before the house of *Jagatseth* moved from Marwar to Bengal in the late seventeenth century and rose to commercial pre-eminence in the eighteenth century. The emergence of the Multani family firms should be measured in centuries rather than decades; already in the thirteenth century, Multanis are identified as large-scale, institutionalized moneylenders and long distance traders.

The relationship between Indian moneylending institutions and the process of monetization in medieval India can be surmised from the fact that the socio-economic function of the moneylender was dependent upon the circulation of, and demand for, monetary currency. The roots of this monetization process predate even the advances of Islamic armies into Sind in the early eighth century and the increasing numbers of Arab merchants traversing the Indian Ocean shipping lanes to port cities dotting India’s Malabar and Coromandel coasts, and elsewhere, in the centuries that followed. However, these early Islamic invasions and peaceful trade missions increasingly opened India’s agricultural production to the western Islamic lands and, during this period of Arab-dominated maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, the *dinar* emerged as

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<sup>27</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C. A. Bayly, ‘Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India,’ *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25, 4 (1988), p. 414. These authors acknowledge the existence in seventeenth-century Gujarat of a ‘complex and integrated mercantile system dominated by very large Vaishya and Brahmin *mahajan-s* [great bankers].’ For a discussion of the emergence of the (originally Marwari) *Jagatseth* banking house, see J. H. Little, *House of Jagatseth*, Calcutta: Calcutta Historical Society, 1967, initially published in *Bengal Past and Present*, 20 (1920), pp. 11–200, and 22 (1921), pp. 1–119.

<sup>28</sup> Subrahmanyam and Bayly, ‘Portfolio Capitalists,’ pp. 402, 418.

the dominant global currency. This facilitated transregional commercial exchanges from Spain to Indonesia and dramatically increased the flow of precious metals into the coffers of the burgeoning Indian commercial classes, especially following the Arab conquest of Sind.<sup>29</sup>

The period of the Turko-Afghan invasions of north India, beginning with the early Ghaznavid advances toward the Ganges valley in 998, considerably furthered the monetization process in India and fostered a climate conducive to the growth and development of the Indian family firms. The Ghaznavids' superior military capability and horsemanship, acquired in the nomadic traditions of the Inner Asian steppe, enabled them to defeat rather easily the sedentary Indian regimes and establish the first dynastic Islamic state in the subcontinent (c. 1001–86). In addition to bringing to India their Persianized understanding of Islamic traditions, the Ghaznavids implemented a new system of government in north India and introduced a variety of institutions alien to the region. These innovations were largely continued under the successive Turko-Afghan dynasties to rule from Delhi after them, including the Ghurid, Khalji, Tughluq, Sayyid, Lodi, and Suri dynasties, collectively referred to as the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1555).<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that, at least during the early years of the Sultanate, these Indo-Islamic states were generally more centralized than their indigenous Indian predecessors and, second only to their frequent military campaigns designed to expand their territory, they focused their efforts on increasing the revenue they could extract from the countryside.<sup>31</sup>

The Delhi Sultans and their regional successors can be credited with implementing two policies essential for the emergence of an extensive moneylending industry in India. The first was an effort to further monetize their realm. It was India's legendary wealth and economic potential which had initially drawn the Ghaznavids to the subcontinent, but this potential was manifest in agricultural production, not in gold or silver reserves. Like the Turko-Afghan dynasties that followed them, the Ghaznavids were a military regime; they were interested in the countryside, but only as a source of income. In order to accumulate wealth the Delhi Sultans first had to convert agricultural production into precious metals, which the Sultans could then collect in the state treasury and use to pay their militaries.<sup>32</sup> In order to collect

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<sup>29</sup> Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, pp. 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> For an outline of these various dynasties, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: a Chronological and Genealogical Manual*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 300–305.

<sup>31</sup> Richards, 'Mughal State Finance,' p. 295.

<sup>32</sup> The Ghaznavids' awareness of the usefulness of a monetized economy is demonstrated



taxes in cash rather than in kind the Delhi Sultans first had to increase the circulation of money throughout India's urban and rural markets. Their efforts were remarkably successful and, according to J. C. Heesterman, in north India 'from the thirteenth century onward the revenue was assessed and paid in cash.'<sup>33</sup> Although Heesterman is certainly correct in spirit, it should not be overlooked that a small proportion of revenue payments continued to be made in kind well into the Mughal era.

The growth of a cash economy in India in this period was achieved in a number of ways. Since the seventh century there had been a growing movement of *dinars* to India via the northwestern overland routes and the Arab-dominated Indian Ocean trade, a dynamic which continued to grow even after the Turko-Afghan invasions. André Wink has recently argued that the Delhi Sultans, all sharing a common Turko-Afghan heritage, also shared an interest in maintaining close commercial ties with the steppe. This resulted in the fusion of India's vast agrarian civilization and industrial production with the nomadic 'frontier of mobile wealth,' a process which added momentum to India's monetization process through the influx of new supplies of precious metals to the subcontinent to be minted into coins and subsequently circulated throughout the region.<sup>34</sup> Concomitant with this, the numerous waves of Turko-Afghan invaders deliberately plundered and destroyed countless Hindu temple complexes. Whether motivated by religious iconoclastic impulses, political goals, economic strategy or a combination of these factors, these temples had been depositories of immense amounts of wealth and their destruction resulted in the dethesaurization of vast reserves of precious metals for recirculation into the Indian economy.<sup>35</sup>

The second policy responsible for the development of an extensive Indian moneylending industry, not wholly unrelated to the first, was the Ghaznavids'

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in Bosworth's observation that 'the ability of the Ghaznavid sultans to tap the rich resources of India meant that they could go on paying their troops substantially in cash for much longer than the military régimes in the lands further west had been able.' Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids*, p. 57.

<sup>33</sup> J. C. Heesterman, 'Was there an Indian Reaction? Western Expansion in Indian Perspective,' in H. Wesseling, ed., *Expansion and Reaction: Essays in European Expansion and Reactions in Asia and Africa*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1978, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of this process, see the chapter, 'Nomads, Cities and Trade,' in Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, pp. 8–44. Wink also notes that, by the first half of the thirteenth century, many of Lahore's principal inhabitants were merchants engaged in India's trade with Khurasan and Turkestan. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>35</sup> See especially the chapter, 'The Idols of Hind' in *ibid.*, pp. 294–333. See also *idem*, *Al-Hind*, I, p. 23.

introduction of the *iqṭāʿ* system of revenue collection, common throughout much of the Islamic world at the time but alien to India.<sup>36</sup> There were a number of variants of this revenue system, although most commonly it (ideally) involved granting military commanders rotating, non-hereditary taxation privileges over a designated territory in return for military and administrative services.<sup>37</sup> Whereas indigenous Indian rulers of earlier centuries had emerged to leadership as an agrarian nobility and maintained relational bonds throughout the countryside, the *iqṭāʿ* system was designed to maintain a standing army and collect revenue while minimizing the ability of the *iqṭāʿ* grantee (designated either by the Persian *iqṭāʿ-dār* or the Arabic *muṣṭiʿ*) to establish a regional power base. This was (again, ideally) achieved by rotating *iqṭāʿ*s among the military elite, or pitting two powerful *amīrs* (military commanders) against each other in competition for the same *iqṭāʿ*. By regularly shifting the territory of the *iqṭāʿ-dārs* and keeping them occupied with hostilities directed against each other, this system limited their ability to establish potentially divisive military alliances with the landed nobility while regularly remitting to the central state treasury a percentage of the taxes extracted from agrarian production. By the time of the thirteenth-century Ghurid invasions, the *iqṭāʿ* system had become the Delhi Sultans' preferred system for collecting tax revenue. Thus, according to Irfan Habib, when the Ghurid armies conquered northern India 'so familiar was the practice of *iqṭāʿ* assignments to the conquerors that the commanders were designated *muṣṭiʿ*s, and their territorial jurisdictions were called *iqṭāʿ*s.' Wink likewise suggests that 'the Delhi Sultanate, in effect, was the sum of its *iqṭāʿ*s.'<sup>38</sup>

The indigenous intermediaries responsible for overseeing the conversion of the tax revenue from agricultural production to cash (a process henceforth referred to as the 'cash nexus') were the linchpin in the Delhi Sultans' revenue system. The operation of a functioning cash nexus throughout the

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<sup>36</sup> Evidence suggests that a hereditary *iqṭāʿ* revenue system may have been used in Ghaznavid territory during the middle of the eleventh century. Although Bosworth, citing M. F. Köprülü, argues that the Ghaznavids may have adopted this system from the Seljuks, it seems logical to conclude that the Ghaznavids had been familiar with the *iqṭāʿ* system since their long tenure as the slave-governors of the Bukhara-based Samanid dynasty (819–1005). Cf. C. E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, pp. 57–58 and note 25; Frye, *Bukhara*, pp. 156–57.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of the *iqṭāʿ* system and its variants, see Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, pp. 37–40.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, (c.1200–c.1750), 1982, reprint, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1984, pp. 68–75; Wink, *Al-Hind*, I, p. 15; idem, *Al-Hind*, II, p. 212.

central regions of the Delhi Sultanate already by the beginning of the fourteenth century, and probably even earlier, demonstrates that this intermediary class was already well-established at that time.<sup>39</sup> These capitalized intermediary financiers also benefited from some of the harsh realities of the *iqṭāʿ* system. In the *iqṭāʿdārs*' fiscal juggling it was necessary for them to maintain a positive cash flow in order to pay their armies on time and the state treasury on demand, which not infrequently occurred even prior to the harvest. Toward this end, the *iqṭāʿdārs* of the Delhi Sultanate had no other recourse than to rely upon this growing intermediary class of financiers, identified by Barani as 'Multanis and *Sāhs*,' for advances against their projected income, which were granted at a rather profitable rate of interest. At least in northern India, the Multanis were active in this role already during the reign of the Shamsi slave-king Balban (r. 1266–86). According to Barani:

The Multānīs and *Sāhs* of Delhi who have acquired abundant wealth have derived it from the resources (*daulat*) of the old nobles (*maliks* and *amīrs*) of Delhi. The latter took loans from the Multānīs and *Sāhs* beyond limit, and repaid the advances with largesses (by drafts) upon their *iqṭāʿs* (revenue assignments). The moment a khan or malik held an assembly and invited notables as guests, his functionaries rushed to the Multānīs and *Sāhs*, and giving them drafts (*qabz'hā*) upon themselves took loans at interest.<sup>40</sup>

The emergence of a number of merchant-moneylending communities uniformly identified as 'Multanis' in the early years of the Delhi Sultanate is probably related to the migration of ethnically diverse commercially oriented Indian communities to that province—located at the interface of India's settled, agricultural civilization and the pastoral nomadic frontier of mobile wealth—as well as the willingness of communities indigenous to that region to adapt their economic activities so as to capitalize on available opportunities. While the former may account for the migration of Khatri from the Punjab to Sind, the latter appears to be especially applicable to the Lohanis and Bhatias, both of whom, it was noted above, were present in Sind prior to the eighth-century Arab conquest of the region.<sup>41</sup> The dependence of the Delhi Sultanate nobility upon such intermediary financiers ensured the Multanis a dominant position in the north-Indian moneylending industry throughout the Delhi Sultanate period. This continued unobstructed by state intervention even under the

<sup>39</sup> Habib, 'Usury in Medieval India,' p. 393.

<sup>40</sup> TFS, p. 120. The translation belongs to Irfan Habib. Cf. Raychaudhuri and Habib, eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, p. 86; Wink, *Al-Hind*, II, p. 216. The designation '*Sāh*' refers to Hindu merchant-moneylenders.

<sup>41</sup> Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, tr., *The Chachnamah*, pp. 36–37, 43, 170–71.

oppressive rule of ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji, noted for his revocation of *iqtā’* assignments, price controls, and contempt for exploitative market brokers (*dallāls*).<sup>42</sup> Considering the established position of moneylenders in Indian history, it is doubtful that this period marks the earliest instance of moneylenders regularly engaging in commercial relations with the state. It can be asserted with some certainty, however, that Indian merchant-moneylenders maintained an important role in the financial affairs of the Delhi Sultanate, a position which they continued to hold under the Mughal Empire.

It should be stressed that the process of monetization and the expansion of the cash nexus throughout the countryside was a complex, lengthy process. Furthermore, it required constant maintenance and was not entirely complete even during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mughal period, when sources demonstrate that land revenue was mostly, but not entirely, collected in cash. The continuation of some taxation ‘in kind’ is attributable to the Mughals’ efforts to expand their tax base by incorporating into their agrarian empire forested lands and peripheral, non-monetized tribal groups.<sup>43</sup> It also should not be overlooked that, by enlarging their agricultural economy, the Mughals were concomitantly providing Indian family firms with new markets for expansion. It is in this context, for example, that family firms such as the well-known *Jagatseth* house were attracted by the increased demand for rural credit and other financial opportunities created by the development of an agrarian economy in seventeenth-century Bengal.

The dominant role of the Multanis in the diaspora during its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emergence is a product of their continued prosperity under the Mughal regime. To some extent this can be attributed to an increase in commercial opportunities created by Mughal efforts to expand their agrarian economy. Perhaps even more important, however, was the further advancement of monetization in early modern India as vast amounts of precious metals were introduced to the subcontinent from yet another important new source: the New World. The movement of precious metals from the Americas, through Europe, to India was a product of the concurrent European maritime ventures to the Americas and, around the Cape of Good Hope, to the Indian Ocean. The injection of New World specie into the Indian economy began at the end of the fifteenth century with the entrance of the Portuguese to the Indian Ocean commercial arena and increased dramatically

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<sup>42</sup> TFS, pp. 113, 303–16.

<sup>43</sup> For a description of this process in relation to the spread of Islam in Bengal, see Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

following the early seventeenth-century arrival of the Dutch and English East India Companies. In exchange for spices, cotton and a number of other goods, India received a flood of bullion from European merchants. Om Prakash calculates, for example, that from 1602 to 1794 the Dutch imports of precious metals to Asia should be valued at over 573 million florins.<sup>44</sup> Still, the total amount of precious metals collectively imported to India by both the Dutch and English East India Companies was less than that which was imported from other Asian markets.<sup>45</sup> The remarkable advancement of the monetization of the Indian economy in this period dramatically improved the ability of the Indian family firms to maintain the cash nexus between agricultural producers and the state treasury, and this encouraged the growth and development of these firms.<sup>46</sup> This also increased competition among the growing number of Multani firms and, in the mid-sixteenth century, motivated them to seek out opportunities in less competitive markets beyond the subcontinent. It should not be overlooked that the Indian firms themselves likewise promoted the monetization of the Indian economy by importing precious metals that they acquired from their commercial ventures throughout their diaspora and injecting it into India's rural markets.

Leonard argues that the prosperity of Indian family firms (and their agents) was ensured by the Mughal administration's continued reliance upon them for revenue collection and, among other services, for a regular supply of cash and credit. The moneylenders' financial services enabled the administrators to pay their expenses in a timely manner and operate a reliable payroll system,

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<sup>44</sup> Om Prakash, *European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India*, The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 2, part 5, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 87.

<sup>45</sup> Chaudhury and Morineau, eds, *Merchants, Companies and Trade*, p. 7 and note 9.

<sup>46</sup> According to Richards, during the Mughal era 'the flow of produce forced from the countryside by the imperial tax demand worked its way up through the system of markets in return for the cash needed to pay the revenue. At every level, graindealers/moneylenders moved commodities toward the cities and cash back to the villages.' Richards, 'Mughal State Finance,' p. 299. Or, in the words of C. A. Bayly, 'magnate, village leader and nomadic wanderer were all drawn more firmly into a rigid cash revenue system.' *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 227. See also Heesterman, 'Was there an Indian Reaction?,' pp. 38–39; André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-century Maratha Svarājya*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, no. 36, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 331–39; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556–1707)*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963, p. 236.

necessary for the maintenance of a standing army.<sup>47</sup> Whether or not Leonard has overstated the case, as Richards suggests, she has convincingly demonstrated that these firms maintained a close relationship with the Mughal administrators. It is also clear that throughout this period these moneylending firms operated the cash nexus in north India and continued to function as an important source of capital and credit for agriculturalists and industrialists.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, during the first half of the eighteenth century, even as the Mughal Empire decentralized, the Indian family firms displayed an impressive ability to adapt to changing political and economic realities. They continued to operate in their unique position in Indian society by redirecting their allegiance and services to the emerging regional powers which, in some cases, entailed their attachment to the Dutch and English East India Companies. In spite of the prevalent political turmoil, the eighteenth century was a very profitable period for these firms.<sup>49</sup>

*The Organization and Function of Indian Family Firms in India and Abroad*

It is unfortunate that there is no statistical basis from which to venture even an estimate of the amount of capital controlled by family firms in early modern India. It is clear, however, that throughout our period of study these firms controlled large amounts of capital reserves and that even as early as the thirteenth century they used their wealth to finance diverse commercial ventures.<sup>50</sup> This says little, however, about the specific socio-economic functions

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<sup>47</sup> Leonard, 'The "Great Firm" Theory,' pp. 152, 155–58.

<sup>48</sup> Heesterman, 'Was there an Indian Reaction?,' p. 39. Habib also notes that in Mughal India, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'the land-revenue, which comprised the bulk of the peasant's surplus produce, was collected in money and not in kind. From such wide use of money, we should naturally infer the prevalence of money-lending and credit on a large scale.' Habib, 'Usury in Medieval India,' p. 393. See also idem, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp. 236–40.

<sup>49</sup> Leonard, 'The "Great Firm" Theory,' p. 161.

<sup>50</sup> For example, the Marwari *Jagatseth* house, known to be the largest family firm of the eighteenth century, is estimated to have commanded roughly 140 million rupees at the peak of its commercial prosperity. According to N. K. Sinha, that house 'was the centre of commercial credit in eastern India. It regulated the rates of exchange, superseded the necessity for the transfer of bullion and afforded a permanent supply of capital at all times... Its vast capital was steadily and beneficially employed in augmenting trade.' J. H. Little, *House of Jagatseth*, pp. x, xvii (introductory essay).

of these institutions and their interests in several commercial arenas.<sup>51</sup> In an effort to illustrate how the diverse commercial portfolios maintained by these family firms is relevant to the commercial activities of their agents in the diaspora, it is beneficial to explore a number of the more important commercial interests maintained by these family firms in their native India.

The categorization of premodern Indian family firms by the contemporary designations ‘merchants’ or ‘bankers’ is precluded by their diverse interests and participation in commercial ventures of various types and magnitudes.<sup>52</sup> In practice, the distinction between many of these designations becomes blurred through the diversification of any single firm’s commercial activities. Even in regards to individuals, for example, the difference between a *ṣarrāf* (lit. ‘moneychanger,’ although *ṣarrāfs* were also commonly known to have been moneylenders) and a *tājir* (pl. *tujjār*, a large-scale merchant, sometimes referred to by the Persian designation *sūdāgar*) may be obscured by their participation in overlapping economic activities, both maintaining diverse portfolios of moneylending and trade.<sup>53</sup> Still, the differentiation of these two categories of commercialists may (rather subjectively) be reduced to the degree to which the individual or organization in question focused on long-distance trade or moneylending. That is, whereas *tujjār* were primarily interested

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<sup>51</sup> According to Richards, in early modern India, ‘within an economic system shaped and constrained by the steady, increasing flow of resources to the imperial center, several different types of commercial groups carried out obviously essential services.’ Richards, ‘Mughal State Finance,’ p. 289.

<sup>52</sup> For discussions of the various types of commercialists in early modern Iran, cf. Jean Calmard, ‘Les marchands iraniens: formation et montée d’un groupe de pression, 16e–19e siècles,’ in Denys Lombard et Jean Aubin, eds, *Marchands et hommes d’affaires asiatiques*, Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1988, pp. 91–107; Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life*, chapter two, ‘Description and Number of the Guilds,’ pp. 37–60, and chapter three, ‘Structure of the Guilds,’ pp. 62–99.

<sup>53</sup> *Ṣarrāfs* were skilled metallurgists and they profitted by providing value assessments and exchanging the hundreds of coins in circulation at any given time, each of which differed in terms of specie type, weight, purity, and age (indicating depreciation due to wear), among other variables. In medieval and early modern Indian literature the term *shroff*, a variant of the Arabic *ṣarrāf*, was commonly used in reference to bankers, money-changers and goldsmiths and was also used to designate the second officer of an imperial mint, whose responsibilities included analyzing the metals for purity. Merchants entering India were given the choice of waiting to have their coins converted to local currencies at an imperial mint free of charge, or employing a *ṣarrāf* to do the job more quickly. Cf. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 11, 14 note 1; William Crooke, ed., *Hobson-Jobson: a Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases...*, 1903, reprint, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984, pp. 831–32.

in the long-distance, large-scale commercial exchange of commodities, which not infrequently included providing credit or otherwise lending money and goods for profit, *ṣarrāfs* were primarily interested in the business of changing money and lending money for interest, although they may also have invested in long-distance trade. By this definition, *tujjār* were the most important agents in the movement of commodities between regions, but it was the financial organizations orchestrated by *ṣarrāfs* (and similar groups) which emerged to establish, and maintain, the cash nexus in the Indian economy. Referring to these Indian moneychangers, Tavernier suggests, for example, that ‘in India a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money-changer, called a Shroff, who acts as banker to make remittances of money and issue letters of exchange... All the Jews who occupy themselves with money and exchange in the empire of the Grand Seigneur [the Ottoman Sultan] pass for being very sharp; but in India they would scarcely be apprentices to these Changers.’<sup>54</sup>

Closely related to the *ṣarrāf* is the *seth* (also known as *sāh*, *sāhū* or *sāhūkār*). Like the *ṣarrāf*, the *seth* is known to have been a well-capitalized, large-scale moneylender responsible for providing a number of important banking services to a wide variety of clients. Their commercial activities were so similar that first-hand European observers often categorized them both simply as ‘bankers.’ Examples are provided by Tavernier who, in the seventeenth century, referred to the Indian *ṣarrāfs* in Iran as ‘banquiers,’ and also by the best-known ‘banking house’ in Indian history, the *Jagatseth* family firm, founded by Hiranand Sahu in mid-seventeenth-century Marwar and brought to prosperity in eighteenth-century Bengal under the direction of his eldest son, Seth Manik Chand.<sup>55</sup> Another similarity between the *ṣarrāfs* and *seths* was their common affiliation with family firms. It will be seen that this affiliation enabled individual moneylenders to utilize the financial technologies of the time to transfer capital in ways less risky and more convenient than the transfer of cash or valuable commodities. The difference between these two categories of moneylenders is found in the focus of their respective commercial

<sup>54</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India*, I, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Little, *House of Jagatseth*, pp. 6–24. Again, it is interesting that, nearly concomitant to the rise of the Marwari *Jagatseth* house, the above-mentioned Marwari Baraev appears in our archival sources as a leader of the Marwari diaspora community in Astrakhan. At roughly the same time, Marwari agents from over a dozen houses spread throughout the subcontinent, handling the grain, cotton textile and opium trades, and spreading even further eastward beyond Dhaka and Chittagong to compete with the Nattukotai Chettiars in Burma. In nineteenth-century Rangoon there were some four hundred Marwari agents active in a variety of commercial endeavors. Ray, ‘The Bazar,’ pp. 257–58.



interests: *seths* tended to combine their moneylending and credit business with retail and wholesale trade in urban markets and investments in industrial production whereas *ṣarrāfs* were famous for their legendary reserves of capital wealth which they used to advance loans and exchange currencies of various kinds.<sup>56</sup>

Monetization was an important development in India's economy, but along with the rise of the family firms came advances in accounting skills and commercial technologies. Functioning much like modern money orders, *hundis* were the most important means used by Indian family firms to transfer large amounts of capital from one individual, or firm, to another. Throughout the early modern period most transactions involving the transfer of large amounts of wealth from one location to another were conducted with *hundis* rather than cash.<sup>57</sup> A *Hundi* is defined by Jain as 'a written order—usually unconditional—made by one person on another for the payment, on demand or after a specified time, of a certain sum of money to a person named therein' and it was especially well-known as an important financial tool of India's *ṣarrāfs* and *seths*.<sup>58</sup> In addition to their circulation within the network of the family firms, *hundis* were commonly bought by unaffiliated individuals who used them much as money-orders or travelers' checks are used today. The primary recipients of this service were merchants and other travelers willing to pay a small fee for the security of converting cash to a safer medium for transport, or those who wished to take out a line of credit with a family firm.

