

The East India Company in the Persian Gulf

1700 – 1750

The View from Bandar Abbas

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Abstract.

The Persian Gulf represents a vital, yet unexplored region of the East India Company's sphere of influence. By considering the Gulf as an important space of interaction between the Company and successive Persian regimes, a new relationship can be revealed. From the Company's foundational action in assisting Shah Abbas I in the capture of Hormuz in 1622, to the creation of a fleet by Nader Shah in the 1730's, the Company's experience with Persia represents a different angle on wider trends in Company history. The Company's factory at Bandar Abbas was a nexus for Indian Ocean trade, as well as the living quarters for a small community of Europeans, whose lives and livelihoods depended on the recognition of rights granted by successive Persian Shahs in the Farman; a legal document of great influence and longevity, originally granted by Abbas I, which lasted for more than a century.

Acknowledgements.

“Oh thou that gave us speech and song and minds that comprehend”

Tydi a Rhoddaist.

توانا بود هر که دانا بود

ز دانش دل پیر برنا بود

“The one who has knowledge has power, while wisdom makes the old heart young”

Persian Traditional Verse.

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Introduction.

The Persian Gulf, also known as the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Iran or simply "The Gulf", has served for millennia as a conduit for trade and cultural exchange.¹ The Gulf is around 990 kilometres long, from Kuwait and Iraq at the north-western end, it varies in width from 340 kilometres to 55 kilometres at its south-eastern extremity at the Straits of Hormuz between Iran and the Omani exclave of Musandam. From ancient times, the Gulf's geography made it important as a maritime route for spices, incense and other goods. This trade created the basis for numerous exchanges between peoples of many cultures and faiths travelling between the East and the West.

In his introduction to *The Persian Gulf in History*, Lawrence Potter points to the Gulf as constituting "a World of its own",² an insightful appreciation of the distinct socio-cultural and economic features of this specific region, formed from its own unique geography, that drew in people and trade from as far away as the Iranian plateau, Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Sub-Continent. The Kingdom of Persia, to which the Gulf, at least in English eyes, nominally belonged, represented the third largest territorial empire in the Indian Ocean, after the Mughal Empire in India. Significantly, Persia was the source of a cultural tradition that spread from Istanbul to Samarkand in the form of language, poetry, music, calligraphy and architecture. What Persia lacked, however, was the commercial attraction of the other empires of Asia,

¹ Whether the Gulf is Persian, Arabian or another combination of terms is a matter of considerable political debate in the region, for the purposes of this thesis it will be known as the Persian Gulf, in common with most scholarship, sometimes shortened to "the Gulf".

² Potter, Lawrence G. *The Persian Gulf in History*. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 7

having fewer commodities which interested the Europeans. Because of this, Persian interactions with European traders, and specifically the English East India Company examined in this thesis, have been largely neglected in the historiography of early European expansion.

From the 13th century, the island of Hormuz, sitting at the narrow mouth of the Gulf's south-eastern end, emerged as an ideal place for ships to stop on their way in and out. In 1296, the mainland based Kingdom of Hormuz, which had previously occupied the area now known as Minab, was compelled by repeated harassment from the Mongols to move its capital to the island of Jarun, which was thereafter known as Hormuz.³ This move also took advantage of the decline of Kish, a more northerly island state that had controlled Gulf trade for the previous three centuries.⁴ The island of Hormuz offered protection from the larger, more powerful territorial states of the Iranian plateau. Although Hormuz had no natural supply of fresh water, it could be supplied from the nearby island of Kishm. Hormuz and Kishm, along with the island of Larak, made a safe leeward stopping point, sheltering ships from monsoon gales from the east while the mainland sheltered the vessels from the west. On Hormuz an emporium developed, trading goods between Europe, Africa, India, Indonesia and China, despite the severe limitations in the availability of arable land and fresh water.

The fortified island city of Hormuz would be safe until the arrival of European naval power following the voyages of the famous Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama

³ Vosoughi, Mohammad Bagher, "The Kings of Hormuz", *The Persian Gulf in History*, edited by Lawrence Potter, (Palgrave Macmillan 2009), p.93

⁴ *ibid*

in 1497. According to Couto and Loureiro, Hormuz became an obsession for Portuguese explorers and conquerors in the 16th century as they sought to control the intimate connection between the Gulf and the paths of trade in the Indian Ocean more widely. In 1507 the island was taken by the Portuguese and then recaptured by them after a rebellion in 1515.⁵ Despite the Portuguese occupation, Hormuz remained the key meeting point between the great empires of Asia, with the Gulf forming a porous border between the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires in the early modern period. In a wider sense, although less tangibly, the Gulf formed a frontier between these three Asian powers, where it was not only a nexus of trade, but also acted as a borderland and meeting point of empires.

This study pivots on a crucial battle over Hormuz in 1622 which shaped the fate of two maritime nations and trade in the Indian Ocean for nearly 250 years. It then goes on to shed new light on the relationship between the East India Company and Persia through the years 1700 to 1750, a dynamic and critical period for both, focusing on the Company's activities within and from its base at Bandar Abbas.⁶ Through a fresh study of underutilised material from the India Office Records held at the British Library, this research reveals the role the Company played in first supporting the Persian ruler Shah Abbas I in re-taking control over territory and trade in the Gulf from the Portuguese, and then how, in unison, the Company and the Persian administration formed a unique partnership lasting from 1619 to 1750 that maintained the balance of power in the Gulf. This thesis explores the influence of the Company on the Gulf region, the impact upon

⁵ Couto and Loureiro, *Revisiting Hormuz: Persian Interactions in the Persian Gulf Region in the Early Modern Period*, (Harrassowitz, 2008), p.1

⁶ The English East India Company will be referred to throughout as "The Company", while the Dutch East India Company will be referred to as either the "VOC" (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*), or simply "The Dutch"

the Company of Gulf politics, commerce, changing regimes, alliances, warfare and projection of military power on sea and land. An added perspective is provided by this thesis's examination of the geography of this region, its climate, culture and living conditions, which taken together provide us with an intimate understanding of daily Company life.

Historiographical Essay.

The scholarly works available that cover the history of the Company, of the Indian Ocean, and of the Gulf region do not focus on the Company in the Gulf through the period 1700 to 1750, nor on the earlier pivotal events between 1619 and 1626 noted above. These events were to form the basis of the Company's trade in the Indian Ocean for 150 years, and to shape a unique, lasting, and valuable relationship at the highest levels of a major empire despite seismic changes in regime. One explanation as to why the history of the Company in the Persian Gulf has been left relatively unexplored is because it has been largely overshadowed by events in India; another is the previous relative inaccessibility of relevant source material.⁷ However, as we shall see, it was events in Persia and the Gulf during this period that would shift the balance of power in the Indian Ocean region until the volume of Company trade and the intensity of its interventions there were diminished or less momentous than those witnessed during the 19th century.

⁷ James Onley and Sugata Bose have both included the Gulf in their treatment of the subject of 19th Century imperialism, while Willem Floor and Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al-Qasimi have studied the functioning of Gulf trade. Onley, James. *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj*, (Oxford, 2007). Bose, Sugata. *One Hundred Horizons*, (Harvard, 2009). Floor Willem. *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History*, (Mage, 2006). al-Qasimi, Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed. *Power struggles and trade in the Gulf 1620-1820*. (Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 1999).

Of key importance to this thesis are those major studies that cover the Indian Ocean, 19th century Western imperialism in the Gulf, Persian history, the East India Company as a global company, and the Dutch East India Company (“VOC” (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*)). The studies of 19th century imperialism in the Gulf by James Onley and Sugata Bose are valuable, but they do not cover anything in detail prior to 1800. Conversely, studies by K. N. Chaudhuri and Sanjay Subrahmanyam that do cover the wider history of the Indian Ocean and East India Company across the 16th to 19th centuries pay the Gulf comparatively little attention. Studies by Rudi Matthee, Edmund Herzig, Charles Melville and Willem Floor cover Persian history from mediaeval to early modern times but do not relate this information directly to the history of the Company. John Keay gives a wide perspective on the Company’s general history and is a useful reference for events in the Gulf. Matthee and Floor additionally cover Dutch East India interactions with Persia through the Gulf and Persian administration, not to mention numismatics, economics and political history. Nevertheless, none of these works capture the significance and richness of the interactions between the Company and the Persian state and their joint impact on the region in any analytical detail during this period of study. Not one of these studies examines how the Persians used diplomacy and commerce and the grant of agreements called *Farman*s to incentivise the Company to support their projection of maritime power, a policy intended to ensure that Persia was not again threatened by what was, for them, a new technological advance in terms of naval warships.⁸

⁸ The Persian term *Farman* denotes an imperial decree in Persianate and Arabic speaking states. The term is taxonomic with others such as *raqam* (pl. *Irqam*), *sanad* (pl. *Isnad*), *Parvana*, though a *Farman* in Persia appears to have been made up of a set of individual *Irqam*. For more see, Ferrier, R.W., *The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia*. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol.49, no.1, 1986.

The period between 1700 and 1750 is particularly opaque in terms of the ways in which the Company functioned in the Gulf region, and its wider impact on Persian attitudes and politics. This is despite the range of studies dealing with the reign of Nader Shah, a looming figure, whose reign and conquests came to dominate this era of Persian history. To address this lacuna, this thesis details the pivotal events at Hormuz which resulted in the Company gaining a vital Persian *Farman*, the Company's collaboration with the Persian state as a naval power, the establishment of the Company's Persian factories, its commercial activities, and its relationship with those regional intermediaries which enabled it to develop its trade. Throughout, we consider the Company's role in the commercial, political, military and social life of the wider Gulf region in which it operated.

Studies on the East India Company grew from the 19th and 20th Century interest in Empire and its history. The Company was viewed as an agent for Empire, or as the means by which Englishmen “discovered” the globe. This was facilitated by the work of William Foster, who published collections of the Company's records, letters and papers in the first three decades of the 20th Century.⁹ Following the Second World War, the approach to the history of the Company became much more concerned with questions of structure, both of the Company itself as well as its role in linking Europe to the powers of Asia. Holden Furber envisioned an “Age of Partnership”, citing the Company's many peaceful interactions with Asian powers, while Subrahmanyam instead saw a period of “fragile equilibrium”. Furber first presented this period as an “Age of Partnership”, in which “Indian suppliers of piece-goods, Indo-Portuguese and

⁹ Foster, William, *The English Factories in India*, London, Clarendon, 1908-26

Armenian merchants...European country captains and Indian *noquedars*.” all acted in relative concert towards mutual goals and benefits.¹⁰ Furber’s vision is a somewhat utopian view of these transactions, indeed, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has been the most recent to challenge Furber’s assertion, describing this period instead as one of “fragile equilibrium”, in which violence and its uses were an accepted danger of business in this era.¹¹ Subrahmanyam bases this conception on an incident of violence between Europeans, surrounding the forced collapse of the Genoese East India Company through a collusion, to reduce competition, between the Dutch and Portuguese, rivals themselves for trade in Asia.¹² Subrahmanyam’s example of Europeans turning upon each other to gain a greater share of shipping of goods around the Cape leaves open for study how Europeans interacted with their interlocutors in the Indian Ocean. K.N. Chaudhuri, on the other hand, presents a situation in which force was an integral part of the presence of Europeans in Asian trade.¹³ Chaudhuri posits that the European habit of issuing safe conduct passes, practiced by the English, Dutch and Portuguese, carried with it an inherent threat of violence, should the passes not be paid for.¹⁴ While this may be so, it could be viewed as a continuance of the European custom of issuing letters of marque against the shipping of other European powers in wartime. Subrahmanyam and Chaudhuri’s claim to a more violent European *modus operandi* in the Indian Ocean does not bear much scrutiny in this way, though clearly Furber’s assertions of partnership with only occasional outbreaks of aggression is unfulfilling. Clulow and Ruangsilp’s more focussed approach, looks at specific examples over longer lengths of time and permits a nuanced understanding of the shared Eurasian experience.

¹⁰ Furber, Holden, “Asia and the West as Partners Before “Empire” and After”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.2, no.4 (Aug. 1969), pp.711-721

¹¹ Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.297.

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Chaudhuri, K.N. *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760*, (Cambridge, 1978), pp.111-4

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

The study of the Company's interactions with Asian states is exemplified in the recent work of Adam Clulow and Bhawan Ruangsilp that shows how the records and resources left by the Company can be used to gain a perspective on Asian cultures and their processes of interaction with the "other".¹⁵ By combining Company sources with local ones, a syncretical understanding of both the Company and these Asian states can be constructed. Unlike in Ayutthaya, where the VOC built up "cultural capital"¹⁶ by negotiating Siamese courtly expectations with wider interests, Clulow's Japanese case required an almost total sublimation of Dutch interests and practices to the norms of the Tokugawa Shogunate.¹⁷ These differing experiences show that the VOC was engaged with its neighbours and interlocutors in distinct and tailored ways, informed either by "cultural capital" or by *force majeure*. This process of understanding the nuanced fashion in which European companies approached Asian powers is vital in furthering our historical understanding of these organisations and the states with which they conducted business. Clulow and Ruangsilp's approach, uses both European and Asian source material in their native languages and provides a very balanced understanding from their individuals perspectives. So far, the only example of this in terms of Persia is Riazul Islam's work on Indo-Persian relations, though this is limited to the formal missions dispatched between the two, without much consideration, due to a dearth of source material, on more commercial or interpersonal connections.¹⁸

¹⁵ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, 2012 and Ruangsilp, Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company Merchants in the Court of Siam*.(Brill, 2007) p.221

¹⁶ Ruangsilp, Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company Merchants*, p.221.

¹⁷ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p.259.

¹⁸ Islam, Riazul, *Indo-Persian Relations*. (Tehran, 1970).

The history of the Company's trade elsewhere in the Indian Ocean world has been studied very closely for several decades. K.N. Chaudhuri's work, covering the goods, ships and ports traded and used by the Company, has provided a platform for other scholars by exploring the trade carried out across the Indian Ocean.¹⁹ Barendse has recognized what Chaudhuri does not take account of: the private trade carried out by the Company's servants.²⁰ This private activity will form a key part of the following discussion. Both Barendse and Chaudhuri develop the view of the Company's trade in physical commodities, as well as exploring the distribution of Company passes to native ships. Neither, however, gives much agency in these trades to the native powers of Asia. Barendse argues: "Where the Court was directly trading through a monopoly, like the Safavid Empire with silk, this was seen as an adjunct to "foreign policy". It was regarded as an exchange of gifts; prices were based upon prestige rather than demand".²¹ Yet, as this thesis will discuss, the Safavids and their successors were both aware and capable of actively manipulating trade policy. The Company experienced this through the introduction and changing of the terms and conditions given to it in the various revisions of the *Farman*, a situation at odds with Barendse's conclusion that Persia was unaware or disinterested in trade.

The study of Persia has undergone significant development over the last 80 years, started through the work of Laurence Lockhart (1890-1975), Ann Lambton (1912-2008) and Vladimir Minorsky (1877-1966), among others. These scholars form the core for the modern study of Persia and its history although it remains a much smaller discipline than those relating to the Company. The development of Persia's

¹⁹ See Chaudhuri, *The Trading World*.

²⁰ Barendse, Rene. *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World in the Seventeenth Century*, (Routledge, 2016)

²¹ Barendse, *Arabian Seas*, p.1570.

interaction with the company has not been so hierarchical as has been the case for the Company as a whole. The work of Minorsky, especially in translating Persian primary sources, has allowed for a broader range of study into Persian history, while Lockhart and Lambton pursued numerous studies on broad swathes of Persia's post-Islamic history. All three of these scholars received their formal linguistic training in support of careers in their countries foreign services, and in the case of Lockhart the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) who also employed R.W. Ferrier. By making Persian sources available, as well as teaching the relevant languages themselves, these scholars generated further generations of experts, whose work has encompassed a wide variety of topics. Roger Savory (1925-Present), himself a prolific translator of Persian manuscripts, also produced a range of studies, most notably his survey of Iran Under the Safavids.²² The work of R.W. Ferrier, published in the 1970s and 1980s, contributed hugely to linking the world of the East India Company with that of Persia in the Gulf has been particularly useful in the writing of this thesis. Ferrier, along with his contemporaries, Savory and O'Kane, assisted further in making Persian sources available to scholars, while Ferrier added the further step of linking Persian materials to cognate collections of English records in the India Office Archives in an analytical way.²³ While the Company's archives have been used by scholars since Lockhart, there has yet to be an authoritative study of their contents and usefulness for academic study. Rudi Matthee and Willem Floor, through the 1990's to the present day have pioneered research into the Persian economy, as well as trade and political life. Matthee's explorations of Persian goods, as well as the political lives of Persian Shahs and statesmen gives fresh context to Safavid history, while Floor's publications since 2004 in the Persian Gulf series have done much to provide depth and detail to this region. In

²² Savory, Roger, *Iran Under the Safavids*, (Cambridge, 1980)

²³ Ferrier, *Armenian Merchants*, 1973 Ferrier, *Terms and Conditions*, 1973 and O'Kane, John, *The Ship of Solayman*, (Routledge, 1973)

many ways, the outward-looking bent within Persian Studies, considering Persia as part of a community of empires and polities, is commensurate with those studies looking from the broad sweep of the Company's history into specific Asian contexts. Floor's investigation is largely focussed on the Gulf in the 17th, rather than 18th Century, but his conclusion is that the power of land-based territorial states including Persia was such that the maritime powers, for instance Portugal, despite numerous attempts, could not exert military power over them.²⁴ His assertion that Europeans had to "put up or shut up (or pay up)",²⁵ makes for a good turn of phrase, but misses the far more nuanced interplay of Persian state policy and European interests explored by this thesis. By investigating the terms and usage of the Company's *Farman*, for example, it is evident that Persian and Company relations were much more complex. While the territorial state of Persia was relatively immune to attack from the sea, as Floor says, the reverse was also true of the maritime powers of the European companies who, in extremis, could simply sail away.

Persia and its relationship to the wider Indian Ocean, as well as the wider World, has so far been largely excluded from the relevant scholarship. The exclusion of Persia in favour of its neighbours has come about due to a number of factors; principally, Persia's trade was relatively small when compared to other areas of the Company's interests, while Persia lacked a strong naval or maritime tradition through which it could project itself either commercially or militarily.

²⁴ Floor, Willem, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1700*. (Mage, 2006), p.601.

²⁵ Ibid.

Recently, Safavid Studies has begun to expand its view outward, with scholars of the Indian Ocean World focussing more deliberately on specific cases and points of interaction between European and Asian trade and diplomatic interests. This is exemplified in the volume *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, in which five papers (Troebst, Faroghi, Rota, Calmard, Marcinkowski) specifically deal with the connections between the Safavids and other European and Asian powers.²⁶ While these articles show that the Safavids were linked to the wider Eurasian world through trade and diplomacy, they do not go on to demonstrate or analyse Safavid agency in these connections. Their valuable research into discovering Persia's place within networks of trade, patronage and diplomacy has not, as yet, been pursued further. This is a, thus far, under examined feature of the Safavid period, which this thesis, by exploring the close relationship maintained by the Company and the Safavids, seeks to advance.

Scholarship concerning Safavid trade has been considerably advanced recently through the work of Rudi Matthee and Willem Floor, who have provided significant overviews of Persian coinage and monetary policy, goods and produce and the mechanisms of the silk trade. Matthee's comprehensive examination of the second century of Safavid rule, *Persia in Crisis*, explores the political, economic and social changes in the Safavid realm after the reign of Abbas I.²⁷ Matthee's work, utilises a diverse range of sources in a variety of European and Asian languages, and has created an informed basis around which future studies into the Safavid era can be constructed. While Matthee considers the place of the Company in Persia during this period and makes use of the Company's sources, he does not provide a clear outline or analysis of the way in which this relationship was transacted. Persian Studies therefore currently

²⁶ Floor, Willem and Herzig, Edmund, eds. *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, (I.B.Tauris, 2012).

²⁷ Matthee, Rudi, *Persia in Crisis*. (I.B.Tauris, 2012).

lacks a schema through which to more coherently approach the day to day processes of relations with foreigners who were long-term residents of the empire. Again, this thesis is aimed at providing a framework through which to appreciate this detail.

In the case of Persia, the East India Company's presence there was dictated by a single document; the *Farman*. This form of imperial decree has undergone serious scholarly study for a variety of reasons. Bert Fragner's exploration of the chancery practice associated with *Farman* writing, form and delivery is instructive, giving a succinct history from the Mongol period to the post-Safavid era.²⁸ Specifically of interest to this study, however, is the work of R.W. Ferrier, who's examination of the extant Persian text of the *Farman* of 1616 and some of its subsequent renewals remains authoritative.²⁹ Unfortunately, Ferrier did not produce any further work on this subject, although his other articles on the Anglo-Armenian relationship is helpful in understanding and contextualising the Company's presence further.³⁰ By making these sources available to scholars, Ferrier has made it possible to study the Anglo-Persian relationship through primary documentation from both sides. If Clulow and Ruangsilp's model is to be followed, then Ferrier's work is vital in facilitating it.

The Company was particularly concerned with the maintenance of its charter, and the *Farman*, and was viewed in a very similar light, as it was a document granting specific rights and privileges. Philip Stern has engaged with this question in depth, while Miles Ogborn has considered the attachment of the Company to physical

²⁸ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farman>

²⁹ See Ferrier, R.W., *The Terms and Conditions*.

³⁰ See Ferrier, R.W. *The Armenians and the East India Company*.

documentation.³¹ Stern argues that the Company, from its inception, “claimed jurisdiction over English trade and traffic in Asia and thus over English goods, ships and subjects throughout the Eastern Hemisphere”.³² Stern denies the validity of previous scholarship which qualifies the Company’s statehood, instead arguing that the Company fulfilled every expectation of the Early Modern state without recourse to its nominal status under the British Crown.³³ This argument is convincing to an extent, but ignores the importance placed by the Company upon its status in relation to Asian and European rulers. The Company’s own attitude to its status, constantly in reference to its place as defined by its charters, whether from the British, Mughal, Safavid or any other authority, demonstrates its inherent vulnerability when compared to true, territorial states and polities. That being said, it is not satisfactory to ignore the Company’s state-like functions and powers, for example, its negotiated immunity to the Persian legal process and decreed ability to manage, censure, recall or dismiss its employees at a great distance. Santhi Hejeebu suggests that the Company was largely unable to do this, claiming that the Company and its employees were too divided spatially for one to enforce or control the other as intended.³⁴ Hejeebu rightly reflects that the Company allowed for certain infringements of what might be considered proper practice in favour of better guarantees of profit.³⁵ In this case, the standpoint of both Hejeebu and Stern is somewhat unsatisfactory, as the Company does not seem to have been either sufficiently state-like, but nor did it lack or fail to use, mechanisms and methods of control.

³¹ Ogborn, Miles, *Indian Ink*, (Chicago, 2007).

³² Stern Philip, *The Company-State*, (Oxford, 2011), p. 3

³³ Stern, *Company-State*, p.12

³⁴ Hejeebu, Santhi, “Contract Enforcement in the English East India Company”, in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.65, No.2, (June 2005),

³⁵ Hejeebu, *Contract Enforcement*, p.520

This thesis will explore and expand upon this historiographical basis, through the lens of the Company's relationships with a shifting landscape of Persian authority and regime change. The Company's experience here can inform the debates within Persian Studies about the methods of interaction used by the Persian rulers and governors, while also adding a new forum for debate about the conflicts, partnerships and tensions associated with the European presence in the Indian Ocean. By taking a closer view of the organisation and provision of the Company's employees in the small, isolated Persian factory of Bandar Abbas, it will be possible to consider, in microcosm, the effectiveness of the Company's mechanisms of governance and control over its peripheral operations.

Sources and Methodology.

The chapters of this thesis explore important gaps in the current understanding of the Company's relationship with Persia using the East India Company Factory Records (IOR/G/29) as a basis. This source, through enhanced cataloguing as part of this project, sheds new light on the way in which the Company functioned in Persia. This archive has been under-utilised by scholars in favour of more complete records collected at Bombay, Surat and London;³⁶ however, despite the chronological gaps in the collection, the detail contained within it is far more useful than the dispatch books from elsewhere might suggest. The only work to have used these records in any great depth is the chapter of the *Cambridge History of Iran* pertaining to Persia's relationship

³⁶ Stored at the British Library in the IOR/E/3 series,

with the European companies; however, this is only a survey and makes reference to the primary material mostly for the purpose of creating a broad chronology of events.³⁷

The IOR/G/29 series covers the period from 1620-1822, though there are some significant gaps in this chronology and these dates do not correspond to specific events. The series is exceptionally rich in detail about the day-to-day business of the factory, important events and politics in Persia, the lives of those who lived and worked there, and copious data on the commodities, prices, weights and measures traded and used in Persia. The consultation books record not only the official business of the Company, but also the personal lives of the factory staff, from their private sales of goods to the investigation of murders, suicide, drunkenness, elopements and fraud. With this information, researchers can explore the private as well as official business of the Company, consider the purchase and sale of goods on the Company's behalf, the exchange of visits by local officials on both a personal and a political basis, and provide a view of the lives of the Company's servants as individuals.

As well as gaps in the chronology of IOR/G/29, there are other considerations to take into account; the most important of these is that the records are authored solely by Europeans. Although there are many non-Europeans working at the factory they have very little obvious input and so this cannot be assumed. There is, for example, no mention of the experience of the Indian soldiers and sailors who garrisoned the factory, nor of the Armenian linguist or Banian broker. Usefully, although these are official minutes, they do contain a significant amount of detail on private events outside the

³⁷ Avery, Hambly and Melville eds. *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol.7, (Cambridge, 1991), pp.350-373

purview of the Company hierarchy and demonstrate in some cases how the Company took an interest in its employees' welfare. It has to be also recognized that being official correspondence, the news related in these records represents the facts of events, or a version of them that would be most palatable to the Company's directors in Bombay or London. We know, for instance, that the beheading of Portuguese sailors was in retaliation for the hanging of Company sailors in a previous incident. This was sanitised and reported as a ship that was captured and taken back to Surat. In light of this level of editorial control one is forced to recognise that one is seeing the factory as "a portrayal", either positive or negative depending on the ambitions, objectives or prejudice of the authors. Equally, there is nothing in these records that evokes the feelings or sentiments of those experiencing life in the Gulf factory, beyond a very limited impression that can be had from the use of certain language or phrases. In many ways, the lack of these personal reactions hides the true intention of the author, or the tenor of the event being recounted. As such, an amount of interpretation is required. Not only does one have to carefully interpret and cross reference the events reported where possible, the use of spelling can be misleading. Spelling of Persian names and places can be quite creative, for example, the city of Shiraz appears variously as 'Shyrash', 'Shyras', 'Xirach', and 'Xiras'.

In order to corroborate the evidence in this archive, as well as fill in gaps in the chronology, records from the IOR/P/341 series have been consulted. This series is composed of the minutes of meetings held in Bombay, as well as discussions of letters and reports received there, including those from Persia. While this is not a perfect replacement, it does provide a counterpoint to those records present in IOR/G/29. Again, this series of documents, composed of both consultations and letters, suffers

from the same drawbacks as IOR/G/29, being written entirely by European officials and lacking the personal feelings and experiences of the authors. That being said, the commentary provided on the letters received from Persia, as well as the conversations minuted concerning the commercial and political business of the Gulf factory, provide a good insight into the broader implications of events and reports available in IOR/G/29.

The period before 1700 has a number of other useful sources which give context to the events during the period of this study and provide information about attitudes and events closer in time to those studies in the present work. These are mostly travelogues and personal accounts from European travellers, merchants, priests and diplomats from a variety of countries. After 1700, this is less the case, with fewer private accounts being written due to the increasingly poor and unstable nature of Persia at the time. The memoirs of men like John Fryer, Charles Lockyer and Alexander Hamilton,³⁸ all of whom worked in different capacities for the Company and conducted their own private trade, provide an insight into Indian Ocean trade, as well as comments concerning the governance of Indian and Persian states. Fryer's text includes descriptions of his travels through several Persian provinces, including the town of Bandar Abbas, while Hamilton describes sailing the Gulf and details the coastline. Other travelogues, such as those by Jonas Hanway, a merchant trading through Russia who visited the Northern provinces of Persia at the end of Nader Shah's reign, and Engelbert Kaempfer, a physician and scientist who travelled with a Swedish embassy

³⁸ Hamilton, Alexander, *A New Account of the East-Indies: Being the Observations and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton who resided in those parts from the Year 1688, to 1723, Trading and Travelling, by Sea and Land, to most of the countries and Islands of Commerce and Navigation, between the Cape of Good-Hope, and the Island of Japan. The Second Edition.* Volume I, 1739 and Fryer, John, *A New Account of East-India and Persia in Eight Letters*, (London, 1698) and Lockyer, Charles, *An Account of the Trade in India*, (London, 1711)

through Persia, but is best known for his writings on Japan, are available. While Kaempfer's time in Persia again falls before 1700, Hanway's account, including his description of the life of Nader Shah, is contemporary with the last two decades of the period of this study.³⁹

Persian sources on this period rarely bear any mention of the East India Company's business in Persia. This is a continuation of the "aloofness" displayed by Persian chroniclers towards both Europeans and the merchant class more generally. The account of the Persian mission to Siam, documented in *The Ship of Sulaiman*, is an exception to this as the mission was carried to Thailand via India on a Company ship.⁴⁰ Hazin Lahiji, a famous poet and Persian émigré to India, devotes a few lines of his memoir recounting his journey to India to describing the Company's good treatment of him and the quality of their "ships and packets".⁴¹ These personal memories of the Company show that to individuals, the Company was noticeable and worthy of mention, despite the silence of official chronicles and records. It is possible that more accounts concerning the Company exist in Iran, through local archives; however, these are sadly inaccessible to the majority of Western scholars.

Persian records more generally are very little concerned with the comings and goings of the *Kullah-Pushan*, (a slang term for Europeans, meaning Hat Wearer), with significant events, such as the Company assistance at the battles around Hormuz, given

³⁹ Hanway, Jonas, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea: With a Journal of Travels through Russia and into Persia*, 4 vols. London, 1753 and Kaempfer, Engelbert, *Am Hofe des Persischen Großkönigs 1684-85*, trans. Hinz, Walter, (Leipzig, 1940).

⁴⁰ O'Kane, John, *The Ship of Solaiman*, p.27

⁴¹ Hazin, Sheikh Mohammed Ali. *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin*, tr. F.C. Belfour, (London 1830), p.215

little to no recognition. Iskandar Beg Munshi, the famous chronicler of Abbas I, devotes only a few brief sentences to the Company's involvement, most of which revolve around the English requesting protection from the Shah against Portuguese tyranny, rather than any sort of mutual agreement or partnership.⁴² Chroniclers, especially official ones, are, of course, writing for a very particular and discerning audience, aiming to magnify the importance of those to whom the work is dedicated. It can therefore hardly be surprising that Iskander Beg would not recount an equal partnership between his awe-inspiring ruler and patron and a band of European merchants, just as the chroniclers Mar'ashi Safavi and Astarabadi when writing about Nader Shah's campaign in the Gulf, omit the Company's involvement totally.⁴³ In the same work, Safavi does mention that the Company have a responsibility to keep the Gulf ports free from piracy, so it is evident that the naval power of the Company was public knowledge among the literate Persian nobility.⁴⁴ The use of these works when looking at the Company in the Gulf is thus more interesting for what it does not say, rather than what it does. The Persian official chronicles make limited mention of the Company's involvement in actions such as The Battle of Hormuz. However, the memoirs of state officials document this in some detail, and also the Persian Court chronicles make tacit reference to the Company's contribution. The chronicles and memoirs as well as other contemporary records do not recognise the significant military relevance the Company projected. This lack of formal Persian sources, along with the large gaps in English

⁴² Turkoman, Iskandar Beg Munshi. *Tarikh Alam Ara-ye Abbasi*, 2 vols. paginated as one, ed. Iraj Afshar, Amir Kabir, 1350 AH/1971, p. 981

⁴³ Mirza Mohammed Khalil Mar'ashi Safavi. *Majma al-Tavarikh dar Tarikh-i Inqiraz-i Safaviyeh va vaqa'i-ye ba'd ta sal-eh 1207 h.q.*, ed. Abbas Eqbal, Tehran, 1328 H.S. and Astarabadi, Mahdi Khan, Jones, William, trans. *The history of the life of Nader Shah: King of Persia. Extracted from an Eastern manuscript, With an introduction, containing, I. A description of Asia II. A short history of Persia and an appendix, consisting of an essay on Asiatic poetry, and the history of the Persian language. To which are added, pieces relative to the French translation*, London, 1773

⁴⁴ Safavi, *Majma al-Tavarikh*, p.40

material for this period has contributed to this era, as well as Persia itself, being neglected by scholars exploring the Company in this region.

The key document for the study of the Company and its place in Persian history is therefore the Company's English translation of the Persian *Farman* (there were several iterations and addenda over time, see Appendix Three) granted to the Company and then renewed multiple times between 1622 and 1747. The text of the *Farman* in the English sources is a gateway to understanding not just what the Company wanted from their relationship with the Persian state, but also what the Persians expected in return and how the Persians themselves tried to divert the Company to their own purposes, whether in terms of trade, military assistance or the carrying of embassies. By considering the changing terms of the *Farman* as initiatives from both sides, rather than a list of European demands or Persian concessions, a better idea of Company-Persian interaction can be formed, which can then inform dialogue on the nature of agreements between Asian and European powers and trading companies more broadly. The lack of copies of the Persian text of the *Farman* is symptomatic of a lack of Persian official sources for this time. The cities in which the Company did the majority of its business were sacked or burned by a series of invaders, occupiers and native forces from the Afghans and Baluchis to Nader Shah himself, making it difficult to imagine finding many sources referring to their presence there. Future research into this period will hopefully benefit from far greater and easier access to records and expertise in Iran itself.

Chapter Outline and Structure.

This thesis has been separated into thematic studies, dealing with different aspects of the Company's presence in Persia. This approach is best suited to studying this period. Attempting to do so by the reigns of the rulers would prove difficult, with considerable differences in the lengths of the reigns of the Afghan occupiers and the longer terms under the Safavids and Nader Shah. There would also have to be a judgement made on when Nader Shah's reign began, whether to include the phase in which Tahmasp II was still titular ruler, or the minority of Abbas III. Looking from the Company's side, there is little to discern the various terms of the Agents, nor specific changes in policy that would warrant a chronological approach. Instead, using thematic studies to consider the important and changing political and commercial landscape in Persia allows for continuity which would be difficult to discern elsewhere. The thematic study of this thesis is formed into six chapters outlined below:

Chapter 1 investigates the naval cooperation between the Company and Persia, starting with the "founding myth" of the Company's presence in the Gulf, the capture of Hormuz. This event would earn the Company its treasured *Farman*, the terms of which will be explored through its renewals, as well as its cancellation and piecemeal reinstatement by Nader Shah, whose use of the *Farman* as a bargaining tool was a significant change in the Company's relationship with the Persian state. This chapter seeks to delineate the importance of the Hormuz campaign and the subsequent *Farman*

representing the basis for all that came after, from the Company's claims to a share in the customs of Bandar Abbas, to the Company's assistance in the creation of a Persian fleet in the Gulf. The Hormuz campaign, as well as leading to the granting of the *Farman*, also became the basis of a close link between the Company and the Persian state concerning maritime policing and making war.

Chapter 2 deals with issues concerning the Company's trade in Persia, from the sale and transportation of Kerman wool, to the production and exportation of Shiraz wine. The Company's commercial interests in the Gulf went far beyond silk and rosewater and this chapter will explore the ways the Company effectively gathered revenue from the Gulf through taxation of trade entering and leaving via the Straits of Musandam and also show how the Persians, by changing the terms of the *Farman* pushed their own financial agenda using the Company's own interests to serve the Persian economy. This Chapter also seeks to change the perception of the *Farman* as a set of capitulations to rapacious Western interests, to understanding it as a document of significant importance and legitimacy to both sides who mutually agreed and changed its terms to their own ends.

We will see in Chapter 3 how the Persian state effectively outsourced responsibility for naval affairs to the Company at various times during the period of this study. This phenomenon of a "navy for hire" is critical to understanding the Company's continued significance to Persian aspirations, whether in terms of naval policing of the Arab Shore or the transportation of embassies to India and beyond. The chapter establishes how important Company cooperation with the various changing

Persian regimes was central to the expansion of the diplomatic and political horizons of Persia. Despite the Company's long-term efforts, they were ultimately unsuccessful in their quest to transform Persia into an active, rather than passive, part of the trading world of the Indian Ocean. Despite the creation of a fleet in the Gulf being a subject studied previously by other scholars, this chapter will show how the Company played a central role in assisting in this project and how the Company gained from their cooperation.

Chapter 4 addresses how the Company was organised in Persia and how it interacted on a formal level with the Persian authorities, as well as the higher tiers of the Company's hierarchy. This chapter will give detail on the methods used by the Company to deliver goods and letters across the empire and as far as Europe, maintaining its communications with the Persian Court, Bombay and beyond. It will demonstrate how local contacts and seemingly informal visits and presentations of gifts were vital to the maintenance of good relations between the Company and Persian officials. The Company's adoption of Persian spaces, such as the creation of a garden along traditional Persian lines is an example of cultural sensitivity. The use of the Company garden as an entertainment and residential facility overcame issues of social commensurability through the use of familiar settings. The efficacy of the adoption of local customs and the embracing of societal forms for regular and intimate interaction will be contrasted with the expense and irregularity of organising and transporting large, formalised embassies. The garden model was a medium for solving immediate issues but the embassies would have to concentrate on macro issues and would risk binary outcomes that may have not been anticipated. The enrolment of the Company's Agent and other employees into local peer networks, and the prestige accrued from

doing so, will also be addressed in order to discover how the Company managed its relationship with Persian regimes and officials.

Chapter 5 explores the environment of the factory itself, considering the physical environment of Bandar Abbas and its hinterland, including the climate. It is important to understand the lived experience of the factory, as this sheds light upon the realities of Company service, separate from abstract concepts about politics. The reality of life in the factory is also significant due to the importance of personal relationships with Persian officials, especially as these connections formed the basis for the Company's diplomatic and political negotiations. This chapter will look at the lives, fortunes and deaths of Company servants, from the food they ate, how they were paid and how they interacted with each other and those around them. It will also shed light on the ways that some Company servants ultimately died and how this was dealt with by the community of Europeans in Bandar Abbas. The chapter additionally explores how events, such as the illness or death of an important member of the factory community might impact the Company's business. Whether through the inability of the Agent to perform social functions necessary for maintaining cordial relations with Persian nobles, or personal disagreements, for instance halting the signing of ships' orders, delaying their departure and therefore reducing the Company's profits.

The sixth chapter addresses the role played by non-European intermediaries in the functioning of the Company, from the Armenian "linguists" who were responsible for translating and interpreting between the Factors and Persian officials and merchants, to the Banian broker, who supplied the factory with a supply of ready cash

and credit. These individuals were paid well for their services and rewarded with social status by the Company, as well as protections and privileges through the extension to them of the Company's rights through the *Farman*. The chapter will explore how these "foreign" workers acted as the Company's "face" through negotiations with Persian officials, using their knowledge of local customs and languages to avoid issues of cultural incommensurability caused by the ignorance of Europeans to social norms. The importance of these non-European networks of information and assistance would become vital to the British imperial order in India and the "informal empire" in the Gulf.⁴⁵ The Armenians are a vital part of this story and their involvement with the Company is an important facet in both the period of this study, wherever closer ties with Armenian families and trading partnerships would enrich the Company's own mercantile efforts, as well as for the study of later cooperation between Asians and Europeans.⁴⁶ This chapter will explore the role of the Armenians, as well as other non-Europeans, in the business of the Company before the age of empire. This thesis will explore how studying the Company's factory in Persia is important in understanding the nature of the Company as an organisation, as well as showing why the Company remained in Persia and the Gulf. By looking at trade, diplomatic relations and military cooperation, this thesis seeks to open up a new way of considering the Company, Persia and the Gulf in a period of significant and dynamic change.

⁴⁵ See Onley, 2007 and Bayly, C.A., *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, c 1780-1870*, (Cambridge, 1996).