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<sup>56</sup> Richards, 'Mughal State Finance,' p. 290. According to H. N. Wright's *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, during Akbar's reign there are known to have been in circulation at least 46 varieties of gold, 125 silver and 229 copper coins. Cited in Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 13 note 4.

<sup>57</sup> Brijkishore Bhargava has suggested that Indian merchants and bankers made use of bills of exchange as early as the Vedic period, even prior to the seventh century B.C.E. Although he convincingly demonstrates that, even at this early date, Indian bankers and moneylenders were actively engaged in a number of commercial ventures, his evidence regarding their use of *hundis* at that time is scanty and his conclusions conjectural. Brijkishore Bhargava, *Indigenous Banking in Ancient and Medieval India*, Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1934, pp. 131–32. Still, long before the early modern period Indian merchants are known to have used *hundis*, as well as checks, which functioned similarly to the checks of today. It is perhaps of interest that the English word 'check' is derived from the Persian *chak* (چک), defined as 'a draft or cheque for a salary or pension; an obligation, deed, bond, note...' F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary...*, 1892, reprint, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1963, p. 396.

<sup>58</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 71. See also Irfan Habib, 'The System of Bills of Exchange (Hundis) in the Mughal Empire,' in Satish Chandra, ed., *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987, pp. 207–21.

Because of the importance of *hundis* in the transfer of capital between India and distant diaspora communities, it is worthwhile to elaborate on their system of operation. First, it should be noted that, whereas *hundis* are commonly referred to as ‘bills of exchange,’ the two did not function in exactly the same way. The primary difference is that bills of exchange were, by definition, written against commercial goods and unconditionally cashable whereas there were no fewer than eight varieties of *hundis*, some of which were cashable only under specified conditions and all of which were accepted, or rejected, on the basis of the reputation of the financial house from which they were issued.<sup>59</sup> Generally, *hundis* were written as a promise of payment by a particular firm either upon presentation at a predetermined destination (*darshani*, ‘sight’ or demand bills) or after a specified time (*muddati*, ‘deferred’ or usance bills).<sup>60</sup> Also, *hundis* were fully saleable, making them a negotiable medium between reputable merchants that was much safer and more convenient than cash for the transmission of large amounts of capital across long distances. They were, therefore, particularly useful as a means to remit payment for goods received or for the movement of capital between the central offices of financial houses and their agents in distant locations. *Hundis* were secure in that, should one be stolen, lost or destroyed, the holder did not suffer a financial loss; instead, the issuance and value of the *hundi* in question could be confirmed and the holder paid in full. *Hundis* were also a convenient means to take out short-term loans and a profitable investment for individuals with cash on hand, as one could buy them at a discounted price, usually from 2 to 2.5 percent, to account for interest, insurance and any other costs.<sup>61</sup> An example of a *hundi* being used for this purpose is found in Elphinstone’s account of the sale of his bills to a Hindu banker in Peshawar (at that time located in Afghan territory) who bought them to move his own wealth to India more easily.<sup>62</sup>

In the early seventeenth century, *hundis* were commonly used for commercial payments and other transfers of capital throughout Mughal India and wherever

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<sup>59</sup> For discussions of the various types of *hundis*, cf. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 70–83; Bhargava, *Indigenous Banking in Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 131–52; Grover, ‘An Integrated Pattern,’ pp. 134–35.

<sup>60</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup> Habib, ‘Usury in Medieval India,’ p. 401; G. T. Kulkarni, ‘Banking in the 18th Century: a Case Study of a Poona Banker,’ *Artha Vijnana: Journal of the Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics* 15, 2 (1973), p. 188.

<sup>62</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, p. 334.

the Indian family firms had established branch offices.<sup>63</sup> For the Indian diaspora merchants this technology was an especially important tool in the movement of capital between the central offices of the family firms in India and their agents in Turan and other diaspora nodes. The continuation of this system of transferring funds into the nineteenth century is demonstrated in the account of Alexander Burnes who, in the 1830s, cashed a *hundi* in Kabul for five thousand rupees, for which the Kabuli agents offered to issue additional *hundis* cashable at their offices in Nizhny Novgorod, Astrakhan or Bukhara, the latter of which Burnes readily accepted. Surprised and impressed by the magnitude of this Indian financial network, Burnes exclaimed that, 'above all, how much is our wonder excited to find the ramifications of commerce extending uninterruptedly over such vast and remote regions, differing as they do from each other in language, religion, manners, and law.'<sup>64</sup>

The final commercial designations to find their way into this discussion of the commercial diversification of the family firms are the *dallāl* and the *baqqāl*. The *dallāl* was a market broker or other type of commercial intermediary whose activities focused on the transfer of large amounts of bulk goods, such as cotton or grains, from production centers to market wholesalers. In Iran the term *baqqāl* was commonly used to refer to a type of green-grocer, or one who sells vegetables in a market place. In India and Afghanistan, however, the term was used to designate a type of *mahājan* (a generic term for a large-scale merchant-moneylender or wholesaler) whose commercial activities specifically focused on the grain trade.<sup>65</sup> *Dallāls* and *baqqāls* are not likely to have frequently dealt in *hundis*, although they did regularly extend commercial credit and production materials to their clients, for example giving seed or livestock to agriculturalists and raw cotton to weavers. They are also known to have purchased agriculturalists' finished harvest (against outstanding debt, for cash, or a combination of the two), to have stored it, and to have arranged for it to be transported to distant urban markets for sale. In India, the primary means by which such bulk commodities were

<sup>63</sup> Subrahmanyam and Bayly, 'Portfolio Capitalists,' p. 414; Habib, 'Usury in Medieval India,' p. 401.

<sup>64</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 169–70. Burnes clearly demonstrates the importance of such financial technologies while traversing insecure territory by describing how members of his mission carefully sewed into the seams of their garments the few gold coins they carried at any given time.

<sup>65</sup> For more on these organizations, cf. Richards, 'Mughal State Finance,' pp. 289–90; Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp. 75–78; A. Jan Qaisar, 'The Role of Brokers in Medieval India,' *The Indian Historical Review* 1, 2 (1974), pp. 220–46; Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 51.

transported between regions was by contracting Banjaras, itinerant communities who traveled throughout the subcontinent with large bullock caravans. The commercial activities of the Banjaras focused on the transregional transportation of such goods as grain, cotton, sugar and salt, and, it is interesting to note, their rise to a dominant position in this profession in northwest India coincided with that of the Multanis.<sup>66</sup>

Through these measures, and by providing loans to rural elites throughout the countryside, the *baqqāl* operated at an important juncture in India's cash nexus. These grain dealers moved capital and commodities between urban centers and villages, thereby bringing cash into the countryside and enabling the administration to collect its tax demands more easily. It is also important to stress that, whereas cash loans were generally repaid in cash, loans to agriculturalists and village industrialists were commonly extended in the form of production materials and repaid with a portion of the harvest or finished product. Along with the remainder of the commodity or merchandise in question, which would have been purchased for cash, these goods were then either transported to urban markets for sale or remitted to the creditor of the village moneylender.

This is relevant to a discussion of the diaspora because Indian *baqqāls*, agents of Indian family firms, participated in rural credit systems beyond the borders of India. Elphinstone makes this clear in his early nineteenth-century observation that, in Afghanistan, there were considerable numbers of Hindus engaged as 'brokers, merchants, bankers, goldsmiths, sellers of grain, &c.' and that 'there is scarcely a village in the country without a family or two who exercise the above trades, and act as accountants, money-changers, &c.'<sup>67</sup> This was echoed a few years later by George Campbell, whose report on the activities of the Khatri moneylenders in Afghanistan claims that 'no village can get on without the Khatri who keeps the accounts, does the banking business, and buys and sells the grain.'<sup>68</sup> Jain also notes that the Multani family firms maintained diverse interests and that they were 'the biggest merchants trading in grain, cloth and precious metals and speculating

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Grover, 'An Integrated Pattern,' pp. 127, 132; Scott Levi, 'The Banjaras: Medieval Indian Peddlers and Military Commissariat,' M. A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994.

<sup>67</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 413–14. Elphinstone notes that Indians were also active in northern Persia at that time, although their numbers were limited as they were reportedly somewhat ill-treated by the administration. Conversely, their presence in Bukhara and the rest of Turan was encouraged.

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, III, pp. 458–59.

in these commodities.’<sup>69</sup> A report of the Banking Enquiry Committee for the Centrally Administered Areas demonstrates that these firms orchestrated transregional trade beyond India’s northwest frontier even into the twentieth century. According to this report, India’s trans-Khyber trade at the time was dominated by some fifty Shikarpuri families in Peshawar, all of which were affiliated with ‘the Multani firm of Naraindas Chelaram.’ This firm was established in Peshawar during the eighteenth-century period of Durrani Afghan domination although, at the time of the report (following the rise of the Sikh regime), its main office had been moved to Amritsar and it maintained branch offices in Peshawar, Kohat, Rawalpindi, Karachi and Bombay.<sup>70</sup>

The above demonstrates the diverse economic functions of Indian family firms. It is important to reiterate that, whereas it may be possible to categorize some commercial specializations of the individual agents under the specific occupational designations discussed above, it can be misleading to apply the same categories to the family firms. Whereas some firms may have focused their commercial activities on certain specializations, they are also known to have developed and maintained diverse portfolios which necessitated the involvement of their agents in a number of types of commercial ventures.<sup>71</sup> For example, it has been noted above that, as early as the thirteenth century, Multani merchants are known to have been charged with importing goods to Delhi for consumption by the Delhi Sultanate’s nobility while simultaneously functioning as a source of investment capital and credit for both the nobility and the rural population. Over five centuries later, Elphinstone reported that it was still common for Indian agents to ‘mix trade and agency with their regular banking business’ in order to maximize their profits by capitalizing on the opportunities available in Afghan territory.<sup>72</sup> The Banking Enquiry Committee also noted that most of the indigenous Indian bankers ‘combine banking with trade in piece-goods, grain, sugar and cotton.’<sup>73</sup>

It is therefore not a contradiction that, while some of a firm’s agents

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<sup>69</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>70</sup> *Banking Enquiry Committee for the Centrally Administered Areas, 1929–30*, 4 vols, Calcutta: Government of India, 1930, I, pp. 349–51; II, pp. 206–8.

<sup>71</sup> This is supported in the early twentieth century by the inclusion in the portfolios of two wealthy Shikarpuri merchants of vast holdings of urban land, agricultural fields and industrial properties. See Markovitz, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 165 and note 10.

<sup>72</sup> Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, I, pp. 333–34.

<sup>73</sup> Banking Enquiry Committee, I, p. 351.

conducted large-scale import-export commerce in such major trade centers as Surat, Qandahar, Isfahan, Bandar ‘Abbas and Astrakhan (referred to in historical sources as *tujjār*), they had associates who were simultaneously established in urban areas as merchant-moneylenders (*seths/sāhs* or *ṣarrāfs*, depending upon whether their specialization was in trade or moneychanging). Meanwhile, the firms had other agents (*mahājans*) established in countless villages where they advanced various sorts of credit to agriculturalists and village industrialists. In return for this credit, a share of the finished product or harvest, commonly grain, was returned to the village merchant-moneylender (the *mahājan* here acting as a *baqqāl*). The moneylender would then arrange for this commodity to be transferred to another associate, most likely another creditor who functioned as a commodity broker (*dallāl*), who distributed the agricultural production to wholesalers in urban centers.<sup>74</sup>

Even considering the wealth, impressive networks and diverse portfolios of these firms, one must be cautious not to overemphasize their role in the early modern Indian economy at the expense of coexisting rural credit systems. The degree to which any single institution was able to strategically place its agents in a number of urban and rural markets and orchestrate a system such as the (rather idealized) case outlined above depended upon a number of variables, including especially fluctuations in market prices, investment portfolios, and regional politics. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that, although agents of these firms were present throughout the countryside, they did not monopolize the early modern Indian money markets. The agents of these firms made collateral agreements with unaffiliated merchants and competed with other interested parties, especially the *zamīndārs* (landlords, agrarian elite), and other landed gentry, who are also known to have advanced credit and arranged for the transportation of the village production to regional commercial fairs throughout north India, known as *mandis*.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to expanding their portfolios by diversifying their commercial interests within the very competitive Indian economic arena, Indian family firms also increased their opportunities for profit by sending their agents to markets in distant regions. These markets offered tempting commercial opportunities for the economically savvy family firm directors and, while some agents were improving the position of their firms in the subcontinent, other, more intrepid individuals chose, or were directed, to uproot themselves from their homes and families and invest in the markets of distant lands. As

<sup>74</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> Grover, ‘An Integrated Pattern,’ pp. 135–36; Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 35.

noted above, the ability of diaspora merchants to operate in their host societies with liberties not enjoyed by indigenous merchants is an element crucial to their commercial success.

Before turning to the operations of the Indian family firms in Turan there remains one question that begs to be addressed regarding Indian moneylending operations in foreign markets. Considering the congenial relations Indian moneylenders generally shared with the government administrators in India, Afghanistan, Turan, Safavid Iran, and Russia, it appears to be a glaring aberration that, despite their numerous communities in the nearby Safavid-controlled Caucasus, Indian agents did not establish diaspora communities in the flourishing commercial centers of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>76</sup> This may be partly attributable to the Ottoman administration's reluctance to allow the immigration into their territories of Hindu merchants, who were not even considered to be *dhimmīs* ('people of the book' to be protected by Islamic law, i.e. Jews or Christians). Rather than attributing the lack of an Indian commercial presence in Ottoman markets to ethnic or religious bigotry on the part of the Turks, however, this aberration seems more likely to be directly related to the presence in Ottoman territory of adequate credit institutions operated by other foreign merchant communities, i.e. Jews, as well as indigenous merchant groups. In his research on such institutions in Ottoman Turkey, Ronald Jennings has uncovered a remarkable system of credit extended by small-scale moneylenders and an 'apparent absence of big credit institutions' comparable to the Indian family firms.<sup>77</sup> The presence of sufficient credit institutions in Anatolia explains the lack of motivation on the part of the Indian family firms to lobby the Ottoman nobility for permission to extend their activities into Ottoman territory, a region otherwise rich with commercial opportunities. Furthermore, the smaller, less well-organized nature of these moneylending institutions goes some distance in explaining why Indians did not encounter significant competition from Ottoman moneylending firms in Turan, Iran or Afghanistan.

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<sup>76</sup> Even in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Alexander Burnes observed that, although Shikarpuri merchants dominated Indo-Turanian commercial relations and maintained 'houses of agency' stretching from Astrakhan and Meshed to Calcutta, they were not tolerated in Turkey. Burnes, *Travels into Bukhara*, I, pp. 168–69. He also mentioned that their position was rather unstable in Persia.

<sup>77</sup> Jennings, 'Loans and Credit,' pp. 212–14.

*Indian Family Firms, Capital and Credit in Turan*

Indian family firms were homogeneous, caste-oriented institutions.<sup>78</sup> It should be made clear, however, that any number of competing firms could operate under the direction of members of the same caste. Conversely, agents with different caste identities belonging to a single firm would have been highly irregular as the homogeneous nature of these firms was an important element in their successful operation in the diaspora. Because the agents involved were all members of the same social, religious and legal system, the ‘familial’ orientation of these institutions ensured a degree of trust which could not easily be secured otherwise. This trust was at least partially a product of the ability of the directors to wield extra-legal penalties over their agents, which better ensured that the agents conducted themselves appropriately and remained loyal to their firm. This, in turn, served to protect the reputation of the firm, accurately characterized by Rudner as ‘a family firm’s greatest intangible asset.’<sup>79</sup> The prosperity of a firm hinged on its ability to issue *hundis* and have them tendered by other, unaffiliated family firms, a transaction which was dependent upon a firm’s reputation as a respected and creditworthy institution. As demonstrated by Rudner in relation to the Nakarattar communities in south India, should a Nakarattar agent in the diaspora decline to act in accordance with the instructions of his directors, he, and his (nuclear) family, could be censured and suffer severe social restrictions and penalties back home.<sup>80</sup>

It was noted above that the Indian diaspora communities were populated almost exclusively by men and that this was related to issues of security. It also seems to have been the case that, while the agents of a firm were living

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<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that this stands in contradiction to the model recently put forth by Markovits. He argues that, rather than caste-based family firms, the Shikarpuris’ trade was primarily organized around the less familial ‘*shah-gumāshta*’ (‘creditor-agent’) relationship, derived from the Islamic *muḍāraba* (*commenda*) commercial partnership. See Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 157–66; 176–78. Thus, while Markovits suggests that the role of kin relationships in diaspora commerce ‘has tended to get exaggerated,’ the discussion here asserts the importance of caste and kinship in the general operation of the Indian diaspora network.

<sup>79</sup> Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India*, p. 109.

<sup>80</sup> According to Rudner, in a situation in which a Nakarattar should refuse to accept the resolution of the community *panchayat* (community elders), the *panchayat* was empowered to forbid other Nakarattar families from intermarrying with his. *Ibid.*, p. 128. Although supporting evidence is lacking, the directors of the family firms of the present study were most certainly vested with similar authority.



in distant communities in control of considerable amounts of the firm's capital, the firm directors watched over the families of their agents as much to reassure the absent agents of their well-being as to ensure the loyalty and responsible conduct of the agents while they were abroad and in possession of large amounts of the firm's capital. Charles Masson suggested that this was so in his identification of Shikarpur as the place where the families of the Shikarpuri agents were 'detained' in their absence.<sup>81</sup> The application of extra-legal penalties aside, should an agent prove untrustworthy in his interactions with merchants of his caste, of other castes, or even other religions, his reputation and credit would be ruined, leaving him unaffiliated, uncanceled and unable to take advantage of the most profitable opportunities.

Agents brought into Indian family firms underwent rigorous training from their early childhood. This training encompassed complex accounting techniques, mathematical formulas for computing various types of interest, moneylending procedures, a variety of legal issues related to their own traditions and those of other legal systems, secret codes, and a long period of apprenticeship.<sup>82</sup> Upon completion of their training, agents were loaned a substantial amount of capital by the firm directors which they took with them into the diaspora. Thus, in the 1660s Chardin reported that, in response to the confiscation of their wealth by Shah Sulayman, the Indian merchants in Iran pleaded with him to reconsider and explained that the money which he had appropriated from them was not their own: it belonged to their creditors in India.<sup>83</sup> Tavernier likewise described a system by which the Indian merchant-moneylenders in the diaspora were capitalized by 'men of substance' at an annual interest rate of 8–10 percent, and they used that capital to make loans at 30 percent, or even higher.<sup>84</sup>

Rather than cash, the family firm directors generally capitalized their agents with a commodity that was in demand in the specific market of destination, most commonly cotton textiles. It is perhaps for this reason that, whereas most accounts of the Multanis in Iran focus on their moneylending activities,

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<sup>81</sup> Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, I, p. 353. See also Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 64 and note 20.

<sup>82</sup> Chardin notes that the most skilled Iranian accountants were those that had been trained by Indian merchants, see Chardin, *Voyages*, IV, pp. 296–99. In the Punjab region of India alone there is reported to have been 15,000 numerical codes in use in the early twentieth century. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 36–39, 90–92.

<sup>83</sup> Chardin, *The Coronation of this Present King of Persia*, pp. 100–101.

<sup>84</sup> Tavernier, *The Six Voyages...*, pp. 159–60, cited in Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life*, p. 230 and note 78.

Raphaël du Mans specifically referred to all of the Multani merchants in seventeenth-century Isfahan as cloth merchants. Even in Anthony Jenkinson's 1558 description of the Indian merchants in Bukhara—the earliest available mention of the Indian diaspora in Turan—he likewise referred to them as textile merchants. Interestingly, if somewhat misleadingly, Jenkinson characterized Bukharan trade as 'beggerly and poore' and he was astonished that it took the Indian merchants who came there two to three years to sell their goods before returning home. Regarding the commercial prospects in Bukhara, Jenkinson complained that:

The Indians doe bring fine whites, which the Tartars doe roll about their heads, and all other kinds of whites [e.g. cambrics, muslins], which serve for apparell made of cotton wooll and crasko [coarse linen], but golde, silver, pretious stones, and spices they bring none... I offered to barter with Marchants of those Countreys, which came from the furthest parts of India, even from the Countrey of Bengala, & the River Ganges, to give them carseis [kersey, an English woolen textile] for their commodities, but they would not barter for such commoditie as cloth.<sup>85</sup>

At first glance Jenkinson's disappointment with the Bukharan market and the unwillingness of the Indian traders to deal with him seems to suggest that the commercial climate in Bukhara was impoverished and devoid of opportunity. Reconsidering this citation in the context of the commercial techniques utilized by the Indian merchants, however, it becomes apparent that the Indians encountered by Jenkinson were already operating in concordance with the standard diaspora model that was to become so familiar in later years. As noted above, it was common for Indian merchants to spend several years in the diaspora before returning to India. This time was spent actively participating in a number of commercial ventures, only one facet of which was the retail or wholesale liquidation of the commodities advanced to them by the family firm directors. The Indian agents traveling to Turan generally made arrangements to have Powinda caravans transport their commodities from India across the inhospitable Afghan intermediary lands. Upon arrival at their destination, they installed themselves in a caravanserai, generally one owned and operated by other Indians, possibly even by their own family firm. There they would begin selling the goods that their family firms had credited to them. If the market price and demand were exceptional they might liquidate their inventory, but considering that every caravan bringing Indian merchants to Turan brought thousands of camel loads of cotton textiles, this is not likely to have been the case. Instead, these merchants would be inclined to sell only a small percentage of the total, hoarding the rest for sale over an extended period of time in

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<sup>85</sup> Jenkinson, *Early Voyages and Travels*, I, pp. 87–88 and notes 2–3.

order to keep the market from saturating and driving down the price of their commodities. It also seems reasonable to suggest that supervising the sale of the merchandise provided to the agents was among the most important duties the family firm directors assigned to their *āqsaqāls*. Thus, rather than demonstrating the destitute nature of the Bukharan market at the time of his visit, Jenkinson's inability to purchase Indian cloth at a discounted price is indicative of the saturation of the Bukharan market with Indian textiles and the efforts of the Indian merchants to keep the price of this commodity as high as possible.

It was, of course, necessary for these merchants to sell some of their stock in order to begin their moneylending operations. Unlike standard caravan traders, the Indian merchants in the diaspora did not take the capital accrued from the sale of their commodities back to their caravanserais and let it sit idle until they returned to India. Rather, they were trained to put their capital to work by reinvesting it in other commercial activities, most commonly in reasonably secure, interest-earning moneylending ventures. A letter written in 1878 by a group of Indians living in Tashkent demonstrates that this system functioned in Turan even into the late nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> According to this letter, the Indians, well-known for their moneylending activities, were all members of the same (although unidentified) 'tribe,' which, they claimed, had maintained a presence in Tashkent for over seventy years.<sup>87</sup> This letter also mentions that those Indians who belonged to this community in Tashkent owed money to wealthy individuals in India, presumably the directors of their family firm from whom they had taken loans prior to their departure into the diaspora. These wealthy financiers were further reported to have been closely connected to a specific, although tantalizingly unmentioned, source of industrial production in India, and the diaspora merchants mention that they specialized in the importation of this commodity. The family firm's relationship to industrial production is most likely similar to that outlined above; the firm in question had agents active in financing the production of this unknown commodity, perhaps cotton, which was then advanced to village industrialists (e.g., weavers) to be turned into a finished product and then exported, probably through the mediation of Powinda nomads, to the firm's agents in Tashkent and wherever else it had branch offices. Furthermore, this letter also mentions that these

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<sup>86</sup> CSHARU, fond I-1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 53-54ob. I am grateful to Robert Crews for bringing this Delo to my attention.

<sup>87</sup> The author's use of the Russian word *племя*, which technically translates as 'tribe,' is most certainly meant to indicate 'caste' as commonly used in reference to the Indian social system.

Indians participated in a number of commercial activities in Turan, including wholesale and retail commerce as well as providing credit for industrial production.

Prior to turning to the specific moneylending techniques used by the Indians, it must be acknowledged that sources describing such activities are almost exclusively restricted to the nineteenth century, with the notable exception of the above-mentioned judicial documents in the *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq* regarding the activities of Darya Khan Multani. Thus, in an effort to reach an understanding of the normative parameters within which most Indian diaspora merchants operated, it has been necessary to rely primarily on nineteenth-century sources for the following discussion.