⁴⁶ Aslanian, Sebouh, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, (University of California, 2012).

Chapter 1: Maritime Violence and the Establishment of East India Company Presence in the Persian Gulf.

Understanding the Gulf: The Geopolitical Context

The Gulf, as well as being an important region for trade and the movement of people and cultures, was also a point of extreme tension between the interests of expanding European powers. Afonso de Albuquerque of Portugal had captured the island of Hormuz and its city in 1507, and made the local dynasty a Portuguese client, along with other ports in the Gulf including Muscat, giving the Portuguese crown control over the pearl fisheries of Bahrain. The island was far more vulnerable to Portuguese sea power than it had been to any of the states on the mainland.

In 1616, the first English East India Company ship entered the Gulf and anchored off the Persian port of Jask where the Gulf of Oman joins the narrows of the Persian Gulf. The *James* carried a supply of woollen cloth, which the Company hoped would sell better in the cooler climate of the Iranian plateau than it had in the tropical climate of India. In turn, its crew hoped to secure a cargo of Persian silk to sell back in Europe. The lure of Persian silk, along with the demand for European cloth in the East, made the Safavid Empire particularly attractive to the Company as a place to do business. The voyage of the *James* proved modestly profitable and paved the way for a continuing trading relationship and the establishment of political connections between the Company and the Persian state. This trading relationship was the means

through which they came to understand each other's mutual antipathy to the Portuguese.

The Company's entrance into the Gulf took place in the latter years of the reign of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629). This Persian ruler reformed the Safavid Empire into a more coherent state after a lengthy period of war and unrest following the death of Shah Tahmasp I in 1576. During his reign, Abbas I successfully fought off internal rivals, as well as scoring significant victories against the Uzbeks and Ottomans, the two great territorial rivals of the Safavids, opening an opportunity to secure the Gulf Coast and Hormuz from the Portuguese, a campaign in which he was to solicit directly the help of the East India Company. In 1622, according to Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle writing to his friend Mario Schipano, Shah Abbas I was aggrieved at the aggressive territorial growth of the Portuguese within his empire.⁴⁷ According to Della Valle, the Shah moved against the Portuguese carefully, and was quick to befriend the English in 1617 in recognition of their naval capability.⁴⁸ The importance of Shah Abbas's territorial and maritime acquisitions, and the role of the East India Company in these, will be a major theme of this thesis explored in subsequent chapters.

The period leading up to the beginning of the 18th Century was one of significant change and divergent fortunes for both Persia and the Company. The Company moved from strength to strength at the end of the 17th Century, both in terms of its financial position and its standing as a European force in Asia. From the 1680's

⁴⁷ Brancaforte, Elio. *The Italian Connection: Pietro Della Valle's Account of the Fall of Hormuz (1622)* in Couto and Loureiro, *Revisiting Hormuz*, (Harrassowitz, 2008) p. 196

⁴⁸ Ibid

onwards (after the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution), the balance of power in Europe assisted to subordinate Dutch interests to those of the English. This was the price the Dutch had to accept for English support against the French in Europe. By 1682, the Company's representation in the Spice Islands of Southeast Asia was limited to one factory at Benkulen, showing that the Company's interests had fundamentally moved away from the exportation of spices back to Europe, to a trade centred more locally on the Western Indian Ocean. The Dutch had increasingly controlled the market in the key spices from their Spice Islands factories, and dominated the trade particularly in Europe. It is important to note that trade for the Company was not solely about returning goods to Europe; as much as effort spent trading goods within the Indian Ocean region itself.

One of the major changes that increased the importance of Persia in the Company's trade came with the stipulation in the Company's charter of 1693, that the Company was required to export £100,000 of English goods annually.⁴⁹ This meant that Persia, one of the few areas where English cloth was in demand, was of renewed interest and importance in the Company's wider view of its own trade; commerce was facilitated by the re-issuing of all the Company's privileges by Shah Sultan Husayn in 1697. Elsewhere, the Company's gaze was shifting westward from the Spice Islands to the Coromandel Coast of India, where cotton cloth, widely in demand throughout both Europe and Asia, was produced. The early 18th Century also saw a major change in the Company's fortunes with the amalgamation of the "New" and "Old" East India

⁴⁹ *ibid*

Companies in 1708. This brought an end to competition within London itself and generated a huge increase in the Company's profitability.⁵⁰

Persia, on the other hand, suffered from economic difficulty caused by the expatriation of bullion, civil unrest and a series of less than competent rulers.⁵¹ In the decades from 1700 to 1750, with which the bulk of this thesis is concerned, the Safavid Empire ceased to be the dynamic state that Abbas I had formed and ruled. The collapse in 1722 during the rule of Shah Sultan Husayn, which was brought about by an Afghan regional uprising and subsequent invasion, had not been foreseen and resulted in the overthrow of the dynasty. What followed was a series of civil struggles between the Afghan occupiers, Safavid loyalists and other foreign and domestic interests. The Ottomans and Russians both occupied Persian provinces, while Baluchi raiders attacked towns and settlements along the Gulf littoral, including Bandar Abbas.⁵² The Sultanate of Muscat, which had become a major power after the Yarubid Dynasty expelled the Portuguese from Oman in 1650 and then went on to capture former Portuguese possessions in East Africa, had become a significant naval power in the Gulf. It would take until 1729 for a Safavid claimant to be restored to the throne. Tahmasp II (r.1729-32) and his infant son, Abbas III (b.1732, d.1740) were under the sway of Tahmasp's leading general, Tahmasp Qoli Beg, who is better known by his regnal title, Nader Shah. He dispensed with the fiction of Safavid rule in 1736 and assumed the throne until his murder in 1747.

⁵⁰ Couto and Loureiro, *Revisiting Hormuz*, p.12

⁵¹ Foran, John. *The Making of an External Arena: Iran's Place in the World System, 1500-1722*. Review (Fernand Braudel Centre), Vol.12, No.1 (Winter, 1989): pp.71-119, p. 281

⁵² Savory, Roger. *Iran under the Safavids*. (Cambridge, 1980), p. 125

Nader Shah's reign (1736-47) represents the most dynamic period in the Anglo-Persian relationship since 1622 and was built upon the recognition of the Company's demonstrated potential as a military partner and a means by which Persian commerce and diplomacy could be transacted and stimulated. Nader Shah took advantage of civil unrest in Oman to launch an invasion of the Arab Shore, (the area facing Iran across the Gulf), briefly capturing the region before an insurrection by the Al-Busaid clan pushed the Persians out again in 1749. The Omanis would maintain themselves as a major power in the Gulf well into the 19th Century, until the British abolition of the slave trade began to undermine their lucrative transportation of East African slaves to the Gulf region and Persia.

It has long been considered that the first half of the 18th Century was a period of relatively little importance in understanding the history of the Company. John Keay asserts that the period between 1710 and 1740, with the exception of the receipt of the Mughal *Farman* from Farrukhsiyar in 1716 was “a glassy wave of unruffled tideway [which] invites no frantic recourse to the records”.⁵³ Yet these decades are only fallow when viewed from the perspective of India, where trade continued, though little else of consequence seems to have occurred.⁵⁴ In other parts of the world the Company inhabited, a series of military and trading defeats – such as at Bantam, where the Company lost its trading rights after the area was taken by the Dutch in 1683; at Mergui, where Thai forces defeated two Company expeditions; and not to mention the embarrassing events of Child's War in India – forced upon it a period of retrenchment rather than an aggressive policy of expansion.

⁵³ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, (Harper Collins, 1993), p. 220

⁵⁴ See Wilson, C.R., *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, (London, 1900).

During this same period, Persia was anything but “unruffled”. Instead, the Company had to carefully manoeuvre through significant political changes, foreign invasions and regime change to maintain its standing in Persia and the Gulf. Why then, given such complexity and political risk, did the Company expend time, effort and funds on maintaining a presence there? This is one of the key questions this thesis will attempt to answer, one that has been long overlooked due to the almost exclusive interest of scholars on events in India. The remainder of this thesis will show the complex story of how, despite the significant and existential threat to the Company and its business from the wars that followed the collapse of the Safavid Empire, the Company maintained its presence in the Gulf region and the reasons it chose to do so. Equally important is understanding the dynamic of the relationship between the Company and the Persians over the course of the period of this study. Was it a relationship with a consistent, clear winner and loser, or was it much more nuanced than this?

The focus of this thesis falls in the first half of the 18th Century; however, in order to understand the Company’s position in Persia during this period, it is essential to review a most significant event in 1622. This event is the siege and capture of the island of Hormuz by a joint Anglo-Persian force from a Portuguese garrison. The Battle of Hormuz should be considered as the pivotal founding moment that established the Company’s presence at the highest level of the Persian state. This was a significant military campaign in its own right requiring careful planning and the coordination of the Company’s ships and Persian land troops, complicated by cultural differences and linguistic barriers and the allies’ lack of familiarity with amphibious invasion.

That there were cultural differences is evidenced by the fact that the Persians felt the need to wash not only themselves after meetings but anything that the Europeans touched.⁵⁵ The fall of Hormuz through this military alliance confirmed the Company's position as a naval force to be reckoned with; this created a bond of trust between the allies and rid the Persians of an overly assertive maritime power. The Company subsequently began to issue passes to ships in order to gather revenue on passing trade. The success at Hormuz bought a major concession for the Company as it resulted in the conferral of the Company's *Farman*, a state document that fundamentally established their presence in Persia.

The fall of Hormuz is given a relatively cursory mention by Willem Floor, who discusses the destructive presence of the Portuguese in the Gulf and the subsequent campaign by Anglo-Persian forces to take the island.⁵⁶ Couto and Loureiro's edited volume about the Portuguese experience in the Gulf sets the backdrop for the events that took place after the arrival of the Company in the region; however, it does not tackle the campaign and its aftermath directly.⁵⁷ Foster's survey of the Company's documents continues to be a vital source for any researcher into the Company's history; although his analysis is superficial, the breadth of detail he provides is no less important.⁵⁸ The only scholar to deal with the history of the Company's *Farman*, the major outcome from the Hormuz campaign, is R.W. Ferrier. While Ferrier's investigation into the *Farman* provides a useful documentary record, his limited pursuit

⁵⁵ Matthee, *Aloofness and Fascination*, p.227

⁵⁶ Floor, *Five Port Cities*, pp.228-30

⁵⁷ See Couto and Loureiro, *Revisiting Hormuz*.

⁵⁸ See Foster, William. *The English Factories in India, 1618-21*, (London, Clarendon, 1908), pp.x-xiv

of the document's scope, dealing solely with the earliest iterations of it, has left a significant gap in the evolution of the Anglo-Persian relationship.⁵⁹ The fall of Hormuz and its aftermath have not been sufficiently tackled in the wider historiography of this period or region, even though the story of the campaign is well known.

Understanding the *Farman* itself and the events that made it possible must be understood in order to appreciate the Company's place in both Persian history and the wider history of the Gulf region. The *Farman* documents a comprehensive set of rights and privileges which enabled an intensification of the Company's trading, military and political association with the Persian regime. The *Farman* was endowed upon the Company through a direct initiative of Shah Abbas I, opens an important avenue of investigation into the history of Persian interaction with Western Europe. As time progressed the changing interests of both parties created the need to review and renegotiate the terms of the *Farman* and these iterations and addendums document the relationship over a considerable period.

At the same time, the military nature of the Company's first major interaction with the Safavid state created an expectation that the Company would continue to provide armed naval support. The Company had calculated that creating common cause in ridding the Persians of their mutual enemy at Hormuz would result in the grant of the *Farman*. But it is not clear they anticipated the continuing belief among Persian rulers and officials that the Company was bound to provide maritime assistance in the waters of the Gulf. While this chapter explores the establishment of this relationship,

⁵⁹ See Ferrier, R.W. *The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia*. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol.49 no.1, 1986.

the next will consider more closely the repercussions that the maritime nature of the Company's first interaction with the Persians would engender, resulting in Persian expectations of continued assistance at sea.

Ultimately the relationship with what would be a changing landscape with Persian rulers would be kept fresh through regular re-negotiations which would involve naval capability and power, through a time where English naval confidence and technology would continue to grow and become internationally assertive.

The Fall of Hormuz.

On the 14th of December 1621, a fleet of English ships, commanded by Richard Blythe and John Weddell, arrived off the Persian Gulf port of Jask, where the Company had begun trading in 1616. The fleet had been dispatched from Surat in Western India. It is not immediately clear whether the captains of the Company's ships were ordered to make war on the Portuguese on their arrival at Surat, but, by the time they arrived at Jask, they had already captured two small Portuguese ships.⁶⁰ The Company's ships were not just fitted for war as evidenced by the presence of merchants and Factors on board. Unfortunately, all but one of these men died, during the voyage between Surat and the Gulf.⁶¹ It appears clear that the Company's ships were capable of carrying out significant military action while also providing merchants with transportation in order to further the Company's commercial aims. The arrival of the Company's fleet, coupled

⁶⁰ IOR/G/29/1 ff.18-18v, letter from John Purifie at Jask to the Factory at Isfahan, 14th December 1621.

⁶¹ IOR/G/29/1 f. 18v, letter from John Weddell to the Factory at Isfahan, 14th December 1621.

with its self-evident successfully aggressive stance against the Portuguese, was especially fortuitous to Shah Abbas I of Persia, who was himself planning to strike a blow against the Portuguese.

The Shah had dispatched his trusted Georgian General, Imam Qoli Khan, to administer the southern provinces of the Safavid Empire. Imam Qoli Khan used his position to undermine the Portuguese and eventually, at the Shah's urging, to make common cause with the East India Company to evict the Portuguese from Hormuz entirely shortly after the battle on the 22nd of April 1622. Gaining the cooperation of the Company was absolutely necessary for this campaign as the Persians lacked any fleet with which they could challenge the Portuguese ships moored around the island.

The Company had become embroiled in the campaign due to an approach by Shah Abbas I, who had become increasingly frustrated by Portuguese attempts to restrict the activity and profitability of Persian merchants in the Gulf.⁶² It is not clear exactly when and where the negotiation for the campaign took place, though the most likely explanation is that the Company merchants dispatched to Isfahan, who were present there throughout 1621, negotiated the terms with the Shah before the arrival of the Company's trading fleet. It has been reported by various scholars, such as Niels Steensgaard and Willem Floor,⁶³ that the English were threatened with being cut out of the lucrative Persian silk trade were they not to comply with the Persians' request for

⁶² Blow, David. *Shah Abbas: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend*, (I.B. Tauris, 2009), p.69 and Brancaforte, Della Valle, p.196

⁶³ Floor, *Five Port Cities*, p.229 and Steensgaard, Niels. *Carracks, caravans and companies. The structural crisis in the European-Asian trade in the early 17th century* (Studentlitteratur Lund 1973) p.341.

military assistance. While this threat was no doubt credible, the Company's primary motivation for involving itself so deeply with the Persians was instead the reward of a set of wide-ranging privileges. The Company was offered the highly lucrative status as joint revenue collectors for Hormuz, though this was later changed to Bandar Abbas when it became the major entrepôt on the South Coast of Persia. The *Farman* also rendered the Company exempt from paying customs and road tolls, *Rahdari*, throughout the Safavid Empire. In addition, the Persians agreed to share half of whatever was captured on Hormuz should the island fall. The English do not seem to have hesitated in their acceptance of this offer; indeed, both fleet commanders and the Company's establishment at Surat all seem to have been keen to accept the articles in the *Farman* offered by the Shah.⁶⁴ Despite the willingness of the Company's officials to engage in this enterprise, the sailors of the fleet proved much more reticent, requiring a considerable amount of cajoling and the promise of extra pay before they acceded to take part.⁶⁵

A letter from the Commanders of the fleet to the Company's Factors in Isfahan, dated the 16th of March 1622, outlines how the English ships were deployed and the role the men played in the wider siege.⁶⁶ This letter, along with others sent and received by the fleet commanders, the Company's representative in Persia and the council in Surat, makes up the primary basis for our knowledge of the events around the siege.⁶⁷ The most obvious use for the English ships was as a counter to the Portuguese fleet moored under the guns of the fortress. The letter describes how the English

⁶⁴ Foster, *1618-21*, p.ix

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ IOR/G/29/1 ff.23v-25 Letter from the Commanders of the Fleet at Hormuz to Isfahan, 6th April 1622.

⁶⁷ The letters are stored in the India Office Records, IOR/G/29/1.

commanders made use of pinnaces, small sailing ships that could function either as ship's boats or as independent craft, as well as armed barges, to attack the Portuguese in port. The attack resulted in the loss of a barge with two men; however, in return the Portuguese Vice Admiral's ship was holed below the waterline and subsequently capsized. The Portuguese also lost their Rear Admiral's ship when it was set ablaze and their Admiral's flagship was set on fire before being captured by the Company fleet. The captured Portuguese vessels were towed, beached and relieved of their ordnance and shot. This fleet action was followed up later by a fire ship attack, though there is no detail of how successful this was. The Commanders of the fleet reported that the Portuguese losses up until the 16th of March were; *Tota los Sanctos*, *Nuestra Senora de Victoria*, *Sancto Pedro*, *Sancto Martino*, *Sancto Antonio* and *Sancto Francisco*, along with a galley and two frigates. Out of these ships, the report states that the *Tota los Sanctos* was a galleon of 1,200-1,400 tonnes with 45 guns which had been built by the Portuguese in Goa.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, on the island of Hormuz itself, the English set about landing eight pieces of iron artillery on the beach, presumably to keep the Portuguese occupied while the Persians dug six mines under the castle walls. The first of these was detonated on Sunday the 17th April and created a practicable breach in the defences, but the Persians, led by Shah Qoli Beg, were unable, despite repeated attacks, to make good on it.⁶⁹ The second mine to be detonated was charged with powder from the English ships and lit by Thomas Barker, one of the East India Company's Factors.⁷⁰ It is certainly interesting

⁶⁸ IOR/G/29/1 ff.23v-25 Letter from the Commanders of the Fleet at Hormuz to Isfahan, 6th April 1622.

⁶⁹ IOR/G/29/1 f.f.36v-37v Letter to Richard Blythe and John Weddell at Bandar Abbas from Edward Monnox on 27th April 1622.

⁷⁰ *ibid*

that a man ostensibly working as a merchant should involve himself in such a risky task, however, possibly more understandable if viewed in the context of the heavily armed ships the Company used for their trading voyage. This second mine again breached the wall, though the Persians failed to attack, leaving time for the garrison to recover.⁷¹ Sadly for Thomas Barker, he did not survive the detonation of the mine. His death was reported in a letter from Edward Monnox, another merchant who was present at Hormuz.⁷²

With no hope of support from their station in Goa, their fleet battered, burned and sunk in front of their walls, the Portuguese, now flushed from the city with women and children in tow, were cornered on a small spit of land on an island with no natural water supply.⁷³ The geography meant that with the naval protection gone all the English ships had to do was to stand off and pulverise the port whilst the Persians attempted to break into the fortification. The Portuguese garrison commander Rui Freire de Andrade decided to make terms with the Company hoping for better treatment by Christians rather than risk a massacre at the hands of the Persians. Terms were reached and on the 22nd of April 1622 the Portuguese flag was lowered marking an end to over 100 years of their occupancy of Hormuz. The remnant of the defending Portuguese garrison, in total some 3,000 men, women and children, were soon ferried to Muscat, no small undertaking in its own right.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² IOR/G/29/1 ff. 26-28, Letter from Edward Monnox at Hormuz to Isfahan, 8th April 1622.

⁷³ Foster, *The English Factories in India 1622-23*, (London, Clarendon, 1908), p.xi

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

The events at Hormuz and subsequent military clashes between the English and Portuguese in the Gulf and Indian Ocean, had they occurred in the Bay of Biscay, would have precipitated all-out war between the two countries. Technically, there was no division between the Habsburg possessions in Europe and the *Estado da India*, both being the property of the Portuguese/Habsburg patrimony of Philip III of Spain. Thus, the seizure of Hormuz and sinking of Portuguese ships was an act of war against the Portuguese Crown itself. After news of the victory of the fleet at Hormuz reached London, the Company's Court of Directors found themselves in a difficult position, not only because of Portuguese political pressure on the English Crown, but also pressure from the Crown itself.⁷⁵

There is no evidence that the Company had discussed the Hormuz enterprise with the Duke of Buckingham, in his position as Lord High Admiral in advance,⁷⁶ and the initiative was a local decision made without the knowledge of the Company Board in London. What was to follow circumstantially demonstrates that the Crown and Admiralty were entirely unaware of the exploit, and, as we shall see, lost no time in exacting a price from the Company. As indicated above, attacking and overcoming a long established outpost possession of the most powerful nation in the western world was never going to be without repercussions and the news of their loss reached the Spanish in Madrid just before Christmas of 1622.⁷⁷ The English Ambassador Digby was summoned before the court and with no explanation to give he referred back to the court of King James and told the Spanish that the Company had acted under compulsion

⁷⁵ Chaudhuri, K.N. *The East India Company*, (Routledge, 1999), p.64

⁷⁶ Foster, *1618-21*, pp.xiii and 223.

⁷⁷ Foster, *1618-21*, p.xiii

from the Persian rulers.⁷⁸ Ordinarily this would not have sufficed and it is likely that hostilities would have ensued, but for a fortunate coincidence.

The coincidence was that King James's son Charles was in Spain to woo the Spanish Infanta and the need for this good, Catholic dynastic match to go well smothered the immediate wrath of the Spanish.⁷⁹ The collapse of this match removed the necessity for the court of King James to have to resolve the Hormuz matter and the Spanish ordered their forces in Goa to retake the island of Hormuz. However, the Portuguese were so weakened by the earlier clash of arms, they could only harass trade for a while.

On hearing of the Company's victory at Hormuz, it became clear that King James I of England strongly disapproved of the expedition, seeing it as putting peace with the Spanish at risk and jeopardising the match of their Infanta with his first son and heir. Not only this, but the Company did not feel obliged to share their spoils either with the Crown or the Admiralty, and the matter slid into a legal challenge until Buckingham (the King's favourite) presented the Company with the ultimatum that its ships would be the subject of a sequester for war against the Spanish were their demands not met.⁸⁰ A sum of £10,000 was settled on Buckingham and a similar amount for King James to close the matter. This wrangling and the time it took to conclude indicates the Company, not for the last time, appears to have acted on its own initiative in conducting an offensive aimed at securing major trade advantages.

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ *ibid*

The Persians also were not good at keeping to their word and the benefits of the siege and sacking of the island and ancient city of Hormuz were not distributed as had been originally agreed. During the battle the small proceeds from the city had been shared but during the siege the main wealth had been moved to the fortification, and the Persians in their thousands took this for themselves without sharing. Moreover, the captured ships and their materiel were held back by the Persians and the English excluded from the island. To compound this, the Company had to pick up the full costs of their part in the campaign lasting three months and was given charges for provisioning their ships for their own use and for the transportation of the Portuguese garrison.⁸¹

The lack of financial success was offset over the longer term by the benefits gained from a grateful Persian ruler in terms of the grant of a coveted *Farman* which was the Company's key objective. Furthermore, the Company if belatedly had engaged the Admiralty and Crown in their affairs who were now aware of the financial benefits the Company could bring without their investment. As for the Portuguese, they were to be subject to harassment by both Dutch and Company ships and sometimes with the Dutch and Company ships operating in concert for an extended period. The Dutch, as we shall see, capitalised on the joint English and Persian success; as immediately as news could travel at that time, they despatched forces with equal speed.

⁸¹ Foster, 1622-23, p.xii

A New Trajectory: The Company after Hormuz.

When considering the nature of the European presence in the wider Indian Ocean, the fall of Hormuz was undoubtedly a political turning point. The native dynasty of Hormuz, Portuguese puppets for a century, abruptly ceased to exist. This removed the veil of local legitimacy from the Portuguese occupation, leaving an opening for the Safavids to step in as the new hegemonic power in the region, having neither the Portuguese nor a local dynasty to challenge them. The more or less immediate transition of the movement of goods and trade away from Hormuz to Bandar Abbas also shows that Shah Abbas had learned from his experience and had removed the naval aspect of any future campaign by shifting commerce to the mainland. The Company took over a house in Bandar Abbas from where they began to contract their business. The fall of Hormuz was a signal event in the decline of Portuguese dominance, the island and city having functioned, not only as their base of operations, but also as a symbol of unassailable strength and privilege.

As indicated previously, although this was an English success, the Dutch were so quick to understand the import of the Portuguese loss of Hormuz and to react by sending ships to the Gulf to bolster their own presence, it can be seen as an almost simultaneous event that the Portuguese became assailed by both forces from then on. The English and Dutch arrived in the region at a point where the Portuguese had ruled the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf relatively unchallenged, internally or externally, for nearly a century. The Portuguese had been present in India, where they had successfully maintained their trade and relations with local powers, whom they had all but neutered in regard to sea power over the previous century. By contrast, the English presence,

until Hormuz, was far more tenuous. At Surat and elsewhere in India, they suffered from the exactions and exploitation of local authorities and landed interests. Foster posits that the only thing, up until the arrival of Sir Thomas Roe's Embassy, which prevented the English from being dislodged from Surat, was the Mughal fear of the English fleet.⁸² The Portuguese defeat at Hormuz was therefore a dynamic shift which damaged their prestige in the region and in the eyes of local dynasts and authorities, thereby leaving an opening for English and Dutch exploitation. English and Dutch attacks on the Portuguese represented the first concerted threat to their hegemony in the region since the Ottomans had attempted to evict them from the Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean during the 16th century.⁸³ The opportunity to wrest control of Hormuz and the Gulf trade from the Portuguese was far too good for Shah Abbas I to pass on; by approaching the English and offering them friendly and advantageous terms for their trade, he made them willing partners in the attack.

The Farman of Abbas I.

Scholars have historically focussed on the Company agreements made in India, also called *Farman*s, but research for this thesis did not reveal any detailed analysis of the same level for Persia. New research for this thesis exposes the importance and lasting impact this initial agreement was to have and how it was to be renegotiated in its multiple iterations. That the Company was able to keep the relationship fresh and alive through these renewals is a credit to the enterprise in being continuously relevant and maintaining the right relationships over protracted and turbulent times. This unique

⁸² Foster, 1622-23, p.ix

⁸³ See Casale, Giancarlo, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, (Oxford, 2010).

insight comes from the detailed research and cataloguing of the East India Company's records held at the British Library. For the Company, involvement at the siege of Hormuz was also a major turning point. As we have seen, the immediate material gains were not what was expected but the campaign propel the Company into a unique commercial partnership with Persia, more formal than any other the Company possessed until the Mughal *Farman* was granted in 1716.

A *Farman* was a royal decree from an Islamic ruler, conferring certain rights upon an individual, community, or in this case the Company. Previously, the English had encountered a similar system of decrees in their trade with the Ottoman Empire, where a set of "Capitulations" were passed onto the Company by the Sultan in a document called an "*Ahdnameh*".⁸⁴ The English had been given an *Ahdnameh* by the Ottomans in 1580,⁸⁵ while in 1618 a *Farman* was granted by the ruler of San'a in the Yemen, establishing the Company in the coffee trade.⁸⁶ The Company was granted limited privileges by various regional governors in the Mughal Empire, though any grant for the whole empire was not forthcoming.⁸⁷

Before the Company's *Farman*, a treaty had already been agreed between Abbas I and the Company. This treaty, made between the Shah and Edward Monnox in 1621, was somewhat grand in its scope, and concerned the military targets of the campaign. The major terms of the treaty concerned the division of the spoils of the city of Hormuz should it be taken, "Then by the Power of God the Country of Jeroone [Hormuz] shall

⁸⁴ Inalcik, Halil, ed. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge, 1994), p.194.

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ Foster, 1618-21, p.xiii

⁸⁷ Foster, 1618-21, p.xix

be possessed by the Subjects of His Majestie of Persia whatsoever monnies, Goods, treasures &c, shall bee taken and surprized from the city, castle, shipps, howses the one moyety shall bee ours and the other the English Companys".⁸⁸ The Shah also requested that any Portuguese possessions in India that were taken be divided between himself and the Company, despite how unlikely any such acquisitions might be.⁸⁹ It is in this treaty that the Company was first granted a share of the customs at Hormuz. The agreements between the Company and the Shah for the division of spoils and the sharing of customs would lay the foundation for the Company's interaction with Persia and set the tone of the future relationship. Ferrier notes that the treaty was not the first agreement made between the Persians and the English, showing copies of some of the previous articles agreed between the Persians and both the East India Company and the Russian Company.⁹⁰ Ferrier's exploration of these agreements and the *Farman* is limited by the source material available. However, the records from the Company's consultations and letters give details about all the subsequent iterations of the *Farman* until the death of Nader Shah in 1747.

After the capture of the island, the treaty was replaced by the promised *Farman*, in which the relationship between the Company and the Shah was formalised in much more specific ways. According to the Shah Abbas' *Farman*, the Company was to assist in the administration of customs and tolls at Bandar Abbas for a share of those same revenues, at first negotiated as half the total take, but subsequently reduced to 1,000 toman.⁹¹ However as we shall see in Chapter 2 the Company seldom were able to get

⁸⁸ IOR/G/29/1 ff. 234-9 Terms of the Company's Treaty with Shah Abbas I

⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁹⁰ Ferrier, *Terms and Conditions*, p.50

⁹¹ See Ferrier, *The Terms and Conditions*

their full share. In the 1720's and 1730's the Afghan and Persian authorities found it necessary to re-negotiate with the Company at Bandar Abbas from the original positions that had been laid down in the *Farman* issued by Shah Abbas and its subsequent renewals under Shah Safi I and Shah Soltan Husayn. These negotiations and the way in which the *Farman* was used by both sides across the period after 1700 make it a living agreement referred back to and re-negotiated by both parties on multiple occasions.⁹²

The *Farman* of Abbas I included the right for English merchants to trade in silk throughout Persia free of customs charges and *rahdari*.⁹³ This right was most important to the English at the time of the treaty as it allowed them to purchase and transport the valuable silk produce of Gilan and Mazandaran on the Caspian littoral in the North of Persia down via Qazvin, Isfahan and Shiraz to Bandar Abbas for shipment. This put them in an advantageous position when compared to their Dutch rivals, whose own agreement with the Safavid Crown required for them to buy fixed quantities of silk at fixed prices.⁹⁴ The English therefore gained materially over the long term, though not as much as they had expected initially, due to the costs of the campaign. More importantly they had achieved their legitimacy through being useful in the eyes of the Safavid Crown in securing their interests, the patronage of which would last until the end of the dynasty and beyond.

⁹² Ferrier. *The Terms and Conditions*, p.53

⁹³ *ibid*

⁹⁴ Cambridge History of Iran, volume 6, 1986, p.297.

The Farman in the 17th Century.

There is a clear link showing continuity with the initial Farman granted by Shah Abbas I in 1627 through subsequent *Farmans* into the 17th century. These iterations of the agreement are equally vital to our understanding of the Company's place and influence in Persia, though they too have received relatively little scholarly attention until now. In the India Office Records (IOR/G/29), there are translations of the *Farman* granted between *Shavval* 1036AH and *Muharram* 1036AH (1627-9AD) by Shah Safi I; the renewal given by Shah Soltan Husayn in *Shavval* 1108AH (1697-8AD), and finally those grants made by Shah Tahmasp II and Nader Shah throughout the 1730s and 1740s. After the Afghan invasion, the Company was also granted all its former privileges by the new regime with no negotiation necessary.⁹⁵ The text of these *Farmans* alters relatively little, however the amendments that are made are indicative of important changes and trends in the Company's interests and those of the Persian government. When considering the importance of the Company to the Persian state one should note that edicts like the Farman normally ended with the death of the granting ruler. That the Company's Farman existed for over 100 years is therefore highly significant.

The renewal granted by Shah Safi I is documented and recorded in the consultations as an addendum to the original *Farman* from Abbas I, Shah Safi's direct predecessor.⁹⁶ Shah Safi's *Farman*, while granting all the previous rights enjoyed by

⁹⁵ IOR/G/29/4 f.5 Summary of Business, March 1727.

⁹⁶ IOR/G/29/1 ff.189v-193v Stipulations of the *Farman* of Abbas I- Granted *Shavval* 1036, 42nd Year of the reign of Abbas I (1627).

the Company, adds a list of new ones. The Company was given ownership of their house at Bandar Abbas, rather than only having the right to reside in the town. Another issue of ownership addressed in the *Farman* is the return of the effects of a deceased Company merchant to Bandar Abbas by the Khan of Lar.⁹⁷ This shows that the Company was becoming settled in Persia on a permanent footing, but also shows that the Shah was sensitive to the Company's anxiety about the status of their property in his kingdom. This is again addressed by an undertaking from the Shah to right any wrongs done to the Company through remuneration for goods lost or the retrieval of them, as well as a promise to punish anyone attempting to defraud the Company.⁹⁸ Shah Safi, unlike Shah Abbas, also removed all *Rahdari*, from the Company, whereas previously the rate for these duties had only been agreed between the two parties when the original *Farman* was granted, though silk was specifically exempt. The *Farman* of Safi I retained previous agreements but importantly added the consideration of systems of justice to maintain the Company's standing and protect their business.

Following the renewal of the *Farman* by Shah Safi I (r. 1629-1642) there were no documented renewals throughout the reigns of Abbas II (r. 1642-1666) and Suleiman I (r. 1666-1694). However, Shah Soltan Husayn (r. 1694-1722) renewed the *Farman* in 1697, though many of the privileges remained the same, there were added provisions for more social concerns, such as the grant that any child of an Englishman and a local woman would be given over to the care of the English.⁹⁹ These concerns reflect how settled the Company had become and that there were clearly pastoral issues that needed addressing as well as those of trade. As stated before, Persia, and Bandar

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ IOR/H/628 f.31 Privileges from the Company's *Farman*.

Abbas particularly, were brutal places for people to live and keeping their factories staffed may have become an issue. The Company will have been keen to ease this environmental burden by attending to sensitive personal matters.

Through the *Farman* the Company were entitled to half the custom duty for goods landed at Bandar Abbas; however, the Persians never consistently rendered what was owed. The Company now demanded payment including a demand for payment of arrears.¹⁰⁰ We will see later this was only partially successful with the Company eventually setting up a system of consulage (a duty paid by merchants for the Company's protection of their goods while abroad). Again, this shows the *Farman* as a barometer of the Company's priorities. The main factor where this version of the *Farman* is different however, is the addition of clauses for the production and exportation of wine and freedom to buy and export Kerman wool. Significantly by 1680 silk is no longer listed separately by the Company, though the provision for its duty-free purchase and transportation persists.¹⁰¹ The continued presence of the silk privileges is no longer demonstrative of the Company's aspirations; as we shall see later in Chapter 2, the Company's attempts to purchase silk in any quantity had lapsed in the 1630's. The Dutch had been obliged to buy set quantities of Persian silk at fixed prices in their *Farman* (but neither side was able to meet this requirement), and the English had not. Instead, the maintenance of this privilege was another attempt by the Persian authorities to stimulate the silk trade, which was an important source of income to the state. This policy of using the Company's *Farman*s to reflect Persian interests is clearly illustrated during the Afghan occupation, when in 1726 Shah Ashraf announced

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁰¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.350-351 List of Rogums granted to the Company in Consultation on the 12th August 1736.

the renewal of all the Company's privileges as a measure to stimulate trade, a tactic that will be explored later in a variety of contexts.

The last list of privileges received by the Company comes from 1736, when Nader Shah had taken over effective control of the Persian Empire. Unlike his predecessors, Nader Shah was unwilling to allow the Company to operate as it had done for the previous century, so he attempted through a variety of means to bend the Company to his will. This process will be discussed through the next chapter concerning naval and maritime projection as well as in the fifth chapter in which trade policy will be explored. The first part of Nader Shah's policy appeared during the reign of his puppet Tahmasp II and demonstrated how the English had carefully tended the relationship and made themselves a valued partner. The following quote is taken from the prolix to the renewal of the Company's *Farman* granted by Tahmasp II in 1736;

"and desired that I would renew the same, I that am King of Persia do order in consideration of the great service that the English have done and their friendship with me is entire and without blemish".¹⁰²

Regardless of this cordial tone, this renewal was not all it seemed, as extra stipulations were added concerning the sale of goods, the production of which had been made a royal monopoly. Unlike the beneficent Tahmasp II, Nader Shah's approach during his own direct reign was far less gentle. Indeed, Nader Shah, used the granting

¹⁰² IOR/G/29/5 f.350-351 List of Rogums granted to the Company in Consultation on the 12th August 1736.

of the Company's individual privileges (*Rogum*) as a means of controlling the Company and gaining tactical military support and supplies from Company ships. By manipulating the Company through the *Farman*, adding or removing individual *Rogums*, Nader Shah was demonstrating the importance of these privileges to the Company. Reciprocally this indicates how careful the Company was to try and keep naval support at arm's length to trade and how important projecting naval power was to the Shah. Ogborn has suggested that the use of the written word was a significant tool in the European mastery of Asia, but as Nader Shah's tactical use of the *Farman* demonstrates, this was evidently a double-edged sword.¹⁰³

The *Farman* and its terms return continue feature in the events of the period, often providing the justification or impetus for the Company's policies in the Gulf. It should not be overlooked, however, that the *Farman* was a Persian document, granted to the Company, rather than a mutual treaty, and that its clauses dictate the behaviour of the Company and its interaction with the Persian state. The terms of the *Farman* show that the Persians are dictating the relationship with the Company, while the Company itself can only make requests on the privileges granted to it. The story of the *Farman* is the vital foundation to understanding the Company's establishment as a trading and maritime power in the Gulf. As shall be explored later, the Company had certain advantages in trade granted through the *Farman*, such as the right to cash payments from the customs of Bandar Abbas and freedom from taxation. The *Farman* provided the Company with the stability to operate over a huge territory with a small establishment profitably, whilst maintaining relationships with the third most powerful regime in the region. The Company tried and failed to gain similar agreements in India,

¹⁰³ Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p.36

China and Japan until the Company's Farman with the Mughal Empire in 1717. The Company's relationship with Persia, unlike with the Mughals, was maintained through the person of the Shah as enshrined in the Company's *Farman*. This meant that the Company had a direct link to the highest authority in Persia. In Mughal India, China and Japan, no such high-level connection could be procured, with either regional terms being negotiated, or none at all. The Company was able through the *Farman* to access all the potential markets, goods and wealth of Persia and while this may not have been at the same scale as the fabulous riches of India, it was nonetheless politically and economically attractive and expedient.

After Hormuz: A Pattern of Maritime Violence?

While the *Farman* is a clear sign of the close relationship that developed between the Company and Persia, the second significant outcome of the Hormuz campaign was the Persian expectation of future maritime and military support from the Company. Niels Steensgaard has shown how the Company deployed force to its own ends.¹⁰⁴ This included Company ships taking letters of marque from the English Crown in order to harass Spanish ships in 1601 and a total blockade of the Red Sea in 1612. In the latter example, ships believed to have travelled from Portuguese ports were stripped of their goods in exchange for English commodities at set exchange prices.¹⁰⁵ Steensgaard suggests that the attacks in the Red Sea were an expedient way of turning a quick profit through privateering; however, he fails to point out that the real target of these attacks are not the local ships, who are recompensed (if at a loss), but the

¹⁰⁴ Steensgaard, *Carracks and Caravels*, pp.121-3

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

Portuguese. By showing that the Portuguese were unable to guarantee the safety of ships travelling from their ports, the Company was striking a blow at their well-established rival.

What Steensgaard sees as privateering, should be seen as a wider campaign against the Portuguese hegemony in the Indian Ocean. By supporting the Persian invasion of the Portuguese fortress and island at Hormuz, the Company was both forging a closer relationship with an important Asian dynasty and striking a blow against their rival, the Portuguese, who controlled the trade in the Gulf. This should not be considered as an attempt by the Company to replace the Portuguese in an imperial sense, instead, it is an undermining of the Portuguese position in order to gain access to the lucrative markets of Asia that Portuguese dominance would otherwise have kept closed. The Company followed the campaign against Hormuz with the settlement of a factory in 1622 in the rising port town of Bandar Abbas, which replaced Hormuz, following the capture and sack of the city, as the major port at the Eastern end of the Gulf. The Company's correspondence with India until 1625 show that there was a continued need for significant forces to be deployed by the Company in the Gulf in order to keep the Portuguese at bay.¹⁰⁶ The commitment of forces on a similar scale to those used at Hormuz was a considerable outlay on the part of the Company, even if the arrival of Dutch ships lessened the burden on the Company of maintaining such forces.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ IOR/G/29/1 ff. 112v-113v Copy of a letter from the factory at Surratt [Surat] to Thomas Barker received at Bandar Abbas 25th November 1625.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

The capture of Hormuz not only represented a significant blow to the morale and the physical capabilities of the Portuguese in the region, it was also important to the Company in the building of political goodwill and capital in Persia. In the case of Hormuz, the Company was in the right place at the right time; had it not been Shah Abbas I on the throne, the Company's involvement may have never been necessary or called upon. It was unusual for either the Shahs of Persia, or their Mughal neighbours, to take much notice of the comings and goings of maritime trade. This lacklustre policy to maritime controls on the part of the major regional powers, with the possible exception of Muscat, left the Indian Ocean as a territorial gap. The Portuguese had filled this gap for a century by seizing control of strategic points around it. In turn, the English and Dutch displaced the Portuguese, gaining valuable access to the commodities and markets of the Gulf region. The Persians, in actively unseating the Portuguese from Hormuz were able to contract a manageable relationship with the Company whereas with the Portuguese there had been no understanding. In chapter 3 we see the Company projecting naval power for the Persians to enforce their assumed rights over both sides of the Gulf littoral, again this is a clear sign of violence being used to support the continuance of wider trade, not close it. Previous scholars have regarded the Company's military capability as either a veiled or actual threat to local regimes and an attempt to coerce them into trade.¹⁰⁸ It is important to re-iterate that although Hormuz is an act of open aggression it is prosecuted as part of a formal partnership with the Asian power itself. Persia, in a coordinated effort, rid themselves of a foreign maritime power that had asserted control of Persian territory through naval might not otherwise available to the Persia.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Watson's work on the role of Company fortifications is a good example of this. Bruce Watson, I., *"Fortifications and the "Idea" of Force in Early Modern East India Company Relations with India"*, pp.26-41 in Tuck, P., *The East India Company*, vol.4, (Routledge, 1998), and Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p.111.

Hormuz more firmly established English trade in the region and gave them a more most lasting foothold than any of the expanding northern European powers. At first sight it was the Dutch who most benefitted as they were much quicker at exploiting this newly open market and had more desirable trade goods. The Dutch dominated this market for a considerable period especially as the English were distracted by their civil war that caused major loss of prestige in terms of trade generally. Certainly, in economic terms, the Dutch prevailed in the Persian Gulf until well into the 18th Century;¹⁰⁹ the English commercial presence, by comparison, was of a lesser order. This should not mask the pivotal role played by the Company in the decline of Portuguese power. In 1699, the year before the period of this study, Shah Soltan Husayn paid a visit to the Company's factory in Isfahan, while this was a huge honour to the Company, it was also an expensive event to manage. Despite numerous attempts to persuade the Shah to pay a similar visit, the Dutch were not given the same treatment.¹¹⁰ Of course, one of the reasons that the role of the Company in the 17th century downfall of the Portuguese *Estado da India* has been neglected is that the English would soon themselves suffer from the reverses mentioned above, leaving the Dutch to dominate trade for much of the next century. Despite Dutch pre-eminence in trade, the Company was still able to project itself with relative success militarily after the Hormuz campaign.

The Hormuz campaign was not a solitary incident of violence in the Company's campaign to open trade in the Indian Ocean. The Company records that describe the

¹⁰⁹ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p.85

¹¹⁰ See Vosoughi, *Kings of Hormuz*.

campaign against Hormuz also provide evidence of further successful attacks against Portuguese shipping. In the early part of 1626, two Company ships, the *Palsgrave* and the *Dolphin*, captured a Portuguese galleon carrying horses between Muscat, where the Portuguese maintained a fortress, and Goa. Smarting from a previous defeat by Portuguese ships in the Gulf near Dammam, the Englishmen took the ship, then proceeded to cut off the heads of the galleon's captain, Antonio de Sera, and his Portuguese sailors. According to John Benthall, a Factor stationed in Gombroon (Bandar Abbas) passing on news to his colleagues in Isfahan, the heads of de Sera and his crew were then sent to Muscat "as a present to Ruy Ferera their cheife and cheife occasioner of their execution" in 1626.¹¹¹

Later correspondence on the 14th June 1626 between the Factors at Isfahan and the Company's directors in London do not provide details for the capture of the ships, mentioning only that the *Palsgrave* and *Dolphin* had "surprised a Portuguese ship bound from Muscat to Goa with horses and took her into Surat".¹¹² This is probably fair evidence that the execution of the Portuguese crew would have met with significant disapproval in London. Earlier, on the 10th of June 1626, an English ship, the *Lion*, was captured by the Portuguese. The crew of the *Lion*, bar one man who was returned to the English as a warning for the future, were hanged by the Portuguese forces that had captured them. Both sides were clearly engaged in similar acts of brutality and reprisal.¹¹³

¹¹¹ IOR/G/29/1 ff.119v-123v, Letters from John Purifie and John Benthall to Isfahan, April-May 1626.

¹¹² Foster, *The English Factories in India 1624-29*, p.139.

¹¹³ Foster, 1624-29 p.137.

The level of violence in the Gulf was not necessarily unusual for its time, especially in the context of what was clearly an ongoing conflict between the Company and the *Estado da India*. A similar event would draw far more attention than the beheading of Portuguese sailors in the Gulf. Unlike the competition over the Gulf trade, the "Amboyna Massacre", was a stark case of distrust between Europeans. Coming about from a Dutch belief that the English were colluding with Japanese mercenaries to displace the Dutch from their factory on the island of Amboina, accounts of the massacre of 1623 gained wide circulation in England.¹¹⁴ The paranoia of the Dutch led to the torture and execution of ten English merchants, along with their suspected Japanese co-conspirators. When news of Amboina reached England, there was widespread consternation and anger towards the Dutch, echoing down the rest of the 17th Century. This was in part resolved through the payment of considerable reparations to the affected families at the end of the 1st Anglo Dutch in 1654.¹¹⁵ It is evident from the public reaction in England to Amboina that this level of violence and extrajudicial killing touched a nerve, even if such occurrences were not entirely unheard of.¹¹⁶ The events in the Gulf, were actually only part of an ongoing series of hostilities between the two combatants but for some reason other atrocities did not draw such attention. Unlike Amboina, which was viewed in England as rank treachery, conversely the Company's attack on the Portuguese ship and the fate of its crew were conveniently viewed as a natural part of conflict at this time. The beheading of the Portuguese crew demonstrates the lengths to which the Company personnel would go in order to remove the competition of other European rivals to its trade in the western Indian Ocean.

¹¹⁴ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p.239

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, pp.48-51.

By defeating the Portuguese and threatening dire consequences to their ships and crews, the Company was able to considerably weaken the Portuguese as a major seafaring power in the Gulf. It is not clear whether the Company or the Dutch could claim any advantage over each other in the region in terms of naval strength. The attacks on Portuguese shipping and the barbaric treatment of captured sailors was a means to an end. The Company, having defeated the Portuguese, was able to take over the business of providing local merchants and ships with passes now more lucrative as trade was more open. These passes were the direct descendants of the *Cartazes* or navi-certs of the *Estado da India*, and had for many years been used by the Portuguese as a system to gain revenue from local shipping. After 1700, the Company was regularly dispatching ships for the dual purpose of combating Arab piracy and to check ships for these passes.¹¹⁷ The Company charged merchant ships for these passes and in return promised to provide protection for these ships and their cargoes.¹¹⁸ The systemic taxation of shipping in the Gulf which the Company now engaged, made possible by discrediting the Portuguese as a viable naval force. Philip Stern and Sugata Bose discuss the Company and Dutch issue of passes as a means of control over Asian and European traders.¹¹⁹ Bandar Abbas was an important node in this system of revenue gathering and as a conduit of the Company's growing influence over Indian Ocean trade.

¹¹⁷ IOR/G/29/4 ff.17-17v, Consultation on Wednesday 26th April 1727 and IOR/G/29/4 f.10 Consultation on Saturday 1st April 1727

¹¹⁸ Foster, 1618-21, p.xii.

¹¹⁹ Stern, *Company-State*, p.44 and Bose, *One Hundred Horizons*, p.45

The financial benefits of the pass system also carried a *de facto* responsibility to actually abide by the protective clauses of the passes themselves; this led to a continued Company presence in the Gulf being a necessity to guarantee this income. In 1709, the English assumed responsibility for the protection of shipping in the harbour at Bandar Abbas. This was rather to protect its own revenue, not so much a philanthropic endeavour. In one incident, a native trader was attacked by a larger Arab ship out of Muscat, the captain of which exacted 800 toman from the trader for the release of the ship.¹²⁰ The same Muscati ship then attacked a second vessel with an English pass within sight of the shore, following which the *Fort St. George* galley was dispatched with a warning to the captain of the raiding ship. This proved enough to scare the Arab captain off, though to make sure, the *Fort St. George* accompanied a number of ships out of the harbour for a few days before returning to port itself.¹²¹ This elicited thanks from the Persian Governor of Bandar Abbas, as it is evident that he had neither the power nor political clout to affect anything himself.¹²²

The Company did not merely sit and wait for infringements of its presumed rights to come to light. On the contrary, between 1700 and 1730 the Company revealed a continuing willingness to deploy its larger, better armed ships to enforce its commercial rights imparted by the *Farman*. To ensure that its passes were carried, either from Bandar Abbas or the factories of India, it dispatched its ships on cruises around the Gulf, armed both with cannon and with books of blank passes for shipping found not to be carrying them. The voyage of the *Britannia* on such a mission provides a fine example of the force the Company employed to maintain the *Cartaz* system in the Gulf.

¹²⁰ IOR/G/29/2 ff. 5v-7v Consultation on 1st March 1709.

¹²¹ *ibid*

¹²² *ibid*

On its cruise, the *Britannia* took various actions against local shipping, pursuing some local vessels in chases to check their passes, the cost of which (spent by the Company on ammunition) these ships were then liable to pay back.¹²³ Ships with passes that had expired were charged and then issued with new passes,¹²⁴ ships with no pass were fined and then had to purchase a pass once these fines were paid.¹²⁵ When payment was not forthcoming for its 'services' the Company was happy to take prisoners back to the factory in Bandar Abbas and keep them there until sufficient money or payment in kind was received.¹²⁶ These records also show that some merchants requested a rolling pass that would be renewed each year, thereby protecting them from further fines. This request was denied by the Company's representatives, though no reason for it is given.¹²⁷ One might presume that this was as much an attempt to maintain a lucrative stream of revenue from the fines, or might be a sign of an unwillingness to enter into long term responsibilities; a situation echoed a hundred years later concerning the Maritime Treaties.¹²⁸

The Company records also reveal further attacks on Gulf ports as Safavid power collapsed. In 1727, an incident occurred whereby a galley was dispatched to the town of Bassidore (Basaidu) on the island of Kishm where the Shahbandar of Bandar Abbas, Sheikh Rashid, had fled following the Afghan invasion. It seems as though Sheikh Rashid had been replaced in his official position by Mirza Zahed Ali, an Afghan,

¹²³ IOR/G/29/4 f.9v Consultation on Saturday 1st April 1727.

¹²⁴ IOR/G/29/4 f.17 Consultation on Monday 24th April 1727.

¹²⁵ IOR/G/29/4 f.26 Consultation on Monday 8th May 1727.

¹²⁶ IOR/G/29/4 f.12v Consultation on Sunday 16th April 1727.

¹²⁷ *ibid*

¹²⁸ Onley, James, "Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820–1971: The Politics of Protection", *CIRS Occasional Paper SFS*, Georgetown University, Vol. 4, School of Foreign Service, (Georgetown University, 2009), 1–44, pp.3–4

sometime after his flight, though he continued to exercise some authority over shipping in the region, encouraging trade at Bassidore at the expense of Bandar Abbas. Indeed, despite his flight to Kishm island, Sheikh Rashid remained at Shahbandar of Bandar Abbas for a time, and used this as a reason for collecting his own customs from passing ships.¹²⁹ The Company, despite having no authority to do so from the Persian state, which due to the collapse of Safavid authority had become notional, deployed a number of ships and soldiers to enforce its privileges granted in the *Farman*.¹³⁰ The subsequent mission to Bassidore, made using local vessels, was successful in exacting 1050 toman from Sheikh Rashid after other offers from him were rejected. The Company forced full payment of their perceived losses to Sheikh Rashid, who was in turn forced by the blockade and his lack of other support to comply with the Company's demands.¹³¹ Sheikh Rashid was not the only one from whom the Company demanded reparations, the Sheikh of "Assilu" whose subjects were found to be responsible for an attack on the *Britannia*, was also threatened with blockade and attack if he did not to pay an indemnity of 500 toman and return the goods taken.¹³² This threat must have been taken seriously, as one *Noqudah* (Captain) from the same port is reported to have abandoned his ship in June 1727 on sight of the *Britannia* only to later return to reclaim his ship. Denying any wrongdoing, the *Noqudah* said that he fled only out of fear of the Company's frigate, rather than a sense of guilt.¹³³

The Company's ships were not limited to aggressive naval operations either, at times acting as an escort to local shipping as a demonstration of maritime prowess. An

¹²⁹ IOR/G/29/3 f.13v Consultation on Monday 12th December 1726.

¹³⁰ IOR/G/29/4 ff.31-31v Consultation on Wednesday 24th May 1727.

¹³¹ IOR/G/29/4 f.42 Consultation on Wednesday 7th June 1727.

¹³² IOR/G/29/4 f.54v Consultation on Wednesday 28th June 1727.

¹³³ IOR/G/29/4 f.52v Consultation on Tuesday 27th June 1727.

example of this tactic is shown by the Company 'protecting' a Muscati ship sailing to Mocha from Portuguese attack in 1727. This was done both to gain favour with the Imam and as an excuse for moving ships to blockade Mocha in order to exact payment of certain debts outstanding to the Company and its servants.¹³⁴ The Company's relationship with the Muscatis speaks volumes about its complex political manoeuvrings in this period. Compared with other local powers, the Company was unusually deferent to the Muscatis, neither interfering with their traders or ships, not even to charge them for passes, a system from which the Imamates' ships were occasionally, but not uniformly, exempt.¹³⁵ The Company at this time also had considerable concerns about the role of the Imam of Muscat and his subjects in local piracy; the English suffered numerous attacks and exactions from the Muscatis, the *Britannia* in 1726 was raided while careened for cleaning and having some of its guns carried off with casualties among the crew.¹³⁶ The perpetrators of this attack would go on to seek shelter at Bassidore, though they would also lose this bolt hole when Sheikh Rashid was forced to capitulate to the Company's blockade.

These missions to Gulf ports, along with the general effort of the Company to police large areas of the Persian Gulf through its pass system, are significant as they show that the Company was building a reputation in the region for naval, as well as financial prowess. In a region where conspicuous force and wealth were signs of prestige and power. This coincided with the waning power of the previously strong authority derived from Safavid Persia and Company was showing itself to be a force to be reckoned with in their own right. While 1727 was evidently a very active year for the

¹³⁴ IOR/G/29/4 f. 44v Consultation on 10th June 1727.

¹³⁵ IOR/G/29/4 ff. 17-17v Consultation on Wednesday 26th April 1727.

¹³⁶ IOR/G/29/3 f.14 Consultation on Monday 12th December 1726.

Company in its efforts to collect passes and tolls, there is no record of anyone being killed, or injured in any of these encounters.

Conclusion.

There is no other scholarly work that fully considers the detail of the Company's activity and position in the Gulf and the significance of the Battle of Hormuz on this region. Significantly there is no evidence of the Company looking to create a territorial empire at this time as they do not seize and hold land from sovereign powers nor build fortifications aimed at subduing and intimidating local populations. The Company did not have the capital or resources at this time to do this, their intention is trade and securing a cost-effective means of taking a share and not a controlling one, as we see with the pragmatic co-operation with the Dutch who can trade more profitably more quickly with their desirable commodities as a result of the Hormuz success in which they played no part.

The Company was a privately funded operation and not state funded unlike the Portuguese and Dutch enterprises, an important consideration in how and how much force can be used, both politically and in terms of time and resources. It is evident after Hormuz that the Company did not have royal consent to risk starting a European war, even though they came very close to it. The Portuguese had an established mode of successful operation based on trade through territorial empire building requiring the display and use of force that established strategic coastal strong points across the Indian Ocean. That the Company employees resolve themselves to mount a major siege

against the Portuguese says a great deal about how hard it was for the Company to break the Portuguese stranglehold of their long established, well-fortified and well policed position across the Indian Ocean from Macao in the East to Zanzibar off the African coast. The siege of Hormuz was of itself an extraordinary event and demonstrated the ability of the Company to identify a unique opportunity to build a formal high-level alliance with Persia. This was important as Persia and Hormuz sat geographically in the middle of the Portuguese assumed zone of coastal control. This was not the beginning of the Company's use of force to gain territory in the region, although force and threat was used and projected, there was no systematic continuation of territorial gain, occupation and fortification. Military efforts were used hereafter by the Company to protect the rights granted to it in the *Farman* and to protect its trade and also to extort payments through assuming control over the informal *Cartaz* system introduced by the Portuguese.

The sea was not a priority for the Persians as their main interests were focused on their extensive land borders with the Ottoman Empire, the Uzbeks in Transoxiana and the Mughals around Kandahar. So, the Persians saw only advantage in having an agreement where they had a major naval power under some level of control for the first time. The major difference between the Company and the Portuguese was the common cause and long-term relationship built with the ruler of Persia over ousting the Portuguese from Hormuz. The Company was endeavouring to break the Portuguese hold on trade while the Portuguese, on the other hand, projected naval power to gain territorially and gain sole control over trade. The Portuguese had actively conquered Muscat, Hormuz, Goa, Diu, Malacca and Macao, garrisoned them and created major

fortifications, to control trade across the whole Indian Ocean, with the direct intent of imperial domination by force.

The Company's partnership with Persia was a clear indication of a difference in style and its willingness to develop trade as a main aim, further demonstrated with willingness to co-exist with the Dutch, both demonstrating a level of pragmatism punctuated by outright cooperation against Portuguese counter attacks and carrying out joint attacks on Portuguese merchant shipping. The implementation of a *Cartaz* system of its own led the Company to use naval force to collect revenue. This position is a similar style to the Dutch approach supported by Subrahmanyam who argues that the Dutch Company only deployed violence in order to further other, usually commercial, aims and interests, while maintaining ships and forts as a reminder of their capacity to do so.¹³⁷ The dynamic suggested by Chaudhuri,¹³⁸ of European aggression and dominance on the other hand is proven to be ill-fitting to the context of the Persian Gulf. Instead, Pearson's view of a balance between local and Company interests is far more in evidence, with the Persians securing their southern frontier along with increased revenues from the ports, while the Company was free to collect money from passes and carry out its own trade.¹³⁹

In terms of the vessels involved, most European merchant ships were themselves considerable weapons of war to protect their rich cargoes from capture. For their time

¹³⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Forcing the Doors of Heathendom", in Parker and Bentley, *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity. Individual and Community in the Early Modern World*, (London, 2007), p.135

¹³⁸ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p.165

¹³⁹ Pearson, Michael N., *The Indian Ocean*, (London, Routledge, 2003), pp.113-14

they overshadowed anything extant in the Indian Ocean in terms of their size and firepower; therefore, wherever they landed, they brought with them an impression of threatening military power. However, as we have seen, this weaponry was mainly used to defend against other European forces, and to subdue and take each other's valuable cargoes rather than to attack local regimes and invade territorially. On the other hand, Shah Abbas viewed the Portuguese as a natural enemy to his control over the southern part of his empire; additionally, they were threatening his subjects, interfering with trade and insulting his religion. The Company's actions against non-Persian shipping are not only a means to protect its *Farman rights* and collect revenue from passes but also a deliberate deterrent through the projection of naval power.

This chapter has explored the important place of maritime violence as a means of establishing the Company as a major force in the Gulf, through the defeat of the Portuguese, their major European adversary. While Chaudhuri suggests that violence was often only the Company's last resort, the siege of Hormuz and subsequent imposition of a system of passes, makes clear that, in fact, the Company was only willing to deploy force in pursuit of commercial not territorial advantage.¹⁴⁰ It appears clear that the use of force was not an uncommon feature of Company activity, though major force was only used in opposition to other Europeans, rather than Asian powers.

The Company was invited to participate in the campaign against the Portuguese and in return were rewarded, thereby clearly showing that it was the Persians, not the Company, who were in control. The Hormuz campaign should be considered the

¹⁴⁰ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p.115

keystone for the Company in its relationship with Persia, while the *Farman* formed a charter and structure for the Company-Persian relationship through to the mid-18th Century. The Company's constant referrals to the service done for the Persians at Hormuz, over the course of more than a century, displays the continuing attachment to this seminal event while the Company's use of the *Farman* and reference to Hormuz as proof of its usefulness, naturally led to an association between the Company and naval prowess, as will be discussed at length in the following chapter. In turn, the Company gained access to the valuable markets of Persia, and a base from where they could collect revenue by issuing passes.

Chapter 2: Trade's Increase: The Commercial Basis of Company Power in the Gulf.

The East India Company's factory in the Gulf was established in order to provide the Company with a hub through which it could sell European cloth that had proven unsuitable for the tropical climate of India. The Company also hoped that their presence on the Gulf coast would assist in redirecting the valuable trade in Persian silk from the Mediterranean, thereby cutting out both the Ottoman Empire and the European Levant Companies. By 1700, it had become clear that the silk trade, though valuable, was too erratic in supply and too entrenched in its westward course to be redirected successfully south. The Company had instead directed its servants to purchase wool from Kerman, which was prized for the making of hats and felts in Europe, as well as wines and rosewater, which were used in India by the Company's servants both personally and as gifts to foreign dignitaries and rulers. The Company had also discovered that more profit could be derived from the "country" shipping trade, which they regulated through taxation at the factory, along with policing of shipping undertaken through the pass system which has been explored previously. In many ways, the importance of the Company's revenue collection, separate to its status as an importer and exporter, has yet to be appreciated by historians. This chapter will explore this factor more fully as a major reason for the Company's continued presence in the Gulf.

Scholarly study of the 'Persia trade' has given rise to a number of debates concerning the economics of the commercial activity of the Gulf region and its place

within the wider Indian Ocean and World economies. Niels Steensgaard has explored the European dimension of trade in the Indian Ocean, seeing it in terms of a competition between the European Companies and local “pedlars”.¹⁴¹ Steensgaard’s focus on the transition between the Portuguese dominance in the region and that of the northern European companies, however, leaves relatively little room for the agency of the Persians themselves. Nor perhaps does he see the broader trajectory wherein the “pedlars”, rather than competing with the companies, served as a route by which the Company’s servants undertook their own, private trade. Steensgaard does, however, provide a guide to how trade and commerce looked at the beginning of the Company’s tenure in the Indian Ocean, allowing for an expansion of scholarly work on later periods.

Rudi Matthee’s work ‘The Politics of Trade in the Safavid Empire’¹⁴² explores the detail of the Safavid economy through the lens of the silk trade. Matthee’s work successfully covers the other side of this discourse, wherein Persian official policy affects the business of the companies, rather than only reacting to it. In order to do this, Matthee uses the example of the silk trade to demonstrate that the Safavid state was actively, or inactively, involved in managing its own economy and trade quite separately from the commercial policies of European merchants.¹⁴³ By building on Matthee’s example of silk police, this chapter will show how the Persians appreciated the usefulness of the Company in managing Gulf trade, alternately using the Company as courier, police force and surrogate for goods that the Persian Shah wished to sell outside his realm. This demonstrates that the Company and the Persian authorities each

¹⁴¹ See Steensgaard, Niels, *The Asian Trade Revolution*.

¹⁴² See Matthee, Rudi, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁴³ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p.7

recognised the importance of the other in the balance of trade and power in the Gulf region. This chapter will also explore how Persian policy, especially concerning silk sales and cloth purchases from English merchants trading through Russia, was geared towards diversifying trading links and partnerships. As yet, this dimension of the silk trade and Persian commercial policy has gone unexplored, due to the time limitations of previous studies. Matthee's work, though essential to this area of study, ends in 1730, a decade before the arrival of the so called "Russia Merchants". By expanding the time studied, this chapter is able to explore the competitive dimension of Persian trade policy more thoroughly.

The expansion of the time frame of this study as opposed to others has also revealed a fascinating new insight into the relationship between the Company and their Dutch rivals. For most of the history of both these organisations, competition for the same resources gave rise to mutual antagonism. In Persia, VOC and Company competition over wool, silk, and the somewhat ephemeral good will of Persian officials created an oppositional binary, though in Chapter 5 it has been shown that fraternisation was not uncommon. What this chapter will demonstrate is that this antipathy and competition, which limited the trade and profit of both organisations, could be done away with in the interest of mutual gain. In 1735, this culminated in an agreement between the Company and VOC to fix the price they would pay for wool.

Stephen Dale's work, highlighting the role of Indian merchants in the commercial life of Asia, also goes some way to dismiss the centrality of Europeans and

their companies in the inter-continental trade networks of the early modern world.¹⁴⁴ This line of scholarship highlights the significant changes brought about in the Indian Ocean by the arrival of European merchants and companies, while also showing that the impact of these changes would not be felt until well into the 18th century. Indeed, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has even questioned how ‘European’ some of the trade networks that have been associated with the mercantile companies actually were.¹⁴⁵ This chapter will explore how the Company’s trade interests intersected with those of the Persian state and how both sides used the other to achieve its aims. Through the lens of the Company’s records and the lists of privileges given to them by successive Persian regimes, it is possible to clearly track the policies both of the Company and their Persian interlocutors. The *Farmans* should not be looked upon as ‘Company’ documents, nor should they be solely viewed as edicts from a distant Persian hierarchy; instead, they should be considered, along with other evidence in the primary record, as a paper trail of ongoing mutual interests.

The Origins of the Company’s Trade in the Gulf.

The Company’s interests in Persia sprang directly from its inability to sell its major European export, woollen cloth, in India. Unlike tropical India, Persia, with its mountains and harsher winters, was a much more likely place for the English merchants to sell profitably their European wares in exchange either for silver, or other produce, which could be used to fuel the Company’s interests in India.¹⁴⁶ The Company, led by

¹⁴⁴ Dale, Stephen, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750*, (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁴⁵ Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, ed. *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, (Variorum, 1996), p.xvii.

¹⁴⁶ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.104

Anthony Shirley's assurances of a good market and reception for their products, therefore began shipping its cloth to Persia in 1616. The promise of a good sale for the Company's cloth was not the only factor that drew the Company to Persia. Silk, which was produced in the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran, also held the imaginations of the Company's servants.¹⁴⁷

Previous scholarship concerning European trade in Persia has focussed on the early 17th century, when the majority of European attempts to enter the silk trade took place. Edmund Herzig's work on the Armenian trade in silk adds to the view of the silk trade as an international business across cultures and continents.¹⁴⁸ These attempts ultimately failed and no major future attempts were successfully made to reignite the purchasing of silk.¹⁴⁹ But the Company's records show that this fascination with silk did not disappear completely and in the 18th century the Company maintained an interest in the market.

The last exploration of the silk trade before 1750 was spurred by competition from other English merchants, who had begun to trade in Persia through Russia. These men were known as the Russia Merchants, led by John Elton and Mungo Graham. These merchants arrived in the silk producing provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran in 1741-2, where they entered into direct competition with the Company by selling consignments of English cloth to Nader Shah. The Russia Merchants' interests were primarily in the purchase of Iranian silk which they planned to ship to Europe via

¹⁴⁷ IOR/G/29/1 ff.232-233v Samples of silk. IOR/G/29/1 ff. 19v-20v, Copy of letter from Mr. Monox [Edward Monnox], Ormuz [Hormuz] received in Spahan [Isfahan], 12 March 1621- 5 May 1621

¹⁴⁸ See Herzig, *Armenian Merchants* and Ferrier, *The Armenians*.

¹⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/6 ff.219v-220 Consultation on Thursday 1st July 1742

Russia. In response to this, the Agent in Bandar Abbas ordered for musters and prices of silk to be purchased at Isfahan and Kerman and sent to him for inspection. This was in preparation to compete with the Russia Merchants directly for silk should the need arise. However, this renewed interest in silk petered out fairly quickly, when the Russia Merchants discovered how high silk prices were. In addition, the Russia Merchants had faced numerous difficulties in establishing themselves and fragmented, and thus, no longer represented a significant threat to the Company.¹⁵⁰ This chapter will explore the issue of the Company's competition for silk and the Russia Merchants' attempts to break into the Company's trade in Persia.

The desire for a market to sell cloth, as well as the draw of silk, were enough to convince the Company of the need to keep trade with Persia flowing. In 1629 and 1630, the Company agreed, for example, to purchase a set quantity of silk, the value of which had to be paid for with at least one quarter hard cash, while the rest could be made up in kind.¹⁵¹ Despite this promising beginning, the Anglo-Persian silk trade proved too weak to maintain; falling prices for raw silk in Europe, due to increased supplies from China, as well as European manufacturers, eroded the profitability of the Company's imports. Coupled with a decline in quality of the Persian's products, due to raiding in the Caspian provinces by Cossacks and diminishing central control, the Company was unable and unwilling to pursue any further stake in the silk market.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ferrier, *Terms and Conditions*, p.63

¹⁵² Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p.138

By 1700, the “Persia trade” was thus dominated by other, less valuable commodities, most notable of which was wool from the Kerman region. Rudi Matthee’s work on the Kerman wool trade shows the volatility of doing business in Persia in the first half of the 18th Century, covering the political, financial and military disturbances that characterised Persia in this period. The trade in Kerman wool is a useful demonstration of the Company’s willingness to invest in an industry that had the potential to create a steady profit, albeit in a relatively volatile and inaccessible region. The Company maintained the wool trade during the Afghan occupation of Persia in the 1720’s and sporadically through the reign of Nader Shah. Danvers Graves, one of the Company’s servants and Resident at Kerman, whose report is present in the factory records, was still collecting wool when Nader Shah sacked the city.¹⁵³ Graves’ account shows how the Company used its connection to local dignitaries and merchants to carry on this trade.¹⁵⁴ This further illustrates the importance of these local links in conjunction with the overarching protections granted by centralised governments through the *Farmans*.

Luxury goods, such as Shiraz wine, which the Company gained permission to produce and export in its *Farmans*, have been studied to an extent by Rudi Matthee, but the Company’s role in export and production was not the main focus of his research. As Matthee points out, Persian wine was produced in relatively large quantities according to contemporary sources and was popular as a luxury commodity throughout the Indian Ocean.¹⁵⁵ The Company’s records show that its ability to ship a significant

¹⁵³ IOR/G/29/6 f.338v-9 Letter from Danvers Graves at Serjune (Likely Sirjan) to the Agent and Council at Bandar Abbas July 1st, 1746.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵⁵ Matthee, Rudi, “Christians in Safavid Iran: Hospitality and Harassment”, *Studies on Persianate Societies*, Vol.3 (2005/1384AH), pp.3-43, p.48

volume of it was a major advantage to it in terms of trade and diplomacy. An example of the use of wine as a diplomatic *douceur* can be found in the records of the Bombay Presidency, when the Jesuit mission at Salsette was given a number of cases as a gift.¹⁵⁶ Shiraz was also the Company's source for rose water, used as a perfume and sweetener throughout Asia and Europe. Both these products, along with others such as nuts, dried fruit, cereals and livestock, suggest that the Company and private traders were active in the exploration of a variety of Persian products that could be sent for sale or use in India.¹⁵⁷ Clearly, from the records of the Bombay Presidency, the Company was not only concerned with the purchase and shipping of goods for simple profit, but also for wider reasons, be they the comfort and leisure of its servants, their diet, or wider geopolitical goals requiring the presentation of expensive products as gifts.

The Company's factory was therefore not founded on the simple premise that it would be a post from which silk would be exported, nor solely as a terminus for English cloth. Instead, we can now begin to appreciate the dynamic ways in which the Company acted as a vehicle for profit through trade, a point of taxation for private shipping and merchants and as a hub of political representation to the Persian state. It is clear that had the Company's sole interest in Persia remained the purchase of silk, it would have abandoned Bandar Abbas early in the 1630's, after it became clear this trade would not flourish. Instead, the factory was maintained by the Company as a going concern, showing that the establishment was profitable in other ways, whether this was in terms of political and strategic importance, or for the purpose of revenue collection and taxation.

¹⁵⁶ IOR/P/341/2 f.51 Consultation at Bombay Castle on 21st December 1704.

¹⁵⁷ IOR/P/341/2 f.194 Consultation at Bombay Castle on 19th May 1705.

The East India Company's Silk Trade 1700-1750.

Let us now turn to the silk trade after 1700, having established the early 17th century basis for the Company's trade in this commodity. Abbas I had attempted to create a state monopoly for silk in the last two decades of his reign, but this initiative lapsed under his successor, Safi I.¹⁵⁸ Unlike other traders, the Company was permitted under Abbas I's monopoly to purchase 100 bales of silk and transport it free of taxation to Bandar Abbas, where it could then be shipped to India or Europe.¹⁵⁹ Company records show that this privilege was restored by Nader Shah, after many years of it having lapsed, with the monopoly itself, as a way of stimulating the silk trade anew during his reign. As the sale of silk remained a royal monopoly, the promotion of its sale was of direct benefit to the Shah's coffers.¹⁶⁰ Attempts to woo the Dutch in a similar way are not recorded in the Company's letters and consultations, though it would be unlikely that Nader Shah would have missed the chance to further improve competition for silk by not courting Dutch interest.

There are clear similarities between Nader Shah's silk policies and his co-opting of the Company to build up naval power in the Gulf. Just as with the fleet project, the Persians were using the Company's own interests in the profit that could be derived from cooperation to achieve their ends. In the case of silk, the Shah hoped to induce the Company into purchasing and exporting his monopoly product, and anticipated, no doubt to build further demand for it. This had the added advantage of creating

¹⁵⁸ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p.74

¹⁵⁹ IOR/G/29/5 ff.350-51 List of Rogums in Consultation on the 12th August 1736.

¹⁶⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.203v Consultation on Tuesday 13th April 1742.

competition over the silk itself both between the maritime route through the Gulf and the traditional overland route dominated by the Armenians, which ran through the Ottoman Empire. Politically, cutting off the caravans of silk through Ottoman Anatolia, while also selling it to the Europeans, was a double advantage to successive Persian Shahs, as well as tying in with the Company's attempts to undercut competition via the Mediterranean.

Further evidence that Nader Shah sought to make use of European merchants to generate competition for this monopolised resource comes in the form of Russia Merchants. Previous research on the European entry into the Iranian silk trade, which has focussed on the period before 1730, has not considered the case of the Russia Merchants who began exploring the northern route to the silk producing Caspian provinces. Stefan Troebst's work, outlining the Russian-Swedish route of trade from North-western Europe to Persia goes some way to rectifying this gap.¹⁶¹ In 1741, an exchange of correspondence between an unnamed Member of Parliament and a group of merchants took place. These merchants, according to their petition, wished to begin trading English cloth for Persian silk, but rather than pursuing this trade via the shipping route around the Cape, or through the Mediterranean, the petitioners sought to trade through Russia.¹⁶² The rationale behind this was that Persian silk was produced in the Caspian provinces in Northern Persia, therefore, it was quicker to travel south through Russia, into the Caspian and then trade in these provinces directly.¹⁶³ In the response

¹⁶¹ For the trade in silk through Russia in the 17th Century, see Herzig, *Armenian Merchants*, pp.141-143 and Troebst, Steffan, *Sweden, Russia and the Safavid Empire*, and Iran and the World in the Safavid Age, I.B. Tauris, 2012, pp.253-9.

¹⁶² Letter to a Member of Parliament relating to The Bill for the Opening of Trade with Persia through Russia 1741, RSS Tracts 5 vol.17 p.6

¹⁶³ *ibid*

from Parliament to the letter, the promise of the importation of raw silk cheaply through Russia, eased with a guarantee of free navigation of the Caspian,¹⁶⁴ is countered by the fear that the Russians, who had previously increased the duty charged on rhubarb¹⁶⁵ would do likewise with silk, or worse, make it a state monopoly tradable only at St. Petersburg.¹⁶⁶ Equally, the response to the letter questions whether the new trade for silk was worth pursuing, when it would quite evidently interfere with the commerce of both the Levant Company and the East India Company.

Despite these obstacles, however, John Elton, a merchant with experience of the Russia trade, and a number of other merchants, made the journey through Russia to the Caspian provinces of Persia.¹⁶⁷ They soon discovered that their intrusion was not welcomed, either by their countrymen in Bandar Abbas, the Armenian merchants in Resht, who refused to accept their bills, or the Persian authorities, who arrested one of the leading merchants, Mungo Graham.¹⁶⁸ Despite these setbacks, it is reported that the ‘Russia merchants’ were accepting payment in bills from their clients and purchasing silk for over 300 shahis per *mann-i Tabriz*.¹⁶⁹ They also secured a sale of broadcloth to Nader Shah, who was encamped at Derbent.¹⁷⁰

Nader Shah, unlike some of his officials, was evidently unconcerned about the presence of competing British merchants in his northern provinces. Indeed, this would

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*

¹⁶⁵ Letter to Parliament, 1741, p.14

¹⁶⁶ Letter to Parliament, 1741, p.17

¹⁶⁷ IOR/G/29/6 f.152 Consultation on Monday 20th April 1741.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.178v Consultation on Wednesday 18th November 1741.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*

appear to have played into his hopes of creating a competitive market for his silk, while also keeping his troops provisioned with durable woollen cloth. The response of Nader Shah is consistent with the policy he was pursuing regarding the sale of silk: the entry of the Russia Merchants into the silk trade increased competition for his monopolised resource, while their sales of English broadcloth, vital for clothing his troops, reduced the price that the Company and VOC could charge for the same product.

The expedition through Russia had a salutary effect on the Company's merchants, who immediately sprang into action, sending orders to their Factor in Kerman, as well as to their other contacts from Resht to Mashhad, to keep an eye on the activities of these interlopers. Not only this, but the Company's Agent also had 3,000 toman of broadcloth sent up for sale at Isfahan, in an attempt to flood the market, thereby removing the Russia Merchants' access to that market.¹⁷¹ The major concern for the Company remained that the merchants coming through Russia, being British, would be able to take advantage of their trade privileges, while not being answerable to the Company hierarchy and competing with them in the same markets and trading in the same commodities.¹⁷² The Company responded by ordering musters of silk from Isfahan, Kerman and Gilan, determined anew to get a firm grip on the silk trade to Europe.¹⁷³ This reaction seems to be less indicative of the Company's overwhelming need to control the silk trade, which was neither possible nor plausible, at least while the Armenians could control all the overland routes to Europe from Gilan. Instead, the outcome of the Russia-ward push for silk demonstrates how the Company was

¹⁷¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.190v Consultation on Saturday 6th January 1742.

¹⁷² IOR/G/29/6 ff.192v-3 Consultation on Monday 15th February 1742.

¹⁷³ IOR/G/29/6 f.208 Consultation on Friday 7th May 1742.

interested in its cloth sales remaining competitive and in retaining the integrity of its trade privileges.

For the Persians, the situation in this period was ideal, with a surplus of cloth lowering its value, while demand for silk rose with competition. Even without charging customs, the potential profit for the Persian government was considerable and the manipulation of the Company's privileges to compel them to purchase silk, along with allowing extra competition in this market, proved that Nader Shah and his regime were sensitive to the ways in which they could shape and profit from the Company's presence. These developments add a distinct new angle to the debate about Persian policy and agency in its trade dealings with European powers, as discussed in Chapter 1. Not only was the Shah willing to offer new privileges to the established companies to further his financial aims, he was willing to sanction and support new ventures to the same end. As such, there can be little question about the agency of the Persian state in its trade policy, especially during more dynamic period under Nader Shah.