Indians granted a number of types of loans to their Turanian clients, although these can be divided into agricultural or industrial investment on the one hand and cash loans on the other, the two types differing categorically in their respective repayment schedules and the interest rates charged.<sup>88</sup> Because many agriculturalists were dependent on rural credit to get their crops planted, and the risks involved in agricultural ventures were unpredictable, these loans constituted an especially important and very lucrative venture for the Indian moneylenders. Loans were generally advanced to agriculturalists prior to the planting season and were given either in cash or, more often, in kind, with the cumulative principal and interest collected at harvest time. In India, and probably in Turan as well, such loans were extended at rates of between 25 and 100 percent of the principal advanced for a term lasting only as long as the growing season.<sup>89</sup> Although the risk involved in agricultural loans was greater than that of a loan against collateral, it is easy to understand why the Indian moneylenders were attracted to rural markets: the interest earned was correspondingly higher and the term of agricultural loans was usually six months or less, depending on the length of the growing season. To the Indians, this meant that the capital retrieved was available for other investments the rest of the year.

As noted above, these moneylenders commonly credited the agriculturalists with seed or other production materials in return for a share of the harvest or

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<sup>88</sup> The following discussion relies heavily on information presented in the anonymous newspaper article 'Indusy i ikh' promisel' v' Turkestanskom' Krae' ('Hindus and their Trade in the Turkestan District'), *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 247, pp. 164–67. Originally published in *Novoe Vremia*, 1879, no. 1367.

<sup>89</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 67–68. For a comparison with the rural credit system in operation in China, see Ming-te Pan, 'Rural Credit Market and the Chinese Peasant Economy (1600–1950),' Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1996.

finished product, which the moneylender then arranged to have transported to urban centers for sale at the market price. Under a similar rural credit arrangement moneylenders entirely financed the agriculturalists' planting in return for a predetermined portion of the harvest, usually 50 percent, which they would likewise arrange to sell at the market price.<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that, as was the case in India, these rural credit agents were also likely to have commonly purchased, for cash, the remainder of the harvest and to have arranged for its sale in urban markets. This extended a cash economy into the Turanian countryside and facilitated the collection of taxes in cash by the Turanian administrators, which at least partially explains the administrators' motivations to protect the commercial interests of the Indians and ensure that they could conduct their business in an agreeable social climate.<sup>91</sup>

The loans Indians extended to village industrialists followed a pattern similar to their loans to agriculturalists. In both circumstances loans were made in cash or in kind, extending seed or livestock to the agriculturalists and raw materials to the industrialists (for example, providing textile producers cotton and dyes imported from their Indian suppliers). Both varieties of loans were also commonly made against a guarantee for a lump sum payment, to be remitted at harvest time or upon the completion of production. The primary difference between the two is the considerably more predictable nature of industrial production. Free from the risk of losses due to destruction by hostile peoples, drought or other natural disasters, industrial production loans were made available for considerably less interest than were agricultural loans.

Some insight into the commercial relationships Indian merchant-moneylenders established with industrialists can be found in the late sixteenth-century *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, the above-mentioned judicial record that includes eight entries regarding Darya Khan Multani, seven of which refer specifically to his activities as a textile wholesaler in Samarqand from 13 October 1589 through 22 November 1590. These documents include Darya Khan's loan contracts with a single Turanian supplier of raw materials for production, in this instance high quality wool, as well as his contracts with a number of Indians who appear to have relocated to Samarqand for the express purpose of supervising

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<sup>90</sup> 'Indusy i ikh' promisel', pp. 164–65; Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 68. This system was known in India as *lawani* ('supply'). Similarly, under the rural credit system known as *batai*, a *zamīndār* loaned seed and/or money to a cultivator under the agreement that he would receive a portion of the finished crop, usually one-half.

<sup>91</sup> The same may be said for the Indian merchants in Safavid Iran where, Chardin notes, much of the tax revenue was collected in kind. Chardin, *Voyages*, V, p. 415.

textile production. All of these Indians are identified as ‘Multanis’ with the exception of a cloth printer from Lahore, identified as ‘Lahori Chitgar son of Lahu.’<sup>92</sup>

Darya Khan positioned himself between indigenous producers of raw materials and retailers of finished textiles by purchasing Turanian raw materials which he then had his employees make into finished products using Indian textile production technology. That is, by bringing Indian *ustads* (master craftsmen) to Turan to oversee textile production using indigenous labor, Darya Khan, himself identified as *janab*, or master, was able to utilize locally produced raw materials (as well as any raw materials imported from India via his trade connections there) to make finished textiles for sale in local markets. By training Turanian craftsmen in more advanced Indian production techniques, Darya Khan was able to reduce his production costs by eliminating transportation expenses and important elements of risk involved in importing textiles across potentially dangerous caravan routes.<sup>93</sup>

Information elicited from these documents demonstrates that Darya Khan operated this system by lending money to his indigenous raw material buyer, who promised to repay him with high quality wool within a seven-month period. He made loans of both money and raw materials to his production supervisors, who likewise promised to return the finished product within a specified period of time. There is no mention of interest in these contracts and it is impossible to venture even an estimate without any idea of each of the commodities’ market value at that time. One can be reasonably certain, however, that Darya Khan profited from his advances of cash and materials to these individuals. Also of interest are the means Darya Khan used to secure his loans. Although virtually every loan made to an individual identified as a Multani was made by signature only, Darya Khan’s contracts with non-Multanis included some form of security. In one such agreement Darya Khan’s raw material buyer, Mulla Hussain son of Mulla Hassan, acknowledged

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<sup>92</sup> For other discussions of Darya Khan Multani’s activities in Samarqand, cf. Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 53–68; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 75–77; Gopal, ‘Indians in Central Asia,’ pp. 11–13; Alam, ‘Trade, State Policy and Regional Change,’ pp. 203–6 and note 3. It is important to note, however, that Alam’s criticism of Mukminova’s Russian translations of the original *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq* entries is misplaced; Mukminova’s translations are accurate. The misunderstanding lies in Alam’s reference to Gopal’s incomplete English summaries of Mukminova’s Russian translations. Again, see appendix one of this work for English translations of the original *Majmū‘a-i-wathā’iq* entries referring to Darya Khan Multani.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Mukminova, *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia*, pp. 62–68; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 75–77.

that he owed to Darya Khan a large quantity of white wool and enlisted a co-signer to ensure payment should he default.<sup>94</sup> In another entry, an individual identified as Ustad Hussain son of Piranan declared that he owed ninety pieces of cloth to Darya Khan and for collateral gave him an Indian slave. The document stipulates that the slave would be returned to Ustad Hussain upon the payment of his debt.<sup>95</sup> In the only other entry regarding Darya Khan's interactions with an individual not identified as a 'Multani,' Lahori Chitgar son of Lalu vowed that if he should fail to meet the requirements of his contract with Darya Khan he would legally divorce his wife by uttering the word *ṭalāq* (to divorce, set free) three times.<sup>96</sup>

Cash loans were generally available at lower rates of interest than agricultural loans, although how much lower depended upon the security provided and other factors affecting the degree of risk involved. In India, cash loans were most commonly made at an annual interest rate of between 8 and 37.5 percent. The interest rate on loans made against sufficient collateral was lower, with the interest on a standard pawn contract (a loan made against an item of higher value than the loan itself) dropping even as low as 7.5 percent per year. More risky loans were correspondingly higher.<sup>97</sup> A loan system commonly used by Indians in Turan, known as *kist*, or *rehti* (a name derived from its common use by the Rehtis, another designation for the Bohras), involved advancing loans in multiples of tens which were then paid back in twelve installments, each amounting to 10 percent of the principal. Variants of this system were commonly used for loans considered to be rather secure. For moneylenders, one of the great benefits of this type of loan was that payments were commonly made on a weekly basis which enabled the moneylenders to extend loans to even more clients as payments were collected, thereby keeping their capital active and earning more interest income. It should be stressed that Indian diaspora merchants were always interested in putting their capital to work in interest-earning ventures. This continued even up to the moment of their departure from the diaspora as it was easy for them to find a colleague eager to purchase active loan contracts.

In a chapter in his memoirs devoted to the topic of Hindu usurers and their practices in late nineteenth-century Bukhara, Sadr al-Din 'Aini reported that

<sup>94</sup> *Majmū'a-i-wathā'iq*, fol. 189a.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 189b.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 182a. According to Islamic law, by pronouncing the word *ṭalāq* three times a marriage is dissolved and can only be restored after the woman has been married to, and divorced by, another man.

<sup>97</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 93–94.

the people in Bukhara who most frequently borrowed from the Hindu moneylenders were the impoverished and those without access to an alternative source of credit, most commonly soldiers in the Amīr's army.<sup>98</sup> From the perspective of the Indians, even signature loans to soldiers were reasonably secure as these clients had a regular income and were therefore not likely to allow their loans to default. Indians further ensured the ability of their debtors to repay such loans by commonly restricting the loans advanced to relatively small amounts, generally between ten and twenty *tanga*. Still, the Indians granted a large number of such loans and they charged an extraordinarily high interest rate. According to 'Aini, for a twenty *tanga* loan the debtor was required to repay a total of thirty *tanga* in weekly payments extending no more than two months, amounting to an annual interest rate of some 300 percent.<sup>99</sup>

'Aini's account is partially confirmed by Likoshin's late nineteenth-century newspaper article regarding Hindu moneylenders in Russian colonial Tashkent.<sup>100</sup> Likoshin also reported that, at that time, Hindus in Tashkent were primarily engaged in granting large numbers of small loans, never amounting to more than twenty rubles, in order to ensure that their clients' loans did not default. According to this account, however, the loan contracts stipulated that for a loan of twenty rubles the debtors, most frequently 'handicraftsmen,' were required to repay only one ruble per week for twenty-four weeks, making the annual interest rate just over 43 percent. This seems to be quite reasonable in comparison to Bukhara, which suggests that Likoshin was referring to loans made against collateral whereas 'Aini was referring to loans made against only a signature. During his visit to Tashkent in the 1870s, Eugene Schuyler similarly observed that, 'the Hindoos usually lend sums for twenty-four weeks, to be paid in weekly installments of one *tenga* to every *tilla*, that is, one nineteenth, making a gain as interest in the course of the transaction of five *tengas*, or about twenty-six per cent., which would be fully fifty-six per cent. per annum.'<sup>101</sup>

In addition to profiting by charging such high interest rates, Indian money-

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<sup>98</sup> 'Aini, *Yāddāshthā*, III, pp. 73–74. 'Aini's observations are limited to the urban population of Bukhara, not the agricultural producers.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. See also Rasul'-Zade, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh*, p. 115 and note 168.

<sup>100</sup> Likoshin, 'Pis'ma iz Tuzemnogo Tashkenta,' 9 (1894).

<sup>101</sup> Schuyler, *Turkistan*, I, p. 186. It is also possible that the difference in interest rates charged by Indians in the Turkestan Krai and the Bukharan Amirate at that time was a product of restrictions imposed by the Russian colonial administration. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.



lenders are known to have occasionally resorted to dishonest business practices to cheat their Turanian clients. In general the Indians and Turanians communicated in Persian, which was widely spoken throughout both northwest India and Turan, but the comparatively well-educated moneylenders were known to have occasionally taken advantage of the illiteracy of the majority of their clients. One method by which they achieved this was for the moneylender to claim that payments on a loan made against collateral had not been received. The moneylender could then appeal to a *qāḍī*, who would issue a *ḥukum khaṭ* (letter of judgement) demanding that the debtor appear before the *qāḍī* prior to a certain date. As the debtor, and the vast majority of the rest of the local population, including the courier, was most likely illiterate and therefore unable to read the order, the debtor typically had little or no recourse to find out what the letter was about and, failing to go before the *qāḍī*, lost all rights to the property designated as collateral in the contract.<sup>102</sup> Even should the debtor appear as required, Indian moneylenders were widely reputed to have bribed the *qāḍīs* in order to secure a favorable judgement.<sup>103</sup> Indian moneylenders were also known to have purposefully failed to document loan payments, to have removed pages from their account books (called *bahis*), rewritten the pages to their advantage and restitched the book, and to have otherwise altered the loan agreement to their benefit, for example by adding a digit to the principal stipulated.<sup>104</sup> It was sometimes said that an Indian moneylender kept three books: one for himself, one for the borrowers to inspect, and one for the tax inspectors. However, it is also worthwhile to note that indigenous Turanian debtors earned a corresponding reputation for being rather adept at cheating their Indian creditors. The most obvious method was for debtors to take loans without any intention to repay the debt. More interesting, however, was a technique used by debtors to ‘wash out,’ or erase, the figures on their loan contracts and rewrite them so as to be more advantageous to themselves, a practice at which debtors in Tashkent were said to have been very skilled.<sup>105</sup>

For the most part, however, the commercial transactions between Indian merchants and their Turanian debtors appear to have been conducted in a predictable manner. Within a period of only two or three years, industrious Indian agents were able to as much as quadruple their initial capital investment.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Indusy i ikh' promisel’, pp. 165–66.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, p. 372.

<sup>104</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. 108–9.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Indusy i ikh' promisel’, p. 165.

Thus, although we are not informed of the amount of their initial capital, G. A. Arandarenko calculates that, over a six-year period in the late nineteenth century, the roughly 375 Indians operating in the Zarafshan Region of the Turkestan Krai earned an average of 537,800 rubles annually. This totalled more than 3.2 million rubles, which they reportedly transported to India in the form of Russian gold.<sup>106</sup> It should also be remembered that, according to the early twentieth-century account of Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey, a community of Shikarpuri merchants in Andijan requested his assistance in transferring to India their total wealth, amounting to some 2 million rubles.<sup>107</sup> This represents only a small fraction of the capital wealth controlled by the Indian diaspora merchants in Turan.

During their tenure abroad the Indian agents were expected to keep a very detailed account of their cash loans, credit loans, receipts and advances in their account books, which they immediately presented to the auditors of their family firms upon their arrival home.<sup>108</sup> The overwhelming majority of their earnings went into the coffers of the firm which had, after all, trained the agents, provided the initial investment, supported the family of the agents, and assumed the greater part of the financial risk. Generally speaking, however, the agents were able to earn a considerable amount of wealth in a rather short time, motivating many individuals to make repeated ventures into the diaspora or to stay in particularly advantageous locations for longer periods.

### *Conclusion*

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the Indian family firms discussed above extended their commercial interests by establishing diaspora communities outside of the subcontinent prior to the sixteenth century, it has been argued that the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of these firms should be traced at least to the early Delhi Sultanate period. In order to better understand the emergence of these firms, their role in the Indian socio-economic

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. G. A. Arandarenko, *Dosugi v Turkestan, 1874–1889*, St. Petersburg, 1889, p. 349; Rasul'-Zade, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh*, p. 117. According to Arandarenko's calculations, during this six-year period, the 266 Indians who lived in the Samarqand area (*otdel*) of the Zarafshan District each earned an average of 1,700 rubles per year, amounting to a total of 452,200 rubles, the 68 Indians in Katta Kurgan earned 115,600 rubles, the 9 Indians in Panjikent earned 15,400 rubles, and the 32 Indians in Urgut earned 54,400 rubles.

<sup>107</sup> Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, p. 30.

<sup>108</sup> Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, p. 83.

arena, and their subsequent role in the diaspora, it is necessary to look beyond their activities in the Mughal-era political arena to a series of historical processes spanning the medieval era. Perhaps the most important of these processes was the increased circulation of precious metals as currency in India during the period of the Delhi Sultanate and the implementation by the Turko-Afghan ruling elite of a new administrative structure and revenue system which focused on maximizing revenue collection in cash. This combination fostered the development of well-organized groups of merchant-financiers who positioned themselves in a lucrative, intermediary position between the agrarian producers and the state treasury.

Already by the end of the thirteenth century, the Multanis were widely known as an important, if not the dominant, element in this intermediary merchant class in north India and as the premier source of credit for the Delhi Sultanate nobility. In the centuries that followed, the numerous Multani firms demonstrated an impressive ability to adapt to changing circumstances by diversifying their interests. This included investing their capital in a number of types of commercial ventures within India and seeking out opportunities in new markets. As the Europeans flooded the Indian markets with New World specie (as well as specie from other foreign markets), competition within the subcontinent increased and the Multani firms began to expand their portfolios geographically, sending agents to commercial centers and villages beyond the boundaries of the subcontinent. During the sixteenth century, Multanis are known to have established communities in Bukhara, Samarqand and Qazvin. In the seventeenth century, the Indian diaspora grew to number in the tens of thousands and it reached even as far as Moscow.

The caravan trade between India and its neighbors to the north and west was nothing new to the early modern period. Indeed, there was an active movement of merchants and other peoples across the Hindu Kush already in the ancient period. It has been argued above, however, that the Indian family firms and their thousands of agents sent abroad to distant diaspora communities were the most important element of the early modern Indo-Turanian commercial relationship. While it is true that the agents of the Indian family firms described in the preceding chapters orchestrated the transportation of various commodities between these regions, especially cotton textiles, they also brought large amounts of investment capital for agrarian and village-industrial production, and a penchant for, and knowledge of, banking techniques. Thus, despite the fact that most Indian communities in Turan were generally rather small, this discussion has demonstrated that the approximately 8,000 Indians widely dispersed throughout Turanian cities and villages functioned in a unique

socio-economic position that the contemporary ruling elite regarded as crucial to the well-being of the society. It was for this reason that, despite the hostility directed toward these ‘Kafir-Indians’ in Turanian literature and folk-lore, the Indian merchant diaspora communities in Turan enjoyed the protection of the state even to the end of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# RUSSIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDO-TURANIAN COMMERCE

### *Introduction*

During the sixteenth century, India's commercial relations with Russia were of little significance and the rather paltry exchange of commodities that did take place was mediated not by Russian or Indian merchant communities, but by Armenian, Iranian and Turanian merchants. The emergence and development of an Indian diaspora community in early seventeenth-century Astrakhan, an extension of the earlier Indian diaspora network in Iran, marks the beginning of direct Indo-Russian commercial relations. As Russian demand for certain Indian commodities, especially textiles and dyes, increased throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Indo-Russian commercial relations, and the mediatory role of caravan traders from Turan, grew stronger. It was observed in chapter one that Turanian merchants continued to benefit from their mediatory position in Indo-Russian trade until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the effects of the Industrial Revolution in Russia brought about a general reversal in the vector of Russia's textile trade, and British maritime traders usurped the transportation of raw materials from India to Russian textile mills. This chapter will address a number of historical processes related to Indo-Russian trade that directly and indirectly affected India's commercial relations with Turan in this period.

Moscow's commercial relations with Asian countries underwent considerable intensification following the annexation of Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556 by Tsar Ivan IV ('the Terrible,' r. 1533–84). However, it was not until the reign of Peter I ('the Great,' r. 1689–1725) that Russia began to take a more active position in the Asian trade arena. Peter's ambitious, yet unsuccessful, efforts at establishing Russian suzerainty in the Central Asian khanates made it apparent that Russian advancement in the steppe would have to be much more cautious and calculated. This began in the early eighteenth century with the establishment of the 'Orenburg line' of military-cum-trading forts across the Qipchaq steppe. As the Russo-Asian commercial frontier was redirected from Astrakhan, on the north coast of the Caspian Sea, toward overland

routes traversing Turan to India, many Asian merchants began to de-emphasize Astrakhan in favor of Orenburg, Omsk, Petropavlovsk and other fort towns.<sup>1</sup> This resulted in a fundamental shift in the dynamics of the overland Eurasian trade network, some of the repercussions of which will be mentioned below.

It is well-established that Russia's southeastward expansion through the steppe and into Turan was mirrored in India by Great Britain's corresponding northwestward expansion into the Punjab and the Afghan frontier. This resulted in a heated contest between the Russian and British colonial powers. However, the cold-war discourse of the 'Great Game' does not concern us here.<sup>2</sup> Attention will instead be focused on the importance the Russians attached to establishing a direct line of trade with India and the role this had in motivating Russian expansion through the steppe, culminating in the conquest of Tashkent in 1865 and the establishment of the Turkestan Krai.

Finally, this chapter will return to the topic of the Indian diaspora in Central Asia. Considering the rivalry between Russia and Great Britain in the late nineteenth century, one might expect to find the Russian colonial authorities concerned about the several thousand Indian merchants—British subjects—widely dispersed throughout the Turkestan Krai. The British did, in fact, use some Indian diaspora merchants to spy on the Russians.<sup>3</sup> But, at least in terms of the policies he directed toward the Indian merchant communities, the Russian Governor General of the Turkestan Krai, Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, was not concerned with British espionage. The Russian colonial archival records, many of which are used here for the first time, demonstrate that Kaufman clearly understood and appreciated the Indians' importance to the economy of the region. These records provide a unique and important insight into the strategic efforts of the Russian colonial administration to undermine the moneylending activities of the Indian diaspora merchants, an important element in Russia's growing control of the Central Asian economy in the early colonial period. Considered together with the concomitant British

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<sup>1</sup> This process has received some attention in Jos Gommans, 'Mughal India and Central Asia in the Eighteenth Century: an Introduction to a Wider Perspective,' *Itinerario* 15, 1 (1991), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> See the excellent treatments of this contest of espionage in Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: on Secret Service in High Asia*, London: Murray, 1990; Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*, Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the case of a British spy who lived for four years posing as a Kashmiri merchant in Bukhara. Khalfin, ed., *Zapiski o Bukharskom khanstve*, pp. 105–6. See also the discussion of Shikarpuris acting as agents for the British in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 217–19.

usurpation of the mediation of Indo-Russian trade, this resulted in the decline and eventual disappearance of the Indian merchant diaspora in Central Asia.

### *The Early Development of Indo-Russian Commercial Relations*

Even before the Grand Duke of Moscovy, Ivan III (r. 1440–1505), freed Russia from Mongol hegemony in 1480, the Russian traveler Afanasi Nikitin was granted permission to leave his homeland and visit India.<sup>4</sup> In 1466 Nikitin departed from Tver, north of Moscow, and after an arduous, adventure-filled journey across the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus and Iran, he reached the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz where he booked passage on a ship bound for India. Finally reaching his destination in 1469, Nikitin spent four years in central India, mostly in the Bahmanid Sultanate. In the accounts of his sojourns to various port cities dotting the Indian coast, Nikitin repeatedly remarked about the considerable volume of trade in textiles, horses, spices, and dyes, especially indigo. Although Nikitin was unable to report his observations to Ivan III personally as he died in Smolensk while returning home, his account was posthumously presented to the authorities in Moscow and its contents are likely to have contributed to the subsequent increase in Russian interests in establishing trade relations with countries to the south and east.<sup>5</sup> This was manifest not only in the well-known official exchanges conducted by diplomatic trade embassies, but also in the proliferation of private traders who began to venture into neighboring markets in Kazan, Crimea, the Caucasus, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup>

Sixteenth-century political developments brought about considerable growth in Russia's trade with its Muslim neighbors. By the 1530s Moscow had begun to extend its control over Kazan. That region was formally made a part of the Russian Empire in 1552, and this was quickly followed by the Russian victory over the Astrakhan Khanate in 1554 and its formal annexation

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<sup>4</sup> Nikitin's account is the earliest available of a Russian traveler to India. See Afanasiia Nikitin, *Khozheniie zatri moriia Afanasiia Nikitina, 1466–1472 gg.*, edited by B. D. Grekova, Moscow: Nauk, 1948. See also the English translation of Nikitin's account, *The Travels of Athanasius Nikitin of Twer*, included in Major, ed., *India in the Fifteenth Century*, part 3, pp. 3–32.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, p. 17; Paul Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580–1650*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 92–101; Janet Martin, 'Muscovite Travelling Merchants: The Trade with the Muslim East,' *Central Asian Survey* 4, 3 (1985), pp. 21–38.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

in 1556. Already in 1574 the Cossacks had taken control of the area around Orenburg, east of Astrakhan, and by the end of the century Russia had established supremacy over the Khanate of Sibir. As Russian territory increased, so did commercial opportunities for Russian merchants.<sup>7</sup> However, for the time being the bulk of Russia's Asiatic trade was conducted with Asian merchants in Astrakhan.