The Bombay Presidency continued to reiterate its interest in purchasing silk for export back to Europe, with small amounts being acquired and sent to Bombay from Persia until as late as 1748.¹⁷⁴ Company policy was directed loosely on this topic, with occasional requests from Bombay to Bandar Abbas for musters of silk, or an appraisal of the market. Ultimately, however, the officials in Bombay were reliant upon the judgement of the Agent, upon whose reports they relied in their decision making. The Company's interest in the silk trade never became more than exploratory in this period, any silk having been acquired either in payment of a shipment of broadcloth, or in place

¹⁷⁴IOR/G/29/6 f.208 Consultation on Friday 7th May 1742 and IOR/G/29/7 f.31v Consultation on Thursday 11th December 1746.

of cash when the Safavid government was unable to cover the Company's share of the Bandar Abbas customs.¹⁷⁵ Unlike in previous periods, where silk had fixated the Company, in the early 18th century it was now the Persians who were promoting it as a valuable product for trade.

In the case of the late Safavids, the use of silk to pay debts to foreign merchants is indicative of the lack of specie available to the government, while for Nader Shah, silk exportation was used as a source of ready income to support Persian military ambitions and as a way of promoting competition between foreign and domestic merchants, guaranteeing an increase in price. In both cases, the recognition of silk as an important source of revenue from the Persian authorities is demonstrable of a wider policy of engagement with the Company as an agent of trade, rather than the Company being the driving force.

The East India Company and Kerman Wool.

The trade in Kerman wool has already been the subject of a study by Rudi Matthee, in which he tracks the development and implantation of the trade until 1730. The Company's exportation of Kerman wool first began as an attempt to increase the profitability of its Persia trade. This was necessary due to the "perennial problem"¹⁷⁶ of gaining an adequate supply of silk, the market for which was controlled by the Persian state under both the Safavids and Nader Shah. Government control of the silk

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Matthee, Rudi, "The East India Trade in Kerman Wool, 1658-1730", in *Etudes Safavide*, (1993), p.346

trade made the purchase by Europeans of a desired quantity at a reasonable price almost impossible. Kerman wool, being readily accessible from the European factories on the Gulf Coast, was viewed as a possible foil to the volatile silk supply.¹⁷⁷

Despite the relative proximity of the wool producing region to the Gulf factory, there were other issues that might have precluded its development. These ranged from the cost of picking cleaning and packing the wool for transportation, ever more specific orders from Bombay and London concerning the maximum prices that could be paid for wool, as well as which colours were desirable in the London markets.¹⁷⁸ On top of these financial concerns, the Kerman region was, as we shall see shortly, ravaged by warfare and the state. Despite all these difficulties, however, the Kerman wool trade endured as a commercial interest for the Company, which used a variety of methods to secure its supply. These included making presents and loans to local officials, making substantial investments with local producers and merchants, and even making an agreement with the Dutch to fix prices.

Kerman wool, or *kork*, is gathered from the soft down under the fleece of the species *Capra Ibex*.¹⁷⁹ The wool was the basis for a local weaving industry in Kerman which produced carpets and shawls, called "namats" in the English sources.¹⁸⁰ In Europe and India it was used in weaving, as well as the production of felt for hats and other garments which had previously used the wool of beavers.¹⁸¹ Before being shipped

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*

¹⁷⁸ IOR/G/29/3 f.4v Consultation on Friday 25th November 1726 and IOR/G/29/5 f.74 Letter to William Cordeux from the Council at Bandar Abbas 16th June 1729.

¹⁷⁹ Matthee, *Kerman Wool*, p.343

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*

¹⁸¹ Matthee, *Kerman Wool*, p.347

from Bandar Abbas, the wool had to be picked, packed and then carried by caravan from Kerman and nearby villages to the coast. The Company's method of purchasing and transporting the wool changed over the period after 1700, developing in competition with the Dutch and reacting to the increasingly hazardous conditions of the Kerman region. Kerman bore the brunt of Baluchi and Afghan incursions in the 1720's and 1730's. If this were not enough, in his constant search for revenue to support his military adventures, Nader Shah comprehensively sacked Kerman, not long before his murder in 1747.

The Company's records for the period after 1700 have a wealth of information about the transaction of the wool trade. Unlike silk, which was not actively purchased during this time, details of the Kerman wool operation were recorded through letters and orders sent and received between Kerman and the factory at Bandar Abbas. The Company employed local merchants to carry out their wool investment. This was preferred as it reduced the costs that the Company incurred from supporting a European, who, unlike the Persian merchants who were only provided a salary, had to be provided a living allowance, accommodation and other expenses. Local merchants had the added advantage of being familiar with the local market, though they also faced the increased likelihood of facing extortion from local officials and were less able to enforce the repayment of Company debts. Owing to these issues, European Company servants were dispatched to Kerman to audit the wool investment, collect outstanding debts and also, it is likely, remind the local authorities for whom the Company's agents ultimately worked. This meant that the Company developed a system which avoided

the expense of maintaining a constant European presence and circumvented some of the major issues with relying on local brokers, while maintaining their expertise.¹⁸²

Working in this way saved costs, about which the Company was obsessed, while keeping a visible presence in Kerman all year round. The position of wool broker was one of significant trust and from 1728 was left in the hands of a father and son, Siavash and Esfandiar.¹⁸³ Previously, the Company had employed a separate broker and wool merchant, Khosrow and Kasim, both of whom were dismissed having been found to be dealing dishonestly with the Company and because of repeated failures by them to provide the correct colour and weight of wool.¹⁸⁴

In order to keep their agents in good standing, the Company made gifts to the local officials in Kerman, both on their accession to their post and annually on *Nowruz*, the Persian new year.¹⁸⁵ The Company went so far as to set a budget of 70 toman annually for the Kerman factory to buy presents or provide cash to local officials in order to keep on a good footing in the region.¹⁸⁶ These gifts, while meant as a gesture of goodwill between the Company and the governor or *Kalantar* of Kerman, were also used as a reminder to these officials to repay the debts they owed to the Company.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² IOR/G/29/5 f.73v Letter to William Cordeux from the Council at Bandar Abbas 16th June 1729, IOR/G/29/5 f.358v Consultation on Saturday 20th November 1736 and IOR/G/29/6 f.24v-25 Consultation on Tuesday 21st March 1738.

¹⁸³ IOR/G/29/5 f.200v Consultation on Thursday 15th March 1733.

¹⁸⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.74-74v Letter to William Cordeux from the Council at Bandar Abbas 16th June 1729.

¹⁸⁵ IOR/G/29/4 f.48v Consultation on Friday 16th June 1727, IOR/G/29/5 f.41 Consultation on Friday 11th February 1729, IOR/G/29/5 f.38v Consultation on Monday 3rd February 1729. For a more full exploration of the phenomenon of Persian gift-giving, see Ashraf, Assef, *The Politics of Gift Exchange in Early Qajar Iran, 1785-1834*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 58 (2) pp.550-576.

¹⁸⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.22 Consultation on Friday 17th February 1738.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*

The exchange of gifts, as well as lending money to local officials were methods of oiling the mechanisms of Persian officialdom in order to avoid any interruption of the wool trade. In cases where wool was lost or stolen on the road, sometimes abandoned by the *Charwardar*¹⁸⁸ tasked with transporting produce to the coast, these connections were used as an effective means of recovering the Company's goods or gaining restitution for any loss.¹⁸⁹ The co-opting of local forces and officials through the exchange of cash and gifts can be likened to a form of informal insurance, whereby the Company could expect the return of their property in case of theft or protection of their people and goods throughout the region.

The Company's wool merchant appears to have been employed to buy up supplies in the markets of Kerman, with the assistance of the broker. Money was supplied to them by bills drawn by Banian brokers operating between the city and the coast; this avoided the risk of transporting cash overland and it also took advantage of the high exchange between silver and the copper coin commonly used around Kerman.¹⁹⁰ As a general rule, the Company in Persia did not provide money in advance, nor did it extend large amounts of credit, other than to its broker at Bandar Abbas. The wool trade was an exception to this rule, receiving a large annual investment. This change approach, appears to have been in imitation of the Dutch, who advanced cash to shepherds in the villages surrounding Kerman as early as 1722, putting the Company at a significant disadvantage by the time the wool was available for sale in the city's markets.¹⁹¹ Matthee suggests that this practice began with the British and was then

¹⁸⁸ Mule or camel driver

¹⁸⁹ IOR/G/29/4 f.73v Consultation on Sunday 9th July 1727 and IOR/G/29/6 f.22 Consultation on Friday 17th February 1738.

¹⁹⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.367v Consultation on 19th February 1737.

¹⁹¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.89 Consultation on Thursday 27th November 1729.

adopted by the Dutch, who saw the English practice of forwarding money and providing gifts to local officials as a form of bribery.¹⁹² Both companies were, in effect accusing the other of underhand practices, while certainly doing the same thing at the same time. Matthee shows Dutch primary sources telling a story of English corruption, while the Company accuse the Dutch of “gazumping” their wool supplies. It is impossible to tell from either set of sources who first began this process, though it is clear that both companies were active in slandering each other where possible, while carrying on whatever underhand dealing they could get away with.

In 1728, to further pursue their trade, the Company dispatched William Cordeux to oversee an investment for wool. In order to do this he was given an allowance of 10 toman per month and the freedom to act as he saw fit.¹⁹³ In pursuit of improving the wool supply, Cordeux was given a treasury of 100 toman in silver mahmudis and 500 Venetian sequins.¹⁹⁴ This outlay of cash would then later give way to the continued use of bills and shipments of English cloth which found a strong market, especially among merchants who came to Kerman from Khorasan.¹⁹⁵ The market for cloth at Kerman was a particular spur to the Company, as the region therefore represented a consumer of the Company's major import and a vendor of a product desired in Europe. Cloth was considered valuable enough to the Company to require the oversight of a European Company servant to oversee its sale, therefore Cordeux served a dual purpose, both increasing the pace of the wool purchases while selling off the Company's cloth.¹⁹⁶ It proved impossible for the Company to completely

¹⁹² Matthee, *Kerman Wool*, p.364

¹⁹³ IOR/G/29/5 ff.145-v Consultation on Friday 28th January 1732.

¹⁹⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.147v Consultation on Tuesday 8th February 1732.

¹⁹⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.193v Consultation on Friday 19th January 1733.

¹⁹⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.358v Consultation on Saturday 20th November 1736.

fund their trade in wool through the sale of cloth due to the difficulty of transporting large quantities of cloth from the coast to Kerman, though the exchange of cloth for wool continued.

Despite the expense involved in procuring wool and shipping it to Europe, the trade remained durable throughout the period between 1700 and 1750. The Company in London learned quickly how best to profit from this product, sending specific instructions regularly on the colour of the wool, how it should be packed and occasionally putting limits on the amount that should be paid for it. This shows that even in the rather remote Gulf, the Company could control and legislate upon the commodities which its servants were purchasing. These interventions often concerned the colour of the wool to be bought, with white and red going in and out of vogue with the London markets.¹⁹⁷ The Company also sometimes limited the price that should be paid for the wool, after it had been cleaned and transported to the coast, but despite this limitation still insisted on a supply of 10,000 maunds.¹⁹⁸ For most of the period after 1700, however, orders of 50-60,000 maunds were common,¹⁹⁹ despite the political upheavals and repeated movements of armies across the region. This suggests that the Company was able to effectively co-opt local officials and forces into securing the routes to the coast and therefore the wool supply to such an extent that very large amounts of wool could be transported to the coast for shipping.

¹⁹⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.78v-9 Consultation on Saturday 26th July 1729.

¹⁹⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.358v Consultation on Saturday 20th November 1736.

¹⁹⁹ IOR/G/29/7 f.44v Consultation on Wednesday 17th December 1746.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the wool trade was the competition between the Company and the Dutch. As has been seen, both companies accused the other of false dealing, bribery, corruption and the English even accused the Dutch company's Armenian *Vakil*, or agent, of poaching wool previously contracted for by the Company.²⁰⁰ This lends some credence to Dutch accusations that the Company began the pre-payments for wool, though does not prove that the Dutch had not been doing so first with other merchants. Certainly, the Company was guilty of furnishing local officials with cash and loans, but whether this constituted bribery is hard to establish, as this practice was common among Persians and Europeans, including the Dutch, and constituted a part of normal business in the empire. The Dutch, on the other hand, were accused in return by the Company of flooding the markets of Kerman with silver and offering outrageous sums to secure the largest supply of wool, though again, this is hardly likely to have differed from the normal practices of the time.²⁰¹ These attempts at industrial and commercial sabotage, whether real or imagined, reveal the importance placed on the wool trade by both companies. Matthee conjectures that this was due to the continuing debasement of Persian coinage, which no longer carried enough silver to make its export worthwhile. Wool therefore represented one of the few commodities in which the Europeans were interested in investing, providing a steady stream of revenue to Kerman, while, at least partially, satisfying the Company's need for profitable exports.²⁰²

Despite the difficulties with cash flow, transportation, invasion and regime change, the Company maintained a steady trade in wool and copper, with shipments

²⁰⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.194 Consultation on Friday 19th January 1733

²⁰¹ IOR/G/29/15 f.69

²⁰² Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, p.106

worth 200,000- 2,000,000 shahis arriving in Bombay between 1728 and 1750. The exportation of goods on this scale from Persia suggests that the Company made a considerable profit, despite significant adverse conditions, whether through the mass exportation of cheap copper to India, or wool to the felters and hatters of Europe.

One of the contributing factors to this volume of Company wool trade came through an agreement made between the Company and the VOC in 1735. This agreement fixed the price of wool at a time when the Dutch chose to break off their investment in wool altogether.²⁰³ This particular agreement between the companies came about after a period of intense competition which raised the prices at which wool could be purchased to a point where both sides had to agree to cooperate or risk leaving their masters' indents unfulfilled. This took the form of a promise to pay no more than 30 shahis per maund of wool, where prices of between 60 and 75 shahis had been recorded previously.²⁰⁴ As the two major competitors in the market, this ceiling forced down the price from its previous high levels. As the Company's investment in wool was reported to be three times larger than that of the Dutch, it is also evident that it was the major beneficiary.²⁰⁵ This evidence shows that the Company and their Dutch rivals were willing and able to act together on a local level, without the need to refer back to Bombay or London.²⁰⁶ The Agent was given significant leeway in the pursuit of his masters' business and that this could in turn lead to innovative solutions from which the Company could derive value.

²⁰³ IOR/G/29/16 f.220 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 3rd June 1740.

²⁰⁴ IOR/G/29/16 f.161 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 27th May 1735 and IOR/G/29/16 f.156 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 10th February 1735.

²⁰⁵ IOR/G/29/16 f.119v Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 20th August 1732

²⁰⁶ IOR/G/29/16 f.156 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 10th February 1735.

The agreement between the European companies was not to last long; by 1745 it had lapsed completely and all efforts to revive it failed.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the agreement demonstrated that the European companies were willing to work together to insure a supply of wool for sale back in Europe, despite the competition this might cause when it was sold in their home markets. Matthee suggests that the competition between the companies was by far the largest block to their success in Kerman. Had he continued his research past 1730, he would have found how accurate he was, as the mutually set price limitations allowed the Company to make orders of 50,000-60,000 maunds at low prices.²⁰⁸ By agreeing to cooperate, both companies removed the barrier of each other's competition, only to have the political situation in Persia deteriorate at the same time. The agreement also showed that the companies were now more intent on profit, rather than the one-upmanship that had permeated the wool trade since it was first explored.

The trade in Kerman wool demonstrates a number of features important to the Company's position in Persia. Firstly, the Company's inability to gain a foothold in the silk trade drove them to consider other avenues to draw profit from their factories in Persia; Kerman wool provided the Company with an opportunity to do this, while also being an outlet for the Company's English cloth. Once enough wool could be procured at a low enough price, the Company then turned to the low price of copper in the region, accepting it in payment of debts and buying it up in large quantities to ship to India. This meant that the wool, purchased with silver in advance could be shown and sold in Europe as a good investment, while the copper sent to India was literally made into

²⁰⁷ IOR/G/29/17 f.15v Letter from Danvers Graves at Isfahan on October 31st, 1749.

²⁰⁸ Matthee, *Kerman Wool*, p.382

money by the Company's mints. The Company's ability to sell cloth, so undesirable in India, completed the attraction, providing an outlet for English exports which could bear a further profit from Persia.

The exportation of wool and copper provided the Persians with a much-needed income of silver into the economy of Kerman. Gifts and loans to the governors and officials in the city forged links of mutual assistance, while the Company could also resort to the auspices of their *Farman* should local officials prove intransigent. The Company's ability to enforce the *Farman* is shown by the disregard the local *namat* makers were treated with when they attempted to intervene in the Company's trade. Starved of raw material they demanded a supply of wool back from the Company in order for their work to continue. This request was flatly ignored by the Company, while the local Khan failed to take any action against the Europeans, to whom he was indebted.²⁰⁹ While Matthee is no doubt correct that local weavers were unlikely to have consumed a large proportion of the wool supply and that European entry into the market would have spurred a surge in production, the inability of these local tradesmen to affect the Company's trade demonstrates the relative value of European business in the bazaars of Kerman.

²⁰⁹ IOR/G/29/15 f.174v Letter to the Court of Directors from Edmund Edlyne and Martin French on 25th September 1724

Shiraz Wine in Indian Ocean Trade.

In 1711, Charles Lockyer, a former Company employee, wrote a memoir and guide to trade in the Indian Ocean. In his chapter on the trade of Persia, he mentions that three varieties of wine were available for purchase, *Ashee*, *Kishmish* and *Shyrash*.²¹⁰ Of these, the first was the most expensive at 160 shahis per chest, while the other two were 140 per chest.²¹¹ Lockyer goes on to tell his reader that the chests consisted of “ten bottles, each containing 5 quarts; or two carboys and two bottles; but of late they leave out two bottles, reckoning two carboys to a chest. The Carboys hold out 5 gallons, one with another”.²¹² While Lockyer was not clear on where this wine was produced, *Shyrash* was a common misspelling of Shiraz, while *Kishmish*, the Persian word for “raisin”, probably refers to an *Auslese* or *Spätlese*.²¹³ By Lockyer’s reckoning, each chest of wine at 160 shahis was worth £2.6s.8d, making it almost as valuable as silk, though at a much greater weight and volume. The Company’s own reports suggest that Lockyer’s prices were, in fact, only about half of what was often paid for chests of wine, with prices between 200 and 300 shahis being recorded.²¹⁴

Alexander Hamilton, another traveller to the Gulf, lists the great benefits and quality of the wine produced at Shiraz in his travelogue of 1739;

²¹⁰ Lockyer, Charles, *An Account of the Trade in India*, p.247

²¹¹ *ibid*

²¹² *ibid*

²¹³ Wines made from grapes gathered later than the general harvest, characterised by a sweeter flavour.

²¹⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.285v Consultation on Thursday 10th July 1735 and IOR/G/29/7 f.153v Consultation on Monday 2nd May 1748.

“the Armenian Christians have the privilege of making wine, most excellent in their kind, and it is a Question whether the World affords better, for they are excellent Stomachicks, and being strong, they’ll bear 4 Times the Quantity of water to mix with them without being flat”.²¹⁵

In the 1670’s Jean Chardin had likewise praised the quality of wine produced in Persia;

“They make the best in Georgia, in Armenia, in Media, in East Hircania, at Chiras, and at Yezd, the Capital City of Carmania. The Wine of Ispahan is the Worst of all, until the nice Europeans pretended to make it, which they did about 20 years ago”.²¹⁶

Viticulture in Persia, according to Chardin, was widespread and enjoyed the favour of the Safavid Shahs and elite, both in their extensive consumption of the produce of non-Muslim vintners, as well as from the money that could be made from permitting the trade in it to continue.²¹⁷ The Company was granted permission in their *Farman* to export wine and maintained their own vineyard, which, judging by Hamilton’s effusive description must have been one of many.²¹⁸ Their house and vineyard were maintained by an Armenian, who also passed them information on the

²¹⁵ Hamilton, Alexander, *A New Account*, p.98

²¹⁶ Chardin, Sir John, *Travels in Persia, 1673-1677*, (Dover Publications, 1988), p.243

²¹⁷ Chardin, *Travels in Persia*, p.242

²¹⁸ IOR/G/29/17 f.30

state of Persian politics and the roads to and from Shiraz. Again, this demonstrated a supportive relationship between the Company and native Armenians, including the Company lending their “wine man” money on an individual basis, as well as providing an advance on the next year's vintage.²¹⁹ There is even a connection between the Company's vineyard and their linguist, who is said to have owned it.²²⁰ According to Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, the Armenians of Shiraz were producing somewhere in the region of 580,000 litres of wine per year,²²¹ Hamilton states that around 24,000 gallons of rose water were also exported yearly from the city.²²² Tavernier documents that out of the full production of wine at Shiraz, the vineyards of European Companies accounted for around one quarter, presumably all intended for exportation. Matthee adds that in the trading season of 1716-17, 625 cases of wine were exported on native ships in the Gulf.²²³

There are mentions in the Company's records of it purchasing and exporting horses, fruit and nuts from Persia for sale and use in India, produce that does not require the investment in production or transportation that is found with wine. When the Company's house and vineyard at Shiraz was burned, 7,000 toman of stock and property was destroyed, suggesting that they stored thousands of bottles there.²²⁴ Letters from Bombay, as well as shipping orders found in the factory records for the Gulf, show that wine was shipped in large quantities to India and was then distributed

²¹⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.155 Consultation on Saturday 2nd May 1741 and IOR/G/29/7 f.11v Consultation on Wednesday 24th September 1746. For advance on production see IOR/G/29/15 f.8

²²⁰ IOR/G/29/15 f.240

²²¹ Matthee, Rudi, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, (Princeton, 2005), p.48

²²² Hamilton, *Account of Trade*, p.98

²²³ Matthee, *Pursuit of Pleasure*, p.48

²²⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.94v Consultation on Sunday 21st December 1729.

amongst the Company's factories and servants.²²⁵ The importance of Shiraz wine to the Company could be explained by the use of alcohol as a treatment for water. While small beer as well as wines and spirits were available in Europe to all levels of society, the Company in Asia found it much more difficult to supply themselves. Wine was also a mark of status, separating Company servants from sailors and soldiers, who were instead provided with much cheaper (not to mention much more alcoholic) arak.²²⁶ When the wine was found to have "gone bad", it was distilled into brandy, which was also distributed amongst the soldiers and sailors stationed at Bombay.²²⁷

Wine, as well as rose water, were exported not only for the use of Company servants to slake their thirst and keep their clothing smelling sweet, but also to be sent as gifts and signs of good will. In one instance, the Father Superior of the Jesuits at Salsette was sent a supply of wine in 1704 in thanks for provisions provided to the Company at Bombay.²²⁸ Persian rose water is mentioned by Bhawan Ruangsilp as having been provided to Phra Narai of Siam by the Dutch.²²⁹ The purchase, exportation and then use of Persian goods as courtly gifts marks this trade as being of particular value to the Company, if not in volume, or raw profit, then as a source of prestige derived from access to such resources. The use of wine in the day to day life of the Company's servants also adds to its value, demonstrating the Company's generosity in providing this rare, relatively expensive beverage to their diet.

²²⁵ IOR/P/341/4 Consultation on 22nd April 1711 and IOR/P/341/4 Consultation on the 8th December 1711

²²⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.307v Consultation on Saturday 15th November 1735. Arak or arrack was produced by the Company in India and shipped to Persia and elsewhere to supply the factories.

²²⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.59 Consultation on Saturday 3rd May 1729.

²²⁸ IOR/P/341/2 f.51 Consultation at Bombay Castle on 21st December 1704

²²⁹ Ruangsilp, *Court of Ayutthaya*, p.130

Persian wines and luxury goods represent a new way of exploring the context of trade conducted by the Company in the Indian Ocean. While the supply of these goods was somewhat sporadic, especially in the period after 1722, the Company's ability to purchase and ship wine and rose water to India for the use of its servants, not to mention as a prestigious commodity for gifts, is indicative of the Company's attitude to Gulf trade. Unlike silk, which captured the imagination of Western consumers, wine was much more pedestrian; this however, was its most important quality. The ubiquity of wine in Europe and the social capital its consumption represented made the Company's ability to supply it, whether from Persia or Europe, an important part of keeping its employees happy; indeed, it was sometimes used as an incentive. In one letter, Euclid Baker, an engineer working in Bombay in 1704 was given a gift of Shiraz in thanks for his work and in the hope of further encouraging his efforts.²³⁰ The consumption of Shiraz in India would come to be replaced by mass imports from Europe by the mid 1760's, especially from Madeira, where highly prized sweet wine was produced, with the added advantage that the island was a common stopping point for Company ships on the way to the Cape.²³¹

The history of drugs and intoxicants and the expansion of European empires is inextricably linked, from the tobacco plantations of the Caribbean to the opium fields of India. The wine trade offers a differing view of this relationship.²³² Unlike opium, which has become synonymous with European rapacity after it was forced upon China,

²³⁰ IOR/P/341/2 f.36 Letter to Surat from Bombay 4th October 1704.

²³¹ See Hancock, John, *An Undiscovered Ocean*

²³² Mills and Barton ed., *Drugs and Empire: Essays in Modern Imperialism and Intoxication, c.1500-c.1930*, (London, Palgrave, 2007). p.1

Shiraz wine was not intended by the Company for mass sale; instead it was a comfort for the Company's servants to enjoy. This is borne out in part by the levels of exportation, amounting to around 35,000 litres a year, according to Matthee's estimate of the Company's share of production during the later Safavid period leading up to 1722.²³³ At the same time, Hancock shows that in this period only about 5,000 litres of Madeira was being imported around the Cape for the Company's consumption.²³⁴ Even though wine was drunk by Indians as well as Europeans, the Company did not export Shiraz for the purpose of selling it on to these local consumers. When demand for Madeira rose in the 1760's, following the receipt of the *Divan* of Bengal, this was only in response to the expansion of the Company's staff, not an attempt to sell more for profit.²³⁵ Although Matthee makes mention of European exportation, the focus of his work is firmly on the Persianate and Islamic attitudes to wine consumption, not upon the European attitude towards it, nor the companies' trade in it. This study therefore provides a context both to the history of the Company's servants' consumption of wine, the trade in it as a luxury commodity, and also the economic benefit its production and exportation had to Persia.

Private Trade and the East India Company.

The factory at Bandar Abbas was a nexus for the Company's trade in the Gulf region, due to its commanding location at the straits of Hormuz, giving access via the sea to the markets of Persia and also the Ottoman Empire through Basra. The value of

²³³ Matthee, *Christians in Safavid Iran*, p.48

²³⁴ Hancock, *An Undiscovered Ocean*, p.156

²³⁵ *ibid*

the factory and its location was augmented by the Company's ability to use their position at the port to gather revenue. This could take the form of the 1,000 toman that the Company was owed annually by the Persian *Shahbandar* from the port's customs, but also from the taxation of intra-Asian and European trade. In discussing the goods traded by Armenian merchants between India and Persia, Edmund Herzig gives what can be considered as the closest approximation of the shape of more general private trade, in the Gulf region, including that of Company servants.²³⁶ Herzig highlights the importance of private trade in importing Indian goods to Persia, while also showing the goods, such as dried fruits and woollen textiles, which the Armenians found it worthwhile exporting. It is not much of a stretch to imagine that anything the Armenians found worthwhile to buy and sell, the Company's servants did as well.

The East India Company's original charter granted a monopoly of all trade between England and the Indian Ocean. This included freighting cargo, cash and people from one side of the globe to the other. However, despite the best efforts of the Company to protect this monopoly, it soon proved too tempting for 'interlopers' to eat into the Company's captive markets. Part of the problem came from the Company's own servants, who worked with interlopers to improve their own private fortunes. This kept their personal transactions off the Company's books, allowing for greater personal profit and the facility to send such profit back to England away from prying eyes.²³⁷ By the 1680's the Company circumnavigated this hole in their revenues by permitting their servants to trade on their own accounts, as long as this trade took place only

²³⁶ Herzig, *Armenian Merchants*, p.144

²³⁷ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.173

between Asian ports.²³⁸ By doing this, the Company was able to not only eliminate the value of interlopers to its servants, but also tap into the country trade itself.²³⁹

In the Persian Gulf, this was achieved through the passes issued to native shipping, discussed previously, but also through the duties levied at Gulf ports. In Bandar Abbas, the Company insisted that all goods belonging to Europeans associated with the Company was assessed at the factory, rather than by the Shahbandar. This practice was well entrenched by the 1730's. The Company charged 1% on transactions carried out in their factory; this was evidently preferable to paying anything up to 7% customs to the Shahbandar.²⁴⁰ Circumventing the Shahbandar was preferable to the Company as it removed the Persian bureaucracy from between the Company and their share of the customs of the port. The Company was, in effect, deploying a state-like apparatus of taxation that superseded the local, Persian system. By doing this, the Company was able to set up a virtual monopoly over the shipping of Indian goods to Persia.

Landing goods at the Company's factory rather than at the Shahbandar's warehouse was an advantage that could be, and was, extended to Armenian and Banian merchants securing their co-operation in other matters. The extension of the Company's benefits to these native traders was in clear contravention of the permission given to the Company to only have control of their own goods. Company ships coming from India were habitually unloaded at the Company's premises, no matter to whom the

²³⁸ *ibid*

²³⁹ *ibid*

²⁴⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.183 Consultation on Monday 13th November 1732.

cargo belonged.²⁴¹ Unloading Indian goods at the factory gave the Company a limited monopoly over the goods being imported on their ships, whoever owned them. In doing this, they removed a level of competition from their trade in Persia by overseeing the sales of a large volume of goods, apparently all belonging to them, when in fact the Company was merely brokering sales and charging the owners a percentage. The same system was also used at Basra, where the Company charged 2% or occasionally more to cover the costs of the factory, as well as other expenses.²⁴² Willem Floor points out that at Bandar Abbas, as well as Basra no doubt, the Company was in league with the local Shahbandar to turn a blind eye to the importation of private goods by Armenians, Indians, the Company servants and private merchants.²⁴³ While this is certainly the case, he also suggests that the Company introduced this policy after its servants were unable to gain its full share of customs.²⁴⁴ Both the Shahbandar official customs and Company “informal” taxation were run concurrently meaning that even if the Company was not able to collect their full share at any given time, what they received was effectively total profit, minus the expense of presents and gifts to local officials.

Willem Floor, in his extensive research on the Gulf region and its ports has repeatedly mentioned the shortfall the Company experienced in its receipts of revenue from the Shahbandar. Often, the Company would receive either a much smaller share than it was meant to, or nothing at all.²⁴⁵ Floor lists the income from the customs that the Company received, as well as an attempt to estimate the actual value of Bandar

²⁴¹ IOR/G/29/16 f.241 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 8th June 1742

²⁴² IOR/P/341/7b f.358 Letter received from Gombroon at Bombay on Saturday 19th October 1734

²⁴³ Floor, *Five Port Cities*, p.315

²⁴⁴ *ibid*

²⁴⁵ Floor, *Five Port Cities*, p.312-15

Abbas' trade.²⁴⁶ Floor describes this shortfall as “an important additional [problem]”²⁴⁷, but then goes on to describe the systemic way in which the Company completely circumvented this problem.

From the example of private and “coloured”²⁴⁸ trade in the Gulf, one can see that at least part, if not the largest part of the Company's interest in Persia and their long maintenance of a factory there sprung not from sales of cloth or the purchase of silk, but from the privately held wealth of private merchants. Due to its very nature, the trade of private merchants is difficult to trace, as the Company did not take account of it in official ledgers and correspondence. However, there are signs of the level of personal wealth that could be accrued by Company servants in Persia. For example, in one instance, the Company's Agent purchased the majority of the lading of the *Fanny*.²⁴⁹ As the Agent's annual income was only £150, it is evident that he had significant other means at his disposal with which he could purchase the most part of a ship's cargo. Equally, he would not have purchased the goods without the means and ability to sell it on.

It seems fair to assume that the Company's directors were interested in maintaining their position in Persia, not only for the sake of their shareholders, but the pockets of their servants. The Company's servants were able to use Persia as a market for goods bought and shipped cheaply from India, such as cotton textiles and pepper,

²⁴⁶ *ibid*

²⁴⁷ *ibid*

²⁴⁸ That is, trade and goods marked as belonging to the Company, but actually belonging to private individuals.

²⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/16 f.218v Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 3rd June 1740

while some Persian goods, such as dried fruits, nuts and dates, found a ready sale in Bombay.

Persian attempts at manipulating Company Trade.

The Company's trade in Persia should not be solely viewed through the lens of European manoeuvres; the Persians too had their agenda. As previously explored in this chapter, the Persian authorities were perfectly capable of effecting policy that controlled the European Companies, such as the encouragement to buy silk through reduction of specific duties. Even using European documents, it is easy to discern ways in which the Persians attempted to use the Company's trade to further their own ends. By having these mechanisms and then deploying them, it is clear that the Company acted as a commercial surrogate to the Persian state. This surrogacy was not always willingly undertaken, though it ties in clearly with the findings of previous chapters in this thesis, showing that the Company was willing to undertake significant operations on behalf of the Persian state and that the Persians were aware of the Company's usefulness. Persian co-opting of the Company's naval power for use as an instrument of international diplomacy, maritime policing and direct military force, is augmented by a commercial side of this relationship.

The relationship is demonstrated through the seemingly innocuous commodity known as hing.²⁵⁰ Hing was a recognised commodity in Asia, being used commonly as

²⁵⁰ Asafoetida, a gum or resin extracted from the roots of the *Ferula* genus or plants, the name means "foetid smell".

a condiment in cooking, and it grew particularly well in Khorasan and Afghanistan. Nader Shah attempted to ship and sell large quantities of this product in India, along with copper, which the Company had proven to be welcome in Indian markets.²⁵¹ This evidently did not go quite as planned as the Company later discovered that their *Farman* had been adjusted to include an article allowing the Company to transport and ship the foul-smelling herb free of any duties.²⁵² By changing the *Farman*, Nader Shah was evidently trying to manipulate the Company into selling hing where he had been unable to. The Company was tempted to an extent, until it was discovered that Persian officials, including Mirza Ismail, the Khan of Bandar Abbas, had secured almost all the supplies of hing and therefore the Company would be forced to pay whatever price he asked. In one case this was as high as 50 shahis in silver per maund.²⁵³ While the Company did occasionally buy and ship hing, the level of commerce was not enough for the Persians, who instead in 1735 forced the Company's broker to buy 500 maunds, despite numerous protestations from the Agent.²⁵⁴

Persian attempts to stimulate trade in this way, through either preferential taxation or access to a state monopoly in the case of silk, demonstrate that the Persians were aware of the potential power of the Company to support their both economic and international ambitions. Previous attempts at embargoing the shipping of cash and bullion throughout the Safavid period had failed to prop up the Persian economy satisfactorily,²⁵⁵ and agreements to supply silk in return for cash and goods failed. Nader Shah's attempts to use ships purchased from the Company to ship hing and

²⁵¹ IOR/G/29/7 f.43 Consultation on Wednesday 18th February 1747.

²⁵² IOR/G/29/16 f.27 List of the Company's Rogums made in March 1730.

²⁵³ IOR/G/29/5 f.304v Consultation on Monday 20th October 1735.

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p.68

copper to India, as well as his somewhat heavy-handed encouragement to the Company to purchase hing, are clear attempts to increase revenue in the short-term. The Company was seen by Nader Shah as a useful vehicle for selling and transporting products he had seized from his own population.

The issuing and renewal of the *Farman* was also an obvious attempt to stimulate commerce, allowing the Company to pursue their business around the empire, providing cloth for the Shah's armies while buying up cheap stocks of copper. Nader Shah was willing also to permit the entry of other British merchants, exemplified by the Russia Merchants, as this guaranteed him the cloth he wanted, while undermining the Company's monopoly on providing it.²⁵⁶ Such attempts to manipulate trade in this way were relatively rare, and despite the longevity of the *Farman* given to the Company, its various provisions were only untidily upheld. Previous attempts to stimulate the Persian economy by way of European trade were made during the reign of Abbas II, by his pioneering, though largely unsuccessful, Grand Vizier, Mohammed Beg.²⁵⁷ Where Mohammed Beg had failed, Nader Shah had only partially succeeded, however, the repeated attempts to use the Company as an economic stimulus by Persian regimes is revealing of an ongoing belief in the Company's commercial capabilities.

The Company's close attention to the health of the Persian economy in this period is helpful to historians, especially considering the relative dearth of contemporary local records. Nader Shah was also clearly sensitive to the importance

²⁵⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.249 Consultation on Monday 23rd May 1743.

²⁵⁷ Matthee, Rudi, "The Career of Mohammed Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah Abbas II", in *Iranian Studies*, vol.24, no.1, (1991), pp.17-36, p.27

and potential of Europeans to support his economy, to which end he was willing to use the Company's many technological and commercial advantages. Equally, the *Farman* shows an ability and awareness of ways in which the Persians could use written agreements, so treasured by Europeans, to their own advantage, adding unasked for privileges in order to stimulate an underperforming or newly discovered trade. The success of such measures appears to have only been limited. However, this can be explained in part by the brevity of their duration, as well as the changeable control Persian officials were able to exert over the Company.

Conclusion.

The Company factory at Bandar Abbas was not the culmination of a century long obsession with silk, nor was it simply a warehouse for the purchase and conveyance of wool. Instead, the factory represented a nexus of Indian Ocean trade, as well as an outpost of the Company's political network. In the period after 1700, silk had ceased to function as a major attraction to international trade, though the ability of the Company to sell its cloth remained. The Company was able to collect its share of customs from the Persian government, even if the amount they received was somewhat less than they had been given to expect. This collection of cash, through taxation or political transaction was increased by the volume of goods processed by the Company's officials, augmented by the private trade of Company servants in the Gulf and India, as well as goods carried on Company ships owned by native merchants avoiding high Persian customs duties. The Company's complicity in the "colouring" of goods was a considerable source of revenue and income, which served to replace some not received

from the Persian customs house; indeed, the circumvention of Persian systems of collection was beneficial to both the Company and the traders themselves. Instead of the laborious battle with the Shahbandar described by previous studies, one can see the circumvention of the official process by a tacit agreement, permitted by local officials with the aid of financial inducement.²⁵⁸

The wool trade reveals the depth of Company connections to local officials, through whom the Company was able to protect its profits through official channels, essentially insuring themselves against loss or theft. The trade to Kerman is also indicative of the major issues that could be caused by competition with the Dutch, proven most clearly by the large profits made by both sides when they reached a mutually supportive agreement. As this occurred in a period after which most studies end, its discovery adds a significant fresh dynamic to the debate over the interaction of Europeans in Persia.

The Company's trade in luxury items, such as wine and rosewater is demonstrative of a keen awareness of the desirability of these products, both to Company servants, other Europeans, as well as the elites of the Indian Ocean World. By holding a stock of wine, which could be used as a gift to a foreign king, or an incentive to a Company servant, the Company proved that the commodities which it bought were valuable in excess of their price in silver. Likewise, the use of rosewater as a political gift, as well as a means of improving the lives of Company servants, shows

²⁵⁸ Floor, *Five Port Cities*, p.315

a strategic approach by the Company to capitalise fully on its relationship and access to the markets of Persia, even when silk ceased to be a viable target.

Throughout this period, however, the role of the Persian government in stimulating trade cannot be dismissed. Whether through the use of the Company as a surrogate exporter of goods held by Persian officials, or the adjustment of the Company's *Farman* to encourage sales, the Persian authorities were aware of the commercial power wielded by the Company as well as their ability to harness this power to their own ends. As with the use of the Company to act in place of a Persian navy, or eventually as a supplier of one, and the utilisation of the Company as an extension of diplomatic networks, the Persian state capitalised on the Company's presence to further their own commercial ends.

Chapter 3: A Navy for Hire: The Continuing Maritime Operations of the East India Company in the Persian Gulf 1727-1743.

This chapter will explore how the Company engaged with the Persians in such a way as to make their maritime and naval military capability a major bargaining tool in ensuring their long-term trading position. This thesis has already discussed that the Persians under Shah Abbas I, before 1622, had realised that the interests and marine technology of the Europeans had changed the balance of power in the Gulf. In freeing themselves of the Portuguese at Hormuz, we see a continued Persian strategy of preventing a single European power dictate control of the Persian Gulf. From 1622 and beyond the mid-18th Century, this strategy is played out across changing Persian regimes. The Persians saw the Company as their navy and shipping capability whom they regularly called upon for both civil and military services. The *Farman* the Persians bestowed on the Company so they could carry out trade across Persia, was of major importance to the Company. However, the Persians could and did, withdraw the privileges of the *Farman* to achieve their ambitions and interests.

To keep the balance of power mentioned above, the Persians at the same time created a similar relationship with the Dutch. Beyond armed naval vessels and armed merchant men and a need for trade, these European naval powers had little else in common. The Dutch and Company's mutual dislike of the Portuguese, more than they disliked each other, would serve the Persians well. The Dutch had the good fortune to trade prestige goods commanding high prices from the Persians in their cargoes of

spices and sugar. The Company was more prosaic in that they traded in cloth and other commodities not as desirable and this put them at a significant trading disadvantage. Neither the Company nor the Dutch were well disposed to the Persians' assumed rights over their ships to render naval and maritime services, and as we shall see, high stakes games of brinkmanship were played between all three parties in order to negotiate more concessions or retain what they had.

Neither the Persians, the Company nor the Dutch played explicitly by the Farman's rules, the Persians did not pay the Company the full customs share the Company was entitled to without delay, the Dutch do not pay their port duties and the Company deceived the Persians by allowing private English ships to use their factory and evade duties. We will see in this chapter how the Persians constantly exploited their partners' desire for using their port and trading their goods with Persia as leverage to make these wily naval powers bend to their will.

Using a combination of the grants of rights and the threat of their withdrawal, fines and veiled and outright threats, we see the Persians generally get the services they require, in the end. This said, we will see also the Company's ability to measure situations and turn complex and dangerous circumstance to their advantage. The Company's capability is seen in their long-term success in managing the Persian relationship through leveraging their strong diplomatic and personal network of Persian officials. That the Persians adroitly manipulated the Company can be seen in how the Company being obliged to provide ships for a Persian navy during the rule of Nader Shah (r.1736-1747), who proved the most demanding of the Persian rulers.

A key factor to consider is that the Persians were an inland state with their population and civil centres hundreds of arduous miles from the sea. Most of the time Persian rulers and officials recognise that they lacked the expertise in seafaring matters, and as we shall see, in this chapter whenever they interfered too deeply things worked out badly for them.

The focus of the following discussion is on the Safavid/Persian resurgence after the Afghan invasion of 1722 and more particularly the reign of Nader Shah (r.1736-1747). The period between 1727 and 1743, in particular, is evidence of wider trends across this relationship between the Company and the Persian state. The events that occur during this period are important as they give an understanding of how the Company behaved and reacted when dealing with a local power from a position of relative strength. Equally and conversely, this highlights the Company's vulnerabilities when circumstances went against it. The detail provided below reveals how careful the Company was to avoid exposing its valuable naval vessels and sailors to unnecessary risk without commensurate reward. Equally, the Company actively avoided being used against any of their other trading partners in the Gulf, like Muscat or the Ottoman Empire. We see below how the Company extended Persian diplomatic exchange across the Indian Ocean and on to Europe.

Laurence Lockhart's article on the construction of a navy by Nader Shah has formed the basis of scholarship on this topic, but while covering the naval project in some detail it neglects to place the Company in the central position that it enjoyed

during this event.²⁵⁹ Two further articles by Willem Floor²⁶⁰ and Michael Axworthy²⁶¹ are mostly based on Lockhart's work. Floor rests more heavily on Dutch sources, adding a new perspective to Persian activities, whereas Axworthy attempts to tie in the naval fleet project with Nader Shah's wider political and military ambitions. These three accounts consider the building of a Persian fleet in the Gulf from a Persian perspective, though they are based almost solely on European sources; Floor's introduction of Dutch source material does little to diversify this. All three treat the construction of the naval fleet either as an event in its own right or as an extension of a policy being carried out elsewhere; in this case, Nader Shah's continued campaigns to assert his dominance over Persia and beyond. This chapter, unlike the three works mentioned above, based upon new research, gives an in depth analysis of the Company's' role in the fleet's completion. In addition, this thesis considers the wider political and military influence this fleet would have on Persia and the polities of the wider Gulf region.

The Afghan Occupation and the Rise of Nader Shah.

We will now look in detail at how the relationship changed between the Company and Nader Shah. Through his ambitions, Nader Shah who made it clear that he wished to "throw reins around the necks of the rulers of Ottoman Turkey and

²⁵⁹ Lockhart, Laurence, "The Navy of Nadir Shah", in *The Proceedings of the Iran Society*, (London, 1936).

²⁶⁰ Floor, Willem, "The Iranian Navy in the Gulf during the 18th Century", *Iranian Studies*, vol.20 no.1, (1987).

²⁶¹ Axworthy, Michael, "Nader Shah and Persian Naval Expansion in the Persian Gulf, 1700-1747", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21, pp.31-39, (2011).

Kandahar, but also Turkestan and India”,²⁶² in order to achieve this, he wanted to intensify Company naval engagement. The creation of a Persian fleet in the Gulf and the increasing involvement of the East India Company as a navy for hire had its origins in the power vacuum and chaos caused by the Afghan invasion of 1722 and the subsequent campaigns to reclaim former Safavid territory. The Afghan invasion was spurred by a failed attempt by Shah Soltan Husayn to put down a Ghilzai rebellion in Kandahar. This act set off a greater rebellion among the Hotaki Afghans, who in company with other Afghan tribes, swept west into Persia until they took the city of Isfahan and captured the Shah, whom they deposed and replaced with their own candidate, Mahmud Hotaki. The Safavid loyalists resisted the Afghans and, organised under the banner of Tahmasp Mirza, a surviving Safavid prince, regained power. With the help of his able general, Tahmasp Qoli Khan, Tahmasp Mirza was put on the throne after the Afghans were defeated in 1729. Tahmasp Qoli Khan then proceeded to supplant Shah Tahmasp II and then his infant son, Abbas III, proclaiming himself as Nader Shah in 1736, though in truth he had been the real power in Persia long before this. Nader Shah was a member of the Afshar tribe of Northern Khorasan in the north of Persia and his rise to prominence was due to the military victories he secured against the Afghans in the service of the Safavid loyalist forces. He proved his mettle fighting the Ottoman Turks, expelling them from the Western regions of Persia which they had occupied during the Afghan occupation.

By the time Nader Shah came to prominence in the chaos following the Afghan overthrow of the Safavid Dynasty, Persian rule in the Gulf Coast region, or *Garmsirat*, was nominal at best and subject to the whims of various Arab confederations, including

²⁶² Axworthy, Michael, *The Sword of Persia*, (Penguin, 2006), p.124

the *Hawala*, a grouping of several Arab Sheikhdoms along both shores of the Persian Gulf, and the Imamate of Muscat.²⁶³ The Arab naval powers were able to operate at will, the Omanis and *Hawala* fighting each other over the island of Bahrain, which was still considered a Persian possession.²⁶⁴ The Company's consultations show that by 1727 the Muscatis had grown so powerful that the Company felt unable to challenge their ships in order to charge them for passes, as they were doing with other shipping in the region.²⁶⁵

This project reveals that it was into this imbalance of power that Nader Shah intended to launch his own fleet, he sought to secure his suzerainty of the Gulf region, which had eroded with the weakening of central Safavid authority before the Afghan invasion and then crumbled under the pressure from the rising power of the Arabs of Muscat and the *Hawala*.

Borrowing and Lending: Persian Requests for Company Ships.

During the campaign to unseat the Afghans from their new Persian domains, Nader Shah ordered the Arab tribes of the Gulf to cut off any attempt by the Afghans to flee by sea. This order was obeyed by Sheikh Rashid of Basaidu, who drove the Afghans ashore, while another Sheikh let them slip away, having sympathised with

²⁶³Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.5.

²⁶⁴ *ibid*

²⁶⁵ IOR/G/29/4 ff.17-17v, Consultation on Wednesday 26th April 1727

them on the grounds of their shared Sunni religious beliefs.²⁶⁶ The new research reveals that on the 19th of March 1730 the Company was sent a similar request to deploy what ships they had to stop any Afghans escaping, which was agreed to.²⁶⁷ It is important to note that, in contrast to later events, this ‘request’ was mentioned as such in the Company’s consultation books, rather than as an order or a demand, and action was taken to gain the favour of Nader Shah and the Persian government by showing their readiness to assist in this Persian campaign.

During the early period of Tahmasp II’s reign it was unclear who was in control of Persia; both Tahmasp and Nader issued orders that were sometimes contradictory. Indeed, it is recorded in the 19th of March 1730 Company Consultation that the Company applied to Tahmasp to rescind an order issued by Nader Shah.²⁶⁸ All this was to change, however, when Nader Shah took full rein of the governance of Persia in 1732, having already strongly influenced and controlled policy during the reign of Tahmasp II and then his infant son, Abbas III. The change was marked by Nader Shah’s declaration of all previous agreements with the European companies as null and void. For the Company, this resulted in the loss of any claim to customs from Bandar Abbas and 3,000 toman owed by Shah Sultan Hussein from loans, as well as their freedom from tolls and customs.²⁶⁹ This meant that the renewal of centralised Persian authority suddenly weakened the Company’s position and the loss of their privileged position in Persia.

²⁶⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.97, Consultation on Friday 2nd January 1730

²⁶⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.106v, Consultation on Tuesday 19th March 1730

²⁶⁸ IOR/G/29/5 ff.106-v Consultation on Thursday 19th March 1730

²⁶⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f. 185 Consultation on Thursday 7th of December 1732

Despite this change in the relationship between the Company and the Persians, research for this thesis reveals that in 1734 Nader Shah demanded the use of Company ships to blockade Arab ports only nominally under Persian suzerainty. The Company Council at Bandar Abbas agreed, promising to blockade one port with the one ship they had in the Gulf at that time.²⁷⁰ No doubt this was a way of setting a limit on Nader Shah's expectations of the Company and their own exposure to his displeasure should he expect better results or greater commitment. Here the use of the word 'demand' in the records is certainly deliberate and the response given by the Company, in an official letter, seems to have been intended to make their displeasure at being 'commanded' rather than 'requested' quite clear. Later in 1734 a further demand was made for ships to cruise the "Sunni shore" of Persia with the promise of the reinstatement of the Company's *Irqam* and *Farman*. Nader Shah clearly recognised the strategic value of the Company's naval power. He reacted to the Company's resistance to his authority by threatening to remove the Company's *Farman*. Such a loss of the Company's privileges would have weakened its legal standing in Persia, as it would remove the protections and benefits it had previously enjoyed. As we have seen already Nader Shah never rescinded the *Farman* completely, he merely leveraged the Company to be more supportive of his interests through the exchange of naval services.

That Nader Shah was not from a noble family (his father was a herdsman) in contrast to Shah Abbas I, may be seen in his continued lack of subtlety in gaining the Company's maritime co-operation.²⁷¹ The records for this study reveal that the *Britannia Grab* was dispatched to cruise with a Dutch ship assigned to suppress parts

²⁷⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.225 Consultation on Sunday 3rd February 1734

²⁷¹ Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, pp.17 - 19

of the Persian state that refused to acknowledge Nader Shah. Both captains were ordered to act in concert with one another, under Persian direction.²⁷² This is another demonstration of Persian reliance on European naval power to take on otherwise impossible actions, in regaining and later extending what had previously composed the Safavid domain. Nader Shah used a carrot and stick approach to ensure that the often reluctant Company would lend their maritime power. Although this change in the niceties observed under previous regimes is seen in the Company records to have ruffled feathers, this was not all negative. By complying with these demands, the Company began to be treated more like a subject or vassal group, with requests for their assistance coming more and more frequently for various services. This is not to say that they were bound always to fulfil them, though they frequently made an effort at least to appear to be complying.

It is revealing that the Europeans acted upon such requests at all: that they did demonstrates the Company's appreciation of the need to balance Persian demands and expectations. The local officials and council at Bandar Abbas were limited by the scruples of the Company's hierarchy in taking any hostile actions against their Arab and Indian trade partners. This utilisation of European naval force is an echo of the campaign at Hormuz a century before; whether Nader Shah was conscious of this emulation of Abbas the Great or not, there are obvious parallels. It is clear that while the Company was willing to accommodate Persian demands to an extent, they were unwilling to either fully submit or act as a subject or vassal, despite their treatment. Essentially, while the Company's and Persian interests aligned, the Company was

²⁷² IOR/G/29/5 f.233 Consultation on Wednesday 10th of April 1734 and Floor, *The Iranian Navy*, p.39. For a Dutch perspective see; Floor, Willem, "The Revolt of Shaikh Ahmad Madani in Laristan and the Garmsirat (1730-1733)", *Studia Iranica* 12, (1983), pp.63-93.

willing to accede to Persian demands, though it was equally clear that the Company had not abandoned its own interests concerning good relations with Muscat, the Mughals or Ottomans and would not submit to orders without question.

The *Shahbandar*, (literally translated as ‘Port King’, in charge of the harbour facility and taxes and duties), of Bandar Abbas visited the Company on the 9th of May 1734, asking what the Shah could expect in service from the Company. The Agent, William Cockell, replied that the Company “could act nothing against Bussorah [Basra], the Muscat Arabs, The Mogulls Subjects all whom Wee were in a Strict Friendship and Alliance”.²⁷³ He added that requests to assist the Persians against their own subjects would be assented to whenever possible. Both the Company and Dutch were asked to lend ships to bring the rebellious Mohammed Khan Baluchi, a Baluchi Chief from Eastern Persia, to heel. The *Prince of Wales Galley* and a Dutch ship were therefore dispatched to join the *Britannia* and another Dutch ship already present to carry out this order.²⁷⁴ The Company was evidently trying to make clear to the *Shahbandar*, and by extension the Shah himself, that the Company's interests were reliant on far more than its trade in Persia and the Gulf, while also showing that they valued their position in the region. The Company had a long-standing trade relationship with the Ottomans, based mostly on the Levant trade, but also advantageously enforced for them in Basra.²⁷⁵ The Mughals again were trade partners whom the Company could not afford to antagonise on the whim of the Persians. The Muscatis, on the other hand, represented both a growing trading capability with a strengthening naval capacity the Company was unwilling to stir. The Company was therefore ready to assist the Persians

²⁷³ IOR/G/29/5 f.235v Consultation on Thursday 9th of May 1734, Lockhart, 1934, p.7

²⁷⁴ IOR/G/29/5 ff.235-v Consultation on Wednesday 8th May 1734

²⁷⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.140 Consultation on Wednesday 14th December 1731.

to regain their previous possessions while serving their own interests by deliberately and clearly telling the Persians what they were unwilling to do.

This thesis reveals that the *Prince of Wales*, was dispatched accordingly, on the sortie for the Shah, its mission to attack the Arab rebels on the island of Kish. This is a clear example of the Company complying with a Persian request, demonstrating the Company's earlier commitment to support the Shah's authority against rebels. The Company was given orders by the Shah in 1734 to capture Sheikh Rashid of Basaidu of which the Dutch were kept ignorant, despite also sending a ship to the island. The Company's servants believed that the Persians would eventually capture the Sheikh themselves; thereby mitigating any benefit the Company might come by with his capture, not to mention the goodwill they wished to accrue in order to regain their privileges, which Nader Shah had abrogated.²⁷⁶ Here the Company can be seen to play politics adroitly by not being as cooperative with the Shah through delaying their efforts to catch the Sheikh. They believed that by saving their wholehearted support for Latif Khan they would gain greater favour with their new contact.²⁷⁷ This shows that they were capable of bartering with the Persians for their help, withholding assistance until an equitable arrangement had been reached. The Company's employees were looking particularly to gain an advantage over a powerful merchant at Basaidu, named 'Hajji Tenaui' who had been interfering with their trade at that port.²⁷⁸ The merchant had managed to force all commerce with the Company through his person, forbidding the other merchants to deal directly with the Company and therefore deriving significant

²⁷⁶ IOR/G/29/5 ff.236v-7 Consultation on Tuesday 14th May 1734

²⁷⁷ *ibid*

²⁷⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.238 Consultation on Friday 17th May 1734

profit.²⁷⁹ The Company demanded the removal of this merchant, or the end of this practice, before they would take any action against the Arab and Baluchi rebels.²⁸⁰ The Company was clearly aware of the latitude with which they could bargain with the Persians in order to both fulfil any obligations the Shah laid on them, while also gaining local benefit; in this case the Company was also trying to make a good impression upon Latif Khan.

Despite this cooperation, the Company continued to have to limit the damage that acquiescence to Persian demands could cause to their relations with other powers. In 1736, Nader Shah wished to use his nascent fleet to capture the island and pearl fisheries of Bahrain. On this occasion, the Company was approached by Taqi Khan and Latif Khan, on orders from Nader Shah, for their assistance.²⁸¹ The Company demurred, claiming that they had no ships suitable to the task and therefore would have to request both ships and permission from Bombay before entering into any such undertaking.²⁸² The Company servants' consultation concerning this event reveals that this was, in fact, an attempt to extract a full confirmation of their trading privileges from the Persian government; the Company was no doubt also concerned about damaging their relations with the Arabs.²⁸³ Unfortunately the Company's attempt to regain their privileges on this occasion failed.

²⁷⁹ *ibid*

²⁸⁰ *ibid*

²⁸¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.335 Consultation on Monday 3rd May 1736

²⁸² *ibid*

²⁸³ *ibid*

The Persians were also actively soliciting the Dutch to provide ships for their campaigns in the Gulf, though the relationship between the two was often sour. While the Dutch did help the Persians in their campaigns on occasion, they never appear to have found a comfortable balance between their own business and Persian demands. A Dutch ship accompanied the Persian fleet that departed for the Arab Shore on 1st April 1737 carrying forces to ‘assist’ the Imam of Muscat with a rebellion.²⁸⁴ Rather than agreeing to Persian demands consistently, however, the Dutch tended to refuse utterly, not bothering to undergo the negotiations in which the Company often found themselves. In one case, Taqi Khan's requests for a large Dutch ship were ignored, angering him to the point where even an expensive gift was not recompense enough.²⁸⁵ This is a clear manifestation of the costs that could be associated with being uncooperative with Persian demands, the avoidance of which required a nuanced diplomatic approach.

Later in the campaign, Taqi Khan, *Beglerbegi* of Fars, decided that he would go himself to the Arab Shore, not satisfied with the plunder sent back to him by Latif Khan. In order to get there, he requested the use of the *Halifax*, a Company ship. This was agreed to and preparations were made with the captain by the Agent, only for Taqi Khan to change his mind the next day and demand that instead the *Halifax* take horses and reinforcements for Latif Khan. Taqi Khan explained that he felt this was only fair as the Dutch had already made two trips.²⁸⁶ This playing off the Dutch and the Company was not an uncommon tool used by the Persians, who regularly fostered competition between the European companies to better achieve Nader Shah's ends.

²⁸⁴ Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.10

²⁸⁵ IOR/G/29/6 f.17 Consultation on Saturday 31st December 1737

²⁸⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.377 Consultation on Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th April 1737

Persian demands for ships did not always focus on large ocean-going ships, but spread also to the small local *trankys* that the Company and Dutch retained to carry goods from their ocean-going vessels to port. In 1737 the Persian fleet commandeered all of these boats in order to load men and horses for the occupation of Muscat.²⁸⁷ This interrupted the loading of goods aboard the *Wilmington* and provision of water for the *Harwich*, both of which were delayed until the loading of the Persian fleet was completed, petitions for even a single *tranky* for this purpose being bluntly refused by Taqi Khan and Latif Khan.²⁸⁸ This event was irritating to the Company and Dutch, both of whom lost time as their ships were forced to wait in port.²⁸⁹ An Indian ship was also detained by the Persians and made to make two trips to the Arab Shore, the *Noqudah* telling Taqi Khan that he would buy a ship for him on reaching Surat; the *Noqudah* revealed to the Company that this was, however, just a ruse to get his business passed more quickly.²⁹⁰ The Persians were happy to inconvenience both European and local shippers, however, where the Europeans were addressed with requests or orders, non-Europeans had to cope with the sequestration of their property.

The ban on action against the Arabs did not stop the Company choosing to provide the services of a ship to carry supplies to Taqi Khan during the campaign. The Company deemed that this did not contravene their orders to not engage in hostilities with the Arabs.²⁹¹ The captain of the *Rose Galley*, Henry Venfield, was given strict

²⁸⁷ IOR/G/29/6 f.14v Consultation on Tuesday 20th December 1737

²⁸⁸ *ibid*

²⁸⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.16 Consultation on Tuesday 27th December 1737

²⁹⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.26 Consultation on Friday 31st March 1738

²⁹¹ IOR/G/29/6 ff.37v-38 Consultation on Tuesday 13th June 1738

instructions not to go out of his way to liaise with either Persian or Muscati forces or officials. On delivering his charge, consisting of some supplies and reinforcements, he should stay no more than three or four days off the coast of Muscat.²⁹² Another passenger, an Armenian merchant named Khawaja 'Sohawk' was also to be taken with them, though Captain Venfield was instructed to leave him behind if he did not return to the ship within the time allotted in his instructions.²⁹³ Venfield was also expressly forbidden from taking any hostile action against the Arabs under any circumstance.²⁹⁴ Captain Venfield was to write later that Taqi Khan delayed him numerous times, spuriously claiming that he wished to return with the ship to Bandar Abbas, but never making a certain move to board her.²⁹⁵ Further requests were delayed by news of an Arab fleet cruising the Gulf and putting a stop to any shipping between Bandar Abbas and the Arab Shore, highlighting the tenuous position of Company shipping in the region at the time.²⁹⁶ This danger was highlighted when the *Rose Galley* was captured by the Arab fleet and threatened with dire consequences should they be caught supplying the Persians again. Captain Venfield was taken prisoner.²⁹⁷ The crew thereafter refused to carry anything for the Persians to the Arab Shore under any circumstances, causing a minor incident between the Company and the Persians, who desired the use of the galley to again carry supplies.²⁹⁸ This again reveals the complex interplay of factors which governed the regional relations adhered to by the Company and their fear of confrontation with an obviously threatening Arab naval force, a concern that overcame the political drive to maintain the Company's privileges in Persia. There were obviously limits to the risks that the Company would take and the

²⁹² IOR/G/29/6 ff.39v-40 Consultation on Wednesday 21st June 1738

²⁹³ *ibid*

²⁹⁴ *ibid*

²⁹⁵ IOR/G/29/6 f.44 Consultation on Wednesday 19th July 1738

²⁹⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.45v Consultation on Friday 21st July 1738

²⁹⁷ IOR/G/29/6 f.48v Consultation on Friday 28th July 1738

²⁹⁸ IOR/G/29/6 f.49 Consultation on Monday 31st July 1738

clear demonstration of a threat, such as the incident with the *Rose Galley*, was enough to give them pause. Assistance to the Persians in their naval experiment was therefore not to be pursued at any cost, but was a useful means of better securing the Company's trade.

The Dutch often avoided providing Taqi Khan and other Persian officials with ships by way of elaborate gifts, an example of this occurred in 1738, when the Company had to placate Taqi Khan for the behaviour of the *Rose Galley*'s crews.²⁹⁹ Later, the *Bombay Grab*, a native ship flying Company colours was requested to go to "Julfar" (Ras Al-Khayma) to resupply the Persian army there. The Company originally did not consent to sending the ship, perhaps concerned by the possibility of repeating the incident with the *Rose Galley*, but the *Noqudah* of the ship was willing to let his ship go while he sold his goods ashore.³⁰⁰ Unfortunately for the *Noqudah* a proportion of his goods were sequestered for use by the Persian government and were never paid for, despite the service his ship was doing them.³⁰¹ When a similar request was made to transport grain along the Persian Coast after the ship's return from the Arab Shore, the *Noqudah* agreed only after being offered suitable compensation and the presence of a European on board in the hope this might prove some security.³⁰² This shows that even individual captains were able to avoid exploitation by the Persians, their services being valuable enough for the Persians to compromise in order to retain them.

²⁹⁹ *ibid*

³⁰⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.73v Consultation on Friday 7th December 1739

³⁰¹ *ibid*

³⁰² IOR/G/29/6 f.74v Consultation on Saturday 22nd December 1739

The Company had to balance requests for their ships with the competing interests of their trade at Muscat and Basra, as well as the danger of aggravating Persian officials, on whom the continuance of their trade relied. The Company was willing to lend their ships for the transportation of goods, attacks against recalcitrant subjects of the Shah, even risking reprisals from the Muscatis by taking soldiers and supplies to support the Persian invasion of the Arab Shore. There are obvious similarities between these events and the Hormuz campaign, as yet again the Company was providing a Persian regime with naval assistance to fulfil its territorial and military ambitions. This displays an unprecedented level of cooperation between the Company and Persia that is not explored in the work of previous scholars, nor is it replicated anywhere else where the Company operated. These services do not represent the only role the Company played in extending Persian power over the Gulf, indeed, the Company would help the Persians in extending their influence much further afield. The Company was asked by the Persians not only to carry out these military missions, but also to carry their embassies abroad to facilitate Persian diplomacy.

“Over ranks of Swelling Waves” the Transportation of Persian Embassies by Company Shipping.

Company ships were not just seen as a means of projecting military power or transporting goods. In fact, the Persians were aware of their role as a means of creating distant communications links were recognised from before the arrival of the Company. In 1598 a band of adventurers from England led by two brothers, Anthony and Robert Shirley, had journeyed to Persia from Italy in the hope of making their fortunes. They

were encouraged by the Venetian authorities who hoped that the presence of these Englishmen would destabilise the growing Iberian control over Asian trade. The arrival in Persia of the Shirleys and their companions was greeted with an audience with Shah Abbas I (the Great) and led to Anthony Shirley being dispatched on an ambassadorial mission back to Europe in 1599. This sadly ended in failure when Anthony and his Persian counterpart, Hussein Ali Beg, fell out in Rome, where their mission petered out. Robert Shirley remained in Persia for some years, reportedly helping Shah Abbas to train his army and reform his artillery along European lines. He married a Circassian chieftain's daughter who accompanied him on his own mission to Europe in 1608, the objective of which was to create an alliance against the Ottoman Turks. Shah Abbas hoped to tempt European powers into such an agreement with the promise of trade facilities in Persia.³⁰³ Shirley and his Persian Embassy visited the courts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Holy Roman Empire, Florence, Milan, Spain and Rome, where he was received and showered with gifts and titles but no treaty emerged. Robert eventually returned to Persia on an East India Company ship via Surat in 1615,³⁰⁴ demonstrating that from the outset of their activities, the Company concerned itself with diplomatic and political activities. On a second trip back to Europe, Robert met with another Persian ambassador named Naqd Ali Beg, who tore up his credentials and struck him, declaring he was a fraud. Naqd Ali had been brought to England aboard the East Indiaman *Star*, again seeking an alliance against the Ottomans.³⁰⁵ Wright points out that the Company promoted the cause of Naqd Ali, providing him with accommodation and financial support throughout his time in England, representing him

³⁰³ Wright, Denis, *The Persians among the English*, (I.B. Tauris, 1985), pp.2-3

³⁰⁴ Wright, *The Persians among the English*, p.4

³⁰⁵ Wright, *The Persians among the English*, pp.5-6

beneficially at court. The English Court returned Naqd Ali to Persia after his inevitable break with Shirley.³⁰⁶

The Shirley brothers' embassies were exceptionally significant, despite the breakdown of their stated objectives. They were, in fact, successful in that they served to stimulate several embassies to visit Persia from many of the crowned heads of Europe, including Sweden, Russia, Poland-Lithuania and Holstein. Though all ended in failure they sought to break the Ottoman alliances or trade rights for the sale of Persian silk via Astrakhan to Europe.³⁰⁷ This early engagement with Europe, despite the lack of any firm results, demonstrates an awareness of Persia with the European Courts and *vice versa* and its importance as a regional actor, if not a global one. These links did not continue, however, as there is no evidence of any return embassies to Europe after Shirley and Naqd Ali Beg. A compelling reason for this is the death of Abbas I. His successor Shah Safi neglected trade interests, during which time the Dutch became the pre-eminent maritime exporter of Persian silk, the main commodity of interest to Europeans. The Company would not enjoy such good standing in Persia until the conclusion of the English Civil War and Restoration, after which stability at home permitted for resurgence abroad.

The relationship fostered by the Company with Naqd Ali Beg and the presence of the Shirleys acclimatised the Persians to the presence of the English and later the Company, which proved its value as an avenue of trade and political broker. The fostering of good relationships, including the exchange of embassies, no doubt eased

³⁰⁶ *ibid*

³⁰⁷ Matthee, Rudolph, *The Politics of Trade in Iran*, (Cambridge, 1999), p.141

and framed the arrival of the Company and the cooperation with the Persian government over the Hormuz campaign. It also created an historic precedent of Anglo-Persian diplomatic assistance, which the Company also exploited in the early 18th century.

The transportation of embassies on behalf of the Persians was another way in which the Company engaged with their hosts; fulfilling these requests was a useful way for the Company to gain prestige and favour. For the Persians, the presence of the Company as a willing carrier for their embassies opened new possibilities for contacts with other powers throughout Asia and even Europe, as shown by the voyage to Siam and the embassies carried to India. Stern comments that the presence of Europeans allowed for a much greater flow of diplomatic missions; the Siamese king, Phra Narai, for example, sent and received embassies from both England and France, as well as the one sent from Persia.³⁰⁸ The Persian state continued to use the facility provided by the Company, which followed on from the Persians' dispatch of the Shirley brothers back to Europe. The Persians' most frequent diplomatic exchanges remained with Russia, the Ottomans and Mughals, the latter two of which, as Muslim empires, shared a common tradition of diplomatic exchange centred around political events, such as the deaths of incumbent rulers and the coronations of their successors. This point is illustrated by a complaint made by Abbas I after it was realised that the death of predecessor, Tahmasp I in 1576 had gone unremarked upon by the Mughal Emperor Akbar.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.77

³⁰⁹ Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations*, p.55

According to Subrahmanyam, previous to the Company arrival in the Gulf, Persian embassies had to travel to India via Kandahar, a region disputed by the two empires, or gain Portuguese approval to travel via the Gulf.³¹⁰ The arrival of the Company therefore facilitated communications between India and Persia via the Gulf, by providing transport for Persian embassies. In contrast, the Portuguese whom the Company replaced, had been deliberately obstructive and refused the transit of Persian embassies through the Gulf at will. Even when the Company did not transport Persian embassies directly, the Portuguese did not stop vetoing their transit. It therefore seems apparent that the arrival of the Company in the Gulf greatly facilitated Persian diplomacy, allowing for larger embassies and more official travel to distant lands for example Siam. As well as this, the Company facilitated faster and more secure communication with the Mughals, with whom contact had been staunch either by the great distance and risk of the overland route, or by Portuguese interference in the Gulf. The presence of Europeans on the Gulf littoral also allowed for speedier communication with European powers, permitting the dispatch of embassies to England, France and the Netherlands. With his rise to power and prominence, Nader Shah sought to reassert and reaffirm these links with the Company, hoping to use them to facilitate his own ambitions. While the last of the Afghans were still holding on in various parts of Persia, including the *Garmsirat*.

This thesis allows the following story to be recounted in detail for the first time. These events highlight the complex interactions, brinkmanship, deceit and outcomes that occurred between the Persians, Dutch and Company officials regarding the demand

³¹⁰ Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, "An Infernal Triangle: The Contest between the Mughals, Safavids and Portuguese 1590-1605", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Dynasty*, (I.B. Tauris, 2012), p.105

of transit made by Nader Shah. We see the Company first refusing to co-operate and then correctly navigating the sensitivity of the situation, handling both the Dutch and Persian personalities and behaviours to ultimately manipulate events to their own distinctive advantage.

In 1730 Nader Shah demanded that the Company provide shipping for an embassy to the Mughal Court at Delhi. This embassy was led by Ali Mardan Khan the *Ishik-Aghasi Bashi* (Chief Mace-Bearer, an honorific title in the Persian Court). This demand was transmitted by the Company's Armenian broker, who incidentally was beaten by the Shah's guard and forced to pay 40 toman before being permitted to carry his message.³¹¹ The relationship of the Company with the Persian state underwent a major change in the diplomacy used in such naval requests at this point. The Company had already been extorted for money through various exactions by Nader Shah. At the time of these events the Company was already petitioning the newly crowned Shah Tahmasp II to recoup these exactions. Allied to this rough, handling the Company had not been recognised or reimbursed for their role in the pacification of Arab forces still resisting the Shah's rule.³¹²

The ambassador, Ali Marden Khan, was initially sent away, being informed that "the monsoon is as far sett in that should either the Vesells of which We have but two stay above ten days they would not only Endanger the loss of their Passage but of the Lives of every Man on board".³¹³ It transpired that the two 'Vessells', the *Severn* and

³¹¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.105v, Consultation on Saturday 14th March 1730

³¹² IOR/G/29/5 f.106v Consultation on Thursday 19th March 1730

³¹³ IOR/G/29/5 f.106 Consultation on Thursday 19th March 1730

Edward, were both privately owned and had little space between decks, therefore unsuitable to transport passengers. The captain of the *Severn* had refused point blank to carry the Persians in any case.³¹⁴

This led the Persians to request the same service from the Dutch, who at first refused, then offered a sloop to carry the ambassador with a few horses and attendants as far as Sind.³¹⁵ How helpful this was is a matter for conjectures as it is only two thirds of the way to Bombay in terms of distance along the coast and Delhi lies far inland. How easy it would have been to disembark and get another ship or go overland to Bombay from Sind is impossible to evaluate now. Regardless, the Dutch then withdrew that offer the next day, earning the ire of the Ambassador.³¹⁶ The following Monday, after the intercession of various local officials, the Dutch repeated the offer to lend the sloop to carry the Ambassador, 30 attendants and 15 horses.³¹⁷ The Persians, deeming the Dutch sloop much too small, refused. Ali Mardan Khan then returned to the Company and requested use of the recently returned *Britannia*.

Despite the previous reasoning of monsoon and dangers, the Company, thinking it only proper to provide this ship in order to keep up with Dutch pretences and with an eye to supporting their own difficult ongoing negotiations in Isfahan, acquiesced.³¹⁸ The offer of the *Britannia* was greeted by the Persian Ambassador, as well as Mir Mehr Ali, the Persian governor of Bandar Abbas, with much pleasure especially as it had

³¹⁴ *ibid*

³¹⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.109 Consultation on Friday 17th April 1730

³¹⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.109 Consultation on Saturday 18th April 1730

³¹⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.109v Consultation on Monday 20th April 1730

³¹⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f. 111v Consultation on Wednesday 29th April 1730 (dated incorrectly in text as 27th)

been made “without recourse to frivolous excuses as was practiced by the Dutch”.³¹⁹ The Company also managed to retain the use of a small ship on the pretext that it would prove enough of a threat to ward off attacks on Bandar Abbas by Baluchi tribesmen, who had been scouring the region, and also by Arab pirates who had been raiding along the coast.³²⁰ After a short while, the Ambassador decided to use only the Dutch sloop, the threat of Baluchi and Arab aggression being impressed upon him as enough reason to leave the *Britannia* at Bandar Abbas as well.³²¹

By this stage in the story both the Dutch and the Company can be seen to fence and trade amongst each other and with the Persian officials. Their key contacts in Bandar Abbas mediating for the state is an interesting detail that makes the story even more informative: Their intercession displays both their loyalty to the state and trust in their ability to negotiate with the Company. This event had the dual advantage of discrediting the Dutch in the eyes of the Persians as well as showing a willingness on the part of the Company to transport the embassy and defend the city from the Baluchi and Arab threats. The Persian perception of the Company willingly offering this service was calculated to assist the ongoing negotiations for the restoration of the Company’s privileges, then taking place in Isfahan. Given the personality of Nader Shah this was a game for high stakes.

The next mention of this event comes when the Dutch sloop, carrying the Ambassador is reported to have returned to Bandar Abbas on the 31st of May 1730

³¹⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f. 111v Consultation on Wednesday 29th April 1730

³²⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f. 111v Consultation on Wednesday 29th April 1730 and IOR/G/29/5 f.112v Consultation on Saturday 2nd and Monday 4th May 1730

³²¹ *ibid*

having met with bad weather on the way to India. This, from the Persians' perspective, is further proof of the Company's honesty about the weather. The ship first called at Muscat, where the embassy was provisioned and civilly treated, but the ambassador then insisted on returning to Bandar Abbas, being "very much terrified" by the heavy weather they encountered.³²² The rest of this party bound for India on another ship had been lost on the first night of the voyage and had not been seen or heard of since.³²³ This demonstrates how ignorant of the sea the Persians could be and also how the Dutch were happy to take advantage of this for their own aims. At the same time, this dishonest conduct by the Dutch led only to their discredit and turned to the Company's advantage, evidencing again their skills not only as traders but also as political actors.

The Ambassador, after a brief time ashore in Muscat, returned to Bandar Abbas, representing to the English how "the Dutch had baffled him in making an Excuse to go to Muscat and Sell their sugar and afterwards would proceed no further, but had frightened him into a Consent of coming back hither".³²⁴ He went on to explain that he would represent the Dutch poor treatment of him to the Persian Court, but in the meantime requested the use of a ship to carry out his original journey, no longer wishing to have anything to do with the Dutch.³²⁵

The Ambassador was clearly not at liberty to give up his quest and clearly not prepared to take no for an answer. He told the Company that it had always been

³²² IOR/G/29/5 f.115 Consultation on Monday 31st May 1730

³²³ *ibid*

³²⁴ IOR/G/29/5/ f.118v Consultation on Wednesday 22nd of July 1730

³²⁵ *ibid*

customary for the Company to carry embassies on board their ships from Persia, hinting that any refusal might lead to punishment.³²⁶ Though the Company servants did not believe that the Ambassador would harm them, given the treatment of the original messenger they carried some concern for their native staff, fearing their broker and linguist might suffer in their stead. Coupled with this they were still negotiating to retain their *Farman* conditions with the Shah and Tahmasp Qoli Khan.³²⁷ It is important to note that the Ambassador still did not demand or requisition the ship or carriage and this gives some indication that the relationship was not master/slave, even though the Company was in a challenged position with regards their rights to trade. The veiled threat, given the earlier brutality, had to be taken seriously.

Not to be cowed, the Company replied that they did not see that they were under any obligation to carry Persian embassies, but they would be happy to lend a ship for this purpose “out of gratitude and Return were always ready to Shew our attachment to their majestys and out of Friendship and Respect complyd with their request”.³²⁸ As this is not a game and the ambassador had his life put at risk, having been cheated and deceived at the hands of the Europeans by this time, the Company, in not kowtowing completely was showing considerable diplomatic and negotiating *sangfroid*. Equally all these decisions about how to negotiate are in real time, with no recourse to either Bombay or London.

³²⁶ IOR/G/29/5/ f.118v Consultation on Wednesday 22nd of July 1730

³²⁷ IOR/G/29/5/ f.118v Consultation on Wednesday 22nd of July 1730

³²⁸ IOR/G/29/5/ f.120 Consultation on Wednesday 22nd of July 1730

The *Britannia* was therefore set aside for this purpose, though the Persians were informed that they would need to provide a smaller ship to accompany her, the coast not being safe for a larger ship to approach. As well as this, transportation for the entourage, horses and baggage of the embassy would also need to be paid for by the Persians themselves, the ship that the Company had intended on lending them having been too badly damaged during its capture by the *Britannia*.³²⁹ Although the account does not report when the embassy left, the *Britannia* returned safely to Bandar Abbas on the 14th December 1730, having last called at Bombay.³³⁰

The detail made available for this thesis also reveals significant information about sovereignty, jurisdiction and intimidation. Regardless of the power of retaliation that could have been raised against it, the Company continue to negotiate for their own interests. It seems clear that while the Persians did not view the Europeans as their subjects per se, they expected to be accommodated in their requests. Interestingly, the ambassador's suggestion that the Company had traditionally carried Persian missions in this way shows a level of familiarity with the Company's history in Persia, as well as a belief that the *Farman* obliged the Company to provide service. This evidence suggests that Persian officials viewed the Company as a sort of irksome lesser ally, who, while being allowed to trade and self-govern, was expected also to serve when requested to do so, owing to their reliance on Persian royal favour to maintain their position. This does not show a relationship of vassalage, where the Persians would have expected a regular tribute, nor subject status, making them liable to taxation. The Company therefore defied easy classification, though it seems most accurate to

³²⁹ IOR/G//29/5/ f.120 Consultation on Sunday 26th of July 1730

³³⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.139v Consultation on Wednesday 14th December 1730

describe them as an opinionated minor ally, operating on the border of the Empire who was useful enough when cooperative. This event is also emblematic of the Persians' expectation of Company if not European naval assistance, having a pedigree dating back to the Shirleys' embassies, as well as of the Company taking advantage of a further Dutch blunder. The actions of the Company facilitated the Persians to engage with politics on a global stage, sending and receiving embassies from Europe, as well as from their neighbours in Ottoman Turkey and the Mughal Empire.