The annexation of Astrakhan in 1556 equipped Russia with what would be its most important piece of commercial property for the next two centuries, at least in terms of Russia's trade with its neighbors to the south and east. Travel through pastoral territories and the unsecured regions of the Caucasus was dangerous, hindering efforts at overland trade and making the port of Astrakhan an important commercial entrepôt long before it became part of Russia. Nikitin traveled through Astrakhan almost a hundred years prior to its annexation, although he attempted to avoid the city and, as a result, reported being shot at and robbed by officials there.<sup>8</sup> Nikitin's account also mentions that another part of his group was likewise robbed in Daghestan by Kaitak tribesmen after having been forced to land there due to a storm.<sup>9</sup> Almost 150 years later, in the early seventeenth century, Fedot Kotov also traveled from Astrakhan to Iran and reported that the Caspian coastline remained largely unsecured and dangerous, forcing him to land only at safeguarded port cities where he was required to pay what he considered to be rather excessive duties for state protection.<sup>10</sup> Largely for reasons of security, Russian merchants preferred the safer and more convenient maritime routes across the Caspian Sea well into the eighteenth century, eventually establishing a few defended outposts as ports. Furthermore, the location of Astrakhan on the mouth of the Volga gave merchants easy riverine access to interior Moscovy, which greatly contributed to its importance to Russian trade. Already by the end of the sixteenth century, Russian and foreign traders also benefited from the

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that Russian territorial acquisitions provided new opportunities for more than just Russian merchants. Already in 1555 the English Privy Council formally granted a charter to a group of English merchants, including Anthony Jenkinson, to form what became known as the Russia Company (or the Muscovy Company) in an effort to access the India trade without engaging the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. This rather ambitious organization failed in 1623 as the Portuguese were no longer considered to be a threat and attention shifted to the English East India Company. See T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company, 1553–1603*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956, pp. 1–18.

<sup>8</sup> Nikitin, *The Travels of Athanasius Nikitin of Twer*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Kemp, tr., *Russian Travellers to India and Persia*, pp. 7–8.



establishment of fortifications along the lower Volga at Samara, Tsaritsyn and Saratov.<sup>11</sup>

Russia's trans-Caspian trade with Iran continued to grow during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was especially so during the celebrated reign of Shah 'Abbas I who, in 1589, received a Russian embassy which offered Iranian merchants appealing commercial incentives, including free trade privileges in Russia.<sup>12</sup> Russo-Iranian diplomatic exchanges continued in subsequent years, and private Iranian and Armenian traders made repeated ventures across the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to transport goods, especially Iranian silk, to Russian markets.<sup>13</sup> Although in the sixteenth century some Russian merchants were willing to venture into the markets of the Caucasus and Iran, this was the exception rather than the rule. In general, merchants from Iran, Bukhara and Khiva supplied Russian and Tatar merchants with commodities that were in demand throughout Moscovy.<sup>14</sup> It is in this context that, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Indian merchants in pursuit of economic opportunities joined in this trade and began to develop a chain of Indian diaspora communities between the Persian Gulf and Astrakhan that, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, engaged Indian and Russian merchants in regular contact for the first time. N. B. Baikova attributes this to Russian efforts to court Indians, and other foreign merchants, in order to use their commercial connections to strengthen the Russian economy, consolidate state power, and build an internal Russian market following the tumultuous 'Time of Troubles' (1598–1613).<sup>15</sup>

Indian commodities were available in Russian markets prior to the arrival of the Indians themselves. The first document included in the collection of Astrakhan archival records edited by Antonova, Gol'dberg and Lavrentsova reports that, in 1615, a Russian merchant (*gost'*) transported Indian cloth valued at over 380 rubles to the tsarist court.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent documents demonstrate a considerable Russian demand for Indian textiles and, throughout the

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<sup>11</sup> Martin, 'Muscovite Travelling Merchants,' p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> See Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40.

<sup>14</sup> In the seventeenth century, these merchants were joined by considerable numbers of Armenians and, in 1667, Tsar Aleksei Michailovich is reported to have granted an Armenian commercial organization a monopoly on the transportation of silk into Muscovy and its sale throughout the country. Burton, 'Bukharan Trade,' p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> N. B. Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh torgovikh sviaziakh*, Tashkent: Nauka, 1964, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> The Indian cloth was of two varieties: the first was plain white cloth and the second was a special variety that included golden thread. Antonova I, doc. 1, 1615, p. 25.

seventeenth century, Muscovite officials repeatedly ordered governors of Astrakhan to invite Indian weavers to Russia in order to teach Russian artisans Indian cloth production techniques, some of whom appear to have accepted the invitation.<sup>17</sup> The local Indian diaspora merchants are recorded as harboring considerable hostilities toward these weavers, although it should be noted that the relationship of these two communities is not entirely clear. It is possible that the merchants resented the Indian weavers for teaching Russian artisans technical skills which, by improving of Russian textile production, might have decreased the demand for the Indian merchants' textile imports. It seems equally plausible, however, that the relationship was similar to that of Darya Khan Multani and his Indian *ustads* in sixteenth-century Samarkand. That is to say, the Indian weavers might have been employed by the merchant-moneylenders to operate textile production centers in Astrakhan, and any animosity held against them was a product of their desertion of their Indian employers in favor of Russian textile manufacturers.

In any event, it is probable, as Antonova suggests, that Indian merchants had first migrated from Iran and the Caucasus to Astrakhan by 1615.<sup>18</sup> In 1648 an Indian merchant identified as 'Sutur Kidekov' claimed to have been paying taxes in Astrakhan for twenty-five years, possibly placing him in Astrakhan already in 1623.<sup>19</sup> Whether or not Sutur was exaggerating, a significant Indian population was clearly established in Astrakhan in 1636 when Adam Olearius observed that Indian and Iranian merchants in that city both traded in their own markets.<sup>20</sup> It is not until August 1638, however, that the presence of Indian traders in Russia is first recorded in the published Astrakhan archival documents. This reference is found in a letter to Tsar Michael Fedorovich (r. 1613–45) in which the military commander of Kazan reported that two Indian merchants had accompanied an Iranian embassy from Shah Safi I and that, among other goods, these Indians brought with

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Antonova I, docs 2–10, 1615–35, pp. 25–32; Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>18</sup> Antonova I, introduction, p. 10 and note 29. See also Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 87 and note 37.

<sup>19</sup> Antonova I, doc. 36, 1648, p. 88. It also seems reasonable to accept Dale's assertion that the Indian community in Astrakhan probably began to grow rapidly in the 1620s as tsarist officials made repeated efforts to improve the commercial climate in Russia for foreign traders. Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 87–88 and note 39. According to Druhe, already in 1625 there were enough Indians in Astrakhan to merit the construction of an Indian serai. Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Olearius, *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, translated and edited by Samuel H. Baron, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967, p. 328.

them over 6,000 pieces of cotton cloth.<sup>21</sup> Later that same year another document mentions two other Indians who traveled from Astrakhan to Moscow with over 5,000 pieces of cotton cloth, for which they paid taxes amounting to 183 rubles, 9 altin and 2 den'gi.<sup>22</sup>

In February 1641 the Astrakhan documents record the presence in Russia of the Indian merchant Sutur for the first time.<sup>23</sup> Sutur appears again in two records of 1645, the same year that Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (r. 1645–76) had a letter drafted to be sent to India with the intention of initiating formal diplomatic relations.<sup>24</sup> The letter, written in both Russian and Tatar, was sent with a Russian ambassador to the Mughal court and presented to Shah Jahan. Although neither Shah Jahan, nor any other Mughal emperor, found it necessary—or even beneficial—to establish diplomatic relations with Russia, the Russian tsars continued to welcome Indian merchants to their territory. Thus, after having returned to India via Iran, Sutur again visited Russia in 1647. While in India, Sutur had reported that Russia offered promising commercial prospects and, when he returned to Astrakhan in 1647, he was accompanied by twenty-five Indian colleagues equipped with merchandise for which they paid over 4,000 rubles in taxes.<sup>25</sup> Sutur traveled up the Volga to Moscow, where he was interviewed by the Russian Foreign Chancellery in regard to the means by which the number of Indian traders operating in Russia might be increased. The Russian officials requested that the tsar order the governor of Astrakhan to construct an Indian division of the commercial market, welcome Indian merchants to Astrakhan, and treat them fairly. The tsar responded hastily and, just two months later, he issued an order that such a structure be built, that special protection be given to Indians in Astrakhan, that the Astrakhan officials encourage the business of Indians in that city, and that Indians should be encouraged to migrate to Russia.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as Sutur had mentioned experiencing some harassment by a Khivan interpreter, identified as 'Devlet-Aliia-abiz,' the tsar demonstrated his good faith to the

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<sup>21</sup> Antonova I, doc. 12, 1638, pp. 38–39. The Indians are identified as 'Kishniachka Moltaev' (Multani?) and 'Mollachka Sedukov' (Saddhu?).

<sup>22</sup> Antonova I, doc. 13, 1638, pp. 39–40.

<sup>23</sup> Antonova I, doc. 16, 1641, p. 44. The document is a notice of payment to Sutur for the sale of fifty pieces of textiles.

<sup>24</sup> Antonova I, docs 21–22, 1645, p. 47. For various drafts of the letter and the tsar's instructions to the Russian diplomats, see Antonova I, docs 24–30, 1646, pp. 48–73.

<sup>25</sup> Antonova I, doc. 33, 1647, pp. 82–85.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Indian merchants by having this interpreter exiled to Kazan.<sup>27</sup> This support, and the ability to easily travel and conduct trade throughout Russia, resulted in a rapid increase in the number of Indians who ventured from their diaspora communities in Iran to Russia. In addition to those Indians in Astrakhan and Moscow, in 1650 there was a small community of Indians established in Yaroslavl', where they traded largely in cotton and silk textiles, about two-thirds of which were reportedly Indian in origin.<sup>28</sup>

In 1651, six years after Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich sent an embassy to Shah Jahan, two Russian merchants (Rodion Nikitich Pushnikov and Ivan Nikitich Derevenskii) were granted diplomatic status and permission to travel to India. Their efforts were unsuccessful, however, as Shah 'Abbas II ordered them to be turned back at the Safavid border, probably because of diplomatic conflicts between Iran and Russia at the time regarding their respective spheres of influence in the Caucasus.<sup>29</sup> Despite earlier failures, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich sent two more embassies to the Mughal court.<sup>30</sup> The Pazukhin embassy of 1670 traveled to Bukhara, where it divided into three separate missions. The two Pazukhin brothers stayed in Bukhara and successfully negotiated a treaty allowing Russians to trade there; Nikita Medvedev traveled on to Balkh, where he received assurance from Subhan Quli Khan that, in the future, Russian trade missions to India would be permitted to pass through Balkh with all necessary protection; and Semen Ismail, charged with traveling to the Mughal capital and investigating Indo-Russian commercial prospects, reached Kabul, the gateway to the Mughal Empire, where he was denied entry. Ismail did, eventually, pass beyond Kabul, although not as a Russian ambassador. Rather, he was offered a position as Mughal official at the respectable rank of 500 *dhāt*, which he accepted, and he reportedly achieved considerable wealth in the Mughal's employ.<sup>31</sup> Apparently undiscouraged, Aleksei's efforts to establish diplomatic and trade relations with the Mughals continued and, in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh torgovikh svyaziakh*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> This was likely to have been compounded by similar problems between Iran and India, as the Safavids had just two years earlier reclaimed Qandahar from the Mughals. Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup> This was followed by several more unsuccessful Russian efforts to achieve direct commercial and diplomatic relations with the Mughal Empire. Cf. Shastiko, ed., *Russia and India*, pp. 44–62; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 11–43; Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh torgovikh svyaziakh*, pp. 41–75.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Antonova I, doc. 91, 1670, pp. 168–70; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 35.

1671, the Bukharan ambassador to Moscow, Mulla Farukh, was questioned regarding the Indian goods that were available in the markets of Bukhara and the most direct routes to India.<sup>32</sup> A few years later, in 1676–77, another Russian embassy to India was organized and placed under the leadership of Muhammad Yusuf Kasimov, a Kazan Tatar.<sup>33</sup> The embassy successfully traveled through Khiva, Bukhara, Qarshi and Balkh and eventually arrived in Kabul. However, as Kasimov had been supplied with gifts for the Mughal emperor valued at a trivial 800 rubles, Aurangzeb saw little to be gained by establishing relations with such a distant and, apparently, impoverished country as Russia.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Aurangzeb criticized the tsar's request that Kasimov exchange his goods for silver, which was in great demand in Russia at that time. Kasimov was ultimately unable to negotiate a diplomatic treaty: the embassy was denied entry and turned away.

Efforts at improving Indo-Russian relations ebbed briefly following Aleksei's death in 1676. First, Russian interests in establishing diplomatic relations with the Mughals were put on hold during the less ambitious reigns of Tsar Fedor II (r. 1676–82) and Tsarevna Sophia (r. 1682–89), the latter of whom served nominally as regent for her young brothers Peter and Ivan. Furthermore, from the 1640s Russian merchants actively lobbied, with some success, to restrict the ability of foreign merchants to trade in Russia.<sup>35</sup> Apparently in response to their demands, in 1667 Aleksei instituted the New Trade Regulations, a series of measures that essentially restricted foreign merchants to border cities, prohibited their export of precious metals, and allowed them to trade only with Russian wholesale merchants.<sup>36</sup> During Aleksei's reign, these appear to have been, in practice, a concessionary gesture designed to appease Russian merchants. Already in 1667 the Armenian foreign community was exempted from these restrictions, and other foreign communities, including the Indians, were likewise granted permission to trade beyond Astrakhan, although they

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<sup>32</sup> Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh torgovikh sviaziakh*, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> For an account of this failed Russian embassy to Aurangzeb, see Antonova I, docs 110–13, 1675, pp. 191–204. See also Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh torgovikh sviaziakh*, pp. 63–69; Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, pp. 53–58; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 36–42.

<sup>34</sup> Dale attributes Aurangzeb's unwillingness to allow Kasimov to enter Mughal territory to unsafe travel in the region due to an ongoing conflict with Afghans at the time. Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> See the essay, 'The New Trade Regulations' in Dale, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 95–98.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

were required to pay extra taxes for doing so.<sup>37</sup>

After several decades of prosperity, the commercial climate for Indian traders in Russia deteriorated under Fedor II and Sophia. This can partially be attributed to a letter sent by Russian merchants to Sophia in 1684 that included, among other things, the jealous accusations that, despite the legislation included in the New Trade Regulations, Indians were still involved in guileful business practices and were becoming wealthy at the expense of Russian merchants.<sup>38</sup> The Indians responded that the accusations were slanderous, that they annually remitted to the state treasury taxes amounting to over 20,000 rubles, and that, in just the previous year, they had transported some 80,000 rubles worth of goods to Moscow. Sophia, however, favored the Russian merchants and limited the commercial activities of Indians in Russia by forbidding them to leave Astrakhan and requiring them to conduct their trade with only Russian merchants.<sup>39</sup>

This was only a brief disruption. Not only were Indian merchants able to continue trading beyond Astrakhan through *commenda* partnerships, but their business prospects in Russia were revived, along with Russian efforts to achieve standing as an international power, when Tsar Peter I (r. 1689–1725) replaced Sophia as the sovereign of Russia.<sup>40</sup> In 1696, Peter visited Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, and England, and became highly impressed by the development of these western countries. Following his return to Russia, Peter focused his attention on consolidating Russia's position in Europe through reform, modernization, the strengthening of his military forces, and the acquisition of strategic Baltic Sea ports. Because of his achievements in these areas, his reign is widely acknowledged to have been one of great economic growth and modernization. For the present discussion, however, more important than Peter's achievements in Europe were his activities in Asia.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97.

<sup>38</sup> Antonova I, doc. 225, 1684, pp. 306–39. This entry includes the accusations of the Russian merchants and the Indians' response in the form of a lengthy letter defending their business practices and rights of trade throughout Russia.

<sup>39</sup> Antonova I, doc. 226, 1685, p. 339.

<sup>40</sup> Peter ruled as joint sovereign with his brother Ivan V until Ivan's death in 1696. Following Peter's assumption of the throne, archival documents again record Indian merchants traveling throughout Russia for trade. See, for example, the discussion of the Indian merchant 'Danichalde' who traveled from Astrakhan to Moscow in 1706. Antonova II, doc. 1, 1706, p. 29.

*Russia Advances through the Steppe*

A number of theories have been advanced in an effort to uncover the motivations behind the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian territorial expansion in Central Asia. These include, in no particular order, the ‘predatory spirit’ of the Cossacks; a sort of Russian ‘manifest destiny’ following the decline of the Mongol Empire (a hypothesis generally tied to Russian imperialist motives, the notion that Russia was the rightful heir to the Byzantine tradition, and a widespread belief among the educated Russian classes that they had a ‘civilizing mission’ in Asia); the need to establish a secure frontier to fend off nomadic raids; the unbridled ambition of Russian generals, especially following the Crimean War (1853–56); fear of an impending British invasion; the mercantilistic agendas of Russian traders; the need for raw materials to support the burgeoning Russian textile industry in the early eighteenth century; and, most important for the current discussion, efforts to acquire these raw materials by improving Russian trade with India.<sup>41</sup> While it is certain that the explanation behind Russia’s expansionist policies in this period cannot be reduced to any single one of these motivations, all of which hold at least some relevance in certain contexts, the discussion below will endeavor to illuminate a number of historical processes directly related to several of them.

More than his predecessors, Tsar Peter I endeavored to establish a reliable, direct line of trade with Indian markets. Even prior to his visit to western Europe, where he saw first-hand the prosperity and development that the Indian Ocean trade had brought England and Holland, Peter was already determined to access this wealth for his own realm. With this goal in mind, he

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860–1914*, translated by Bruce Little, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 86–100; Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, ‘Systematic Conquest,’ in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, 3d ed., Durham: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 131–50; Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Central Asia*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964, pp. 48–64; Akdes Nimet Kurat, ‘Tsarist Russia and the Muslims of Central Asia,’ in Holt, Lambton and Lewis, eds, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, *The Central Islamic Lands*, pp. 503–23; Seymour Becker, ‘The Russian Conquest of Central Asia and Kazakhstan: Motives Methods, Consequences,’ in Hafeez Malik, ed., *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994, pp. 21–38; Mehmet Saray, ‘The Russian Conquest of Central Asia,’ *Central Asian Survey* 1, 2–3 (1982), pp. 1–30. Soviet accounts are generally careful to point out that Russian expansion was precipitated by internal Central Asian political conflict and that the Central Asian peoples voluntarily chose to be incorporated into the Russian Empire rather than be oppressed by their own ‘feudal’ leaders.

sent an embassy to the Mughal court, placed under the command of Semen Malen'kii. This embassy departed from Astrakhan in 1694 and traveled across the Caspian Sea and Iran to Bandar 'Abbas, where they booked passage on an Indian ship and sailed to the Mughal port of Surat.<sup>42</sup> Unlike earlier ambassadors, Malen'kii managed to receive an audience with Aurangzeb and, although he ultimately failed to establish an Indo-Russian diplomatic agreement, the mission was treated well. Aurangzeb granted Malen'kii a *farmān* permitting him to travel and trade throughout Mughal India without paying customs duties, and he was even presented an elephant to be delivered to Peter.<sup>43</sup> On January 22, 1701, the Malen'kii mission departed from Surat on two ships and, prior to reaching Iran, was twice robbed by Arab pirates for a total of over 18,000 rubles, a figure presumably including the value of the elephant.<sup>44</sup> Malen'kii died just short of reaching Russian territory and his report of the mission was lost.

Peter's interest in opening direct trade relations with India is further demonstrated by his aggressive policies in Central Asia. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Russia had already gained control of considerable territory in Siberia and during the period from 1715 to 1717 Peter unveiled an ambitious plan to add the Khanates of Yarkand, Khiva and eventually Bukhara to his realm, diplomatically if possible, militarily if necessary.<sup>45</sup> He was categorically disappointed. In late 1715 Peter placed a small army of some 2,450 soldiers under the command of Colonel Ivan Buchholts and ordered them to cross Siberia, enter Sinjiang, and conquer Yarkand.<sup>46</sup> The small force successfully traveled across much of Siberia and even established a new, distant Russian fort on Lake Yaimal, from where they intended to continue on to Yarkand. Shortly after venturing out, however, the Russian troops were decimated by Qalmaq nomads—the original fort was abandoned and only 700 soldiers

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<sup>42</sup> For accounts of this trade embassy, cf. Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh trgovikh sviaziakh*, pp. 71–74; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 44–45. The official Russian discourse regarding this mission, including a reproduction of the original Tatar-language translation of Peter's letters to the Safavid Shah Hussein and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, is found in Antonova I, docs 253–60, 1684, pp. 360–77.

<sup>43</sup> This *farmān* is reproduced in Antonova I, doc. 256, 1696, pp. 369–70.

<sup>44</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> With the exception of some unsubstantiated rumors of gold reserves, none of these regions offered Russia considerable wealth in terms of natural resources, agricultural production or industry. For Russia, they were desirable because of their trade.

<sup>46</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 49.



survived to retreat and establish another fort in Omsk in 1716.<sup>47</sup>

Peter's second expedition, an effort to subjugate Khiva in order to improve Russia's access to the India trade, was an even greater disaster than the first. Peter had been informed that a dry bed of the Amu Darya could be engineered to re-route the river from Khiva to the Caspian Sea. Coupled with the common misperception of the time that the Amu Darya was connected to rivers in India, this raised for Peter the very exciting prospect of establishing a riverine commercial route between Astrakhan and India.<sup>48</sup> Peter's ambition was further encouraged by earlier appeals made by the Khivan *khān* for Russian assistance in pacifying their Turkman neighbors. In 1717 Peter placed some 3,000 Russian troops under the command of Prince Aleksander Bekovich Cherkassky and dispatched them to Khiva. After suffering severe hardships and recurrent Turkman raids while traveling across the desert, the Russian army arrived at the gates of Khiva in the scorching mid-August heat. Considering the earlier willingness of the Khivans to put their state under Russian protection, Peter had predicted that Bekovich would have little trouble achieving his goal without resorting to force. Bekovich, however, was greeted by a new Khivan ruler, Ghazi Sher Khan, who viewed the arrival of Russian forces in Khiva quite differently than his predecessor. The expedition was catastrophic; the Russian troops were slaughtered, Bekovich was killed, and his head was sent to Bukhara.<sup>49</sup>

These expeditions, however unsuccessful, mark the beginning of the long process of Russian expansion into Central Asia. Although Russia was unable to effectively establish control over Yarkand, Khiva and Bukhara in the eighteenth century, these failures underlined for Peter, and subsequent tsars, that more careful and calculated efforts were necessary for Russian expansion

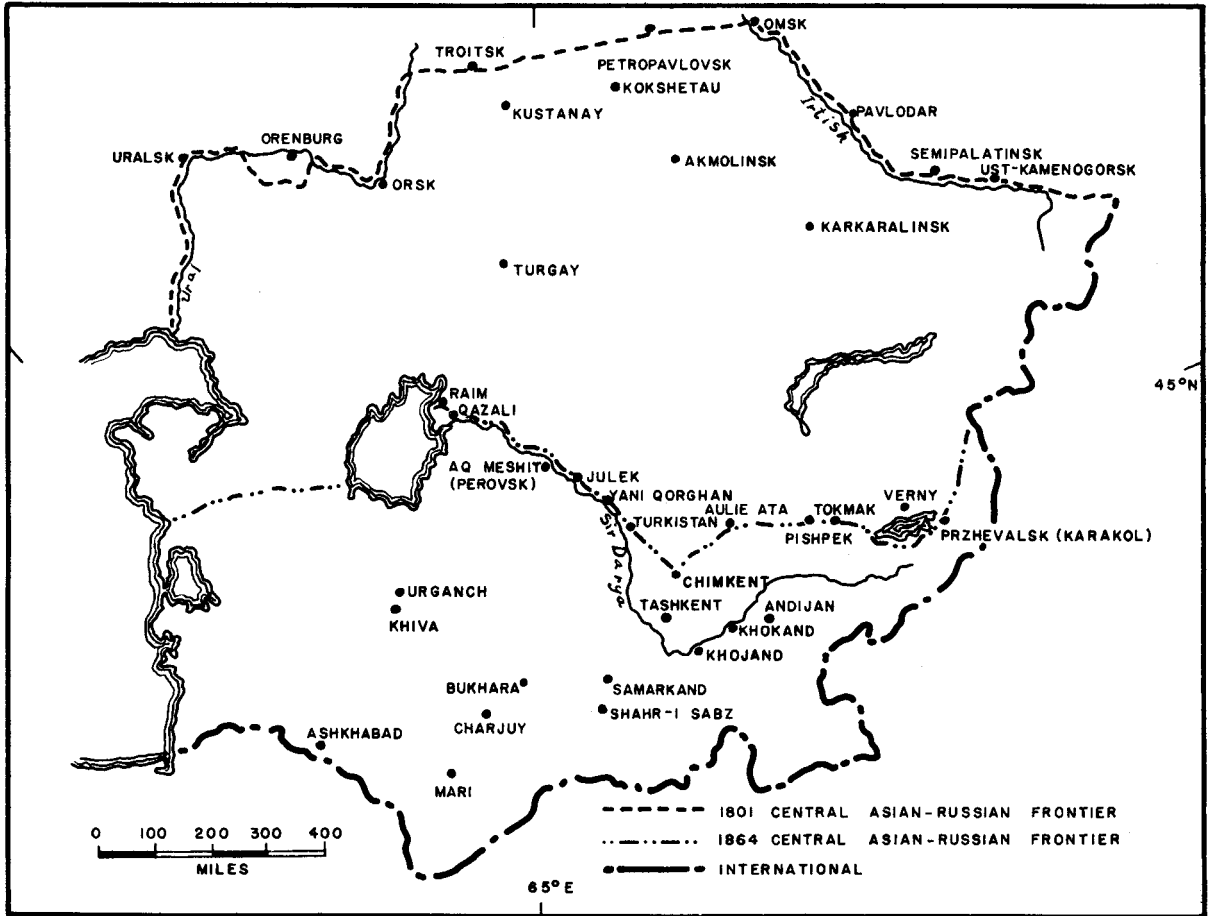
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<sup>47</sup> The Qalmaqs of the Volga region in this period can more precisely be identified as Oirat Mongols. For a discussion of Russia's complex relations with the Qalmaq tribes, see Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600–1771*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 46–50. According to the account of the official historian of this mission, 'although Khiva and Bukhara were of themselves insignificant from their poverty in natural products and the undeveloped condition of their trade and industry, yet they were of extreme importance as channels of trade with other Asiatic countries.'