If the above was negotiation was not tense enough, the following story reveals the nature of the people the Company found itself negotiating with and the risk they very carefully and with significant diplomacy navigated their way through. In 1732, a second ambassador was appointed to the Mughal Court named Mahmud Ali Beg for whom the Company was also expected to provide transportation. This news was delivered in a letter from William Cockell, which was accompanied by an order from Shah Tahmasp II to that effect. Again, this was an order, rather than a request and the Company complied immediately, promising to provide passage, but only for the ambassador, on their next ship bound for India, demonstrating that acquiescence came with a setting of expectations.³³¹ It was characteristic that a Shah would order rather than request; though the Company did not consider such orders binding, they attempted to fulfil them where they were able or insomuch as it was convenient to them. It was also a courtesy that following the Shah's demand other Persian officials paid formal visits to the Company Agent to ingratiate themselves and make a public display of respect. Such visits were an integral part of Persian court and local politics and therefore the integration of the Company and Dutch into this system goes some way to

³³¹ IOR/G/29/5 ff.181-v Consultation on Saturday 28th October 1732

explaining the relationship between Persian and European officials. The Europeans themselves took part in various ritualistic customs, such as official visits, gift giving and welcoming new arrivals into town. These will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

Mahmud Ali Beg boarded the *Britannia* in November 1732 shortly after it returned with Ali Mardan Khan on the completion of his voyage detailed above.³³² Mahmud Ali Beg also took with him a Dutch ship, used to transport part of his equipage and entourage, the rest being taken on smaller, local vessels.³³³ Mahmud Ali Beg's embassy even went as far as summoning Company shipping from the Gulf to Sind to carry them back to Persia in 1734 after the completion of their mission.³³⁴ This request came to nothing as the Ambassador was reported dead the following January when a 'Moorish' ship came to Bandar Abbas and refused to transport his body or effects back to Persia without explicit orders from the Court.³³⁵ The Company was again summoned for the return of Mahmud Ali Beg's body.

Although the Persian leadership clearly had a sense of entitlement, when one considers the confidence placed in the Company for the return of the embassy's entourage and effects, the Persians, despite their apparent lack of need for diplomacy, are not left with much choice other than to demand the Company's assistance. It would be very hard for them to accept a negative answer had they only requested this service. Owing to the death of Mahmud Ali Beg, two agents, Safi Khan Beg and Mahmud Siah

³³² IOR/G/29/5 f.184 Consultation on Monday the 27th of November 1732

³³³ IOR/G/29/5 f.193 Consultation on Saturday 13th of January 1733

³³⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.255 Consultation on Saturday 9th October 1734

³³⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.263 Consultation on Wednesday 15th January 1735

Beg, were appointed by Nader Shah to travel to India and recover the body and effects of the former ambassador. They demanded shipping from the Company but were firmly told that the monsoon had ended and it would be impossible to take them.³³⁶

The Company was again pressed three days later, but this time the agents had a ruse. This was to send the agents out on a ship for a couple of days and then return with a story of bad weather to placate Nader Shah and avoid the journey.³³⁷ The Company refused to take part, believing this to be an attempt to entrap them, instead saying that a ship would be made available to them when the season permitted passage to India.³³⁸ It is hard to say whether this is evidence of the Company's probity, or simply that the Company was wary of being tricked by the Persian agents, thereby betraying their complicity in misleading the Shah about their ability to travel during the monsoon. Given the danger of incurring the Shah's wrath and the existence of plenty of detractors, not least the Dutch, who would inform of such a deceit, the Company clearly were not to be taken in by such a dangerous game, especially after the Dutch expedition to Muscat.

In July of the same year, the Company again promised their assistance to transport the agents, but pointed out that they would be unable to transport the embassy's elephants back to Persia as these required separate open boats rather than the confined decks of the Company ship, which could not accommodate them.³³⁹ The Company was to come good on their promise to provide ships as promised, though the

³³⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.274v Consultation on Tuesday 6th May 1735

³³⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.275 Consultation on Friday 9th May 1735

³³⁸ *ibid*

³³⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.289 Consultation on Thursday 17th July 1735

Persians had other problems. The Dutch failed to provide ships and the Persians were unable to supply smaller boats to transport the horses and elephants. This was reportedly because Ali Mardan Khan, on his return from India, had beaten the Indian *Noqudahs* of these smaller ships and taken back what he had paid them previously. These native captains refused to take on the Persians at Sind and thus the Dutch were tasked with supplying local shipping from the Gulf to go to India and back to collect the stranded embassy.³⁴⁰

The refusal of the Indian *Noqudahs* to take the Persian agents shows an independence inherent in sailors of the period and region and may go some way to explain the use of the Europeans rather than these native ships. The agents finally departed on the *Rose Galley* on the night of the 15th September 1735.³⁴¹ The agents were not to return by this ship though, despite it returning to Bandar Abbas a month later. It is reported that the two agents had so mistreated the crew of the *Rose Galley*, that her captain, John Harris, in consultation with his principal officers, Henry Venfield and Samuel Hough, had left both Safi Khan Beg and Mahmud Siah Beg in India.³⁴² The captain explained to the Company's officials that this decision had been taken due to the poor treatment suffered by the crew of their ship at the hands of the two agents and therefore, to avoid further insult and any resultant trouble, they had been left in India to make their own way back.

³⁴⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.300 Consultation on Saturday 6th September 1735

³⁴¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.302 Consultation on Tuesday 16th September 1735

³⁴² IOR/G/29/5 f.306v Consultation on Thursday 13th November 1735

The main issues appear to have been the unwillingness of the Persian agents to part with their horses, which the Company's ship could not carry, and the failure of those same Persian men to provide the ship with wood and water for the ship's upkeep while at Surat.³⁴³ This account suggests that the crews of the Company ship, whether they were Europeans, Indians or native Persians, were treated as though they were subjects or lackeys. This being the case the sailors would be considered to be very low in social status. However, they would only answer to their officers, with even the officers being treated with disdain by the Persian agents. This behaviour mirrors that experienced by the Indian *Noqudahs* who refused to deal with the agents in India as well. That the Persian agents felt they held jurisdiction over non-Persians outside of Persia is difficult to explain.

The perceived status of the Company in the eyes of the Persian agents is a useful detail in considering the wider image of the Company held by the higher echelons of the Persian ruling class. It also goes to show how precarious the actual authority of the Company's employees on land must have been and how good their operational level relationships were to cushion them from this type of encounter. The actions of Captain Harris and his crew brought considerable trouble to the Company, which was forced to placate the irate Persians by paying 19,320 shahis to Safi Khan Beg to cover the transport costs to return him to Persia. In return, both Persian agents signed a letter declaring themselves well satisfied with the Company's services to them.³⁴⁴ As well as this expense, Latif Khan, the Persian admiral, also had to be placated after Captain Harris nearly had him thrown overboard, being saved only by the intervention of the

³⁴³ IOR/G/29/5 f.307 Consultation on Thursday 13th November 1735

³⁴⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.310 Consultation on Monday 1st December 1735

ship's mate. It is not mentioned why Latif Khan had gone aboard in the first place, but the conduct of Captain Harris was explained thus by the Company's Persian Agent "our seafaring men's behaviour was generally as boisterous as the Element they must deal with and that we ourselves when we went a voyage were seldom pleased with the Captain's deportment".³⁴⁵ This seems to have satisfied Latif Khan, who also promised to represent the Company's services well to his superiors. This again demonstrates the ability of the Company's men to turn difficult and potentially explosive situations to their advantage.

It is through the endorsement of these officials that we see the major advantage to the Company of acceding to Persian demands for transportation of their embassies. The endorsements and recognition that these acts received at Court were of considerable potential to the Company in the securing of their trade privileges and as a means of escaping financial exactions for themselves or their servants. The Company was careful to secure the endorsements from the two agents who travelled to India and the letter from Latif Khan, which were sent by the Company with letters of their own, to Nader Shah.³⁴⁶

In 1736, Nader Shah ordered that Mirza Mohsen be transported by the Company and Dutch to India as an ambassador to the Mughal Emperor. As well as this passenger, the sister and family of one Sa'dat Khan, a Mughal Vizier, were also to be taken.³⁴⁷ Despite the Persians having their own ships by this time, which will be

³⁴⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.310v Consultation on Thursday 4th December 1735

³⁴⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.315 Consultation on Saturday 3rd January 1736

³⁴⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.359v Consultation on Tuesday 30th November 1736

discussed later in this chapter, and their not having paid for the previous transportation provided to Persian embassies. The Company agreed to carry these passengers in the hope of securing good will from the Shah and the reinstatement of their now defunct *Farmans*. The passengers were charged 1,800 rupees for the use of the *Robert Galley* as it was not a Company owned ship.³⁴⁸ No doubt the Company also hoped that this service done for the family of a Mughal courtier would assist their activities in the Mughal domains of India. It is interesting that the Company actively charged for this service and were paid, where previously such arrangements had been viewed as favours to the Persians and thus were free of charge, the Company instead using such opportunities to garner support.

The transportation of the Persian embassies and agents clearly shows the Company's eye for a deal or an advantage. The ability of the Company's men in Persia to manipulate Dutch failures to their advantage as well as navigating around the potentially damaging conduct of the ships' companies and captains, shows a nuanced understanding of their circumstances. This in turn goes on to highlight the balancing act that continued with the Persian government and Nader Shah, eventually culminating in the receipt of favourable references from local officials and enough security to allow the Company to charge for the transportation of the embassy of 1736.

³⁴⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.361 Consultation on Thursday 9th December 1736

The Honourable Company as an Honourable Broker: Purchase of shipping for the Persian Navy.

A major shift in policy came in May 1734 when Nader Shah dispatched Latif Khan, appointed as his admiral, to the Gulf with “orders to purchase shipping of the Europeans at Gombroon”.³⁴⁹ This request was impossible for the Agent or his Dutch counterpart to fulfil, having discussed the matter together already, the ships in the Gulf at this time belonging not to them, but their superiors. The Company gave a polite but firm refusal, offering to organise the construction of shipping in Surat for the Persians as an alternative, should they so wish it. Lockhart mentions in his work that the ships of Surat were famed for their longevity, seaworthiness and resistance to the bad climate of the Gulf.³⁵⁰ The Persians were slow to warm to this offer, instead repeatedly pressing the Europeans to sell the ships that passed through Bandar Abbas.

Both the Company and the Dutch were keen to provide assistance to Latif Khan in the hope of gaining him as a useful ally and advocate for their interests at court.³⁵¹ The danger here was that if Nader Shah, who was mercurial at his best, decided that the Europeans were of no more use to him, the creation of a strong navy of his own would allow him not only to expel them from his state, but stop their trade in wool altogether. This use of a provincial official to influence the centre was not unusual and will be explored in a later chapter; in this case however, it was being used specifically to create a strong advocate for their continued presence. As well as requesting that the

³⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.234v Consultation on Thursday 2nd May 1734, Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.6, Lockhart provides this quotation, but failed to give a reference for it.

³⁵⁰ Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.6n

³⁵¹ IOR/G/29/5 ff.240v and 241 Consultations on the 28th and 29th May 1734

Persians stop offering to buy their ships, the Company again mooted the idea of dispatching a Persian, under Company guidance, to purchase ships for the Shah at Surat.³⁵² A Persian request that the Company should buy the ships for them, if provided with the money, was deemed impossible without direct orders and permission from the Presidency at Bombay.³⁵³ This is a further demonstration of the Company attempting to navigate between Persian demands and their own limitations. They used Latif Khan to assuage the demands of Nader Shah, while pleading the need to follow the orders given to them by their superiors in India.

Lockhart, in his article on these events, suggests that the Persians had bought two ships from Sheikh Rashid, a local Arab chief,³⁵⁴ when in fact the Company had captured them and handed them over to the Persians, with the Sheikh deriving no advantage whatsoever.³⁵⁵ This ascribes a much more active role to the Company in the formation of the Persian fleet; it in fact shows them positively enabling it. It seems that the Company was at something of an impasse concerning the Persian desire to build a naval force. It was willing to enable the creation of a Persian fleet, which would remove the European monopoly on naval strength in the region and thereby damage one of the few bargaining chips they had concerning their rights and privileges in Persia. This concern was not as important to the Company as removing their current obligation to provide ships to the Persians when they needed them, suggesting that the Company's attitude to the use of their ships as military tools had shifted. This shift may well be because most of the shipping travelling in and out of the Gulf was chartered by the

³⁵² IOR/G/29/5 f.241 Consultation on Wednesday 29th May 1734

³⁵³ *ibid*

³⁵⁴ Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.7

³⁵⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.242 Consultation on Sunday 2nd of June 1734

Company, thus enjoying its protection, while not being subject to or beholden to fulfil any orders contrary to their contract. The *Britannia* was a Company ship and was therefore under the command of the Agent, hence its repeated operations against Arab and Indian shipping and collection of money for passes.

One of the dangers for the Company of having privately owned, chartered ships operating in the Company's service became apparent in 1734 when two ships, the *Ruparell* and the *Patna* were sold by their captains to the Persians.³⁵⁶ This showed that where the Company might be unwilling, private concerns could fulfil the Persians' demands, thereby stealing away any benefit the Company might derive. The Captain of the *Patna*, Thomas Weddell, died shortly after making the sale to Latif Khan at Bushehr, having sent his personal effects on from there with a dinghy that brought news of the sales to Bandar Abbas.³⁵⁷ The Company's response to this was to severely censure Richard Cook, the captain and owner of the *Ruparell*, the Company describing his and Weddell's behaviour as "Scurrilous". In order to attempt to take advantage of this turn of events, the Agent decided to privately lead Latif Khan to believe that the ships had been sold him "by our connivance" in order to "make a meritt of it".³⁵⁸ This event, reported to the Bombay Presidency by a letter sent on the 3rd of December, was followed up by a positive ban on the sale of ships to the Persians by any but the Company.³⁵⁹ The ban on the sale of shipping, as well as the Agent's attempts to make it appear to the Persians that the Company had helped arrange the two previous sales shows a great degree of flexibility in the way the Company managed the expectations

³⁵⁶ Lockhart p.7 and IOR/G/29/5 f.257v Consultation on Monday 2nd of December 1734

³⁵⁷ *ibid*

³⁵⁸ *ibid*

³⁵⁹ Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.7

of the Persian Court, not to mention a good eye for how best to protect the Company's position and maintain favour.

In 1735 the nascent Persian fleet was sent against Basra, where the Company maintained a small residency, meeting with defeat at the hands of the Turks, who upon hearing of the approach of the Persian fleet seized two Company ships present there. On confronting the Ottoman authorities on this point, the Turks imprisoned the Resident Martin French and stationed troops aboard both ships. The Persians were driven off by the superior firepower of these two ships, again demonstrating the superiority of European ships.³⁶⁰ This act significantly jeopardised the standing of the Company in Persia, leading to a brief withdrawal from their factories in Kerman, Isfahan and Bandar Abbas.³⁶¹

This event demonstrated a danger that threatened all European shipping in the region and the relatively tenuous position they held. No doubt it would have been in the power of the captains of the *Royal George* and *Dean Frigate* to resist the Turks' attempts to board their ships, but this would have proven a terrible provocation to the Sublime Porte, with whom a large volume of trade, both in the Gulf and Mediterranean, was conducted. It was for this reason also that it was decided not to offer the Persians military assistance against Basra, despite the affront of having Company ships commandeered and employees imprisoned.³⁶² This event particularly underlines the difference in firepower and threat that the European ships possessed when compared

³⁶⁰ Axworthy, *Naval Expansion*, p.35 and Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.8 and Floor, *The Iranian Navy*, pp.39-40 originally in IOR/G/29/5 f.278v Consultation on Monday 16th June 1735

³⁶¹ IOR/G/29/5 ff.299-v Consultation on Wednesday 3rd September 1735

³⁶² IOR/G/29/5 f.294 Consultation on Monday 11th August 1735

to what the Persians and their Arab sailors were used to or prepared for. No doubt this disparity was at least partly responsible for the continued pre-eminence of the Europeans in the Gulf along with the desirability of their assistance with military operations and transportation of important officials, supplies and troops. This also shows why Nader Shah desired to purchase or otherwise acquire Company ships. A similar attempt was made by the Turks on hearing of a further Persian attempt on Basra in 1743, the Resident at Basra resisted Turkish calls for use of a brigantine lately arrived in port. For this refusal, he was imprisoned by the Turks, who then got the ship to approach closer to defend the city, and not wishing to repeat the events of 1735, the crew created a leak in the hull of the ship and thereby avoided providing any assistance to the Turks on pretext of repairing her.³⁶³ The Company's men were evidently just as capable of learning from their mistakes.

In May 1736 the Agent was informed that the ship *Northumberland*, under the command of Robert Mylne who was also joint supercargo with Eustace Peacock, had been sold to the Persians, despite such a sale being banned by the Company.³⁶⁴ Lockhart and Axworthy erroneously suggest that this ship was seized by the Persians,³⁶⁵ who then paid off Captain Mylne to return to the Company. Though it is true that Captain Mylne came away with 500 toman in silver, apparently as a down payment on another ship he would buy for the Persians, having also a promise for 5,000 toman more, his story was dismissed by the Agent who held him and Peacock absolutely responsible for the sale of the ship. It seems very unlikely that Mylne, against the orders of the Company and the *Northumberland's* owners, sailed to

³⁶³ IOR/G/6/ f.279 Consultation on Wednesday 17th January 1743

³⁶⁴ IOR/G/29/5 ff.336-v Consultation on Friday 21st of May 1736

³⁶⁵ Axworthy, *Naval Expansion*, p.35

Bushehr, the home port of the Persian fleet, in order to sell his cargo, unaware of the likelihood of the Persians' wishing to purchase his charge. This rather pulls at the bounds of credulity, not to mention being dismissed out of hand by the Agent and Council at the time.³⁶⁶ The attempt by the Persians to again purchase a private ship shows that the Company's plans to limit the sale of ships to their own benefit were slipping. The high prices offered by the Persians, as well as the desire of Europeans to make a good profit, were enough to render the Company's deterrents only partly successful.

The sale of shipping by private individuals was of particular concern to the Company as it threatened their position in Persia by making their refusal to sell ships to the Shah directly seem antagonistic and disruptive. The other issue for the Company was that these sales ate into their ability to organise and make a profit from the sale of ships built in India. The first instance of a Company brokered sale was that of the *Cowan* in 1736. The *Cowan* was, in fact, a privately owned frigate bought at Bombay and dispatched to the Gulf, arriving on the 19th of November 1736.³⁶⁷ After the arrival of the *Cowan* and its handover, which was accompanied by much fanfare and the firing of salutes from the Persian fleet, the fort at Bandar Abbas and the Company factory and ships in the road,³⁶⁸ the Persians requested that another ship should be delivered to them on like terms. The Dutch failed to take part in the salutes fired at the handover of the *Cowan* earning the displeasure of the Persians. This is an apt demonstration of how the Company, despite original refusals, would act in order to preserve good relations

³⁶⁶IOR/G/29/5 ff.340v-342 Consultation on Thursday 6th July 1736, consisting of letters between the Agency at Bandar Abbas and Eustace Peacock and Captain Robert Mylne.

³⁶⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.357v Consultation on Friday 19th of November 1736

³⁶⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.361v Consultation Saturday 18th December 1736

with the Persians and make money doing it. The success of this strategy can be seen in the fanfare made on receipt of the *Cowan*.

Seeing how well received the *Cowan* was, the Company happily agreed to deliver a second ship, having made somewhere in the region of 200% profit from the 8,000 toman sale, according to an envious Dutch source.³⁶⁹ The *Cowan* was later renamed the *Fath-i Shah* a ceremony in which yet further salutes were fired, including this time by the Dutch.³⁷⁰ Despite several mentions in the secondary material by Lockhart of a second ship being delivered with the *Cowan*, the EIC records contain no such detail. They show that the *Cowan* arrived in company with the *Robert Galley*, though this ship later departed carrying Mirza Mohsen, the Persian ambassador and the sister of a Mughal grandee. The *Robert Galley* was eventually sold to the Persians, but not until 1742 by the connivance of the already troublesome Eustace Peacock, who travelled up to Shiraz in order to offer the ship to the Governor of Fars, Mahmud Taqi Khan. Peacock sold the *Robert Galley* for 1,000 toman, but was forced to give a gift of 150 toman to Taqi Khan on his visit to Shiraz.³⁷¹

Two more ships, the *Mary* and the *Pembroke*, were delivered to the Persians at Bandar Abbas, with naval stores, in 1742 at a cost of 186,251 rupees or around 9,312 toman.³⁷² Originally, the Company at Surat had purchased three ships for the Persians, but the third had been damaged before departure and therefore had not arrived. The

³⁶⁹ Floor *The Iranian Navy*, 1987, p.41n, Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah*, p.9

³⁷⁰ IOR/G/29/5 ff.38v-9 Consultation on Tuesday 3rd March 1737

³⁷¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.189v Consultation on Wednesday 27th January 1742 and f.190 Consultation on Sunday 31st of January 1742

³⁷² IOR/G/29/6 ff.188v-9 Consultation on Sunday 24th January 1742

Council at Bombay requested that these costs be covered by attempting to get the Persians to pay for the third ship,³⁷³ a request which the Agent and council at Bandar Abbas found impossible to fulfil, the Persians having bought several European ships and Taqi Khan being unlikely to be duped.³⁷⁴ Instead, the Agent at Bandar Abbas made sure to get a receipt for the two ships delivered for the amount already paid them, thus putting an end to the issue as speedily as he thought possible.³⁷⁵ The actions of the Agent, though less than scrupulous, were somewhat better than the plan suggested by the Council at Bombay. The Agent succeeded in gaining political capital from a potentially awkward and dangerous situation, balancing the advantage of a quick, risky profit whilst accruing the good will of Taqi Khan. Although Jean Sutton in her examination of the Company's role in the Indian Ocean, speaks briefly of the problems caused by private and Danish trade in arms, the sale of ships as military hardware in this way seems to be unique to Company interactions with Persia.³⁷⁶

The delivery of the *Mary* and *Pembroke* was accompanied by a fresh issue; that of crewing the Persians' expanding fleet adequately. Up to this point, the fleet had been manned by Gulf Arabs, whose loyalty to the Shah in his campaigns against their fellow Arabs and Sunni co-religionists (1738 and 1742) could hardly be counted upon. Indeed, mutinies severely damaged the fighting ability of the Persian fleet on numerous occasions. This affected the Company as Taqi Khan, the *Beglerbegi* of Fars and chief administrator over the *Garmsirat*, had decided that the Indian and European crewmen already serving on the ships would serve better, not to mention more loyally, than his

³⁷³ IOR/G/29/6 f.183v Consultation on Wednesday 30th December 1741

³⁷⁴ IOR/G/29/6 f.187 Consultation on Thursday 21st January 1741

³⁷⁵ IOR/G/29/6 f.204v Consultation on Monday 19th April 1742

³⁷⁶ Sutton, Jean, *The East India Company's Maritime service*, Boydell, 2010, p.108

Arab crews. On getting wind of this, the Company dispatched their Armenian linguist with the ships in order to foil any attempt by Taqi Khan to detain the crews and, if necessary, to bribe him to secure their return.³⁷⁷ The crews did end up staying on with the Persians for two months, but insisted on full pay from them and still served under their own officers. These officers argued fiercely with Taqi Khan over whether the Persian or Company colours should be flown over the ships while the Company officers and crews remained aboard.³⁷⁸ When Taqi Khan insisted on flying the Persian colours, the crews refused to serve any longer than the two months they had been contracted for, despite the raging of the Persian official.³⁷⁹ This clearly reveals a tension between the Persians and the Company, the lack of a treaty cementing the relationship and status of both sides allowing for significant difficulties to arise over questions of sovereignty and authority, also demonstrated earlier in the behaviour of the Persian agents to India and Captain Harris.

This event rather aptly shows the weaknesses of both the Company and the Persians. On the one hand, the Persians could compel the Company to provide the crews, threatening disfavour at Court and the personal ire of key local officials, while the Persians had no way of forcing the ships' crews to comply with their orders. This underlines the disparity between the Company and Persian naval authority, prowess, and more importantly, confidence.

³⁷⁷ IOR/G/29/6 f.201 Consultation on Tuesday 23rd March 1742

³⁷⁸ IOR/G/29/6 f.204 Consultation on Tuesday 13th April 1742

³⁷⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.204v Consultation on Monday 19th April 1742

An unexpected advantage to the Persians in the presence of Europeans was the potential to use deserters as military experts. This had originally been prohibited in the agreements made during the Hormuz campaign over a century ago, though this seems to have broken down after the Afghan invasion and rise of Nader Shah. Most notable among these was Captain Richard Cook, who had sold his ship to the Persians in 1734. Cook is afterwards mentioned assisting the Persians at Bushehr in 1735, where he intervened with the Persians on the Company's behalf after the defeat at Basra as well as assisting in later negotiations with Arab mutineers on behalf of the Persians.³⁸⁰ As well as Cook, other European deserters appear to have made their way into Persian service, including men who deserted the *Harwich*, stealing the ship's boat in the process.³⁸¹ The records do not mention why these men chose to serve the Persians, though the promise of better pay, conditions, or appreciation for their naval expertise may have contributed. Sadly, certainly in terms of pay and conditions, the deserters would have been disappointed, the Arab mutinies being sparked by a lack of money and food.

The ships were officially handed over to the Persians on the 28th May 1742, despite the *Mary* being in need of daily pumping, due to leaks in her hull, and the *Pembroke* lacking rigging.³⁸² It is suggested that just taking ownership of the vessels gained Taqi Khan enough political capital with Nader Shah that he concerned himself relatively little with the state of the ships themselves, not to mention a further implied personal financial incentive tied up with the purchase.³⁸³ Despite these major issues,

³⁸⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.282v Consultation on Monday 23rd June 1735 and Lockhart, p.11

³⁸¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.14 Consultation on Friday 16th December 1737

³⁸² IOR/G/29/6 f.215v Consultation on Friday 28th May 1742

³⁸³ *ibid*

the Agent was informed by Bombay that they would buy two further ships for the Persians, as long as a bond of 20,000 rupees per ship was provided beforehand.³⁸⁴ The Persians had previously requested the use of the crews of Company ships composed of lascars from Bombay, though these requests had been denied also.³⁸⁵ The lack of concern over the state of the ships by Taqi Khan would suggest that the Company took some licence over which ships they purchased, no doubt with an eye to a large profit, while this profiteering on their part was ignored by the equally avaricious Taqi Khan. This again demonstrates the nuanced approach and understanding adopted by the Company's men in Persia. In this case, the balance struck was highly beneficial to the Company, who turned a significant profit on the sale of ships to the Persians, while also earning the gratitude of Taqi Khan, who magnified himself in the eyes of the Shah. The Company then maintained a friendship with an important official while also assisting in the advancement of that official's career.

By 1742 there was significant evidence of the Persians actively seeking out ships from other sources. These included other Company ships operating in Sind, which was now part of Nader Shah's possessions in India, as well as Arab and Indian ships. These were either purchased at Sind as in the case of Indian ships, extorted from the Arab Sheikhs of the Gulf, or received as gifts from the Imam of Muscat. This can be gleaned from a report of the loss of three ships at sea transporting a Persian governor to India. These included the *Hertford* and the '*Siddee Grab*' along with a ship lent to the Persians by the Dutch.³⁸⁶ The first, it is recorded, was purchased at Sind, the second is an Arab or Indian ship, though the consultation does not mention its provenance, nor

³⁸⁴ IOR/G/29/6 f.233v Consultation on Sunday 14th November 1742

³⁸⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.367v Consultation on Monday 21st February 1737

³⁸⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.207 Consultation on Thursday 29th April 1742

how the Persians came by it. This diversification of sources of shipping shows that the Persian effort to build up their naval strength was not concentrated solely in the Gulf, nor limited to a single source in the East India Company. In fact, as Lockhart and Axworthy mention, Nader Shah also worked to build a fleet in the Caspian, though this project does not fall within the scope of the present work.³⁸⁷ There were also later reports of the Persians seizing eight ships from Sind and using them to carry men, horses and 50,000 toman of treasure from that place to Bandar Abbas.³⁸⁸ In 1743, during the campaign on the Arab shore against Muscat, it is reported that a “large ship from Muscatt of about nine hundred tons and mounts 50 guns”,³⁸⁹ arrived at Bandar Abbas after being handed over by the Muscati Arabs to the Persian forces. The ship was sent on to the Persian arsenal and dock at Laft, a port on the north coast of Keshm, where she would be hauled ashore and her hull cleaned.³⁹⁰ This demonstrates a shift in the power relations of the Gulf region, the Persians now being able to flex their own naval muscle in such a way that they could capture and maintain ships from the Muscatis, who had previously exercised almost untrammelled control of the Gulf’s shipping, save only that of the Europeans.

Persian power in the Gulf took a serious turn in August 1740, when the Arab crews of the Persian fleet revolted *en masse*, killing the admiral, Mir Ali Khan, along with any Persians who resisted them. They then took all the ships they could from the anchorage at Laft. The Company blamed this mutiny on a lack of pay and supplies,

³⁸⁷ See the works by Axworthy and Lockhart mentioned above

³⁸⁸ IOR/G/29/6 f.274v Consultation on Wednesday 20th December 1743

³⁸⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.249 Consultation on Monday 23rd May 1743

³⁹⁰ *ibid*

adding that the Persian fleet was lost without the Arabs to sail it.³⁹¹ In order to put down this revolt, the Persians were forced to request the Company and Dutch for ships. As the Company was unable to supply any, the Dutch were requested to provide two that they had available locally.³⁹² The record notes that the Dutch felt compelled to assist the Persians, feeling that such a dire circumstance necessitated them giving their assistance freely, as the backlash should they resist would be severe in the extreme due to the panic of the Persian officials, even if their ships' crews had to be bribed to proceed past Kishm Island.³⁹³ The Company eventually assisted against the rebels by providing a *tranky* crewed with some of their factory guards and a gunner, who, if the Company report is to be believed, put up a much greater resistance to the Arabs than did either the Dutch or the Persians, both being accused of taking flight at the sight of the enemy.³⁹⁴ This incident reveals a continued Persian reliance on their European navies for hire, especially in a period where the balance of power in the Gulf had not yet settled in Persia's favour, meaning that a mutiny of this sort could set the Persians back to a point where they were again completely reliant on borrowed, European military assets.

A final way in which the Company was involved in supporting Persian naval expansion in the Gulf was the provision of naval stores and supplies, as well as, on one occasion, personnel to assist in the construction of ships at Laft under the supervision of a Fleming named Porterie.³⁹⁵ The first major instance of this is recorded in 1735,

³⁹¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.108v Consultation on Tuesday 26th August 1740

³⁹² *ibid*

³⁹³ *ibid*

³⁹⁴ IOR/G/29/6 f.115v Consultation on Sunday 12th October 1740

³⁹⁵ Lockhart, *Navy of Nadir Shah* p.12

after the Persian defeat at Basra, when Latif Khan, the Persian admiral, asked the Company to provide him with a supply of tin, iron shot, and gunpowder, all of which he promised to pay for.³⁹⁶ Despite not having the quantity he requested, the Company gave him a considerable supply of 500 maunds of tin, 2,000 round shot and 10 barrels of powder. It is to be wondered at how the Company's factory would have such a quantity of shot and powder in the first place, making it seem likely that this would not have been solely for the factory's use. It would suggest that the store of such a large quantity would be used either to resupply ships passing the factory, which one might imagine would be found recorded, or that they were available to local merchants or potential buyers. In fact, there is no record of either of these activities taking place, the only trade in such naval stores being connected with demands from the Persian government, most of which come later than 1735. This seems, therefore, to be evidence either of a clandestine trade in military hardware with the Persians by the Company, which does not appear on their books, or that a private trade was being carried out by someone in such materiel, though if this were the case there would have been some recourse to the owners before it was given as a gift to Latif Khan. Such requests were made occasionally to the Company and Dutch throughout the period of the Persian naval experiment, these were sometimes made with promise of payment, or as gifts. This evidence, along with the sale of ships to the Persians, solidifies the Company's role as an arms trader in the Gulf.

The purchasing of ships and gifts of stores to the Persian fleet by the East India Company provides an interesting case, showing both a great level of military involvement in the Gulf region as well as revealing a further level of the political

³⁹⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.282v Consultation on Monday 23rd June 1735

balance struck with the Persian government. On the one hand, it seems obvious that the Company would benefit from the profits they could turn on brokering the ship's sales, while on the other, it would damage any claim to naval supremacy they had in the Gulf. Presumably this would permanently put a stop to any claim they might have to collect money for passes from ships bound to or from India. There were other benefits to the Company in supplying ships; they would be seen to be assisting the Shah in his desire for a fleet, as well as building an effective force to keep piracy and threats by Arab shipping to the sea lanes. This would alleviate the Company from the need to do so themselves, as they had in the past, the presence of a Persian fleet would also allow them to relinquish any responsibility for troublesome requests to transport embassies, troops and supplies for Nader Shah. This intimate involvement also carried risks of gaining the Shah's displeasure should his expectations not be met, requiring the Company to not only placate him, but also keep local officials, such as Taqi Khan and Latif Khan, firmly in the Company's camp in order to advocate on their behalf at Court.

Conclusion.

This chapter reveals that the presence of the East India Company at Bandar Abbas allowed the Persians to engage more fully in international diplomacy, providing the Shahs with a useful means of transporting their diplomatic missions to the far corners of Eurasia. While serving this purpose, the Company's ships and crews were made available to the Persians as a navy for hire, taking part in operations against the Arab and Afghan rebels in the wake of the Safavid loyalist victories inland as well as carrying supplies during the invasions of the Arab Shore in 1738 and 1742. The

Company also became an arms supplier, brokering the sales of fighting vessels and stores for the Persian navy from India, at a premium, of course. These services show the extreme lengths to which the Company was willing to go in order to maintain good relations with the Persians, while also turning a steady profit and keeping their treasured privileges intact.

Despite this, relations between the Company and Persia were not stable, requiring a delicate balancing act of differing expectations and interests with influences ranging from the ever-changeable mood of the Shah to the machinations of the VOC. The Persians did not simply dominate a quiescent Company, the employees of which played a constant game of cat and mouse with Persian officials in order to limit their exposure to displeasure while operating at a minimal cost to their Honourable Masters. They were able to do this by trading and negotiating on the desirable asset of their powerful and threatening naval forces, the Persians' desire for which allowed them to deal from a position of strength that belied their numbers. From this also came a difficult question regarding the status of Company ships and crews being used by the Persians, it not being clear to either side where or to whom loyalty should ultimately lie, nor to what extent such loyalty and service could be relied upon.

In terms of the wider implications of this period, the Company's provision to Persia of naval support was an important feature of the preservation of the Company's *Farman*. Indeed, the Company was only able to keep its trading privileges through the reign of Nader Shah by acquiescing to his demands for naval assistance. Despite this difficulty, however, the Company was able to negotiate with the Shah in order to

provide him with the services he desired, while not unduly hampering business. The swift thinking and action of the factory's Agent without recourse to either London or Bombay, managed to overcome rapidly changing circumstances without detriment to the Company's trade or privileges. The autonomy of the Agent, as well as the clear assistance given to Nader Shah in his desire to create a fleet, make it clear that the Persian Gulf factory was far from the quiet *quid pro quo* of India. The Gulf in the first half of the 18th Century was a politically unstable region, in which the Company maintained a steady relationship with changing Persian and Afghan regimes.

Chapter 4: Governance, Information Management, Reporting, Communication and Control.

When considering how the Company operated it is important to accept that the system of governance had a major part to play in the Company's longevity. Researching the India Office Records for this dissertation has shown how simple the Company structure was and how much confidence was placed in the hands of people on the ground. Overcoming stretched lines of communication were by time, distance and reliability, the success of the Company and its factories is exceptional. Clearly this success started and ended with the character and quality of the individuals governing the Company at every level and location. Given the terrible conditions encountered by Company employees especially in Persia organisational efficiency was matched by attracting and motivating the right people to assignments. This chapter demonstrates how these employees worked as a team, and how much they must have respected and trusted one another to project the Company's and their country's interests abroad. It is possible to sum up this success in one word – trust. This is embodied perhaps in how they referred to themselves as the “Honourable East India Company” and to one another as “Honourable Gentlemen”, an estate of implied nobility many staff could never have attained at home.

The Company gave their employees contracts of employment setting down the Company's principles and interests and the standards of behaviour expected. The assignments of ranking officers such as Agents came with extensive powers of delegated authority to allow local negotiations at the highest levels, without the need

for escalation through the chain of command, that would have destroyed local confidence and have paralysed progress through elapsed time. The Persian element of the Company was particularly remote, and therefore had to rely on their wits, ability and local knowledge. The resilience and flexibility of the Company system is nowhere better demonstrated than where the Company's Persian Agents repeatedly and successfully negotiated the seismic regime changes from the Safavids to the Afghans and the brief restoration of Safavid rule before the reign of Nader Shah.

These powers of authority and freedom of local decision making and action however, were kept in check by detailed reporting, record keeping and a system of accounting and audit with recourse to forensic analysis where required. The India Office Records show regular periodic and formulaic reports on the detailed aspects of trade volume, value and the costs of sales including factory subsistence, construction of the garden facility, taxes and tolls, and Persian exactions. These amount to the information required to produce a full profit and loss account for the operation of the Company in Persia.

There were also Company "lines in the sand", standing orders, which were enforced by penalties severe enough to discourage breach and, when thought to be infringed, were vigorously verified regardless of distance, time, or cost, to set an example. The Company process worked by rules, the expectations of behaviour, and the fear of social censure and family honour. This was matched, in no small part, by a much-encouraged culture of high risk and reward, that permeated the whole enterprise and undertaking, root and branch. The Board of the Company risked investor capital,

and the individual officers their lives. It is the fortunes individuals in theatre were able to make that made it possible for the Company to operate in the hell hole that was Bandar Abbas. With the Company's blessing and support all employees and officers could conduct individual private enterprise. The system allowed a cascade of private employee trade profits up through the chain of command so all benefitted. Another positive aspect of being employed as a Company servant was being paid as well as having free board and lodging and local medical support.

Communications: Bridging the Cultural Divide – The Garden at Afseen.

The Gulf region represented an important middle point in the Company's network of factories and cities. This is evidenced by the large number of letters and correspondence marked as having been delivered to and from London via the Gulf and Mediterranean. The Bandar Abbas factory lay on one of the major communications routes between London and India, which ran up the Gulf to Basra, then onward north through the Ottoman Empire to Aleppo and from there to England via the Mediterranean. While technically under the direct jurisdictional control of the President and Council in Bombay, the distance between Bombay and Bandar Abbas, and the climatic changes of the monsoon which carried ships between the two cities, gave the Persian factories much greater autonomy. This need for autonomy was exacerbated by the need for the Agents in Persia to deal directly with the bureaucratic and diplomatic apparatus of the Safavid Empire in real time. This latter fact should not be understated as a means by which the Agents in Persia could be said to have a distinctive character and purview. Despite their subordinate status to the President and Council at Bombay,

the distance (in terms of time) from the Gulf gave the Agents at Bandar Abbas greater freedom to pragmatically and quickly manage the Company's relations with Persia.

In any business relationship, especially when working with foreign cultures on their home soil, it is only good manners to make the desired key contacts needed to fulfil objectives, to be respectful by adopting and adapting to local etiquette. More important is the ability to demonstrate that the relationship offered will satisfy the personal aspirations and interests of the people whose support is needed, and to make them feel they are dealing with a senior leader with little recourse to higher authority.