<sup>49</sup> See the account of Russia's ill-fated efforts at imperial expansion in Khiva, Bukhara and Yarkand under Peter in *ibid.*, pp. 49–54. For more on the Khivan massacre of the Cherkassky mission, see Stephen A. Halkovich, *The Mongols of the West*, Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series, vol. 148, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 51.

to the south and east. This began with the construction of a number of forts along the Irtysh river in Siberia. In 1718, shortly after the Bekovich mission, the Russian frontier was extended eastward from the fort at Omsk with the establishment of a fort at Semipalatinsk. In 1720 another fort was constructed even further east, at Ust-Kamenogorsk.<sup>50</sup>



Map 4. Russo-central Asian Frontiers, 1801, 1864<sup>51</sup>

With his plans for establishing suzerainty over the Central Asian khanates in shambles, the Ghilzai Afghan invasion of Iran offered Peter an appealing opportunity to redirect his commercial aspirations toward Iran in an effort to enter the Indian Ocean trade and compete with the Dutch, English, Portuguese, Spanish and French. Thus, in 1722–23 Peter took advantage of the Safavids’

<sup>50</sup> Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, ‘Encounter,’ in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> This map was reproduced from Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, p. 12 (fig. 1.1). It was originally prepared by Edward Allworth based on information found in *Ozbekistan SSR Tarikhi*, Tashkent: Fan, 1957, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 102–3, and Mikhail A. Terent’ev, *Istoriia zavoevaniia Srednei Azii*, St. Petersburg: Tipoligrafia V. V. Komarova, 1906, vol. 1. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

weakened condition and occupied the northern Iranian provinces of Daghestan, Gilan, Mazandaran, and Astarabad. Russian control over these territories was short-lived, however, and just ten years later, in 1732, Empress Anna was forced to return all of Iran's northern territories to Nadir Shah. Russian trade with Asia also suffered because of the severe oppression Nadir Shah inflicted upon the Indian and Armenian merchant diaspora communities, two of the most important commercial groups active in Astrakhan. Unsatisfied with the current state of affairs, Russian commercial interests were again directed to the overland routes to Bukhara and Khiva.

In the 1730s Russia augmented the forts that had been established along the Irtysh river with additional forts along the Ural river. The purpose of these forts was two-fold. Primarily, they were dispersed throughout the sparsely populated steppe where they served as military and diplomatic outposts to aid Russian efforts to pacify its nomadic neighbors, or at least to offer Russian merchants protection from them.<sup>52</sup> Secondarily, these forts developed into important trading entrepôts that attracted Russian merchants, the nomadic peoples of the steppe, and large numbers of caravan traders from Bukhara.<sup>53</sup> In 1735 a fort was established at Orsk, although this fort was called Orenburg until 1743 when that name was re-applied to the new Orenburg fort roughly 200 kilometers to the west.<sup>54</sup> Also in 1743 a new fort was founded at Troitsk,

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<sup>52</sup> The Qazaq Great Horde formally accepted Russian suzerainty already in 1723, the Little Horde followed in 1730, and the Middle Horde in 1734. Initially, at least, this did not represent any real power relationship. Rather, certain Qazaq leaders used Russian influence to their advantage in their own internal power struggles. Meyendorff observed that these diplomatic ties did little to improve Russo-Qazaq relations, and they did not stop Qazaq raids on Russian caravans. Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, p. 122. Cf. Alan Bodger, 'Change and Tradition in Eighteenth-century Kazakhstan: The Dynastic Factor,' in Shirin Akiner, ed., *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1991, pp. 344–60; Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987, pp. 28–53.

<sup>53</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' pp. 66–77. Burton notes that a *gostinii dvor*, or commercial arcade, was constructed in the Siberian town of Tobol'sk already in 1601. This burnt down in 1629 but, because of the increased numbers of traders coming to that city, a new structure three times as large was built to replace it. Some Bukharans even settled in Siberia where they traded and farmed, another profitable endeavor as the nomads were in perpetual need of agricultural products. It should be noted that Bukharans are known to have acquired some raw cotton and cotton textiles in China. Other commodities that the Bukharans brought to Siberian markets included large quantities of rhubarb, tobacco, spices, and tea. For a recent study of Bukharans in eighteenth-century Siberia, see S. N. Korsunen and N. V. Kuleshova, *Istoriia barabinskikh i kurdaksko-sargatskikh Tatar*, Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Carrère d'Encausse, 'Encounter,' in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian*

and in 1752 another was added at Petropavlovsk, closing the expansive gap between Troitsk and Omsk.<sup>55</sup> In 1763 Empress Catherine II ordered that the Russian military build another fort, equipped with a customs office, on the Siberian river Bukhtarma, a tributary of the Irtysh, in order to improve Russian trade with the countries to the south and, through them, with India.<sup>56</sup> In an effort to encourage traders to visit the location, she ordered her officials to publicize that all trade in this fort would be free from taxes for ten years.

The establishment of Russian trading forts in the steppe had a considerable impact on Eurasian trade routes. This is illustrated by the eighteenth-century transformations in the network of Indian merchant diaspora communities engaged in Indo-Russian commerce. The Indian diaspora community in Astrakhan, for example, had developed steadily since it emerged in the early seventeenth century as an extension of the more numerous Indian communities in Iran. However, as Russia pushed forth its Asian commercial frontier through Orenburg during the course of the eighteenth century, a number of changes become apparent. Able to easily relocate to those locations most advantageous for the pursuit of commercial opportunities, it was not long before Indian diaspora merchants in Russia began deserting Astrakhan to follow the path of mobile wealth to Orenburg. Even those Indian merchants who continued to conduct Indo-Russian transregional trade operations in Astrakhan increasingly did so via the overland routes through Turan.<sup>57</sup>

The Russian authorities took an active role in encouraging Indians to come trade in Orenburg. Already in February 1735, immediately following the establishment of the first Orenburg fort, the Orenburg Dispatch Department issued a summons for an Indian merchant to be brought from Astrakhan for an interview.<sup>58</sup> The leader of Astrakhan's Marwari community, identified as 'Marwari Baraev' ('Great Marwari'), was taken to Orenburg where he informed Russian officials about the various overland and maritime routes used by Indian merchants traveling to Russia. He also reported that, whereas in the past as many as 200 Indian merchants had annually traveled from Iran to

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*Dominance*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> See B. P. Gurevich and G. F. Kim, eds, *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v tsentral'noi Azii, XVII–XVIII vv.*, vol. 2, Moscow: Nauka, 1989, doc. 218, 1763, pp. 169–73.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. A. I. Yukht, 'Indiiskaia koloniia v Astrakhani,' *Voprosy istorii* 3 (1957), p. 142; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 132.

<sup>58</sup> Antonova II, doc. 69, 1735, pp. 128–33.

Astrakhan, in recent years this had diminished to only some 80 Indian merchants because of the difficulties associated with the policies of Nadir Shah in Iran. Marwari Baraev suggested to the Russian authorities that, were the route from Bukhara to Orenburg free from the dangers associated with the nomadic tribes, the Russians could expect 'at least 600 Indian merchants every year.'<sup>59</sup> Considering the commercial climate in Iran at the time, the Russians' invitation to trade in Orenburg was apparently all the encouragement the Indians needed.<sup>60</sup> Shortly thereafter Indian merchants began shifting their trade from the Iran-Caspian-Astrakhan line to the overland routes through Central Asia to Orenburg. Already in 1747, the year Nadir Shah was assassinated, a Russian census shows Astrakhan's Indian community to have dwindled to 51 people from its 1725 population of 209.<sup>61</sup>

Following Nadir Shah's death there was some revival in Indo-Iranian trade and, by extension, Indo-Russian trade through Iran. As noted above, the Indian merchant diaspora community in Astrakhan remained active even into the nineteenth century. The number of Indian merchants in Astrakhan never reached the magnitude of earlier years, however, as Russia continued to make concerted efforts to foster improved commercial relations with India via the overland routes through Orenburg. Materials from the Orenburg State Archive illuminate Russia's rather successful efforts to attract merchants to Orenburg. In a letter written in 1745 the Bukharan merchant Irnazar Maksiutov informed Orenburg officials that, as instructed, he had done everything possible to motivate 'not only Bukharan traders, but also Indian traders, to participate in the Orenburg Fair.' Maksiutov reported that, 'as a result, Indians went to Bukhara with about sixty camels with different goods worth about 300,000

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 129. Marwari Baraev reportedly inquired about getting approval from the tsar to send his subordinate agents from Orenburg to Bukhara and then on to India. See Antonova II, doc. 72, 1735, p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> Nadir Shah's invasions and annexation of northwestern India, Afghanistan, Bukhara and Khiva must also have had a severely negative impact on the general commercial climate throughout these regions. However, foreign merchants in these areas did not suffer for as long as did those in Iran. See the discussion of the Nadirid invasions into these territories in Jonathan L. Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan and the Battle for Balkh, 1731–1901*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, edited by Ulrich Haarmann, vol. 15, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, pp. 64–71.

<sup>61</sup> Antonova II, doc. 132, 1735, pp. 265–69. See also the discussion of this census in Dale, *Indian Merchants*, p. 112.

rubles.’<sup>62</sup> In 1750 a new trade fair was opened in Troitsk, situated between Orenburg and Omsk, with prices listed in both rubles and rupees.<sup>63</sup> In Orenburg, prices were likewise quoted in both currencies.<sup>64</sup> In 1751 the Russian Senate Collegium of Foreign Affairs endorsed a proposal of the governor of Orenburg to establish a commercial Orenburg Company to trade with the Central Asian khanates and India.<sup>65</sup> In the 1770s the French traveler to India, Comte de Modave, reported coming across 300 Gujarati families preparing to migrate to Orenburg, Russia’s new Asian commercial center.<sup>66</sup>

Bukharan merchants, known to regularly travel to India and purchase goods that they then transported to Orenburg for sale, were likewise very important in the mediation of Indo-Russian trade through Orenburg.<sup>67</sup> The Bukharans’ interest in encouraging their mediatory trade with Russia in this period is illustrated by the eleven embassies sent from Bukhara to Russia between 1762 and 1819 in order to gain privileges for Bukharan traders and assess the demand in Russian markets.<sup>68</sup> This apparently had a positive effect on Bukharan trade as in 1813 the Indian traveler Mir Izzat Ullah observed that there was an annual caravan of between four and five thousand camels transporting goods between Bukhara and Russia, supplying Russia with cotton

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<sup>62</sup> Orenburg District State Archive, fond 3, opis’ 1, delo 8, list 10. Cited in Shamansurova, ‘Noviie Danniie,’ pp. 105–6.

<sup>63</sup> E. Ia. Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie sviazi v XIX v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1958, p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin, *The Image of India: The Study of Ancient Indian Civilisation in the USSR*, Moscow, 1984, p. 35. See also the discussion of the eighteenth-century Orenburg trade in Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, pp. 28–30.

<sup>65</sup> Antonova II, doc. 139, 1751, pp. 283–84.

<sup>66</sup> Comte de Modave, *Voyage en Inde*, p. 405.

<sup>67</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 102. The journey from Peshawar to Bukhara took roughly forty-five days, and the journey from Bukhara to Orenburg took another forty-five to sixty days.

<sup>68</sup> Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, pp. 122–23. According to Meyendorff, at this time the trade between Russia and Bukhara was largely comprised of cotton textiles and dyes and had recently increased ‘especially in cotton and Kashmiri shawls.’ It should be noted that Bukharans had been trading with Russians in Siberia since the 1570s, shortly after the Russian annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan, and a number of sources from the sixteenth century onward refer to Bukharan merchants supplying western Siberia with Indian commodities. This increased in the seventeenth century, as significant numbers of Bukharan traders, as well as Qazaq and Qalmaq nomads, responded to Russian encouragement of foreign merchants to trade in the Siberian outposts of Tobol’sk, Tiumen, Tomsk, Tara and Turinsk. Cf. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, pp. 65–66 and notes; Burton, ‘Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,’ pp. 66–68.

textiles and yarn in return for manufactured items, products of the steppe, and precious metals.<sup>69</sup> Dr Eversman, a companion of Baron Meyendorff, noted in 1821 that half the city of Bukhara consisted of caravanserais and trading bazaars which drew people from all over the world for the trade fair season, from January to May.<sup>70</sup> Until the transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century, the Central Asian khanates enjoyed a favorable balance of trade with Russia. This is demonstrated as much by Moscow's repeated issuance of edicts forbidding foreign merchants to export silver or gold from Russia as it is by the efforts of those merchants to circumvent the edicts and continue to export vast amounts of Russian specie, much of which eventually found its way to Indian mints where it was turned into rupees.<sup>71</sup>

The specific commodities Bukharan traders brought to Russia further suggest that early modern Turan continued to play an intermediary role in the Eurasian trade network. According to Burton, the Bukharans supplied Russia primarily with various types of cotton and silk textiles, dyes, and horses in exchange for Russian *yuft* (treated leather hide), woolen textiles, furs and manufactured goods.<sup>72</sup> It should be stressed that, well into the nineteenth century, Russia's primary imports from Bukharan merchants were cotton and dyes, including large amounts of indigo. Considering that Bukhara was largely dependent upon India for these commodities, this suggests that there was still a strong Indo-Russian commercial relationship mediated through Turan, refuting long-standing arguments for the economic isolation of Turan in this period. Furthermore, it illuminates Russian motivations to bypass merchant-middlemen, the Bukharans and others, in an effort to achieve direct trade relations with India.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Mir Izzet Ullah, 'Travels beyond the Himalaya,' p. 332. In his account of some thirty years later, Mohan Lal also estimates that the caravans traveling between Bukhara and Russia were comprised of between four and five thousand camels.

<sup>70</sup> See Askarov et al, eds, *Istoriia Uzbekistana*, p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Jakovlev's account in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, pp. 40–41, 56; Mir Izzet Ullah, 'Travels beyond the Himalaya,' pp. 339–40; Khalfin, ed., *Zapiski o Bukharskom khanstve*, p. 104.

<sup>72</sup> Burton, 'Bukharan Trade, 1558–1718,' pp. 42–43.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Antonova II, doc. 51, 1727, pp. 85–95; Baikova, *Rol' Srednei Azii v Russko-indiiskikh trgovikh sviaziakh*, pp. 94–95; Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, pp. 61–63; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 44–71.

*Indo-Russian Trade Relations in the Nineteenth Century*

The eighteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in Russia's assertiveness in its trade with Asia, most notable in the establishment of the Orenburg line of military-cum-trading forts. This continued in the nineteenth century, and was accompanied by a considerable increase in demand for Indian goods in Russian markets. Throughout the early modern era tens of thousands of pieces of Indian cotton textiles were annually imported to Russian markets.<sup>74</sup> This commercial relationship underwent a profound transformation during the half century between 1780 and 1830, the period in which the Industrial Revolution spread across much of Europe and North America. This rather brief period in history witnessed the world-scale realignment of trade relations, involving the collapse of many long-established markets and the corresponding development of new ones.<sup>75</sup> Among the more apparent commercial realignments in this period was the cotton textile trade between India and Britain. Whereas for centuries India had been an important source of cotton textiles for European markets, the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain reversed this relationship. Already by the end of the eighteenth century, the British textile industry had grown to such an extent that over half of its production was destined for foreign markets; in 1816 India suffered its first negative balance of trade in textiles; in 1824 India imported one million yards of cloth from Great Britain; and in 1837 Indian textile imports from Great Britain exceeded sixty-four million yards.<sup>76</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British textile industry had effectively surpassed the industries of India and North Africa.

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<sup>74</sup> As noted above, Indian cotton textiles were transported to Russian markets even prior to the establishment of an Indian diaspora community in Astrakhan, and the earliest available sources documenting the presence of Indian merchants in Russia mentions that, in 1638, one Indian merchant brought six thousand pieces of cloth to Russia and another brought five thousand pieces. Even in the early nineteenth century, Jakovlev mentioned that Indian cloth was still an important Bukharan import and Mir Izzat Ullah reported that cotton textiles were the commodity most in demand in Orenburg. Cf. Antonova I, docs 12–13, 1638, pp. 38–40; Jakovlev's account in *Russian Missions into the Interior of Asia*, pp. 40–41, 56; Mir Izzet Ullah, 'Travels beyond the Himalaya,' pp. 339–40. See also Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, pp. 225–26.

<sup>75</sup> See C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World 1780–1830*, London: Longman, 1989, p. 187.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 188; Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, p. 24; Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 290; Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie svyazi*, pp. 62–66.



This abrupt transformation is even more impressive considering that the textile mills of Great Britain were still dependent upon foreign supplies of raw materials. That is to say, the vast majority of the cotton used to make British textiles was imported from distant production centers, especially India, Egypt and North America. Even factoring in transportation costs, the efficiency of the industrialized textile mills enabled British companies to import raw cotton from India, clean it, spin it into yarn, weave it into cotton cloth, and export it back to Indian markets for sale at prices low enough to compete favorably with India's own cotton textile production.

In Russia, the Industrial Revolution also began with the textile industry, although it started a few decades later than in Great Britain. Indeed, to some extent, the industrialization of Russian textile mills in the early nineteenth century was a product of the earlier industrialization of the English textile mills as, for several decades, Russian producers were dependent upon the English for supplies of cheap yarn, which was imported in large quantities to the Russian mills where it was woven into cloth.<sup>77</sup> By the 1830s, however, Russian mills had begun spinning their own cotton yarn and the textile industry quickly developed into an element of primary importance to the Russian economy. The mechanization of Russian textile mills greatly increased in the 1840s when the British government authorized the exportation of spinning machines to Russian mills. Already by 1850 some of the biggest textile factories in the world could be found in Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>78</sup> In the early 1860s the value of Russia's annual cotton textile production is estimated to have reached seventy-seven million rubles, and the Russian cotton spinning industry ranked sixth in the world.<sup>79</sup> As was the case in Great Britain, this process naturally brought about a considerable decrease in Russian demand for finished textiles and an increase in Russian textile exports.<sup>80</sup> Thus,

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<sup>77</sup> William L. Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800–1860*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 42–53.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43, 47. According to Blackwell, 'these factories dwarfed the largest competitors in New England or Philadelphia in this period.' Still, in its totality the Russian textile industry was minor in comparison to that of England. Blackwell calculates that Russian production amounted to less than 10 percent of English production.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 408.

<sup>80</sup> 'Statisticheskiiia svedeniia po russkoi torgovle s' Sredneiu Azieiu khlopchatobumazhnimi izdeliiami,' *Turkestanskii sbornik'*, vol. 151, pp. 20–21. Originally published in *Golos'*, 1876, no. 53. According to this article, in 1857 the combined Russian cotton textile and cotton yarn exports to Central Asia was valued at 2,106,387 rubles, of which 166,270 rubles was yarn; in 1862 the total was valued at 3,026,802 rubles, of which 252,000 rubles was yarn; in 1866 the total was valued at 7,206,136 rubles, of which nearly 500,000

whereas textiles had previously been foremost on the list of goods in demand in Russian markets, in 1857 Russia is reported to have *exported* to Central Asian markets over 1.9 million rubles worth of cotton textiles, and just ten years later the value of this trade surpassed 10.7 million rubles, an increase of more than 500 percent.<sup>81</sup> However, unable to produce a substantial cotton crop of its own, industrialization concomitantly created a new, even greater demand in Russia for a regular, inexpensive supply of raw cotton. Whereas the British textile mills regularly received large shipments of inexpensive raw cotton directly from their agents in India, Russian industrialists were not so fortunate.<sup>82</sup> Instead, they were forced to rely upon a series of merchant-middlemen (*posredniki*) for their supplies of raw cotton, the price of which steadily increased as it moved from hand to hand.

To some extent this was nothing new. For centuries Russia had relied upon intermediary merchants—Bukharans, Khivans, Armenians, Iranians, Indians, Tatars, Qazaqs, Qalmaqs and others—for supplies of necessary commodities, especially finished textiles.<sup>83</sup> However, with the development of the Russian textile industry in the early nineteenth century, caravan traders responded by transporting to Russia large quantities of raw cotton. Already in 1819 the Orenburg customs records document that Bukharan merchants alone brought to Russia 16,813 puds of raw cotton (over 600,000 pounds) and 18,928 puds of cotton yarn (over 680,000 pounds).<sup>84</sup> At this early date there was still a market for finished textiles in Russia, and Bukharan exports also included 97 puds of striped cotton cloth, 20,410 pieces of white cotton cloth (*biaz'*), 151,600 pieces of printed cotton cloth (*vyboika* and *buiak*), and 2,414 pieces

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rubles was yarn; and in 1867 the total was valued at 11,697,500 rubles, of which nearly 900,000 was yarn.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> It should be remembered that, according to the statistics presented in 1840 by John Briggs, between 1817 and 1834 the amount of Indian cotton exported to markets in England and China averaged over 77 million pounds per year, and in one year exceeded 139 million pounds. Briggs, *The Cotton Trade of India*, pp. 1–2, 11.

<sup>83</sup> The European Companies transported Indian cotton textiles to Russian markets already in the early seventeenth century. See Dale, 'Indo-Russian Trade,' p. 155. For a letter regarding the Russian acquisition of Indian textiles in Holland in the early eighteenth century, see Antonov II, doc. 50, 1722, pp. 84–85.

<sup>84</sup> One pud is equal to thirty-six pounds. It seems reasonable to suggest that Russian mills were still interested in importing yarn at that time as they had not yet acquired spinning machines from Britain.

of 'designed' cotton cloth.<sup>85</sup> The figures presented in the charts below clearly illustrate the dramatic increase in raw material imports resulting from the industrialization of the Russian textile mills.