“At Afseen there are many gardens where the inhabitants of Gombroon retire to in the hot months; But the English East India Company's is the best, and best cultivated. It produces plenty of Seville Oranges, whose trees are always verdant, and bear ripe and green fruit with blossoms all at once”.³⁹⁷

The Company Agents and servants clearly were very well versed in what today is called “Customer Entertainment”, and more important to realising trade objectives and resolving issues than any other form of communication at the Company's disposal. The massive investment in the Garden at Afseen and its upkeep are well documented in the India Office Records. The Company's Garden at Afseen is their most important, effective and immediate communication tool. Other communication methods available to the Company in Persia are effectively reporting historic events or receiving

³⁹⁷ Hamilton, *A New Account*, p.94

instructions. Even within Persia, communicating with other Company operations was a challenge. Isfahan, Kerman and Shiraz were over 300 miles from Bandar Abbas.

Diplomatic exchanges with the Persians, covered in detail in Chapter 3, was often carried out at the Company's garden based at 'Afseen'. Afseen may correspond to the villages of Fariyab-Eesin or Patal-Eesin which lie about eight miles north of the modern city of Bandar Abbas. The garden provided a welcome escape from the town, lying at a higher, cooler altitude with running water nearby. The Company's servants believed the garden worthy of considerable expense, with a monthly upkeep of 234 shahis in March 1727,³⁹⁸ when it is first mentioned in the accounts, rising to 400 shahis per month in November 1750.³⁹⁹ In June 1727, the garden also underwent repairs costing 4,009 shahis, a cost that is justified by the "handsomeness and conveniency of those apartments" and the "frugality" with which the work had been completed.⁴⁰⁰ Philip Stern discusses briefly the importance of gardens in Bombay and other Company settlements in India, which, unlike Afseen, existed in urban spaces and were primarily for the use of the inhabitants of the Company's cities.⁴⁰¹ Despite this difference, the emulation of the practice, distinctly Persian in origin, is noteworthy. Further to this we find that the Persian tradition of gardening was exported to India by the Company, with a request for two gardeners to be sent over from Persia to Bombay in 1704, while others were employed to tend an herb garden and orchards at Isfahan.⁴⁰² These gardeners were paid handsomely for their work, receiving 180 rupees per year, considerably more than a Company Writer. The Company's investment in the garden and the adoption of the

³⁹⁸ IOR/G/29/4 f.10 Consultation on Saturday 1st April 1727

³⁹⁹ IOR/G/29/7 f.287 Consultation on 30th November 1750 Consultation on Friday 30th November 1750

⁴⁰⁰ IO/G/29/4 f.47v Consultation on Thursday 15th June 1727

⁴⁰¹ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.31

⁴⁰² IOR/P/341/2 f.106 Letter to the Committee of Victualing at Bombay 19th January 1705 and f.211 Consultation at Bombay Castle on 5th June 1705.

practice in India is indicative of how effective these spaces were as places for relaxation and negotiation.

Afseen was predominantly occupied by resting Persian officials, who regularly made requests to stay at the garden while en route to or from Bandar Abbas and Isfahan or Shiraz. This was due to the garden lying on the main route North-West from Bandar Abbas towards Lar and Jahrom, then on to Shiraz and Isfahan. In 1740, the Governor (*Sultan*) of Bandar Abbas requested the use of the garden so that he might “take the waters” there.⁴⁰³ This implies that Afseen had a natural spring, which considering the shortage of fresh water in the region would have considerably increased the garden’s attraction. Unfortunately for the Company’s servants, the only recorded time they attempted to use the garden for their own recreation was in March 1734, when they were ambushed by bandits and forced to ride back to the factory.⁴⁰⁴ As Hamilton mentions though, they at least got the benefit of the fruit grown in the garden.⁴⁰⁵

The garden then was primarily a place to entertain Persian officials. The Dutch also had a garden at Naban, though again it is unclear where this might have been located. It is possibly related to Noband, a town near Minab, east from Bandar Abbas. The fact that both the Company and the Dutch maintained a garden is proof that they appreciated the very important place of gardens in Persian architecture. By mimicking this tradition, the Company gained a diplomatic advantage by hosting their guests and interlocutors in a familiar setting. The India Office Records show that a garden was

⁴⁰³ IOR/G/29/6 f.108 Consultation on Saturday 16th August 1740

⁴⁰⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.227 Consultation on Friday 1st March 1734

⁴⁰⁵ Hamilton, *A New Account*, p.94.

also maintained at Isfahan, with the *Farman* specifically guaranteeing a supply of water for it.⁴⁰⁶ The Company's staff in India also requested for seeds to be sent for use in their gardens.⁴⁰⁷ How the hot, dry climate of the Gulf littoral was seen as a suitable place to supply seeds provides an insight into how rich the horticulture/agriculture of these gardens may have been. The desirable garden was, unfortunately, also very vulnerable, lying outside of the town of Bandar Abbas. The village and garden were both occupied by Afghan forces in 1731⁴⁰⁸ and Baluchis in 1733.⁴⁰⁹

Despite these incursions and the devastation caused by a swarm of locusts in April 1738,⁴¹⁰ the Company retained the use of the garden and maintained it to entertain themselves and their guests in local style. Though the Company's officials viewed themselves as foreign to Persia and maintained their cultural and religious independence, they equally assimilated Persian customs regarding hospitality. This appears to have been a conscious effort on the part of the Company servants to improve relations between themselves and the Persian officials with whom they negotiated and socialised at the garden. Such an effort on the Company's part is also indicative of a previously unexplored medium of interaction between the Company and the entirety of Persian officialdom.

This adoption of the Persian garden by the Company as a space for recreation in India and of political exchange and a diplomatic meeting place in Persia was

⁴⁰⁶ IOR/G/29/17 f.30 Letter to the Court of Directors, 7th June 1745.

⁴⁰⁷ IOR/P/341/2 f.106 Letter to the Committee of Victualing at Bombay 19th January 1705 and f.211 Consultation at Bombay Castle on 5th June 1705.

⁴⁰⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.134 Consultation on Monday 17th October 1731

⁴⁰⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.218v Consultation on Wednesday 10th October 1733

⁴¹⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.28 Consultation on Thursday 27th April 1738

accompanied by other habits, pastimes and favours, such as the presentation of guests with gifts, as well as the consumption of coffee and smoking of *qalyoun*. Later, coffee began to appear, more commonly as a social beverage enjoyed with Persian officials. While there are mentions of coffee comprising parts of the cargoes of various ships passing Bandar Abbas, it does not make an appearance in the factory's table expenses at this time. The first mention of its consumption is in 1739, in relation to the visit of a Persian official, who took coffee with the Agent while trying to extract a "gift" from him.⁴¹¹ After this meeting, several later encounters with Persian officials and VOC servants took place over coffee and in one case, *qalyoun*.⁴¹² Rudi Matthee suggests that Persians adopted the combination of coffee and tobacco more quickly and wholeheartedly than anywhere else,⁴¹³ quoting the saying "coffee without tobacco is like soap without salt".⁴¹⁴ This habit was not only enjoyed by the Company; there is a note in the Company's warehouse stock from 1726, mentioning two spare "glasses" for *qalyoun*, so the pipes were evidently in fairly constant use.⁴¹⁵ Matthee mentions that one Persian name for tobacco was *inglis-tanbaku* (English tobacco), hinting at its original source before cultivation of the plant within Persia took off.⁴¹⁶ The importation of coffee was also a European preserve; interestingly, the majority of ships carrying it to Persia and Basra appear to have been French. The French grew their own beans on Mauritius, obviating the need to purchase the beans in Mocha.⁴¹⁷ The trade in these exotic substances and their use is indicative not only of an exchange of goods, but also the construction of habits of consumption and leisure, developed and shared in the

⁴¹¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.63 Consultation on Tuesday 30th October 1739.

⁴¹² This is the Persian word for the water pipe, called hookah in India and shisha or nargileh in Arabic.

⁴¹³ Matthee, Rudi, Smoking in Iran, in *Smoke: A History of Smoking*, ed. Gilman and Xun, (New York, Reaktion, 2004).

⁴¹⁴ Matthee, *Smoking*, p.61

⁴¹⁵ IOR/G/29/3 f.12 Accounts and stocks for 1726

⁴¹⁶ Matthee, *Smoking*, p.60

⁴¹⁷ IOR/G/29/6 f.4 Consultation on Tuesday 9th August 1737

interaction of Persians and Europeans.⁴¹⁸ Company officials went to great lengths and expense to lavishly entertain their interlocutors, and ensure that their guests saw facilities like the Company's garden as a preferable place to go to relax, exchange information and do business. The lasting support the Company gained from their main contacts is ably demonstrated in Chapter 3. Here we see how Persian contacts helped the Company Servants to navigate through potentially explosive and life-threatening events by skilful negotiation.

Communications: By sea and overland.

The ability to manage and govern any enterprise successfully is determined not only by the quality of people engaged but also the speed of communication between locations. Although the Company hierarchy was highly structured and centralised, decision making was devolved to the individual Agents and Residents, even those at small and remote locations. This is because the ability to manage centrally was less effective and relevant the higher the latency between communication and response. Governance structures often fail through an insistence on overly centralised control over remote situations they cannot appreciate and that need simultaneous and appropriate responses. Steensgaard characterises this as an inconsistency of expectation; "There was too great a distance between reality as pictured by the Council of State and the reality in which their local representatives found themselves."⁴¹⁹ The governance of the Company in Persia overcame what were fragile, insecure, agonisingly slow and unreliable communications through the principle of trust and

⁴¹⁸ See Matthee, *Pursuit*, especially concerning the development of tobacco smoking.

⁴¹⁹ Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p.66

devolved responsibility. To fully appreciate how the Governance structure was determined by an acceptance of these facts it is necessary to look in some depth at what was possible in communications terms and how these shaped governance communication and reporting. We will also see that the Company was adept at information gathering and interpretation and that this was used in concise well-structured reports destined for scrutiny in Bombay and London.

The East India Company's administration was based on a system of committees and councils presiding over often weakly defined and mutable areas. In the early days of Company expansion, the Presidency at Bantam founded in 1603 on Java had primacy over all other factories, from those nearby on the Spice Islands to more distant Surat and Hormuz. As Bantam lay at the eastern extremity of the Company's sphere of operations, it quickly became clear that using it as an administrative hub was inefficient. After the factory at Bantam was abandoned in favour of the (questionably) healthier climes of India, authority over the Persian factories fell, along with operations to the Red Sea and the West Coast of India, to the Bombay Presidency and Council. Although significantly closer than Bantam, Bombay's communications with Bandar Abbas were still subject to the same problems of the seasonal weather and availability of shipping.

The issues of communication, which will be expanded later in this chapter, had a profound impact upon the way in which the Company and the Crown could negotiate with the Shahs and their representatives. The distance and time taken to shuttle messages, gifts and envoys to and fro necessitated the recognition of the Agents at

Bandar Abbas as effectively an almost completely delegated authority with whom the Persians could deal with on a quotidian basis. This system took some time to perfect, as this chapter will show. The Company was relieved of the expensive and time-consuming need to send large, well-manned and well-laden embassies. The Company's Agent and Resident having the *de facto* status of consul, envoy and ambassador significantly affected the way in which the Agents were perceived by the Persians and lent certain expectations to the image they projected. This position led to the adoption of certain Persian customs such as the ostentatious use of chinaware to serve coffee or the use of a cool, well maintained garden where the Agent might entertain visiting dignitaries, drink yet more coffee and smoke *qalyoun*.⁴²⁰

While the Agent acting as a consul was used as an effective means of avoiding undue delay and expense, there still occasionally remained a need to deliver embassies between Persian and British rulers. In these cases, the handling of embassies both to and from the Shahs required a visit to Bombay, to facilitate direct negotiations with the President or Governor there. This was an endemic issue for the Company, which had to balance the expectations of the Persian Court of dealing with local decision makers with their own authority, whilst measuring the full extent of the Agent's abilities to negotiate and grant terms. This same issue of jurisdiction appears within the Company's own hierarchy, wherein the Agent lacked the authority to act with full independence such as trying criminal cases, which were often referred back to the President and Council.

⁴²⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.63 Consultation on Tuesday 30th October 1739.

While the Agent could act with great autonomy, there remained the overarching authority both of the President and Council in Bombay and the Court of Directors in London. Despite being at a great distance and severely restricted in their ability to intervene with the running of the factory on a timely basis, the Court of Directors retained overall control. This meant that their orders and advice, delivered to the Council at Bandar Abbas, carried significant weight and had to be taken seriously. This is notably true when considering the way in which the Agents in Persia could deal with piracy, especially that carried out by Muscati and other Arab ships. This issue was particularly stark when the Company's interests in Persia created an ever more strained situation with the Imams of Muscat and the *Huwala* Arabs. Directives from further up the hierarchy prevented hostile action being taken against Arab groups who carried out trade with the Company in India, or who could threaten their maritime traffic.⁴²¹

Communications by sea in Persia were largely the preserve of the European trading Companies. As with naval power, the Safavids and their successors lagged significantly behind the Europeans in this field, being reliant upon Arab shipping traffic to send correspondence internationally. While this was not a priority for the Persians, it was a necessity for the Europeans, who needed to remain in as close contact as possible with their superiors in India, Batavia, London and Amsterdam. Letters and packets sent abroad were often transported aboard whatever ship was willing to take them and was going in the right direction. This meant that Dutch, French, Indian or Arab ships would often carry Company letters.

⁴²¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.235v Consultation on Thursday 9th May 1734

Sea travel, and therefore also the delivery of mail by sea, was fraught with danger, perhaps even more so than by land. As on land, travel by sea carried the additional risks of brigandage, whether by Arab pirates in the Gulf, ‘Sanganians’ from Kutch or the threat of attack by “The Angrias”, a naval clan of Marathas. The seizure of ships by pirates or brigands presented the added danger of letters captured on board giving away the positions of other vessels that might be vulnerable, as was feared when the *Adventure Grab* was taken while carrying letters on board.⁴²² Ships foundered relatively often, sometimes without trace.⁴²³ Such incidents, whilst representing a tragic loss of human life, could also have serious repercussions on the delivery of important letters, papers and packets between Persia, India and Europe, thus threatening the management of the Company and its trade.

The major meteorological threat in the Gulf was the monsoon, upon which all trade in the region depended, but which effectively made all traffic to and from the region one-way for half the year. This had the corollary of delaying any post that was due to be sent out to India. Likewise, mail for England from India was often sent via the Gulf; from Bombay or Surat via Bandar Abbas to Basra, then overland to Baghdad, Aleppo and finally back onto a ship at Iskenderun, on the Mediterranean coast to be carried back to England. This route took over six months and relied on the cooperation of transportation both in the Gulf, across at least four Ottoman provinces and then a further voyage from the Eastern Mediterranean. Some letters were also sent by a route overland from Basra to Livorno in Italy then onward by sea.⁴²⁴ No doubt this distance

⁴²² IOR/G/29/6 f.210v Consultation on Thursday 20th May 1742

⁴²³ IOR/G/29/16 f.242v Letter to the Court of Directors from the Council at Gombroon 8th June 1742

⁴²⁴ IOR/G/29/15 ff.29-30v, Promise of payment to the Company on a loan to Ceasar Devaux, 15th March 1722.

both in time and space was important in devolving jurisdiction to India, which was often only a month away from the Gulf by ship, dependent, naturally, on favourable winds.

The time it took to send and receive letters necessitated that correspondence be gathered and sent in packets, the problem with this being that correspondence sent in this manner, if taken and read en route, revealed much more about the Company's business. Such a danger was unavoidable due to the delays between conveyances and the associated delay in receiving any sort of reply. Letters sent to London were therefore much more formulaic than letters between the Persian factories or between Persia and India. Letters for London were divided into sections; news, goods from Europe, goods for Europe, general trade (which included events in Persia and their effects upon the Company's dealings), buildings and revenues, then personnel. These letters are by far the longest in the Company's books and included events from several months. Even so, they are often no more than 15 folios long and while quite detailed, represent only a fraction of the corresponding time in the factory's consultation books, which were sent to Bombay on a roughly annual basis.

Unfortunately, there is no data for how much shipping mail and packets cost the Company. One would presume that Company ships and charters were expected to carry mail as a matter of course; however, it is unclear whether ships from other nations were paid for this service or undertook it for free, in a spirit of mutual cooperation. The consultations do show that Company servants' travel was covered by the Company itself, no matter whether the vessel used was owned by them or not, in the form of a

payment to the traveller. It is unclear why this would have been necessary on a Company ship, perhaps the charge was nominal and was used as an accounting tool to rationalise the replacement of cargo with a passenger. Whether this is true of packets of letters is equally opaque, though they may have been taken free of charge due to their relative smallness and it being unlikely they would displace cargo.

Seaborne and overland remained a necessarily slow and risky method of sending and receiving post that would change little before the arrival of steam shipping and later the telegraph in the 19th Century. In the 18th century communication was reliant on horses, camels and couriers, rowed galleys and sailing ships. It was slow, inefficient and at best, vague and unreliable. Limitations of time and the need to copy letters and consultations by hand meant that communication with India, while relatively fast by the standards of the day, had to be condensed in packets which might cover more than a year's worth of Company business and accounts. Letters to London were much briefer, comprising of a formulaic section by section breakdown of the Company's business and news from the territories in which the Company operated. This brevity was compounded by the fact that any clarification would have to wait for a passage round the Cape of Good Hope and then favourable winds to the Persian Gulf. Why it was that post from England came around the Cape but letters from the East were sent via the Gulf is ambiguous. The fact that letters were sent by this route goes some way to cementing the importance of the Company's factories in Persia as a hub for communications. The Gulf would continue to be pivotal in this regard until the construction of the Suez Canal, when the telegraphic cable system running through Persia was replaced with an underwater line through the Canal and the Red Sea.

Before the period under study, Persia had gone through something of a transportation revolution under Abbas the Great, who instituted systems of highway security, *Rahdar*, as well as regular way stations for caravans and travellers, providing water and shelter. Despite these improvements, by 1700, travel within Persia was neither a fast, nor safe business. The East India Company continued to rely on caravans of pack animals to take their goods to market, while being equally reliant on such conveyances to deliver fresh supplies of ready money from other parts of the empire. These caravans, *qafileh*, were considered by the Company as a barometer for the health of the Persian economy as a whole. In good times, the caravans would be large, rich and regular, travelling long distances untroubled by banditry and extortion. In bad times, the opposite characteristics were noticed, with long delays between the arrival of caravans, which arrived only from neighbouring cities and regions with little coin to spend.⁴²⁵

The routes of the caravans seem to have remained relatively unchanged throughout the period, with routes beginning in Mashhad, running south to Kerman and, from there, southwest to Bandar Abbas via Sirjan.⁴²⁶ Caravans from this region were major purchasers of the Company's woollen goods, with sales of 40,000 rupees recorded, no doubt owing to the harsher winters that prevailed in the highlands of Khorasan and Kerman.⁴²⁷ While the Company's consultations give no detail of how long it took the caravans to reach Kerman from Mashhad, the regular transportation of wool and copper from Kerman to Bandar Abbas gives us a clearer impression. The

⁴²⁵ IOR/G/29/17 f.66v Letter to the Court of Directors from the Council at Gombroon from 10th February 1749

⁴²⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.254 and IOR/G/29/7 f.141 Consultation on Wednesday 2nd March 1748

⁴²⁷ IOR/G/29/17 f.66v Letter to the Court of Directors from the Council at Gombroon from 10th February 1749

timings given are not exact, but journeys of a month between Bandar Abbas and Kerman seem to have been typical, while large delays were sometimes suffered because of a lack of pack animals caused by military campaigns.⁴²⁸

Bandar Abbas was also served by a route from the city of Isfahan through Shiraz, though this one is less well documented in the Company's records, probably due to the placement of Company staff in both these cities at varying times. It appears that caravans from Isfahan would travel southward, stopping at Shiraz, the capital of the province of Fars, then continue southeast via Lar to Bandar Abbas. These caravans could be vast. In 1727, one consisted of 220 camels carrying a supply of wine and rose water, led by the Company's linguist.⁴²⁹ It is unclear how typical a size this was, nor what a normal range would be. However, even if this represented a particularly large example, the logistics necessary and expense involved, would have been prodigious. Caravans were also provided with guards, either from the Persian authorities or hired by the merchants, including the Company. The Company's privileges include a command for local officials to supply the Company's caravans with guards, should they request them. While this was a useful gesture, it demonstrates an underlying fear that caravans were vulnerable and in need of armed escort. When the Persian authorities were unable or unwilling to provide escorts, the Company, on occasion, would organise their own large and well defended caravans, presumably offering to extend their protection to local merchants.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ IOR/G/29/16 f.192v Letter to the Court of Directors from the Council at Gombroon from 15th December 1737

⁴²⁹ IOR/G/29/4 f.72 Consultation on Wednesday 5th July 1727.

⁴³⁰ IOR/G/29/7 f.18v Consultation on Friday 24th October 1746

Owing to the turmoil created from the initial shock of the Afghan invasion of 1722, caravan routes seem to have taken five years to recover; the Company records show that it took until 1727 for the first to arrive from both directions, being most notable as they delivered fresh fruit for the first time.⁴³¹ Caravans were exceptionally vulnerable, due to their size and relatively lumbering pace, and despite being guarded, were often picked off by raiding Afghans, Baluchis, or local bandits. It was for this reason that they would not have been suitable for carrying important mail, while strength in numbers made them ideal for high value and bulk goods. In previous times, especially under Abbas the Great (1588 to 1629), the recovery of goods lost on the road was the responsibility of the local governor, whose duty it was to recover or indemnify for the goods taken on his watch.⁴³² By 1700, this had ceased to be the case and therefore private security became a necessity while government support dwindled out of existence.

This was also true when considering postal services. There appears to have been three different levels of messenger available in Persia during this period; the ‘cossid’ (*Qasid*, a courier or runner, from the Arabic and Persian root *to inform*), the shotter (*Shatir*, derived from the Arabic for “clever”) or the Choppar (from Turkish *çapmak* “to gallop”).⁴³³ Throughout the period of this study all of these services were available. The first two were readily available, either chartered privately, or permanently employed by the European Companies, local merchants or Persian officials. Shotters seem to have formed the largest or most commonly used corps of messengers, with the

⁴³¹ IOR/G/29/4 f.52 Consultation on Saturday 24th June 1727

⁴³² Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, p.153.

⁴³³ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/capar-or-capar-turk> and <http://dsal.srv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/contextualize.pl?p.0.hobson.1444099>

Banians, Company and Dutch employing their own. Despite working for one or other of these groups, the shotters could carry letters from other organisations, as well as their employers. Throughout the period, the Company vacillated between employing its own shotters and using those in the pay of the Dutch, Persians or Banians. This was pursued as a money-saving measure by the Company, whereby it avoided paying to maintain its own messengers and could instead simply pay for individual messages to be carried at need. By 1729 it was decided that the employment of the Company's own messengers was a necessary expense as it removed any time spent waiting for a conveyance to be available, as well as being cheaper and more secure. A Company shotter was paid 70 shahis per month for his services, nearly twice the earnings of a Company Writer and there were between six and 12 in the Company's pay at any time.⁴³⁴ It seems to have taken a shotter roughly seven to ten days from Bandar Abbas to reach Kerman, or more than two weeks to reach Isfahan, so while they were slower than the choppers, they still represented a rapid service.

'Cossids' appear much less frequently in the Company's records and no information is given about how much they were paid. Unusually amongst the messengers, cossids appear to have been used to carry messages longer distances, being mentioned travelling only to Isfahan and Kerman, while also accompanying other messengers.⁴³⁵ Cossids seem also to have been paid according to time limits, rather than at a flat rate or salary; one entry in 1746, shows a cossid being ordered to deliver a letter from Bandar Abbas to Kerman within eight days,⁴³⁶ an exceptional request considering this is a distance of circa 500 kilometres. A cossid was employed to

⁴³⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.61v Consultation on Thursday 15th May 1729

⁴³⁵ IOR/G/29/7 f.18v Consultation on Friday 24th October 1746

⁴³⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.293 Consultation on Monday 4th August 1735

accompany a shotter from Bandar Abbas to Kerman during a period of increased activity amongst the robber bands on the roads. Why he was employed for this journey and what exactly his capacity was remains unclear. He may have been a backup messenger in case any ill befell his companion, or possibly a bodyguard, though whether he would have been employed for this purpose is uncertain.⁴³⁷

Choppars were not private messengers for hire, but official riders for the Shah and his noblemen. Choppars were paid by the recipient not the sender, unless the letter was for the Shah, in which case the sender was made to pay for the service.⁴³⁸ Choppars were richly reimbursed for their trouble, receiving four to twenty toman depending on the message they carried and from whom the letter was sent. An example of this is found when a choppar sent by Persian court officials delivered a letter from Isfahan and received four toman, while a choppar who delivered kalats (robes of honour) to the Company's Agent was rewarded with 20 toman.⁴³⁹ Choppars seem to have also carried out minor administrative functions, rather than acting solely as messengers, showing the social status of the position. Choppars had the right to carry arms and were identifiable through a uniform. They also had the right to take riding animals wherever they required them, either from peasants or other travellers.⁴⁴⁰ Choppars were therefore by far the fastest means of communication, being able to ride between 70-100 miles a day.⁴⁴¹ In one rare instance, a choppar is reported to have reached Isfahan in seven days

⁴³⁷ IOR/G/29/7 f.18v Consultation on Friday 24th October 1746

⁴³⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.105 Consultation on Saturday 7th March 1730

⁴³⁹ IOR/G/29/7 f.186 Consultation on Friday 28th October 1748

⁴⁴⁰ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/capar-or-capar-turk> accessed 14:51 13/11/15

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*

from Bandar Abbas, though this was extraordinary. Most reports suggest instead that 10-14 days was necessary.⁴⁴²

In ideal conditions, where the roads were properly guarded and maintained, movement and communication around Persia was relatively fast, but such circumstances were rare. During the period of this study, however the roads were not administered to their potential by any means and suffered the predations of Afghan, Baluchi and Arab raiders, as well as groups of local bandits. These represented a significant danger to the messengers who travelled between towns and cities, necessitating, as has been mentioned, the escorting of messengers by other men. Interestingly, even when messengers were captured and threatened, the letters they carried were afforded rather more respect. One report in 1740 suggests that a shotter's life was spared by Arab rebels when they were told he carried mail for the Company. He was not killed on the proviso that he carried a letter back to the VOC and the Company, asking them not to interfere with their uprising.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, the Arab rebels made a point to say that they had not read the Company's letters, despite capturing the messenger. There appears to have been an understanding that mail was inviolate, meaning that Dutch messengers carrying Company letters would not read them and vice versa. This was partly reliant on trust, but was backed by the surety that should one party read the letters of another, their own would not be safe the next time they used a foreign conveyance. This did not mean that precautions were not taken, including the omission of previous correspondence in order to avoid giving context to

⁴⁴² IOR/G/29/5 f.42v Consultation on Wednesday 19th February 1729 and f.5 Consultation on Saturday 23rd November 1728

⁴⁴³ IOR/G/29/6 f.123-v Consultation on Wednesday 4th November 1740

the present letter.⁴⁴⁴ Some letters appear to have been purposefully left behind, with one instance, in 1724, of Ottoman messengers delivering official correspondence from the Pasha of Baghdad, while the Company's letters, sent by the same messengers, were mysteriously missing.⁴⁴⁵ During times of war, letters and packets would be purposefully seized, as was the case with French mail found aboard a Dutch ship which was examined and forwarded to Bombay in 1748 during the War of the Austrian Succession.⁴⁴⁶

Communication by land in Persia would appear to have been comparable, if not preferable with contemporary European means of sending and receiving mail. The major road networks of Europe, such as the Turnpike system in Great Britain, would not begin to emerge until the end of the 18th Century, with travel before this appearing, if anything, considerably slower there than in Persia, not to mention more expensive.⁴⁴⁷ There appears to have been a thriving market for messengers, whether employed by one of the European companies, the Banians, Persian nobles or by working for the state. Any of these messengers could be utilised to carry messages for any of the parties.

⁴⁴⁴ IOR/G/29/15 f.88 Letter to William Phillips from Edmund Wright from 3rd November 1722

⁴⁴⁵ IOR/G/29/15 f.192 Letter to the Court of Directors from Isaac Housaye from 12th December 1724

⁴⁴⁶ IOR/G/29/7 f.176v Consultation on Saturday 20th August 1748

⁴⁴⁷ Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p.6

Company Rules and “Evill Practices”: Governance and Jurisdiction in the Persian Factories.

The factory at Bandar Abbas, like all East India Company establishments was governed by an executive Agent with the consent and support of a board of every covenanted Company servant present above the rank of factor.⁴⁴⁸ This rule was followed to the letter, covenanted servants only being elevated to the board on their accession to the rank of Factor, which occurred after a period of five years serving as a Writer. After serving three more years as a Factor a covenanted servant became eligible to become a Junior Merchant and then after a further three years, a Senior Merchant. The Company’s servants could also augment their standing and salary by serving in certain “stations”, such as Warehouse Keeper, Secretary etc. all of which carried extra responsibility and remuneration. According to the payrolls of the factory at Bandar Abbas, there was a mixture of Writers, Factors, Junior and Senior Merchants on the payroll, as well as the Agent, and surgeon, never amounting to more than 12 covenanted Company servants.⁴⁴⁹ This governing body therefore excluded anyone not covenanted with the Company and the youngest, least experienced members of the factory’s staff. All the covenanted servants were required to sign off each order, letter, and the board’s consultations. Any member of this board who withheld their signature was effectively exercising a veto.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ IOR/G/29/7 f.217 Consultation on Thursday 13th April 1749

⁴⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/7 f.250v Consultation on Monday 31st July 1750

⁴⁵⁰ Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, pp.80-83.

This need for cooperation springs from what Chaudhuri refers to as “Business Constitutionalism”⁴⁵¹ characterised by Stern as “a strict hierarchy and consultative government”.⁴⁵² In this way, neither party, whether the Chief Factor, or two members of the Council, had complete authority to judge what was and was not a criminal act or breach of the Company’s rules. Therefore, a synthetic form of ‘justice’ was necessary and fundamental to the factory’s governance. Clearly this system worked by requiring unanimity to proceed on contentious decisions. This rule must have required each member to have negotiated and sold their ideas to the satisfaction of all. That disagreements sometimes erupted being far better in terms of a balanced external and Company outcome even if at the expense of individuals’ pride or sensibilities.

As has been explored above, the signing of ships orders by the Council in 1727 led to conflict between the Chief Factor Draper, and his subordinates. This disagreement demonstrates that the system although precipitating a regrettable local incident, ultimately resulted in a more sensible outcome which meant there was no offensive against the Muscatis in contravention of standing Company orders. The Company’s rules and regulations were not codified in any meaningful way in this period. Updates had to be requested and lists made and amended on a regular basis on the initiative of the local Agent and Council.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p.22

⁴⁵² Stern, *The Company-State*, p.11

⁴⁵³ IOR/G/29/15 f.262 Letter to the Court of Directors from Henry Draper, William Cordeux and John Fotheringham from 25th March 1727 and f.265 Letter to the Court of Directors from Henry Draper from 25th March 1727

Above the jurisdiction of Bombay, where criminal or malpractice cases were referred, was the even more distant power of the Court of Directors in London, to whom appeals were made directly by covenanted servants on a variety of pretexts. In 1719 alone two petitions were sent to the Court of Directors in London concerning a trade dispute between two Factors and a complaint concerning a perceived breach in the rules of seniority, which dictated the position and rank of a Factor within the council of his factory.⁴⁵⁴ It is unclear why these particular disputes were referred to London rather than Bombay in the first instance, but from the letters dispatched from Bandar Abbas between 1719 and 1727, this seems to have been common practice. The Court of Directors seems to have been used as a court of appeal for personal matters between Company servants, while day to day business was submitted to Bombay in regular, structured reports. This is most likely a reflection of the difficulty in transmitting people and paperwork for criminal cases, all the way back to England, whilst balancing the need for personal disputes to be dealt with by the highest authority.

Judicial questions were not the limit of the jurisdictional bounds of the authority of the factory. The Agent at Bandar Abbas was responsible, not only for the business of his own factory, but also for the administration of the factories at Isfahan and Kerman in Persia and Basra, at the head of the Gulf, in the Ottoman Empire. The Agent held the power to recall recalcitrant Company servants, audit their books and had limited power to appoint members of the Company's staff to new positions, though this was also governed by the whims of Bombay and the Company's strict adherence to seniority. Despite this premier position in the hierarchy of the Persian factories, the

⁴⁵⁴ IOR/G/29/15 ff.7-10v Letter from Anthony Beavis to the Secret Committee, 25th January 1719 and Letter from John Lock to the Court of Directors January 25th January 1719.

Agent would have been limited in his ability to effectively communicate with his distant charges, the Residents, relying either on slow, risky overland transportation, or the quicker but even more mercurial shipping up the Gulf to Basra. This meant again these local officers were trusted to act on their own initiative and with delegated authority subject to later audit and scrutiny.

The Residents were the officials in charge of the Company's houses and factories in Isfahan, Basra and Kerman. Isfahan, as the Safavid capital, had long played host to Company representatives, who acted in the dual role of merchant and consul with the Persian Court. While the Agent was technically superior to the Resident at Isfahan, the latter had significant personal authority, being the first line of communication with the Court and therefore responsible, more than any other, for the maintenance of the Company's good standing. From the 1720's onwards, there was only an intermittent presence in the Persian capital, due to the "distracted state" of the region, sparked by the Afghan invasion and occupation. When no Resident was present in Isfahan, responsibility for negotiations with the current ruling power in Persia reverted to the Agent at Bandar Abbas, applicable for most of the period after 1722. Kerman was likewise only sporadically served by a Resident due to the costs incurred by having a European live in the city. When no European was present in either Isfahan or Kerman, a local employee was given stewardship. In Isfahan, this was carried out by the Company's linguist, who was normally an Armenian from Julfa, and in Kerman this was often left to a local Persian in the Company's service.

We have discussed earlier in this chapter how the vast distances involved in communication between the Agent, the Residents and then Bombay and ultimately London made any centralised control at any level impossible. Santhi Hejeebu has suggested that the Company's use of contracts and charters had "little currency as an enforcement mechanism".⁴⁵⁵ While the arguments of Hejeebu support the idea of a "resilience" within the Company's systems, they deny that the contractual obligations undertaken by the Company servants were the framework in which this resilience rested. However, whereas it seems reasonable to assume from a variety of recorded misdemeanours that the Company's bonds and contracts were not a suitable enough deterrent, the relative dearth of serious cases suggests these were exceptions and not the rule. Out of eighteen criminal cases listed in the Factory records between 1700 and 1750, of these only one half resulted in the guilty party being sent to Bombay for trial. Considering the long period of time studied, such a small number of cases in a far-flung part of the Company's establishment would seem to suggest that the bonds and covenants sworn were actually in the main effective, and the punishments of infraction a suitable deterrent. Given how tiny the European community was when compared against the population in which they lived also reduced the likelihood of anyone being able to misbehave without being caught.

The Company employed a relatively rigorous accounting system and the India Office Records document 18 cases where fraud was investigated over the period 1700 to 1750. It is useful to elaborate on three of them, those of Thomas Waters and John Peirson, which revolved around keeping false accounts, with a third, involving William

⁴⁵⁵ Hejeebu, Santhi, "Contract Enforcement in the English East India Company", in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.65, No.2, (June 2005), pp.499-500.

Cordeux also accused of false accounting discovered after his death.⁴⁵⁶ These three cases demonstrate that there was indeed some manipulation of the Company's business for private gain through embezzlement. The three men listed may have been the only ones to get caught doing it. It is perhaps also important to note that Cordeux and Peirson were stationed in Kerman and Isfahan respectively when they committed their frauds. That they got caught out under the weight of the Company's administrative machinery when their accounts were checked either at Bandar Abbas or at Bombay say a lot for the Companies auditing and forensic accounting rigour.

While Hejeebu's argument that the Company's various legal mechanisms for the prevention of illicit activity were unsuccessful seems bolstered by these examples, the power of the Company to identify irregularity, recoup losses and censure their servants for breaching what was considered proper conduct suggests this conclusion is an over-generalisation. This is supported by the great lengths to which the Company would willingly go to check whether the covenants of their servants were genuine. In one instance in 1729, Martin French, who served both as a ship's captain and as Resident in Basra, was asked to provide proof of his covenant,⁴⁵⁷ for which purpose one of his guarantors was traced all the way to Lisbon where he was convalescing after an illness.⁴⁵⁸ The effort and time expended in tracing the witnesses in this way would strongly suggest that such legal contracts were considered, both by the Company and its servants, to be both binding and suitably proscriptive to discourage misbehaviour. Not only this, the Company was both willing and able, from the example of Martin French, to track down and verify its servants' compliance with legal process.

⁴⁵⁶ IOR/G/29/6 f.143v Monday 20th April 1741.

⁴⁵⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.361v Consultation on Wednesday 15th December 1736

⁴⁵⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.381 Consultation on Saturday 25th June 1737

As we have seen already, the Company operated a distributed model of control, giving Residents and Agents decision making authority with the minimum direct involvement from the central organs of London and Bombay. Again, distance and slowness of communications were overriding factors making this a necessity. However, when required, decisions were channelled back up the hierarchy as a ruse to delay having to give responses to demands or to leverage negotiations.

In 1736, when it came to the purchase of ships for the Shah, the Agent, being unsure as to how he should proceed, decided to delay negotiations with the Persians by insisting on his need to consult with his superiors in Bombay before agreeing to anything.⁴⁵⁹ This was a protective mechanism for the Agent, who could legitimately claim to lack the necessary authority to permit the purchase of ships by Company personnel, both giving him a way of avoiding Persian ire for the delay or sanction from his superiors in India or London. This particular mechanism and the delay it caused was often enough to put off the Company's Persian interlocutors who were either unwilling or unable to afford the delay.

In 1734, a serious political situation developed resulting in a major deception of the Persians precipitated by Nader Shah's preoccupation with owning his own fleet of ships. The Company had long outlawed the practice of private individuals selling their own ships to the Persians, it being expressly banned by the President and Council

⁴⁵⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.335 Consultation on Monday 3rd May 1736

at Bombay. The Shah's requirement, however, led to the Company's Agent in Persia who decided to publicly adopt this practice.⁴⁶⁰ As we have seen in Chapter 3, this deception was necessary to mislead the Persians about the true level of private trade in the Gulf that the Company allowed to abuse the favourable rights of the Company *Farman*. Many of the ships trading at the Company factory were in fact privately owned carrying the goods of private merchants and as such liable to pay full duty at the port of Bandar Abbas.

By claiming to the Persian authorities that, although the Company had not been willing or able to sell its own ships, they had encouraged, or indeed facilitated, the sale of two ships owned by private individuals who were in the Gulf on charter for the Company.⁴⁶¹ This adroit manoeuvring served the purpose of satisfying Nader Shah, an essential political dance step, whilst perpetuating the appearance of the Company's control over all British shipping, and also appearing to preserve their ban on the sale of their own ships.

The Company was flexible about how business was carried out in the factory but offered no such flexibility where the Company's own finances were involved. Here there was a definitive response by the Company's local structures to recover losses caused by their servants. In 1735, Captain John Harris, who deserted his command of

⁴⁶⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.257v Consultation on Monday 2nd of December 1734

⁴⁶¹ *ibid*

the *Rose Galley*,⁴⁶² fled to the islands in the Gulf, until he was captured by the Persians, whose help the Company had enlisted to detain.⁴⁶³

The case of Captain Harris differs from that of the Draper, Cordeux and Fotheringham affair, explored later in this chapter; Harris was not a member of the Council, though he commanded one of the Company's ships. Harris had stolen 3,500 rupees in cash, as well as other items belonging to the Company. This act of theft of Company property removed the opacity from his case and automatically created the Company's clear suit against him. Harris' case is noteworthy also because of his repeated requests to be examined by the Council at Bandar Abbas and not to be tried in Bombay. This may explain his apparent willingness to satisfy his debtors with an auction of his belongings before he was shipped to Bombay. Company records also document a botched escape attempt in 1736, with the assistance of his crew, four of whom were also arrested and confined in the factory. Apparently, they were too drunk to row themselves and their erstwhile captain to safety.⁴⁶⁴

It is worth analysing the shipwreck of the *Gombroon Merchant* as it details how extraterritoriality was managed between the Persians and the Company respecting the *Farman*. The Gombroon Merchant ran aground in March 1734,⁴⁶⁵ and a keen interest was taken in apprehending all those members of the crew who had survived but left the wreck, many with goods and cash stolen from the ship. Some of these men were found

⁴⁶² already notable for leaving Nader Shah's Agents in India earlier that year, covered in Chapter 3.