AVERAGE RUSSIAN RAW COTTON IMPORTS, 1793–1824<sup>86</sup>

1793–1795	—	9,616 pud	(346,176 pounds)
1800–1814	—	50,615 pud	(1,822,140 pounds)
1814–1824	—	55,113 pud	(1,984,068 pounds)
1824–1834	—	100,266 pud	(3,609,576 pounds)

AVERAGE RUSSIAN DYE IMPORTS, 1800–1834 (IN PUDS)<sup>87</sup>

Year	Indigo	Cochineal	Madder Root	Total Value (in rubles)
1800–1814	9,261	1,006	26,443	379,069
1814–1824	15,448	1,276	38,872	1,205,220
1824–1834	20,876	3,080	55,225	1,905,238

Throughout the eighteenth century, Russian merchants made numerous efforts to circumvent middlemen in their quest for Indian commodities.<sup>88</sup> Since the reign of Peter the Great, Russian maritime efforts to bypass European middlemen and join in the Indian Ocean trade were at best insignificant, and at worst tragic.<sup>89</sup> Attempts to establish and maintain an overland route to India were no more successful. In the early nineteenth century, Russian administrators made a number of efforts to minimize cost increases suffered due to the handling charges of middlemen. These were largely manifest in the establishment of a number of state-controlled trading companies and investments in improving the safety of the overland routes between Orenburg and India. Already in the

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Meyendorff, *Puteshestvie*, pp. 225–26. Other items of significance include 12,000 turquoise stones, nearly 65,000 sheep skins (*karakul*), large amounts of dried fruit, and 408 puds of striped silk cloth (over 14,600 pounds). Goods brought back to Bukhara include wool, red leather (*yuft*), iron, copper, steel, other Russian manufactures and, interestingly, Indian muslin, which had probably been imported from Britain.

<sup>86</sup> Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, pp. 42–43, 66. Liusternik cites G. Nebolsin, *Statisticheskie zapiski...*, part 2, p. 235.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 66. Liusternik cites G. Nebolsin, *Statisticheskoe obozrenie vneshney trgovli...*, part 2, pp. 84–85. As one might expect, Russia's indigo imports grew in conjunction with the development of the Russian textile industry. According to Liusternik, from 1822 to 1859 Russian dye imports increased by some 700 percent. The indigo was almost exclusively Indian, as it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the Dutch introduced Javanese indigo to the international markets.

<sup>88</sup> See Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, p. 25.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 70; Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, pp. 54–55, 66–67.

year 1800, the Department of Manufactures and Trade of the Ministry of Finances of Russia implemented plans to establish in Orenburg a special Russian company for trade with Asian merchants ‘in order to establish direct connections with India and to get such goods as are necessary for internal use in Russia.’<sup>90</sup> Another organization, the Orenburg Trading Company, was founded in 1823, financed with six million rubles, and chartered to conduct regular trade with Bukhara and to eventually conduct direct commerce with India.<sup>91</sup> The inability of these companies to successfully maintain commercial relations with the Central Asian khanates can be attributed primarily to disturbances in the steppe by interposing nomadic tribes. The first two caravans financed by the Orenburg Trading Company, for example, were routed by Qazaq and Turkman tribesmen.<sup>92</sup> Such events effectively underlined the fact that if Russia was to succeed in achieving direct commerce with India, the threats associated with the nomadic tribes and the Khivan Khanate would first have to be neutralized. With this in mind, throughout the nineteenth century, Russian commercial efforts were augmented by the construction of many more Russian forts, reaching progressively farther into the steppe.

A detailed discussion of the Russian military advances through the steppe is beyond the purview of this study. This is especially so as, ultimately, overland routes would never provide Russia access to a significant supply of Indian raw cotton. During the mid-nineteenth century, as the British began to consolidate their power in India’s northwest frontier, the transportation of large amounts of Indian raw cotton to Russian markets via the overland caravan routes was brought to an end. Thus, in the early 1840s, only 5 percent of Russia’s raw cotton imports came through the steppe.<sup>93</sup> It is important to note, however, that in the following decades, the amount of cotton transported to Russia through Orenburg actually did increase. Rather than India, however, the overwhelming majority of this cotton was produced in the Khanates of Bukhara and Khoqand.<sup>94</sup> In response to the growing Russian demand for this commodity, and its increasing profitability, Central Asian agriculturalists began to turn more of their land over to cotton production. Thus, despite Arminius Vámbéry’s critique that the quality of Bukharan cotton was less than impressive, another observer in the 1860s, a Bukharan merchant identified as Nazir

<sup>90</sup> Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, pp. 50–53.

<sup>91</sup> Druhe, *Russo-Indian Relations*, p. 99.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, pp. 65–66.

<sup>94</sup> Orenburg continued to function as an important center for Russian trade with the east into the 1850s and 60s. Shamansurova, ‘Noviie danniiie,’ p. 105.

Khairulla Khan, reported to the British in India that cotton had become a 'staple article of produce' in the Bukharan Khanate and that the annual Bukharan cotton exports amounted to roughly one million rupees.<sup>95</sup> This was encouraged by Russia and in 1867 the Governor of Orenburg sent a letter to the newly established Turkestan Krai announcing that caravans from Russian Turkestan would be permitted to bring cotton to Orenburg and Troitsk duty free.<sup>96</sup>

That is not to say, however, that Indian cotton did not reach the Russian textile mills.<sup>97</sup> Quite to the contrary, Liusternik has established that increasingly large quantities of Indian cotton were, in fact, transported to Russia, but they arrived via western Europe—generally from England to Hamburg and Bremen and then on to St. Petersburg—rather than by camel via Orenburg.<sup>98</sup> Of course India was not the only supplier of cotton for Russian mills. Much of the cotton imported through these European firms originated in other production centers, such as Egypt and the American south. Still, Liusternik calculates that roughly one-third of Russia's raw cotton imports from Europe were produced in India.<sup>99</sup> This supply was reasonably steady but, because of the considerable profit margins of the middlemen responsible for bringing this commodity to the Russian textile mills, these manufacturers were still in the position of paying significantly more than their western European competitors for their raw materials.<sup>100</sup> This had a negative impact on the ability of Russian textiles to compete in the international markets, which provided Russian industrialists a powerful motivation to look elsewhere for alternative supplies. Thus, in the period following the Crimean War (1853–56), Russian merchants

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, (Arno Press & The New York Times edition), pp. 469–73; Montgomery, *Report on the Trade*, appendix XXII, pp. clix–clxxvi.

<sup>96</sup> 'Ob otmene karavannogo sbora s khlopka privozimago na Orenburgsko-troitskuiu tamozhennuiu liniuu iz Sredneaziatskikh vladenii' ('About the Cancellation of Caravan Duties for Cotton Imported at the Orenburg-Troitsk Customs Line from [our] Central Asian Possessions'), 8 March 1867, CSHARU, fond 1, opis' 16, delo 203, list 1–1ob.

<sup>97</sup> Liusternik notes that Indian cotton and indigo 'played a great role in the development of the Russian textile industry.' Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66. Liusternik draws her statistics from G. Nebolsin, *Statisticheskoe obozrenie vneshney trgovli...*, part 2, p. 85.

<sup>100</sup> Liusternik, *Russko-indiiskie ekonomicheskie nauchnie i kul'turnie sviazi*, pp. 26, 72–73. Liusternik suggests that Indian cotton commonly passed through three or four middlemen before it reached the Russian markets, and the British generally sold Indian cotton to Russian industrialists for 100 percent more than they had paid.

urged Moscow to improve their access to markets in Central Asia. According to Geyer:

The memoranda, petitions and newspaper articles which flooded in well before any large military operations began argued that cotton could be planted as a source of raw materials for the cotton processing industry in Central Russia, at that time almost completely dependent on American exports; they drew the government's attention to the possibilities inherent in increased trade with Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand and other places; they pointed to the desirable effects of encouraging greater navigation on the Caspian and Aral Seas and the Amu-Darya and demonstrated the usefulness of railway lines reaching deep into the heart of Asia.<sup>101</sup>

While Geyer appears to underestimate Russia's non-American cotton imports, he is correct to assert that the American supply was of critical importance to the Russian textile industry. Indeed, it has been argued that the disruption of the international cotton market resulting from the American Civil War (1861–65) ultimately motivated Russian industrialists to press tsarist officials to produce an alternate supply by colonizing Central Asia.<sup>102</sup> It should be stressed that it is not possible to reduce the Russian annexation of these territories to any single factor, and that there were corresponding economic motivations to refrain from expanding the empire into Central Asia. Available evidence, however, lends some credence to this thesis.<sup>103</sup> For example, according to one contemporary author, the annual Russian cotton imports from Asia prior to the 1850s had amounted to no more than 25,000 pud, and in 1855 this had increased to 150,000 pud. However, in the early 1860s, during the American Civil War, Bukhara alone annually exported 500,000 pud of cotton to Russia, and in the early 1870s, following the 1865 establishment of the Turkestan Krai, Russia annually imported 1.1 million pud of raw cotton via the overland routes from Asia.<sup>104</sup>

The temporal relationship between the Russian colonization of agrarian Central Asia and the disruption of the American cotton supply is apparent.

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<sup>101</sup> Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 91.

<sup>102</sup> Kurat, 'Tsarist Russia and the Muslims of Central Asia,' p. 510.

<sup>103</sup> See Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 92. Geyer argues that 'the siren songs of those championing expansion into Central Asia were more than offset by the critical voices who warned of the costs and dangers of taking on new financial burdens.' In response, military leaders strove to justify their expansion by proving the economic benefits of their expensive campaigns.

<sup>104</sup> 'O Sredne-aziatskom' khlopke,' *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 2, p. 173. Originally published in *Moskva*, no date, no. 52. The anonymous author notes that 'the volume of cotton is very easy to double if our businessmen wish to do so, and if they will not meet problems in regards to organizing lands for plantations.'

By 1864 Russian expansion had extended into the southern steppe, reaching beyond Vernyi (Alma Ata) to the cities of Turkestan and Chimkent, previously part of the Khanate of Khoqand.<sup>105</sup> In June 1865 the Russian army under the command of General Cherniaev conquered Tashkent and in August 1866 Tashkent was formally made a part of the Russian Empire. Less than one year later, on November 7, 1867, Konstantin von Kaufman entered Tashkent as the first Governor General of the newly established Turkestan Krai. Within months of Kaufman's arrival in Tashkent a treaty with Khoqand placed the Farghana Valley under complete Russian economic control and Russian troops annexed large stretches of eastern Bukhara, including such towns as Jizak and Samarqand, the region which in 1872 would become known as the Zarafshan Oblast'. In 1873 the Khivan *khān* signed a treaty with Russia which reduced it to a Russian protectorate and, three years later, the Khanate of Khoqand was dissolved, annexed to the Russian Empire, and renamed the Farghana Oblast'. Further to the west, the annexation of the Turkman territories began in 1877 and in 1881 this new territory was designated the Zakaspiiskii (Transcaspian) Oblast'.

Already during the early years of the Turkestan Krai, Russian industrialists devoted considerable attention to cotton production in their new colonial territory. In 1870, for example, R. Keler', a merchant with offices in both Moscow and Tashkent, published a list of means by which Russia could improve the profitability of cotton production in Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>106</sup> His suggestions include improving the cleaning of the cotton, encouraging investment in cotton plantations through tax incentives, and experimenting with superior varieties of American and Egyptian cotton seeds. Russian interest in expanding cotton production is also demonstrated by the establishment of cotton plantations in the vicinity of Samarqand in 1877.<sup>107</sup> Still, another contemporary author, who likewise observed that Central Asian cotton had provided an important source of relief to Russian textile mills during the American Civil War period, reported in 1876 that demand for the superior-quality American variety continued despite the availability of Central Asian cotton.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> For more detailed discussions of Russian expansion into the Central Asian khanates, cf. Carrère d'Encausse, 'Systematic Conquest, 1865–1884,' in Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, pp. 131–50; Becker, *Russia's Protectorates*, pp. 3–78; idem, 'The Russian Conquest'; Saray, 'The Russian Conquest.'

<sup>106</sup> R. Keler', 'O khlopke v' Srednei Azii,' *Turkestanskii sbornik*', vol. 40, p. 159. Originally published in *Birzhev. vedomosti*, 1870, no. 112.

<sup>107</sup> 'Khlopkovaiia plantatsiia v Samarkande v 1877 g.,' *Turkestanskii sbornik*', vol. 240, pp. 253–65. Originally published in *Turkestanskiia vedomosti*, 1879, no. 5.

<sup>108</sup> 'O khlophato-bumazhnom' proizvodstve v' Srednei Azii,' *Turkestanskii sbornik*', vol.

Thus, when the American diplomat Eugene Schuyler visited the Turkestan Krai in 1883 and observed that cotton production had actually *decreased* in favor of wheat, it is likely to have been a result of a shift in demand due to the post-Civil War return of American cotton to the international markets.<sup>109</sup>

Russian trade with Central Asia increased greatly in the 1890s when the Russian Transcaspian Railway network finally extended into Central Asia, significantly facilitating the transportation of Central Asian raw cotton to the Russian textile mills and stimulating further cotton production.<sup>110</sup> The planning for this project was begun already in 1875 and the initial tracks of the Transcaspian Railway were laid in 1880. It was not until 1899, however, that the railway network extended uninterruptedly to Samarqand, and the Central Asian lines were finally connected to the Russian European lines in 1905.<sup>111</sup> Russian railway construction increased markedly following 1900, and in just ten years the amount of finished track in Asiatic Russia nearly doubled, from 8,869 kilometers in 1900 to 17,390 kilometers in 1910.<sup>112</sup> Efforts to increase shipping up the Amu Darya and across the Aral Sea also facilitated the transportation of Central Asian cotton to Russian markets, which likewise encouraged cotton production.<sup>113</sup> In the years from 1892 to 1900, annual cotton production in the Farghana Valley increased by nearly 400 percent, from just over 1 million puds to just under 3.9 million puds, and Bukharan cotton exports to Russia increased from 410,000 puds in 1880 to 2.6 million puds in 1915.<sup>114</sup> It was not until later in the twentieth century, however, that Soviet directives forced Central Asian agricultural producers into a cotton monoculture.

*Russian Colonial Policy in the Turkestan Krai and the End of the Diaspora*

The Russian administration turned its attention to the activities of the several

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196, pp. 95–96. Originally published in *Russk. mir*, 1876, no. 80.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Schuyler, *Turkestan*, p. 151; McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*, p. 43.

<sup>110</sup> Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 93 and note 71. For a discussion of this railway network, with maps, see Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, passim.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. ‘O transitnoi torgovle s’ Azieiu,’ *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 150, pp. 111–12. Originally published in *S. Peterburgskiiia vedomosti*, 1875, no. 343; Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 93.

<sup>112</sup> Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 37.

<sup>113</sup> Holdsworth, ‘Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century,’ pp. 25–26.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.



thousand Indian merchants in its territory almost immediately following its annexation of Tashkent in June 1865. However, whereas their Muslim predecessors had perceived the Indians as a necessary, even desirable contribution to society, the Russian colonial administration viewed Indian moneylenders as an undesirable economic threat whose usurious activities were contrary to the best interests of the population of the Turkestan Krai. Already in April 1866—even prior to the formal incorporation of Tashkent into the Russian Empire in August of that year—a decree was published and signed by Emperor Alexander II (r. 1855–81) which limited the interest rates that could be charged by Indians in Turkestan and mandated that all loan agreements between Indians and the indigenous population must be made according to the laws of the Turkestan Krai and notarized in a colonial court, not by local *qādis*.<sup>115</sup> Despite this directive, Indians continued to operate as before, receiving court approval for their loans and circumventing legal restrictions of the interest they could charge by writing their loan contracts in a manner that avoided making any clear statement of interest or any other charges.<sup>116</sup> Further efforts to monitor the commercial activities of Indian merchants in the Turkestan Krai by requiring them to apply for passports and annually appeal to have them renewed were also deemed inadequate.<sup>117</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the colonial administration, the law of 1866 was insufficient to halt the Indians' exploitation of the indigenous population. In 1877 the administration resolved to institute further legislation to limit the Indians' commercial activities.

Considering the thousands of Indians living in the Turkestan Krai during the most heated moments of the 'Great Game,' one might have expected the Russian administration to have evicted these British subjects from their territory for reasons of national security. The legislation implemented by the colonial administration was not, however, concerned with potential espionage. Rather,

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<sup>115</sup> 'O paralizaovanii ekspluatsii tuzemnogo nasaleniiia indeiskimi vykhodtsami' ('About the Paralization of the Exploitation of the Native Population by Indian Immigrants'), 25 June 1877–10 April 1893, CSHARU, fond I-1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 8–15.

<sup>116</sup> Later, in 1893, it was reported that the Shikarpuri community of Kattakurgan area of the Samarqand district were required by Russian administrators to lower their annual interest rate from 60 percent to 30 percent. According to one source, dating to 1903, in the preceding fifteen years three Indian moneylenders had been convicted of usury and sentenced to spend the remainder of their lives in Siberia. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 84 and note 63, p. 190 and note 11.

<sup>117</sup> 'Prosheniia indeitsev o vydache im godovykh pasportov na pravo priezda v raznye goroda i o nadzore za priezzhaiushchimi' ('Applications of Indians Regarding the Legal Issuance of Their Annual Passport in Various Cities and about Supervising Newcomers'), 31 January 1878, CSHARU, fond 36, opis' 1, delo 1477, ll. 1–116.

it focused on the Indians' progressive accumulation of agricultural land from poor farmers who owned small plots of land that they had used as collateral against loans that had defaulted.<sup>118</sup> In 1877 General Ivanov, the head of the Zarafshan Oblast', wrote a letter in which he inquired about controlling the accumulation of immovable property throughout the region by Indian moneylenders. In this letter, which would initiate a sixteen-year dialogue among administrative officials of the young Turkestan Krai, Ivanov warned: 'the economy of this region is not industrial, it is based upon trade, which is at this time in the hands of very wealthy people and moneylenders. Something must be done! It is necessary to create laws to protect the peasants' immovable property and to pay more attention to the poor, limiting the activity of the moneylenders in this region.'<sup>119</sup> The response to Ivanov's letter reveals the colonial administration's fear that, unless stopped, the Indians' moneylending activities would produce a class of landless poor people that would become 'a great burden for the population and a very great burden for the administration.'<sup>120</sup> A consensus was reached that the transfer to Indians of agricultural land should be outlawed, and this was accepted by Kaufman as he himself noted in the margin of a letter sent to him by General Major Abramov, Military Governor of the Farghana Oblast'.<sup>121</sup>

Limiting the moneylending activities of Indians proved to be a rather complicated affair. Governor General Kaufman was aware that the population of the Turkestan Krai needed access to a source of credit and that for many of them their only recourse was Indian moneylenders. General Major Abramov noted that some of the wealthy 'Sarts' (sedentarists) had begun to lend money based on the example of Indian merchants but that, as these individuals were insufficiently capitalized to compete with the Indians, the indigenous population continued to rely on the Indians for their moneylending needs.<sup>122</sup> In September 1877, the Governor General's office, under the direction of the Chief of the Office, Kamenger P. Kablukov, announced that the administration 'must step forward with radical measures to stop the movement of land ownership from the indigenous population to the Indians.'<sup>123</sup> These measures included forbidding Indians to purchase land, make loans against land as

<sup>118</sup> According to Kemp, moneylenders in Sind had acquired over 40 percent of the land in that province by foreclosing on agricultural debts. Kemp, *Bharat-Rus*, p. 102.

<sup>119</sup> CSHARU, fond I-1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 1-3ob.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, list 4-4ob.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 6-7ob.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, list 9ob.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, list 13.

collateral, and even to rent land as that could still enable them to assume *de facto* control over the income from the land. Finally, Kablukov suggested that the best long-term results would be achieved by establishing state credit offices, thereby usurping the economic function of the Indians by providing the indigenous population with a reliable, alternative source of credit.<sup>124</sup>

On November 7, 1877, exactly ten years after he had first entered Tashkent, Kaufman published a new directive, referred to in all following correspondence as circular #8560, in which he presented seven new policies to be followed that would ‘fence off the population of the region under my [Kaufman’s] rule from the Indians’ exploitation.’<sup>125</sup> Kaufman had seventy-five copies of circular #8560 made to be distributed to his subordinate administrators and to the tsar’s Military Minister, whose approval was necessary to give the directive the force of law:

#### Extract from Circular #8560

- 1) From this time Indians are forbidden to buy, or otherwise receive according to any contracts and penalties, land property, even for temporary usage.
- 2) Any land property which Indians received by will, gift, or other means, must be sold within six months.
- 3) Indians are forbidden to take land on pawn and lease.
- 4) The auctioning of the immovable property of the indigenous population based on documents of the Indians is forbidden, even if such documents are based on immovable property. It is forbidden even to look at or discuss these papers.
- 5) Instead of such selling of immovable property, the money owed to the Indians will be paid, with the assistance of policemen or other officials, from the profit which the debtors earn from their immovable property. This will amount to not more than one-third of the debtor’s annual profit from this immovable property, as stated in paragraph 653 of the Promissory Note Rule.
- 6) The personal arrest of the indigenous debtors, prior to their payment of their debt, is disallowed.
- 7) The following moveable property may not be sold or auctioned, provided the person has not overindulged in it: daily clothing, furniture, agricultural tools, items necessary for life, domestic and work livestock.

Within two months of its publication this directive provoked an angry and desperate response from members of the Indian community in Tashkent, and this was followed by numerous letters from other Indians throughout the Turkestan Krai. The first letter Indians sent to Kaufman was most concerned with the fact that nearly all of their wealth had been extended to the indigenous

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., ll. 16–17ob.

population as credit and that, following the publication of circular #8560, payments to Indian moneylenders had entirely stopped and the Indians were left with no legal recourse to recover the money owed to them. Indian merchants requested that Kaufman allow them to collect debts from those borrowers who signed contracts prior to the publication of the new law so that they could at least repay their own creditors in India, referring to the directors of their family firms.<sup>126</sup> On the bottom of this appeal Kaufman instructed that the request should be ‘left without any attention.’

On May 29, 1878, another letter was sent to Kaufman by Indians in Tashkent which claimed that, despite taking their debtors to court, they were unable to retrieve any money or even to gain assistance from the Russian court officials, some of whom had apparently taken money and goods as bribes from the Indians under the pretense of establishing ‘kind and favorable relations.’<sup>127</sup> Again, the Indians pleaded to be able to retrieve the money owed to them from contracts written prior to the publication of circular #8560. Ten days later, twenty-four Indians in Tashkent sent another appeal to Kaufman requesting a resolution to their previous appeal and informing him that ‘quickness is necessary in taking the debts because, not receiving Promissory Notes, we have suffered great losses and, considering these losses, we plan to leave in a short time for our motherland.’<sup>128</sup>

Even greater problems arose from appeals sent protesting the implementation of Kaufman’s second directive, which made it illegal for Indians to own land property. This was initially intended to refer to agricultural land, but was in practice applied to all ‘immovable property’ owned by Indians. In two letters, the first to General Major Ivanov in March 1878 and the second to Kaufman in April 1878, the Indians of the Zarafshan Oblast’ pleaded for the repeal of Ivanov’s order requiring them to sell their houses, caravanserais and land within six months, following which any remaining property would be confiscated by the state.<sup>129</sup> General Major Ivanov was not the only Russian administrative official to misinterpret Kaufman’s directives. In February 1878 another appeal was sent to the Head of Chimkent District by Kaku Daryadeva, a Hindu merchant in the town of Chimkent.<sup>130</sup> In this letter, Daryadeva complained that he was being forced to sell a caravanserai, the construction of which was

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, list 27–27ob.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 53–54ob.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 55–56.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 36–38.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 49–50ob.

entirely financed by himself. Not only had his construction and ownership of this building been approved by the colonial administration but, in an effort to improve the trade of Chimkent, in 1871 Major Prokopovich himself had given land to Daryadeva for the express purpose of building this caravanserai. After two years of effort and some 6,050 rubles in construction costs, Daryadeva invested another 850 rubles in purchasing and renovating several nearby commercial shops, only to have the same colonial administration order him to sell all his property within six months or lose it to the state treasury.

Kaufman's repeated requests for an explanation from Ivanov regarding his insistence that the Indians sell *all* their property holdings betray a rift between Kaufman and Ivanov concerning the appropriate treatment of the Indian population in the Turkestan Krai. Kaufman intended to allow the Indians to continue their commercial activities, although under close supervision and rather severe restrictions, whereas Ivanov desired the wholesale liquidation of all of the Indians' immovable property.<sup>131</sup> In June 1878 Kaufman issued a circular to the Military Governors and Heads of the Zarafshan and Amu Darya Oblast's in an effort to end the confusion surrounding the use of the terms 'land properties' (agricultural lands) and 'immovable properties' (commercial buildings and other structures) in his previous directives.<sup>132</sup> According to this clarification, Indians were henceforth not allowed to own or otherwise accumulate agricultural land in the Turkestan Krai. Those who did were considered to be exploitative landlords stealing the property of the peasantry and reducing them to a class of landless laborers. Kaufman maintained, however, that the Indians' other commercial activities were beneficial to the economy of the region, and that this necessitated their ownership of some 'immovable property,' such as houses, shops, caravanserais and even gardens and empty lots located inside towns as, 'without the rights of ownership of these kinds of property in native towns, it would be impossible for them to conduct trade relations and handicraft production.'<sup>133</sup>

The above measures, as intended and through their misimplementation, sent shock waves throughout the Indian communities of the Turkestan Krai. Even

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., list 40–40ob. In this letter, Kamerger Kablukov announced to General Ivanov that, 'the Governor General is awaiting an explanation about the case from your region of the selling by Indians of land and other immovable property. It is necessary to stop the selling of this property. It is the order of his excellence, the Governor General of the Krai...[that] such property as houses, shops and caravanserais must not be sold.'

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., ll. 57–59ob. The term used for 'land properties' is земельной собственности and the term used for 'immovable properties' is недвижимой собственности.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., list 58.

after Kaufman's concessionary amendment to his earlier directive, the commercial opportunities for Indians in the Turkestan Krai continued to evaporate. The ability of Indian merchants to conduct their business in the Turkestan Krai was greatly impaired by Kaufman's restrictions forbidding Indians to make loans secured by immovable property, the legal protection granted to the indigenous debtors, and the difficulties associated with collecting even the principal on loan contracts made prior to the 1877 issuance of circular #8560. These measures effectively undercut the Indians' ability to continue operating a rural credit system in that region by lending either money or production materials to agriculturalists, who necessarily used land as collateral against such loans as it was their only property of sufficient value. The effect of these policies is illustrated in the appeal of one Indian group to Kaufman in which they inform the Governor General that, despite their commercial presence in Tashkent for some seventy years, they would soon be returning to their motherland.<sup>134</sup>

The commercial climate for Indians in the Turkestan Krai further deteriorated as the Russian colonial establishment tightened its control over the economy of the region. Earlier in the century a network of savings and loan banks had developed in Russia, and this inspired the Russian colonial administration to establish similar institutions in the Turkestan Krai.<sup>135</sup> Kamerger Kablukov, the Chief of the Office of the Governor General in Tashkent, had been a strong proponent of establishing savings and loan branches throughout the Turkestan Krai. According to Kablukov, while a colonial banking infrastructure would enable Russians to acquire immovable property in the Turkestan Krai, it would also provide an agreeable alternative to Indian moneylenders, disallowing the Indians to inflict their usurious interest rates upon the indigenous population.<sup>136</sup> In the late 1870s a grandiose State Bank building was constructed in Tashkent and in 1879 Kablukov finally saw the initiation of his proposed savings and loan banks.<sup>137</sup> Two years later the Central Asian Commercial

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 53–54ob.

<sup>135</sup> Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization*, pp. 88–95.

<sup>136</sup> It is interesting to note that, in India itself, the British resorted to similar measures to undercut the business of the moneylenders. See the essay on the problems of the Indian financial system written by John Crawford in 1837 in which he proposes to introduce the English banking system to India, in K. N. Chaudhuri, ed., *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company, 1814–58*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 257–73. See also Slater's introduction to Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India*, pp. xiii–xiv, where he suggests that a more comprehensive, 'efficient and elastic banking system for the whole country' was necessary to liberate the countryside from the indignant usurers.

<sup>137</sup> The colonial banking system was established according to 'The Collection of the

Bank was opened with 500,000 rubles in capital.<sup>138</sup> There is evidence that Indian moneylenders attempted to join the savings and loan banks, and that they were permitted to do so, but it was made clear that even should they become members, they still would not be allowed to extend loans against immovable property.<sup>139</sup> It is stated in the regulations of these credit institutions that agriculturalists could still use their land as collateral against loans from Russians and other non-Indians.<sup>140</sup> The colonial banking infrastructure was later augmented by a system of producer cooperatives which, by 1913, boasted over 80,000 non-Russian members.<sup>141</sup>

The savings and loan system quickly spread throughout Russian colonial territory in Central Asia, effectively revolutionizing the banking structure of the entire region. For example, the Zakaspiiskii Oblast' was founded in 1881 and, already in March 1889, a letter sent from the Office of the Head of the Zakaspiiskii District in Ashkabad reported to the Office of the Turkestan Governor General that, 'the population of my district, which is in need of money, tried to take it from private businessmen... The population is then obliged to return the debt not in money, but from their harvest at a price of about one-half of the market rate. It is necessary to defend the interests of the population from the Kulaks' exploitation, so the ruler of the district is now very busy creating savings and loan banks for the population. In one town such a bank has been opened and we intend to open another one during the year.'<sup>142</sup> One month later, in April 1889, the regulations for credit cashiers

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General Rules and Protocol of Savings and Loan Cashiers of 1879,' see 'Ssудо-sberegatel'nie kassi pri kantseliarii turkestarskogo general-gubernatora' ('Savings and Loan Banks of the Counselary of the Turkestan Governor General'), May 15, 1879–October 4, 1879, CSHARU, fond 30, opis' 1, delo 1, ll. 1–11. It was not signed into law until April 24, 1889. Fond I–1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 94–94ob. For information about the State Bank in Tashkent, see V. A. Nil'sen 'Iz istorii zastroiki Tashkenta,' in *Arkhitektura i stroitel'stva Uzbekistana* 9 (1983), p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> Rasul'-Zade, *Iz istorii Sredneaziatsko-indiiskikh*, p. 121.

<sup>139</sup> CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 86–87ob. Some Shikarpuri merchants, presumably those with a good credit rating, borrowed money from these Russian banks at the established rate of 6 percent interest so that they could extend loans to other Shikarpuris at higher rates of interest. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 83–84 and note 62.

<sup>140</sup> CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 11, delo 39, list 87–87ob.

<sup>141</sup> Holdsworth, 'Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century,' p. 65.

<sup>142</sup> CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 11, delo 39, ll. 92–93ob. The reply from the Office of the Turkestan Governor General emphasized that, 'these credit cashiers must be based in different districts of the region. This will, of course, limit their exploitation by moneylenders.' *Ibid.*, list 94–94ob.

were signed into law. Ultimately, it was the combination of the directives outlined in circular #8560 with the establishment of a Russian colonial system of savings and loan banks throughout the Turkestan Krai which usurped the unique role of Indians in Central Asian society.

Within two decades of the publication of that circular, the number of Indians in the Turkestan Krai dropped to less than 1,000, roughly two-thirds of the population having returned to India.<sup>143</sup> The flight homeward of Indians in this period is further demonstrated by another collection of archival records regarding a number of Indians who abruptly evacuated Khojent and Samarqand without paying fines levied on them for allegedly conducting commercial activities without obtaining proper documentation.<sup>144</sup> In 1919, the British officer F. M. Bailey visited Bukhara and recorded meeting only twenty-five Shikarpuri merchants.<sup>145</sup> Just one year later, when the Red Army entered Bukhara, those few Indian merchants who remained in the region were subjected to severe brutality, motivating the vast majority to return to India.<sup>146</sup> Finally, the general census of 1926 records that the thirty-seven Indians who lived in Central Asia at that time were registered as permanent citizens of the Central Asian republics.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. L. F. Kestenko, *Turkestanskai krai*, St. Petersburg, 1980, p. 333; N. V. Ostroumov, *Geografiia Turkestanskogo kraia*, Samarqand, 1981, p. 60; *Sredniiaia Aziia almanakh*, Tashkent, 1895, p. 32; Kaushik, *India and Central Asia*, p. 26 and note 3. This directly contradicts Markovits' hypothesis that the number of Shikarpuri merchants in Central Asia 'rose from around 500 in 1850 to around 3,000 in 1890.' Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 71. Information in British archival sources has led Markovits to suggest that, on the eve of the Russian Revolution, the population of Shikarpuri merchants in the Bukharan Amirate and Turkestan Krai combined was 'about 2,000.' *Ibid.*, p. 79 and note 57. Although his estimate seems high, this would still represent a 75 percent decrease from the population estimate of just a few decades earlier ventured by Dmitriev and supported here.

<sup>144</sup> 'Po povodu vzyskaniia s indeitsev shtrafa za torgovliu bez dokumentov' ('Regarding the Recovery of Fines from Indians for Conducting Trade without Documents'), 29 May 1881–11 December 1884, CSHARU, fond I–1, opis' 11, delo 200, ll. 1–14ob.

<sup>145</sup> Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, p. 242.

<sup>146</sup> See the accounts mentioned in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, pp. 104–5.

<sup>147</sup> Dmitriev, 'Iz istorii Indiiskikh kolonii,' p. 244. Some apparently returned to India later. Markovits notes that, according to British records, the repatriation of Shikarpuris from the Soviet Union continued to the late 1930s. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants*, p. 105.



*Conclusion*

Direct commercial relations between India and Russia began with the emergence of the Indian diaspora community in Astrakhan in the early seventeenth century. While Russian interest in expanding this relationship by establishing a direct line of access to Indian markets can largely be attributed to the leadership of Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725), similar efforts, however unsuccessful, continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nomadic raids, punctuated by numerous ill-fated commercial and diplomatic missions, motivated the Russians to add a strong military presence to their commercial endeavors in the steppe. The establishment of the Orenburg line did much to advance the Russian economic frontier in Asia and increase Russian trade with the Central Asian khanates. However, raids on Russian caravans and the failure of Russian merchants to effectively operate in Asian markets ensured their continued dependence upon middlemen—Asian caravan traders and the European Companies—for necessary supplies of textiles and other commodities. If this was a hindrance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Russia's reliance upon middlemen for raw materials became an issue of increasingly critical importance with the early nineteenth-century industrialization of the Russian textile mills, motivating the Russian government to implement more aggressive policies in Central Asia.

The nineteenth century saw a considerable transformation in Russian trade relations with both Central Asia and India. The Industrial Revolution began to effect the Russian textile industry in the early decades of the century, resulting in a dramatic increase in textile production and a corresponding increase in Russian demand for raw cotton and dyes. Much like the reversal in the cotton textile trade between post-Industrial Revolution Great Britain and India, from the middle of the nineteenth century, Russia's cotton textile trade with Central Asia also began to undergo a process of reversal. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources repeatedly mention cotton textiles as the Indian commodity most in demand in Russian markets, and even as late as 1821 cotton textiles formed an important part of Russia's imports from Central Asia. However, with the industrialization of the Russian textile mills, especially following their acquisition of British cotton spinning machines in the 1840s, Central Asian markets were stocked with increasingly larger supplies of Russian textiles.

Central Asians were not 'passive' in this exchange. To the contrary, as Russian demand for raw cotton grew, and the Indian supply was increasingly transported to Russian markets through European middlemen, Central Asian agriculturalists responded by devoting more land to cotton production for

export to Russian markets. Russia's repeated attempts to achieve a direct line of trade with India, deemed crucial for the success of the Russian textile industry and an element of primary importance to nineteenth-century Russian-British rivalry, proved unsuccessful. Ultimately, this was rectified through the transformation of Central Asia into a massive cotton production region. This process began in the nineteenth century, but it was not until well into the twentieth century that Soviet directives forced Central Asian agriculturalists to focus on cotton at the expense of grains and other foodstuffs. In recent decades the Central Asian cotton monoculture, based on the Soviet-era development of massive irrigation projects, has resulted in such ecological disasters as widespread soil salination and the shrinking of the Aral Sea.

The end of the Central Asian transit trade in Indian cotton and cotton textiles was the first of two factors to result in a decreased Indian presence in Central Asia. The second began just a few months after the Russian annexation of Tashkent with the implementation by the Russian colonial administration of a number of policies regarding the Indian diaspora in the Turkestan Krai. In a self-proclaimed effort to end the exploitation of the indigenous population by Indian moneylenders, the colonial administration strategically limited the moneylending operations of Indians. It is conceivable that the Indians may have been able to adapt to many of the restrictions imposed upon them by Kaufman's circular #8560. Their long-term commercial prospects in Central Asia were terminated, however, by legislation making it illegal for agriculturalists to take loans from Indian moneylenders using land as collateral, and the corresponding establishment of a colonial banking system and its expansion throughout the region. This effectively forced Central Asian agriculturalists to resort to this new source of credit to finance their agricultural production, thereby removing Indian moneylenders from their intermediary position between agricultural producers and the market. Finally, it should be stressed that the Russian usurpation of the Indian-led banking system in Central Asia provides an important and rare insight into Russia's increasing command over the Central Asian economy in the early colonial period and the corresponding separation of India and Central Asia during their periods of colonial dominance.

## CONCLUSION

This study has synthesized information found in archival records, published and unpublished chronicles, travelers' accounts, and some recent secondary literature in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the commercial relations between early modern India and Central Asia. Toward this end, it has presented surveys of the trade in a number of the more important commodities exchanged between these regions, paying special attention to horses, tens of thousands of which were annually transported to Indian markets, and the corresponding movement of Indian cotton textiles and slaves to Central Asian markets. An effort has been made to show that Central Asia retained its economic vitality and continued to function as an important conduit for overland Eurasian commerce throughout the early modern period, contradicting the widely accepted notion that the arrival and increased presence of European traders in the Indian Ocean pushed Central Asia into economic isolation. Central Asian caravan traders transported large amounts of Indian merchandise to Russian markets well into the nineteenth century.

It is a central argument of this work that commercial relations between India and Central Asia not only remained active throughout the early modern era, but that they continued at an escalated level. This is attributed partially to the patronage of the great Islamic dynasties in India, Central Asia and Iran, but mostly to the activities of the many thousands of Indian diaspora merchants who, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, occupied cities and villages dispersed across Central Asia. In addition to mediating transregional trade, these merchants utilized Indian capital and commercial technology to finance industrial production and rural credit systems far afield from the subcontinent. In an effort to arrive at an improved understanding of the social organization and economic function of these Indian merchant communities, they have been considered in the context of their larger early modern Indian diaspora network. It has been estimated here that, at any given time in the early modern era, this was comprised of roughly 35,000 of Indian merchants—agents of heavily capitalized, caste-based family firms—stationed in diaspora communities dispersed across Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, the Caucasus, and up the Volga river as far as

Moscow and St. Petersburg. The present study has examined the emergence, ethno-religious composition, economic function, social organization, and decline of this early modern Indian merchant diaspora.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the emergence of the Indian diaspora was the efforts of the Delhi Sultanate nobility to encourage the monetization of the Indian economy in order to facilitate their collection of revenue in cash. In part, this was achieved through the active support of transregional trade, the dethesaurization of vast amounts of precious metals from Hindu temples, and the implementation of the *iqṭāʿ* system of revenue collection. In the process of increasing the circulation of specie throughout urban and rural markets, these policies created new opportunities for Indian merchants eager to profit by converting the agricultural surplus into cash. Already in the thirteenth century, Indian merchants—identified as ‘Multanis’ because of their association with that frontier town—are recorded as having maintained diverse portfolios of moneylending and trade. Over the centuries the Multani family firms stationed agents in cities and villages throughout north India, where they operated transregional trade networks and complex systems of rural credit and industrial production. This process was further advanced in later years as the Mughal administration maintained policies similar to those of the Delhi Sultans, and European traders injected an even greater amount of precious metals into the Indian economy, originally extracted from the New World, Japan and elsewhere. Already by the middle of the sixteenth century, increased competition throughout the subcontinent motivated the directors of the Multani firms to begin diversifying their portfolios geographically, sending their agents to markets beyond the boundaries of the subcontinent where they could take advantage of commercial opportunities in a less competitive setting.

At first glance the ability of Indian merchants to maintain thriving diaspora communities in foreign lands appears to be an unlikely historical phenomenon as the vast majority of the diaspora population consisted of Hindu merchants in Muslim states, individuals technically unprotected by Islamic law. However, it is a hallmark of the Indian diaspora that, with only a few notable exceptions, Indian merchants enjoyed the steadfast protection of the state administrators. Although they were generally disliked by members of their host societies and their repeated movement across political boundaries brought them under suspicion, Indian merchants were widely respected as large-scale transregional traders whose fortitude, technical knowledge, and commercial connections

were a commodity unto themselves. Perhaps even more important than their transregional trade, however, is the contribution Indian merchants made to the efforts of the ruling elite of their host societies to monetize their own economies. As a dedicated and skilled capitalist element situated at strategic positions throughout these agrarian societies, the Indian merchants provided the ruling elite an important service by operating a cash nexus in the countryside, thereby facilitating the collection of tax revenues in cash. Indian merchants also benefited the state in other ways. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Afghanistan, for example, the Indian merchant communities are known to have provided numerous financial services to the state, including revenue collection, and Indian merchants are likewise recorded as having been responsible for the collection of custom duties in nineteenth-century Iran.

In comparing the commercial organization of the family firms of the present study to those prevalent throughout the Middle East, a number of similarities, and some marked contrasts, become apparent. Perhaps the most notable similarity is that the organization of premodern commerce around communal 'family' institutions was a factor as important to the success of the Indian merchants as it was to the Armenian, Arab, Iranian, Jewish, and other medieval and early modern merchant diasporas. In his classic work on Islamic partnerships, Abraham Udovich notes that, in the Islamic world, the extended family was, 'the basic unit of social, political, and economic life.'<sup>1</sup> S. D. Goitein's observation that 'the family partnership was endowed with overriding legal power' is as applicable to early modern New Julfa and Multan as it is to Fatimid Cairo.<sup>2</sup> The preference of merchants throughout premodern Asia for establishing commercial partnerships with trusted family members can be attributed to the need for security and the desire to circumvent a host of legal complications in the event of death or theft—factors which became amplified in the diaspora context. That is not to say that partnerships outside of the Islamic family firm were atypical. On the contrary, Islamic law provided a number of techniques by which such partnerships could be established, and Goitein even notes legally binding commercial partnerships between Muslims and Jews. However, both Udovich and Goitein agree that these partnerships were used as veiled forms of temporary employment; they were dissolved upon the completion of the legal stipulations and were not tantamount to granting someone membership in one's own family firm. By contrast, the

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<sup>1</sup> Udovich, *Partnership and Profit*, pp. 122–23.

<sup>2</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I, p. 180.

Indian family firms were organized around caste rather than the nuclear family. This greatly facilitated the success of the Indian firms as it equipped the firm directors with a larger pool of trained commercial agents, enabled the firms to develop into larger, more diverse institutions, and still gave the directors access to extra-legal control over the activities of all of their agents. Furthermore, the regular rotation of agents in and out of the diaspora enabled the Indians to efficiently relay information between the diaspora communities and the firm directors, and the practice of establishing temporary communal residences in caravanserais enhanced their ability to relocate rather quickly and easily, whole or in part, in pursuit of new opportunities elsewhere.

The commercial system employed by Indian diaspora merchants also exhibited significant differences from those of the other merchant organizations mentioned above. To briefly summarize, following a period of training and apprenticeship, Indian agents were capitalized by the directors of their family firm with a commodity, most commonly cotton cloth. The merchants then traveled to a foreign market where they installed themselves in a caravanserai and began to sell their merchandise for cash at the highest price possible. Rather than let their capital sit idle in the caravanserais, the agents were trained to put it to use either by investing it in other trading ventures, as was common practice among many merchant diasporas, or, more specific to the Indians, they engaged it in various types of short-term, high-interest loans. These included small loans to those in need of immediate cash, as well as financing elaborate systems of rural credit and industrial production.

It is clear, then, that a distinction must be made between the practice of extending credit as a tool to facilitate commerce, common to merchants throughout the Indo-Islamic world, and making loans for the sole purpose of accumulating wealth by charging interest, as practiced by the Indian diaspora merchants. Despite doctrinal or legal prohibitions that forbid lending money for interest, Jewish, Muslim, Christian and other merchant communities invariably developed commercial techniques that facilitated trade, and this included the extension of credit in return for interest among people participating in established merchant networks. Addressing this topic, Udovich notes that, in medieval Islamic commerce, 'a merchant's banking activities were simply an extension of his commercial operations...., banking activities went hand in hand with regular commercial operations, and were invariably subsidiary to the merchant's endeavors in the more traditional aspects of trade such as

buying, selling, exporting, and importing.’<sup>3</sup> Udovich also notes that, in the Islamic commercial arena, the types of credit made available by transregional traders were generally dependent upon the social relationship of the people involved; credit was not made available to someone with whom the lender was not acquainted.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for most Muslim merchants, charging their associates interest was clearly ancillary to their primary goal, which was to profit from the sale of a tangible commodity.

Indian merchants in the diaspora are also known to have participated in *commenda* (*muḍāraba*) partnerships, amongst themselves and with outsiders, and to have similarly extended credit to commercial partners using techniques that mirror those of their Muslim counterparts. These commercial ventures were, however, independent of the Indians’ widespread, deliberate engagement of capital in short-term, high-interest moneylending ventures, the primary goal of which was the accumulation of profit from interest, not trade. The degree to which Indians in the diaspora emphasized either element of their trade varied, but in general moneylending and the financing of rural credit systems appear to have been foremost in the Indians’ commercial portfolios. Several factors may have contributed to the Indian diaspora merchants’ ability to dominate this crucial economic sector of their host societies. Their identification as ‘outsiders’ in their host societies and the doctrinal sanction of lending money for interest in Indian religious traditions are likely to have given the Indians an advantage over most other merchants. Ultimately, however, the Indians’ success should be attributed to the sheer magnitude of the Indian economy, which gave them access to considerably greater capital resources than other merchants operating in the same markets. In this way, the Indian merchant diaspora network functioned as a conduit, connecting the urban and rural economies of their host societies with the vast reserves of capital wealth wielded by their family firms in India.

The transformation of the Central Asian economy during the early years of Russian colonial expansion in the region is a topic of critical importance to our understanding of the role of the Indian merchant diaspora in Central Asia. For centuries, Central Asian rulers relied upon private individuals to operate systems of credit and moneylending, providing Indian moneylenders with attractive commercial opportunities. Under Russian domination, however, the state took a direct role in the rural credit system and banking. The

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<sup>3</sup> Udovich, ‘Bankers without Banks,’ p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

imposition of a state banking infrastructure in the early years of the Russian colonial period in Central Asia placed the cash nexus in the hands of the state for the first time, effectively removing Indians from their central role in the Central Asian rural credit system. Coupled with the trade reversals associated with the Industrial Revolution and the nineteenth-century British usurpation of the transit trade in Indian cotton, commercial opportunities for Indians in Central Asia dwindled and, in just a few short decades, the centuries-old Indian diaspora in Central Asia came to an end.

As for the family firm as an institution, it has survived into the twenty-first century and continues to be the predominant business organization in India. And yet, Gurcharan Das has recently observed that the family firm as such is moribund in India, too.<sup>5</sup> As the Indian economy revolutionizes in the modern Information Age and India rapidly emerges from decades of isolationist policies to become more a part of the global economy, these firms are finding it necessary to adopt new business strategies in order to compete successfully with multinational corporations. Perhaps most importantly, this will entail privileging technical and managerial skill over familial relations. Thus, while we have endeavored to demonstrate that the firms of our study capitalized on family relationships to prosper, they are now disadvantaged by their inability to compete effectively and to expand beyond a certain scale; the very features that were in earlier times their strengths have become their weaknesses.

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<sup>5</sup> Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, pp. 261–78.



## APPENDIX ONE

The following are excerpts from the *Majmū‘a-i-wathā‘iq*, the late sixteenth-century judicial record of a *qāḍī* in Samarqand. These documents have been reproduced in facsimile and published in Russian translation in R. G. Mukminova’s *Sotsial’naia differentsiatsiia naseleniia gorodov Uzbekistana v XV-XVI vv.* The English translations below are from the original Persian manuscript.

Document 606 (fol. 182a)

This third day of the month *zīal-ḥijja al-ḥarām*, in the year 997 [October 13, 1589], Lahori Chitgar, son of Lalu, being of full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: There is a debt on me and I must give and deliver to Janab Darya Khan, son of Janab Sheikh Sa‘di, in total one hundred and fifty coins current in circulation, silver, pure, minted, single new-*mithqāl*, (مشقال, a very small weight, equal to 3.36 grams), and which I will deliver upon the demand of the aforementioned.

And it was in the presence of the trustworthy

Witnessed by,

Mulla ‘Abd al-Rahim Muhtasib

Witnessed by,

Mulla Hussain Mullazim

Document 607 (fol. 182a)

On this same date of the aforementioned year, the aforementioned Lahori Chitgar, debtor, being in full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: If I act contrary to the command of the aforementioned Janab Darya Khan, lender, in the interest of whom I made the previous announcement, in this case my wife can be completely divorced from me according to the law of pronouncing *ṭalāq* three times.

And it was in the presence of the trustworthy

Document 608 (fol. 182b)

This sixteenth day of the month of *muḥarram al-ḥarām*, in the year 998 [November 25, 1589], Mullah Hussain, son of Paina Multani, being of full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: There is a debt on me, and I must give and deliver to Janab Darya

Khan, son of Janab Sheikh Sa‘di al-Din Multani, thirty-two pieces of *chīt-i pūrband* (tightly woven cloth), seven-colored, twelve *gaz* long by one *mukassar gaz* wide, which in four months I will bring in total and return to the aforementioned lender.

Confirmed true, agreed in person and done in the presence of the trustworthy.

Document 638 (fol. 187b; fol. 188b according to Mukminova’s translation)

This nineteenth day of the month of *zīal-qa‘da al-ḥarām*, in the year 998 [September 19, 1590], Ustad Rajab Kazar Multani, son of Ustad Hussain Multani, being of full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: There is a debt on me, and I must give and deliver to Janab Darya Khan, son of Sheikh Sa‘di, a total of twenty-eight coins current in circulation, silver, pure, minted, single, new *mithqāl*, of thirty dinar value and presently in circulation, and seven full pieces of *pūrband* cloth, each twelve *gaz* long by one *mukassar gaz* wide. All this I will deliver on demand in full to the person mentioned above, who is the beneficiary of this statement.

Confirmed true, agreed in person and done in the presence of the trustworthy.

Witnessed by,  
Mulla ‘Abd al-Rahim Muhtasib

Witnessed by,  
Janab Hafiz Mahmud, son of Janab Hafiz  
Khaldar

Document 641 (fol. 189a)

This seventh day of the month of *zīal-ḥijja al-ḥarām*, in the year 998 [October 7, 1590], Mulla Hussain, son of Mulla Hassan, being in full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: There is a debt on me, and I must give and deliver to Darya Khan, son of Sheikh Sa‘di, high quality white wool by weight in the amount of eleven two-and-a-half seer and one-fourth (?) by large Samarqand weight. This I will deliver in Samarqand in seven full months.

Also, Mulla Maryam, son of Mulla Shah Muhammad, made a statement: If the aforementioned Mullah Hussein does not deliver within the specified time to the person mentioned above, who is the beneficiary of this statement, I will become the guarantor and take responsibility in the name of the aforementioned Mulla Hussain and I will be held accountable to the person named above, who is the beneficiary of this statement.

Confirmed true and done in the presence of the trustworthy.

## Document 643 (fol. 189b)

This twenty-fifth day of the month of *zīal-ḥijja al-ḥarām*, in the year 998 [October 25, 1590], Mankui Kazar Multani, being in full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: I must give and deliver to Janab Darya Khan Multani, son of Sheikh Sa‘di, seven pieces of *chīt-i pūrband* cloth (of the city), each piece being twelve common *gaz* (*shar‘a-i mut‘āraf*). I will deliver on demand.

The statement is confirmed true, which was agreed in person and done in the presence of the trustworthy.

## Document 644 (fol. 189b)

This thirteenth day of the month of *muḥarram al-ḥarām*, in the year 999 [November 11, 1590], Ustad Gujar (Kajar) Multani, son of Khwaja Ya‘qub, being in full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: I must give and deliver to the aforementioned beneficiary [Darya Khan, son of Shekh Sa‘di], thirty-two pieces of red *chīt-i pūrband*, each twelve *gaz* long and one *mukassar gaz* wide. This I will deliver to the person mentioned above, who is the beneficiary of this statement, in the city of Samarqand, in seven full months.

Confirmed true and done in the presence of the trustworthy.

## Document 645 (fol. 189b)

This twenty-fourth day of the month of *muḥarram al-ḥarām*, in the year 999 [November 22, 1590] Ustad Hussein, son of Piranan, being in full legal competence, made the following statement, true and in accordance with the law: I must give and deliver to Darya Khan Multani, son of Sheikh Sa‘di, ninety pieces of red *chīt-i pūrband* cloth (of the city), each twelve *gaz* long by one *mukassar gaz* wide. This I will deliver to the aforementioned person, who is the beneficiary of this statement, in seven full months. And also, I have given as a security deposit to the person mentioned above, who is the beneficiary of this statement, one full and whole slave of Indian origin with separated eyebrows, healthy members of the body, of tall stature, approximately twenty-seven years old. My servant, who is my property, is named Hazar. And when I return my debt, I will take this slave back from him.

Confirmed true and agreed in the presence of the trustworthy.

## APPENDIX TWO

Accounts of the Hindu Temple at Baku by Forster in 1784 and Keppel in 1824 and of the Hindu Temple at Astrakhan by Pallas in 1794

A. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, vol. 2, pp. 256–59, 262. Also cited in Gopal, *Indians in Russia*, appendix-D, pp. 262–63.

Baku, at the period of Mr. Hanway's travels into Persia, had a double wall on the eastern face; but the exterior one is now levelled by the rise of the sea, and its foundation brought within water-mark. The province of Shirwan produces a large quantity of silk, of which about four hundred tons are annually imported at Astracan. Saffron, of a good quality, is also produced there, and constitutes a valuable article of trade. A society of Moulthan Hindoos, which has long been established in Baku, contributes largely to the circulation of its commerce; and, with the Armenians, they may be accounted the principal merchants of Shirwan. The Hindoos of this quarter, usually embark at Thatta, a large insular town in the lower tract of the Indus, whence they proceed to Bassorah, and there accompany the karavans which are frequently passing into Persia. Some also travel inland to the Caspian sea, by the road of Kandahar and Herat; but the number is small, and they grievously complain of the oppressions and insults of the Mahometans.

On the 31st of March, I visited the Atashghah, or place of fire; and on making myself known to the Hindoo mendicants, who resided there, I was received among these sons of Brimha as a brother; an appellation they used on perceiving that I had acquired some knowledge of their mythology, and had visited their most sacred places of worship. This religious retirement, where the devotees worship their deity in the semblance of fire, is a square of about thirty yards, surrounded with a low wall, and contains many apartments; in each of which is a small volcano of sulphureous fire, issuing from the ground through a furnace, or funnel, constructed in the form of an Hindoo altar.

This fire is appropriated to the uses of worship, cookery, and fortifying the feeble Hindoos against the rigour of the winter season. On closing the funnel, the flame is immediately extinguished, when a hollow sound is heard, by applying the ear to the aperture, accompanied with a strong and cold current

of air, which is inflamed at pleasure by placing near it any illuminated matter. The flame is of a pale clear colour, without a perceptible smoke; and emits a vapour strongly impregnated with sulphur, which considerably impeded my respiration, until, by sitting on the ground, I brought my head lower than the level of the furnace. The Hindoos had a wan, emaciated appearance, and were oppressed by an hectic cough, which continued to affect me during my stay at the Atashghah. The ground within the enclosure abounds in this subterraneous air, which issues from artificial channels; but, in these contracted spaces, it seems only capable of producing flame by the application of a foreign fire. Exclusive of the fires pertaining to the Hindoo apartments, a large one, arising from a natural cleft in an open place, incessantly burns, whence it would seem, that no extraneous object is required to impart an illumination to the larger evaporations of this air. On the outside of the wall are seen many of these volcanos, which have the appearance of lime-kilns; and one of them is conveniently adapted to the uses of a funeral pile. The general space, which contains this volcanic fire forms a low flat hill slanting towards the sea, the soil of which consists of a sandy earth, intermixed with stones. No mountainous land is seen from the Atashghah, nor any violent eruptions of flame; Nature seems here to have adopted a gentle and inoffensive medium of discharging her discordant atoms, which, in other quarters of the globe, shake her with convulsions, and pour around a horrid devastation...

Having laid before you the more material part of my observations on Shirwan, I cannot resist the impulse of calling your notice, for a moment, to the disposition and temper of a small but extraordinary portion of its present inhabitants. Human nature takes a portion of its preeminent features from national prejudices, from education, and from government; nor must we exclude climate from its share of the formation. This remark arose from a view of the Atashghah at Baku, where a Hindoo is found so deeply tinged with the enthusiasm of religion, that though his nerves be constitutionally of a tender texture, and his frame relaxed by age,<sup>1</sup> he will journey through hostile regions, from the Ganges to the Volga, to offer up a prayer at the shrine of his God.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the Hindoos at the Atashghah, was an old man, a native of Deli, who had visited all the celebrated temples of northern and southern India, and whom I afterwards saw, at Astracan.

B. George Keppel, *Personal Narrative of a Journey from India to England*, pp. 291–94.

July 6.—I left Bakoo early this morning, attended by my servant and a Cossack. Sixteen miles north-east of the town, on the extremity of the peninsula of Abasharon, I came, after ascending a hill, in sight of the object of my curiosity. The country around is an arid rock. Enclosed within a pentagonal wall, and standing nearly in the centre of the court, is the fire-temple, a small square building, with three steps leading up to it from each face. Three bells of different sizes are suspended from the roof. At each corner is a hollow column, higher than the surrounding buildings, from the top of which issues a bright flame; a large fire of ignited naphtha is burning in the middle of the court, and outside several places are in flames. The pentagon, which on the outside forms the wall, comprises in the interior nineteen small cells, each inhabited by a devotee. On approaching the temple, I immediately recognized, by the features of the pilgrims, that they were Hindoos, and not Persian fire-worshippers, as I had been taught to expect. Some of them were preparing food. I was much amused at the surprise they showed on hearing me converse in Hindostany. The language they spoke was so mixed up with the corrupt dialect of the Tartars, that I had some difficulty in understanding them. I dismounted from my horse, and gave it in charge to the Cossack, whom they would not allow to enter the temple, giving, somewhat inconsistently, as a reason, they he was an Infidel. I followed one of the pilgrims, who first took me into a cell where a Brahmin, for so his thread proclaimed him, was engaged in prayer. The constitutional apathy of the Indian was strongly marked in the reception this man gave me. The appearance of an armed European, it would be supposed, would have alarmed one of his timid caste; he testified, however, neither fear nor surprise, but continued his devotions, with his eyes fixed on the wall, not deigning to honour me with a look, till his prayers were over, when he calmly and civilly bade me welcome to his poor retreat.

My first acquaintance and the Brahmin then accompanied me round the other cells, which were whitewashed, and remarkably clean. In one of them was the officiating priest of the Viragee caste. This faquir wore only a small cloth round his loins; he held a piece of red silk in his right hand, and wore on his head a cap of tiger's skin: this is, I believe, emblematical of the life of the wearer, who, on leaving the society of man, is supposed to have recourse to the skins of wild beasts for a covering. In a small recess stood a figure of

Vishnoo, and near it one of Hunoomaun, “he Whom India serves, the monkey deity.”

My acquaintance with their deities seemed to please them much: one of them said, “You know our religion so well, that I need not tell you where you ought, or ought not to go.” While I was here another Viragee came in: he was a stout, well-looking man, with matted locks and shaggy beard, and covered with a coarse camel-hair cloth; his body was tattooed all over with the figure of Vishnoo.

On entering the temple he prostrated himself before the image. The priest then put into his hands a small quantity of oil, part of which he swallowed, and rubbed the rest on his hair. This man was once a Sepoy in the Indian army, and had been an orderly to a Colonel Howard in the time of Lord Cornwallis: he was the only man who seemed to have any acquaintance with the English. I was informed, that there is a constant succession of pilgrims, who come from different parts of India, and relieve each other every two or three years in watching the holy flame. This rule does not apply to the Pundit, or Chief, who remains for life. They spoke of their present chief as a man of great learning and piety: as they wished me very much to converse with him, I accompanied them to his cell, which was locked: they told me that he was either at prayers or asleep, but no one offered to disturb him. Of the pilgrims present, five were Brahmins, seven Viragees, five Sunapeys, and two Yogees. They spoke favourably of the Russians, but with more rancour against the Mahometans than is usual amongst Hindoos for those of a different persuasion. They said that Nadir Shah treated their predecessors with great cruelty; impaling them, and putting them to several kinds of tortures. All these faquirs were very civil and communicative, with the exception of one Viragee, the severest caste of Indian ascetics: he was quite a Diogenes in his way; and, when asked to accompany me, called out that it was no business of his.

Outside the temple is a well: I tasted the water, which was strongly impregnated with naphtha. A pilgrim covered this well over with two or three nummuds for five minutes; he then warned every one to go to a distance, and threw in a lighted straw; immediately a large flame issued forth, the noise and appearance of which resembled the explosion of a tumbril. The pilgrims wished me to stay till dark, to see the appearance at night; but the bright prospect of home in the distance got the better of curiosity, and made me hurry forward. I passed several villages, the inhabitants of which were employed in collecting black and white naphtha, and arrived at a Cossack station in the evening.

C. Peter Simon Pallas, *Travels through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire, in the Years 1793 and 1794*, vol. 1, pp. 254–59.

During my stay at Astrakhan, I attended with pleasure at the idolatrous worship of those Indian merchants of Multanistan, who reside together in the Indian Court, called *Indeiskoi Dvor*. Though some account of these idolaters has already been given in a work entitled *Nordische Beyträge*, yet I do not think it superfluous to relate what I remarked among them at this time, and to annex a representation of their idols, as well as their manner of assembling.

These Multanes, whose country is now subject to Timur Shah of Avgan, and whose language bears the greatest analogy to that of the Gypsies, perform an ablution in the Volga every evening, previous to the worship of their idols. As they have no appropriate place of devotion, they meet in the chamber of their priest, who is not a regular Bramin, but a Dervise. The pagoda, or altar, as represented in the two Plates, No. 8 and 9, is suspended in a corner on the right, opposite the priest's couch. Every thing here, as well as in the chamber of the forty Indians, appeared in a more miserable state than formerly, since a part of this people have abjured the religion of their ancestors, and have been incorporated among the citizens of Astrakhan, with a view to defraud their mercantile correspondents in India.

I was struck with the appearance of the Dervise, whom I had formerly seen clothed in a robe and girdle perfectly white, which dress appears to be an exclusive privilege of the Bramins. But he now performed the religious ceremonies in a cloth vest buttoned up, and long white breeches partly covered with a redish garb. His head was not shorn like the other Indians, but he wore short hair, and had a round spot, stained with vermilion, above his nose. The other Indians, on the contrary, were shaved, except a tuft of hair on the crown of the head. They generally, after bathing, describe some Indian character with turmeric on the forehead.

We were requested to pull off our shoes, or clean them, as the others did, before we ascended the elevated part of the chamber, which was appropriated to devotion. The Dervise began the service with silent prayers and meditations. Some of the Indians then placed melons and other fruits on the floor, beside the pagoda. The Dervise placed himself before the shrine of the idols, which was illuminated by a row of candles in front. To the left of the priest, on a small table, Plate 9, there was a large double lamp filled with tallow, and kept burning night and day. The mirror suspended on the wall above the table was inverted. To the right, on the floor, there was a metal bason, with a salver





Hindu temple in Astrakhan, 1790s<sup>2</sup>

which half covered it, and on the left were two cymbals of the Janissaries, and two smaller musical cups, similar to those used by the Kalmuk priests. A small table was placed before the Dervise, under the suspended pagoda, with a little censer, and a particular lamp with five wicks. The idolatrous worship commenced in a loud voice; an Indian pulled the string of the bells which hung at the side of the shrine, and two others took small cymbals in their hands. They all sung an harmonious litany, in unison to the tinkling of the bells and cymbals. This hymn was begun by the Dervise himself, with a sacerdotal bell in his left hand, like that used by the Lama. In the first division of the hymn, addressed to the idols, the Dervise took the censer, and throwing some gum copal into it, he offered the incense before the shrine, upwards, downwards, and in a circular direction; a ceremony intended to represent the element of air. After having performed this part of the service, he took a square folded piece of cloth, which lay before the idols, and moved it in

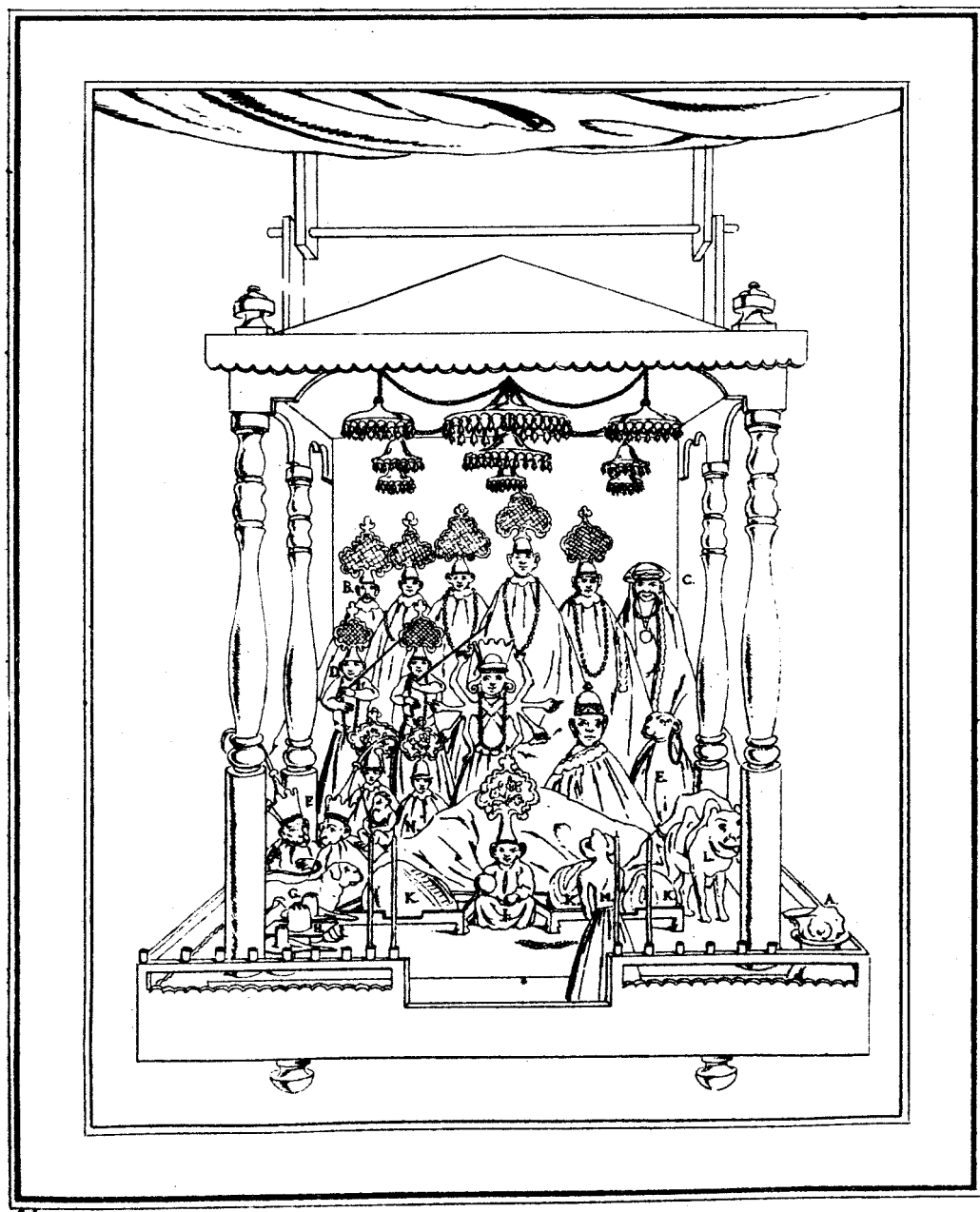
<sup>2</sup> This lithograph and the following sketch have been reproduced by courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, General Library System, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

various oscillations before them, as symbolical of the element of the earth. He next successively lighted the five wicks of the lamp, represented in the Plate, and during continued hymns moved it in different directions before the idols, as emblematical of the element of fire. Having finished this rite, he placed the lamp on a small salver, and it was then carried by a member of the congregation to all the worshippers present: each of whom, after having reverently held his hand over the five flames, touched his eyes with his warmed fingers. This part of the ceremony being concluded, the priest received the lamp, and extinguished the five flames with its pedestal: but the wick with which he had lighted them, he threw into the large lamp.

At length, the element of water was worshipped. For this purpose, pure water was kept ready in a large marine shell, Plates 8 and 9, which was placed on a brass vase supported by the right corner of the pagoda, The Dervise took this shell, and, between the pauses of the song, he poured the water it contained with much dexterity from a considerable height into the half-covered cup on the floor; and lastly, dipping his hand into this holy water, he besprinkled the whole congregation, who received this benediction very devoutly, and with folded hands.

After the litany was finished, the Dervise gave the cup with holy water to the person who chimed the bells, and sat down, together with the whole congregation, cross-legged on the carpet: he then caused a spoonful of holy water to be poured into the palm of each person's hand, who religiously swallowed it, and moistened his head and eyes with his wet palm. The Dervise afterwards took the remainder, with which he washed his head and eyes, and poured it into the vase that supported the shell before the idols. He then said a long prayer for the Empress, the constituted authorities, and the people. After this ceremony, the Indians were presented with dried raisins without stones, or Kyshmish, on a plate; and after they had all risen, plates with sugar-candy and pistachio nuts were offered to the strangers. When the whole ceremony was concluded, we were permitted to approach and make drawings of the pagoda, without touching any part of it. At our request, the priest himself uncovered part of the idols, which were dressed in sky-blue and pale rose-coloured silk cloaks, describing them to us by their names. In the back-ground, elevated on a pedestal, in a direction from right to left, we observed the following: Sagenat, Tsettergun, Letseman, Rama, Bahart, and Lakumi, as they are represented in the eighth Plate, from B to C. The first five were adorned with high moveable bonnets. The last was a representation of a female, dressed in a kind of turban, with a ring in her nose.—On a lower

step, in the second row, on the right side, from D to E, were Murli and Mrohor; they were decorated with high bonnets, but without silk garments and held staves in their right hand, over their shoulders. In the midst, there was a figure called Ashtabudshi, with eight arms, and crowned like Cybele; the next was a figure called Saddasho, in a sitting posture, with a round bonnet, and Honuman, an idol resembling Apis, with a dog's head, and rings in his ears. Small idols and relics crowded together, occupied the front part of the shrine. Before the figures that held staves in their hands, we observed two distinguished pictures of Vishnu and Brama, or as they pronounce it, Brmahah, N. Farther to the right, there were two very prominent fitting idols, in the form of apes, which were likewise called Honuman, with long-pointed caps, like crowns. In front of these was the figure of a tiger, or lioness, cast in copper, like the idols, and called Ssurr-nur-seng. Lastly, towards the corner, we noticed three figures similar to the Duruma of the Mongolian Lamas, which appeared to represent Lingams, and were called Shadisham, H; that in the middle leaned on a square pedestal of yellow amber, in the form of an obtuse cone, studded with grains of rice: two other small columns rested on a base similar to a lamp, which represented the female parts of generation. In the middle was placed a small idol, I, with a very high bonnet, called Gupaledshi: at its right side there was a large black stone, and on the left, two smaller ones of the same colour, K K K, brought from the Ganges, and regarded by the Indians as sacred. These fossils were of the species called Shofs, Saugh, or Sankara, and appeared to be an impression either of a bivalve muscle, with long protuberances, or of a particular species of sea-hog. I have never seen among petrifications these stones with a figured elevation, by which the Indians endeavour to represent certain female parts, and raise the colour by yellow streaks of turmeric. Such stones are held in the greatest veneration among them. Behind the foremost idol, there was a folded silk garment lying across. In the corner stood the figure of a saddled lion, L, called Nhandigana. There was besides an image at the edge of the shrine, with its face turned towards the other idols. He appeared almost withered, had large ears, and was called Gori. The front space likewise contained the bell, or Ghenta, of the idolatrous priest, as well as his rosary, and a sceptre, such as is peculiar to the Lama clergy. From these details, the great analogy between the idolatrous worship of the Lama of Tybet, and some ceremonies of the Indians, and even of the ancient Christian Church, will be evident.



Sketch of the icons in the Hindu shrine in Astrakhan, 1790s

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