⁴⁶³ IOR/G/29/5 ff.314-314v Consultation on Friday 26th December 1735

⁴⁶⁴ Op. cit. f.315v Consultation on Friday 9th January 1736

⁴⁶⁵ Op. cit. f.230 Consultation on Monday 8th March 1734

in a gambling den, others had fled to Minab after having stolen various articles from the ship.⁴⁶⁶ The Company's men were keen to secure not only the goods that had been taken, but also the perpetrators of the thefts, who were not to be punished by the Persian authorities, despite Persian assistance in finding them.⁴⁶⁷ The unwillingness of the Company servants to let the Persian authorities play any part in the punishment and sentencing of the thieves they apprehended shows the Persians were prepared to cooperate in these matters, even though they could have asserted jurisdiction. This cooperation, followed by the Company's disbursement of justice, highlights how the *Farman*, by setting out a clear prerogative for both the Persians and the Company to assist in apprehending one another's fugitives, was respected by both parties. Not only was the Company given the freedom of a separate legal jurisdiction by one clause of the *Farman*, another clause guaranteed the assistance of the other party in making sure this justice was applied. It is all the more remarkable as this agreement dates back to 1623 and the first *Farman* agreed by Shah Abbas I.

Lastly, it is vital to consider the status of crimes committed against the Company and its servants by Persian subjects. The Company's right to try its servants under its own law, enshrined in the *Farman*, has some similarities to later systems, for example in China, and could cause serious diplomatic repercussions.⁴⁶⁸ The most striking of these was the murder in 1734 of William Cordeux while overseeing the wool investment at Kerman.⁴⁶⁹ The report was sent by Nathaniel Whitwell on his arrival in Kerman to take over from Cordeux and investigate his death. Whitwell informed the

⁴⁶⁶ Op. cit. f.239v Consultation on Monday 20th May 1734

⁴⁶⁷ Op. cit. f.232v Consultation on Wednesday 10th of April 1734

⁴⁶⁸ Bickers, Robert, *The Scramble for China*, (London, Penguin, 2011), p.62

⁴⁶⁹ Op. cit. f.228 Consultation on Tuesday 14th March 1734

Council that Cordeux was strangled by his own servants as he was a “severe master”.⁴⁷⁰ Of the four responsible for the murder, two are reported to have escaped, while the other two are reported to have been held by the Persian authorities in Kerman. Whitwell advised the Council that he could have the two men in captivity executed should they provide a small bribe to the Khan of Kerman.⁴⁷¹ Sadly, the story ends there and nothing more is mentioned of the Khan's prisoners or their eventual fates. Nevertheless, this episode demonstrated the limits of the Company's powers over Persian subjects, showing that despite the victim of the crime having been a Company servant, the Company was unable to exercise any official influence over the Persian judicial process, such as it was, and would have had to instead stoop to a bribe to deal out summary justice.

The importance of understanding the Company's reach in terms of the Persian justice system is demonstrated in the case of the brother of the Company's broker, who, along with the broker and several other Banians, was accused in 1732, of the murder of a Muslim thief.⁴⁷² The Company, in this case, took a very active role in defending the rights and freedoms of their broker and his brother, demanding a public apology for the miscarriage of justice and for money exacted from them to be repaid. This highlights the nebulous status of the broker himself. Clearly the authorities felt able to exact a form of justice, but the Company in this case is able to exercise the privilege of its relationship and appealed directly to Nader Shah, who ordered that the Banians to be refunded half the money taken from them. This demonstrated the Company's ability to exercise significant influence over the local Persian officials who had attempted to

⁴⁷⁰ IOR/G/29/16 ff.150v-1 Letter to the Court of Directors from Gombroon 15th August 1733.

⁴⁷¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.231 Consultation on Monday 1st of March 1734

⁴⁷² Op. cit. ff.172v-3 Consultation on Friday 11th August 1732

defraud their broker and demonstrated the great importance of the *Farman*, which guaranteed their right to protect the broker as their agent, rather than leaving him to face justice from the Persians.⁴⁷³

The Company's attitude towards Englishmen not directly in its employment was also a point of contention, especially as the *Farman* did not differentiate between Company servants and other Englishmen. This is exemplified by the case of Captain Forbes, who, in 1727, was imprisoned by the Pasha of Basra having been accused of keeping two Muslim women as slaves aboard his ship, a crime punishable by death.⁴⁷⁴ Forbes was spared punishment at Ottoman hands by the intervention of the Company's Resident, William May, and the English trading community, who paid for his release. The letter recounting these events mentions that the Court of Directors censured their servants at Basra for paying as they believed "the Pasha durst not go so farr [as to execute him]".⁴⁷⁵ The letter explains that it was "the advice of all the English in the place who were unanimous for giving it".⁴⁷⁶ The Directors may have been in favour of saving Forbes' life had they deemed it in danger, though in this instance they evidently believed that their subordinates had showed their hand too early. Forbes was the captain of a Company ship, raising important questions about the status of various members of the Company's extended network in the region. If saving the life of a ship's captain was not a matter for the Company to concern themselves with, then where did their responsibility begin and end? It cannot have been only with the covenanted servants,

⁴⁷³ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁴ IOR/G/29/15 f.250v Letter from William May to the Court of Directors on March 25th, 1727

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁷⁶ *ibid*

as this would exclude the broker and his brother, though Forbes, despite being an employee of the Company, was not covered.

The letter from the 25th of May 1727 is also revealing in how it closed the issue of Captain Forbes' rescue and is worth quoting at length. It is critically important too in that it is direct evidence of how seriously the Company took their mandate of delegated responsibility to even the smallest of their factories:

“and your petitioner is Humbly of [the] Opinion that all the English in Bussorah [Basra] when met together are better judges of the nature of that people and Government than any can supposed to be who were never before off the Coast of India and your petitioner is Humbly of Opinion that the Supracargoes would give their Opinions to the best of their Judgement their Interest in that respect being the same with your Honours”.⁴⁷⁷

Unfortunately, Isaac Housaye, the Resident at Basra, was charged the 55,000 shahis for Forbes' release. He resigned soon after this following 16 years in the Company's service. Despite the remoteness of the Persian factories from either London or Bombay, the Company's stable systems of organisation, based upon the executive appointments by seniority of its local Residents, Agents and Councils, created a recognisable matrix of authority from which trade and diplomacy was successfully carried out over an extended period. This hierarchy was able to exercise adequate

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid*

administrative, judicial and commercial control over the Company's servants, while also presenting a recognisable system with which local powers and authorities could interact, building long lasting and trusting relationships enabling them to conduct trade whilst balancing local and national political interests.

The Persian factories provide an example of the relative universality of the Company's control structure and the efficacy of its accounting and auditing, even at a distance both in space and over time. This supports Ogborn's description of an intricate, if fragile, administrative system, dependent completely on trusting the small number of individuals "on the ground" but governed by a robust system of checks and balances.⁴⁷⁸ It can be concluded that the Company's rule by contract and delegated authority, although challenged by a number of cases of fraud and misuse of funds are, in fact, under the circumstances, effective enough. Misdemeanours and breeches are few, discovered, investigated, and result in punishment and reparations from the individuals, no matter the distance between them and central administrations in Bombay and London. These example cases must have served as an object lesson and salutary deterrent to all the Companies officers.

For Crown and Country and trades increase?

The question of the governance of the Company's holdings and operations in Persia is inextricably linked with the Company's relationship with the Persians

⁴⁷⁸ Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p.72

themselves. The diplomatic link that the Company forged in the joint campaign against Hormuz was not only a useful tool for the Company itself, but also provided a route for diplomatic exchanges between the Persian and English/British states. This also leads to questions concerning the separation, whether practical or nominal, between the Company's commercial ends and the diplomatic strategies of the English/British Crown. Further to this, if no such separation is to be found, or is unclear, then it is just as important to consider the overlap between Company and Crown policy, attitudes and ends.

The period between 1700 and 1750 was a time of considerable upheaval in Persia. It saw the collapse of the 200-year rule of the Safavid dynasty, the chaotic rise and fall of the Afghans and then the puppet rule of Tahmasp II and Abbas III, leading to Nader Shah's reign. Due to this instability, diplomacy took on a renewed importance to the various would-be dynasties that came to prominence in this period. Despite this unease, diplomatic traffic with the British resident in Persia was limited to letters exchanged with the Company's Agent and other officials, except the mission of Mirza Nasser, who was dispatched by Shah Soltan Husayn with orders to negotiate with the British at Bombay and then to go on to England if he failed to get a desirable response.⁴⁷⁹

Mirza Nasser was dispatched to India as an emissary, carrying letters to the President and Council at Bombay in order to negotiate for Company assistance to combat the increasing threat of Muscat to Persia's southern coast.⁴⁸⁰ This exchange had

⁴⁷⁹ IOR/P/341/2 ff.174-5 Consultation at Bombay Castle 24th April 1705

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid*

been prompted by a letter sent by Queen Anne to Shah Soltan Husayn which was delivered by the Company's Agent, Alexander Prescott, to Persian dignitaries who were entertained at the Company's garden at Afseen. Prescott had elected not to take the title of Ambassador when carrying out this mission until he was informed that the Persians would only recognise embassies from London, despite being happy to send and receive letters to and from Bandar Abbas and Bombay.⁴⁸¹ This demonstrates that the Persian Court was clearly aware of the division between the Company and the Crown; indeed, they were not only aware of it, but enforced protocol on the basis of it. This shows a clear separation between the experiences of the East India Company in Persia as opposed to that of the Dutch Company, who suffered under their own pretext of representing the *Stadhouder* in The Netherlands while attempting to carry out a separate diplomatic correspondence throughout Asia through the Governor-General at Batavia. Adam Clulow points out that this deception was necessary in the early stages of trade with Asian states, especially Japan, where there was no cultural cognate with the concept of the elected States-General.⁴⁸²

Unlike the Dutch, the Company could still point towards a sitting monarch who fitted within the Persian paradigm of kingship and therefore bestowed upon the Company's European servants a form of sovereign protection and a clearer sense of nationality. This was not so easy for the Dutch, who sent letters from a Governor-General, not a king or queen. Homa Katouzian explains that the authority of Persian rulers, and therefore any ruler, was resultant from a divine legitimation known in Persian as *Farr*.⁴⁸³ The Company was able to easily trace its activities back to a

⁴⁸¹ *ibid*

⁴⁸² Clulow, Adam, *The Company and the Shogun*, p.34

⁴⁸³ Katouzian, Homa, *The Persians*, (Yale, 2009), p.5

recognisable ruler in the King of England/Britain. This then made it possible for them to create a frame of reference that would be palatable to Persian concepts of rulership and sovereignty.

The Company used their royal connection to its fullest extent in order to mirror the Persian conception of rulership, meaning that all their treaties and the *Farman* were based on a relationship between the Persian Shah and English/British monarch. The *Farman* granted to the Company after the capture of Hormuz and its subsequent reissues were exemplary of this. The final renewal of the *Farman* came about after a letter was sent to Shah Soltan Husayn from Charles II just as the letters carried by Mirza Nasser were in reply to correspondence delivered from Queen Anne. The fact that Mirza Nasser was the Shah's chief merchant, rather than an appointed ambassador, is also demonstrative of the Persians' attitudes towards the Company and Crown. Essentially, if it is reasonable for the English/British monarch to send letters and petitions via merchants, it must be likewise for the Shah.

Despite the inferred royal sanction to the letters delivered to the Shahs by various Kings and Queens, the period between 1700 and 1750 did not see a widespread exchange of official embassies between the courts of Europe and Persia. The lack of any official, royally appointed embassies is symptomatic of the view held in London that the Company's Agent also acted for the Crown as a consul.⁴⁸⁴ In this way, the need for official embassies, like the one that was originally meant to deliver Queen Anne's letters, was abrogated by the formalised position enjoyed by the Company through the

⁴⁸⁴ IOR/H/628 f.28 The Terms of the Company's *Farman*

Farman recognising them as not only Company servants, but also the representative of the English/British Crown. In practice, the Agent and Council in Persia do not seem to have ever been given an official mission from the Crown, nor any orders. This suggests that the Crown was either unaware of the clause tacitly handing consular authority to the Company, or was simply happy to allow the Agent and Company to run their own affairs; after all, the vast majority of the Englishmen in Persia would have been Company servants.

Despite not recognising the Company's representatives as fully fledged diplomats from a foreign, sovereign power, the Company benefitted from this relatively lowly status as it obviated the need for large, impressive and expensive retinues, gifts and baggage which would normally be a requirement of foreign embassies. This is exemplified by the mission sent to gain the Company's first *Farman* from the Mughal Empire, in this case John Surman's mission to the court of Farrukhsiyar, the gifts alone of which consisted of:

“1001 gold coins, a clock set with precious stones, an unicorn's horn, a gold escritoire, a large lump of ambergris, the inevitable ewer and basin and a globe, more than six feet in diameter inlaid with gold and silver”.⁴⁸⁵

Other embassies to the Persian court, conspicuously those sent by the Russians and Ottomans, were vast undertakings. One Russian embassy, according to the

⁴⁸⁵ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.226

consultation books from Bandar Abbas, consisted of 125 attendants which was met by an escort of 300 mounted troops who conducted the Russians to Isfahan.⁴⁸⁶ Two later embassies from Russia were reported to consist of 500 and as many as 3,000 men,⁴⁸⁷ causing concern for the Russian Resident, who did not believe he could obtain passports for all of them in time.⁴⁸⁸ Ottoman embassies were, if anything, even grander more lavish affairs and required the Persians to give the ambassadors large gifts and allowances while they remained in Persian territory.⁴⁸⁹ This level of expense was not unusual and mirrors the huge sums spent on embassies in this period, including the Dutch *Hofreis* to the Shogunal Court in Japan.⁴⁹⁰ It is not unreasonable to assume then, that the much less formal nature of the Company's interactions with the Persian Court was conspicuously less burdensome, time consuming and expensive for both parties and represented a pragmatic even pleasant way of continuing a relationship which, by the end of this period, had lasted 150 years.

While technically serving a dual purpose for two different masters, both as the Agent of the Company's holdings in Persia and the Crown's consul, in reality the latter responsibility was largely notional. During the period between 1700 and 1750, there was little need for official embassies to be sent from London and, in this way, emissary's missions like the one carried out by Mirza Nasser, sufficed to maintain diplomatic dialogue. The constant presence of the Company in Persia for such an extended period of time seems also to have habitualised its presence and while some

⁴⁸⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.236 Consultation on Monday 13th May 1734

⁴⁸⁷ IOR/G/29/7 f.88v Consultation on Saturday 14th March 1747

⁴⁸⁸ IOR/G/29/6 f.97 Consultation on Tuesday 4th May 1740

⁴⁸⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.5 Consultation on Tuesday 23rd August 1737

⁴⁹⁰ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p.110

fanfare was made of Company envoys, it never reached the extravagance a Russian or Ottoman embassy elicited.

Conclusion.

Santhi Hejeebu has concluded that the Company's system of administration, control and operation was weak and ineffective.⁴⁹¹ By investigating the way the Company operated in Persia, a small, far-flung part of the Company's operations, one can see that this was not the case. This research looks at how the interests of the Company and state were projected abroad based on basic guiding principles, how servants of the Company were empowered to act on their own initiative, necessitated by the slowness of communication. It had to be accepted that apology was better than permission. Control, punishment and censure could also be applied. There were notable failures that included fraud and arguments that turned to violence that were resolved within the community of the factory.

It is clear that the Company deployed excellent communicators and relationship builders, able to act as ambassadors, diplomats and military advisors. The use of the Afseen Garden is testimony to their skills as relationship managers, able to put their interlocutors at ease and develop strong interpersonal bonds and friendship. The Company Servants gathered intelligence and were adept in its analysis to interpret circumstances and respond in order to develop trade.

⁴⁹¹ Hejeebu, *Contract Enforcement*, pp.499-501

This chapter gives evidence of how the Company functioned operationally and how the people working in even its farthest flung outposts were central to its success and longevity in Persia. The Company's communications were shaped by the technology of the time and the extreme distances over which it operated. The massive delays, risks and difficulties involved in communicating even with the Company's regional centre again point to the autonomy enjoyed by the Agent and factory at Bandar Abbas and the trust inherent in holding this office. Operationally the Company Servants for the most part repaid the trust endowed, although on occasion their decisions are audacious.

Chapter 5: Bandar Abbas, Climate, Environment, Natural Disasters, Health and Wellbeing and the Adoption and Adaptation of Local Customs.

No modern history is complete without consideration of the “human factors” whether environmental, organisational, health or social, as it is the wellbeing of the Company’s people that affected the decisions made by the Company. Although much is now known about how dangerous to life working for the Company in India was, the Persian experience was far worse. This chapter gives an insight into the working environment and sheds light on factors that affected the wellbeing and state of mind of the Company’s key decision makers and their situational reactions discovered in the factory and Company records. The history of emotional reaction, illness, stress and loneliness has only recently begun to be explored, but by being so it allows for a more nuanced and therefore more accurate view of historical context. While documentary and tangible evidence of historical events is still the basis for any worthwhile study of history, the consideration of ‘background noise’ in the lives of historical subjects should be a matter of interest, notice and debate. An indication of how punishing the environment was in Persia Company is evidenced through officers returning to India to recuperate.

Bandar Abbas.

Dr. Abd al-Amīr Muḥammad Amīn describes the Company establishment in Bandar Abbas in the middle of the 18th Century as consisting of an Agent, a Senior Merchant, three Factors, two Writers, a Surgeon, two Linguists and a scribe. In addition, there is a garrison consisting of a Sergeant, a Corporal and 45 Asian soldiers. There was also always a guard ship and crew standing off Bandar Abbas to protect against pirates. We know that on other occasions documented below there were two surgeons and two Sergeants and a Private with an English name.⁴⁹² That there were two Sergeants might imply a larger contingent of soldiers but that cannot be assumed.

“A sailors adage of the time had it that “*only an inch of deal stands between Gombroon and Hell*”. “You cannot get excited about Gombroon”, wrote James Douglas, the Bombay Historian”.⁴⁹³

It is important to build a picture of the location and working environment of the Company servants in Bandar Abbas to fully appreciate why the mortality was so high and how the conditions must have affected decision making. That very young men were prepared to leave their homes in Europe, voyage halfway around the world into what contemporary authors often described as a hell, says a great deal about their temperament, conditions and opportunities in Europe and the inducements that were

⁴⁹² Amin, Abd al-Amīr Muḥammad, *British Interests in the Persian Gulf*, (Brill, 1967), p. 41

⁴⁹³ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.251

offered through Company employ to take what was for many a one way and short-lived trip.

John Keay's survey of the East India Company illustrates how extremely challenging it was to live and work in Bandar Abbas even when compared with the difficult, uncomfortable, life threatening conditions met in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.⁴⁹⁴ Despite this the Company felt it worthwhile and necessary to deploy precious resources to keep a presence at the factory.

Willem Floor described the Gulf region as “hot, humid and unpleasant, while winters were mild, although at times cold enough to require warm clothes”.⁴⁹⁵ Floor also records the miniscule average rainfall and limited arable zone available to support the local population. The monsoon winds, although offering some relief from the region's extreme heat and bringing shipping into the region, equally brought gales. Often these gales rendered many of the ports and roadsteads unsafe as docks and berths, especially for the small coastal vessels used for ferrying goods to shore from ocean-going ships. Bandar Abbas, which lies on the northern Persian Gulf littoral, has the advantages of being one of the safer ports in the area and was close to sources of fresh water. The port faced southward towards the islands of Kishm and Hormuz, the two linchpins of trade and shipping in that part of the Gulf. Kishm offered a rare source of fresh water, an anchorage at Basaidu and further away a beach at Laft suitable for the vital task of careening, the process of beaching a ship deliberately to clean the hull.

⁴⁹⁴ The Company's records refer to the town, now known as Bandar Abbas in English by a variety of names, *Bunder Abbasee*, *Gamron*, *Gombroon*. For ease and clarity, the current spelling has been used

⁴⁹⁵ Floor, Willem, *Five Port Cities*, p.1

Hormuz, though much reduced in importance after 1622, still retained a garrison and fortress equipped with heavy artillery and a safe harbour, though trade now flowed directly through Bandar Abbas. The new security now enjoyed by Bandar Abbas was in no small part thanks to the presence of the European Companies armed naval and trading vessels. In addition to the geographical location, other positive factors, according to Cornelis le Bruyn, a Dutch traveller and artist, included that Bandar Abbas was blessed with an abundance of *Gamberi*, a variety of prawns or crayfish, plenty of date palms which, in addition to fruit, provided a staple building material. Le Bruyn also described the architectural features of *Badgir*, a type of wind catcher providing a natural cooling system for houses and public buildings.⁴⁹⁶ As in Spain, local people were in the habit of taking a *Siesta* in the heat of the afternoon, then carrying on their business in the cool of the evening.⁴⁹⁷

Prior to departing Bandar Abbas, Le Bruyn took note of the large European graveyard “filled with lofty tombs and covered domes”.⁴⁹⁸ He stated that the reader should not be surprised by the great number of graves blaming “unhealthy air”, “excessive heats” and “burning fevers”, which are there more common than in any other place, and frequently prove fatal in the space of twenty-four hours”.⁴⁹⁹ Le Bruyn’s account supports Keay in the above quotes, not to mention the winter damp, or the “unwholesome” water that Le Bruyn describes later. Throughout the records of the East India Company in Persia there are instances where the employees complained about the heat and bad water, as well as the heavy rain which made any work impossible, and

⁴⁹⁶ Le Bruyn, Cornelius, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of the East Indies*, (London, 1737), vol.2 p.73

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁹⁸ Le Bruyn, *Travels*, p.74

⁴⁹⁹ *ibid*

the high winds that threatened to destroy ships while tearing apart the small local craft used to shuttle goods between the sea-going ships in the road and the port itself. If all of this were not enough, there is a record of a plague of locusts in 1738 and an earthquake in 1747.⁵⁰⁰

Bandar Abbas' punishing environment, ranked at this time as being worse even than the infamous Bencoolen in Sumatra, a port built on a fetid disease-ridden swamp, or the tiny, mid-Atlantic island of St. Helena, both renowned for high rates of mortality and emotional misery. Appreciating these rigours and understanding their impact on the behaviour and emotions of the East India Company's servants is an important factor in giving the historian a view of how they lived. Jon Wilson, in his introduction to *The Domination of Strangers*, suggests that "Modern states do not consider their subjects as unique, particular individuals".⁵⁰¹ This statement is equally true for the Factors, soldiers and traders of the Company.

"Their Legs were filled with worms": Disease and Illness.

From the descriptions of Bandar Abbas documented below, one of the recurrent themes is the ever-present reality of disease. Bandar Abbas had a deserved reputation as regards its lethal effects upon the health of those whose misfortune it was to be posted there. Tim Blanning describes the relationship between the people of 17th and

⁵⁰⁰ IOR/G/29/7 f.59 Consultation on Tuesday 29th May 1747

⁵⁰¹ Wilson, Jon, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in East India 1780-1835*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.2

18th Century Europe and disease; “when mourners gathered around an English graveside to hear the clergyman intoning the words of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 ‘in the midst of life we are in death’-they knew it to be true”.⁵⁰² In Europe, the average life expectancy fluctuated between 30 years of age to the mid-40s, depending on factors such as social class, region and wealth. In the service of the East India Company in Bombay, most young men, on average, could expect to live only three years from their arrival.⁵⁰³ The situation in Bandar Abbas was yet more stark when one considers that men would return to Bombay from Bandar Abbas to recover their health.⁵⁰⁴ So remarkably even Bombay with its “rains and pestilence” was preferable, indeed a relief, from the conditions on the Gulf Coast.⁵⁰⁵

The water, so necessary in the oppressive heat of the Gulf, was itself dangerous and it was not just the town that suffered; it proved equally dangerous for sailors. In one instance, the crew of the *Fort St. George Galley* returned from an uneventful cruise up the Gulf, “being very sick and their legs filled with worms”.⁵⁰⁶ This almost certainly means that they were infected with *Dracunculus medinensis* or “Guinea-worm”, the symptoms of which include sickness, severe pain, vomiting, with the worms eventually extruding from the lower legs (often ulcerated) to disseminate their eggs.⁵⁰⁷ The presence of this parasite in the ship’s water may have meant that the supply was infected for the factory as well. In other Persian cities, notably Isfahan, water was supplied by the *qanat* system, a network of underground tunnels which carried water

⁵⁰² Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory*, p.57

⁵⁰³ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.135

⁵⁰⁴ IOR/G/29/2 f.21 Consultation on 10th July 1710

⁵⁰⁵ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.101

⁵⁰⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.82v Consultation on Friday 29th August 1729

⁵⁰⁷ World Health Organisation, *Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality Third Edition Volume I*, WHO, 2006, p. 276

down from mountains and highlands, acting as a subterranean aqueduct. The Company was very careful to ensure access to fresh water at their house and garden in Isfahan. The water supply was guaranteed by the *Farman*, a stipulation the Company was careful to get renewed.⁵⁰⁸ The factory even had a budget set aside for the maintenance of the *qanat* each year.⁵⁰⁹

The unhealthy environment at Bandar Abbas was not just appreciated by the Europeans, but also by the Persians themselves. On a campaign against Muscat, the Persian commanders decided not to leave their army waiting at Bandar Abbas, instead moving them westward down the coast to Kung. It was explained that they preferred to use this much smaller port as many of their troops had died at Bandar Abbas of unknown illnesses while waiting to be shipped across the Gulf. To escape these conditions, Company servants were often dispatched inland to higher ground, at the Company's expense, to recover from illness. In one case George Pack, a Writer, in 1732, requested to serve in Isfahan, rather than Bandar Abbas, to preserve his health.⁵¹⁰

William Cockell, who served as Agent from Sunday 4th March 1733 until his health drove him to retire in February 1736, spent a great deal of his time as Agent absent from the factory. Several months of severe ill health necessitated him to take long trips to the Persian interior, nearly reaching Kerman, between 13th April and 27th November 1734. During this time, he continued to send and receive letters concerning the business of the factory, but this was hardly a substitute for his actual presence.

⁵⁰⁸ IOR/G/29/17 f.30 Letter to the Court of Directors, 7th June 1745

⁵⁰⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.330v Consultation on Thursday 25th March 1736

⁵¹⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.180v Consultation on Tuesday 10th June 1732

Cockell took another trip for his health from April 1736 until he was summoned to return to the coast in July for an official visit by the *Beglerbegi* of Fars, Mohammed Taqi Khan.⁵¹¹ Owing to continued illness, including another trip away from Bandar Abbas, Cockell was ordered to hand over control of the factory in November 1736 to John Geekie, who had previously acted as the Company's Resident in Isfahan.⁵¹² Cockell soon after retired as Agent due to his health and departed for Bombay.⁵¹³ Despite no official record being left, we can assume that the day to day running of the factory continued unabated by the Agent's absence, business being conducted by the Council, composed of the Company servants in Bandar Abbas above the rank of factor.⁵¹⁴ The Council would have been supplemented by the experience of John Geekie, both in running an establishment and dealing with the Persians, having done so at Isfahan as Resident. The occasion in which these absences are recorded to have caused concern was when the *Beglerbegi*, visited Bandar Abbas, where the Agent's presence was essential for propriety's sake.

Despite being largely administrative and official in scope, the letters and consultations written in the India Office Records (IOR/G/29 series) for the Gulf Factory also contain very interesting insights into the personal lives of the men serving in the Company's factory. These not only include their commercial transactions and business, but also the process by which their wills were executed and their estates disbursed, their marriages, liaisons and disagreements. By studying these issues in the tiny Company

⁵¹¹ Op. cit. f.331 Consultation on Wednesday 31st March 1736 and IOR/G/29/5 f.345 Consultation on Wednesday 28th July 1736

⁵¹² Op. cit. ff.358v-9 Consultation on Saturday 20th November 1736

⁵¹³ Op. cit. f.366 Consultation on Wednesday 9th January 1737

⁵¹⁴ Lawson, Philip, *The East India Company, A History*, (Routledge, 1993), p.72. The Factor was the lowest rank of "covenanted" servant, who had entered into a contractual relationship with the Company to serve, while providing a security and references in support of that contract.

community (never more than 12 covenanted servants) in Persia, it is possible to build up an appreciation of the attitudes and perceptions concerning sexuality, interracial marriage and legal jurisdiction in the wider polity growing in India and beyond.

Miles Ogborn has demonstrated that the East India Company provided wages only as a nominal inducement to its servants to serve them.⁵¹⁵ He states “private trade has been understood as the main incentive that kept the Company servants loyal”.⁵¹⁶ Between 1729 and 1749, the only adjustment in the salary of Company officials in the Persian Gulf was measured in the Company mandated exchange rate between the rupee and the Persian shahi, which went from eight to ten per rupee.⁵¹⁷ The relatively low pay received by the Company’s employees was significantly augmented by a variety of allowances and expenses. These included the Company Table, a communal space where any member of the Company or visiting European might eat and drink, including European wines and Goan arak. Each covenanted servant was also given their own suite of rooms in which to live. In the new factory, completed in February 1745, there were ten sets of two room apartments and two with three rooms, reserved for the Agent and his second in command.⁵¹⁸ Travel on Company business was also covered for Company Servants, including, as previously mentioned, journeys undertaken for health reasons.

⁵¹⁵ Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p.72

⁵¹⁶ *ibid*

⁵¹⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.206v Consultation on Wednesday 13th June 1733

⁵¹⁸ IOR/G/29/17 ff.18-v Letter to the Court of Directors 20th February 1745

The Company's table at Bandar Abbas was well stocked, as reported in a breakdown of the expenses compiled in December 1734 in an attempt to extract an increased allowance from the Presidency at Bombay.⁵¹⁹ It reports that the butler of the factory spent roughly 1,000 shahis per month, the equivalent of two and a half years pay for a writer, on "petty expenses for fowls, greens, butter, eggs, fish and &c" as well as mutton.⁵²⁰ The table expenses also include ghee, sugar, water for the garden at Afseen, rice, Shiraz wine, candles, "breadflower", barley and European liquors and Goan arak.⁵²¹ The factory also kept its own sheep for mutton "when costs [sic] 8-10 shahis per maund"⁵²² as well as "hogs, ducks, pidgeons [sic], fowls"⁵²³ which were fed with barley. How the Company had managed to circumvent the Islamic interdiction against the rearing and consumption of pigs remains unanswered, though their *Farman* permitted them to produce and export alcohol. This spread would presumably suffice to feed the nine members of the Company staff listed in their last payroll before the request for an increased allowance was made. Indeed, they would seem to have been very well provided for. The provision of room and board then may have allowed the Company's servants to use their incomes solely for their own entertainment and investment in goods for sale.

⁵¹⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.261 Consultation on Saturday 28th December 1734

⁵²⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.261v Consultation on Saturday 28th December 1734

⁵²¹ *ibid*

⁵²² *ibid*

⁵²³ *ibid*

Wives, Girls and Lovers.

The European community in Persia, being officially solely male, faced the perennial problem of all such transplant communities, namely female, or indeed other male, companionship. William Dalrymple in his work, *White Mughals* gives a fascinating view of the relationships enjoyed by the Company's servants in the subcontinent, where Muslim and Hindu women, who had much greater latitude in their actions than did the women of Iran, sought marriage to Englishmen.⁵²⁴ The source Dalrymple uses, the *Kitab Tuhfat al-'Alam*, was written by the Persian noble Abdul Latif Shushtari in 1802. However, it still provides a window, not only on the personal lives and interactions of Europeans with their Indian neighbours, but also on the Persian cultural perspective on these relationships. Suffice it to say that Shushtari, a Persian, had little truck with the concept of Muslim women who "take every imaginable liberty".⁵²⁵

The records for Bandar Abbas contain two cases of the Factors' relationships with Persian women. On the 20 April 1732 William Cordeux, the East India Company's Factor in Kerman, was strangled by four servants (detailed later in this chapter). William Cordeux had manumitted a slave girl called Manna with whom he was engaged in a relationship. It may be presumed that they were not married, judging by the description of her as his "girl"⁵²⁶ rather than his wife. What is clear is that she was set to inherit substantially from Cordeux's estate after his murder and that she was not

⁵²⁴ Dalrymple, William, *White Mughals*, (London, Viking, 2003), p.134

⁵²⁵ *ibid*

⁵²⁶ IOR/G/29/5 ff.230v-1v Consultation on Consultation on Monday 1st of March 1734

a Muslim. We know this due to attempts by the Khan of Kerman, following Cordeux's death, to force her into converting, thereby making her new wealth liable to seizure by the Persian authorities.⁵²⁷ As it happened, Manna seems to have been in the care of the Company's replacement for Cordeux, Nathaniel Whitwell, who refused to heed any demands from the Khan, who had attempted to fabricate orders from Nader Shah to have her seized. Shortly thereafter she was spirited away by the Company to Bombay "to be proceeded against", presumably concerning various demands on Cordeux's estate.⁵²⁸ It transpired that Manna was suspected of being an accomplice in Cordeux's murder, but there is no record of the investigation and, as we shall see, the witnesses are not available.⁵²⁹

The second case concerns Ursula Euston, a Jewish woman with family in the Gulf port of Kung, the widow of William Euston, the former Agent at Bandar Abbas. Edmund Wright was appointed as the executor of her estate and disbursed 300 toman to her husband's sisters in England, anything remaining after her other legacies was bequeathed to her Jewish family at Bandar Kung.⁵³⁰ It is interesting to note that Ursula Euston's relatives were Jewish, as there are very few mentions of Jews in the Persian factory records. The status of Jews in Persia under the Safavids was not a comfortable one, as with Jewish people in England, who had been expelled en masse in 1290 and only legally readmitted in 1655. In the territories of the East India Company tolerance was more entrenched, presiding as it did, over an incredibly heterogeneous society including Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Roman Catholics, Armenians.⁵³¹ Whether the

⁵²⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.216v Consultation on Monday 20th August 1733

⁵²⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.217 Consultation on Saturday 25th August 1733

⁵²⁹ IOR/P/341 f.396 Letters in a packet from Bandar Abbas received at Bombay on 13th of June 1733

⁵³⁰ IOR/G/29/15 ff.69v-70 Letter from Isaac Housaye and Edmund Wright to the Court of Directors on January 20th, 1723

⁵³¹ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.102

Company's wide-reaching toleration would have spread to a Jewish Agent controlling one of their factories is unclear, however the intermarriage of local women to Englishmen was widespread in India. Indeed, Robert Shirley, one of the first Englishmen to visit Safavid Persia was married to an Orthodox Circassian noblewoman, re-christened Teresia.

In the same letter that reports the death of Ursula Euston, there is also the following passage, concerning Charles Savage and a Persian noble, named Lutf Ali Khan:

“he has rendered himself unworthy of the service by his former Wickedness and late Elopement as the Agent advises from the factory to the House of Loof Ally Caun [Lutf Ali Khan] one of the most notorious offenders in that unnatural and infamous vice that lives under heaven”.⁵³²

While this passage does not explicitly accuse Charles Savage and Lutf Ali Khan of homosexuality, illegal in Britain under the Buggery Act of 1563, the meaning would appear clear. Unlike in 18th Century Britain, Persia at this time had a rather different historical relationship with same-sex relations; indeed, a rich poetic and literary history celebrating such relationships exists. However, it is quite evident that such a relationship was deemed unacceptable to the Company and thus Savage was sent back to Bombay.

⁵³² IOR/G/29/15 ff.69v-70 Letter from Isaac Housaye and Edmund Wright to the Court of Directors on January 20th, 1723

A Little Wine for thy Stomach's sake: Alcohol and Entertainment.

The relationship between the Company's servants and alcohol has a long, complicated history. This was no less true for the first Company voyages to the islands of Indonesia where they indulged heavily, "disordering themselves with drinke and whores"⁵³³. Persia was no exception to the conspicuous consumption of alcohol, whether wine produced at the vineyards of Shiraz or shipped from the Rhineland, or arak distilled in Goa. The trade in wine produced in Persia explored in Chapter 2, however the social implications of alcohol should be treated separately to this. Nominally illegal in Muslim Persia, wine has a long and colourful history in Iran not least in the Shiraz region, though the connection between the region and the grape variety are disputed.⁵³⁴

Persia is documented as a major source of wine consumed in Bombay, where it was shipped in quantity when available. The Company not only had a *Farman* granting them permission to produce and export wine, but maintained their own vineyard and vintner in Shiraz for this purpose. In July 1727, a caphila (caravan) of 220 pack animals carried 280 chests of wine and 100 chests of rosewater to Bandar Abbas from Shiraz.⁵³⁵ In 1728, another shipment "and hundred Chests of eight Flasks ea[ch]" was dispatched to Bombay on the Company's account "to supply for their immediate want", the

⁵³³ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.42

⁵³⁴ For more on Iran's wine culture: Matthee, Rudi, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900*, (Princeton, 2009).

⁵³⁵ IOR/G/29/4 f. 72 Consultation on the 5th July 1727

previous year's vintage having proven sour.⁵³⁶ There was also mention of the expected arrival of another caphila bearing wine and the desire that should it arrive before the departure of the ship carrying the original stock, another 50-100 chests might be added to the shipment. The consumption of Persian wine in India has been documented by David Hancock, but only inasmuch as to mention that it was an alternative to the trade in Madeira wine, which was the focus of his study. However, on considering the large imports of this product in the latter half of the 18th Century, one can begin to formulate an idea of the significant demand for alcohol in India, thus supporting the importance of Shiraz as a supplier and Bandar Abbas as an export route.⁵³⁷ Any wine that was found to be sour at Bombay was distilled and distributed to the Company's soldiers stationed there.⁵³⁸

When, as in 1729, no wine was produced at Shiraz, 50 chests were acquired from other areas for the use of the factory.⁵³⁹ Despite being destroyed by the Afghans in December 1729, with the loss of 7,000 toman of stock, the vineyard at Shiraz was maintained, with the vintner sending news to Bandar Abbas periodically. The Afghans had previously halted production of wine by their invasion in 1722 but, by 1726 a new vintage was being prepared, though at "a much greater price than was accustomed to be paid".⁵⁴⁰ It took until 1732 before Bombay requested another shipment from Persia and, from then on, the request became routine. For example, in 1740, 200 chests were purchased at 200 shahis per chest, 140 of which were charged to the Company's cash,

⁵³⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.41 Consultation on Tuesday 11th February 1729

⁵³⁷ Hancock, David, 'An Undiscovered Ocean of Commerce Laid Open': India, Wine, and the Emerging Atlantic Economy, 1703-1813, in *The Worlds of the East India Company*, ed. Bowen, Lincoln and Rigby, Boydell, 2003, p.159

⁵³⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.59 Consultation on Saturday 3rd May 1729

⁵³⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.84 Consultation on Saturday 13th September 1729

⁵⁴⁰ IOR/G/29/3 Consultation on Monday 26th December 1726

presumably to be sent on to Bombay, the other 60 therefore, were retained for the factory.⁵⁴¹ Considering the small number of Company servants, nine in 1734,⁵⁴² at Bandar Abbas, the presence of between 480 and 600 flasks of wine, not to mention other alcohol that might have been imported, borders on alarming, especially considering the shortage of water and the much maligned climate. It is quite possible the Company surgeons spent a large part of their days attending to the severely dehydrated. Shiraz wine was far from the only tippie enjoyed by the servants, with mentions in the accounts of considerable purchases of Goan “arrack” and European wines. On top of what was provided by the Company, there was the Dutch “punch house” in Bandar Abbas.⁵⁴³

At least some of this stock of alcohol was used to keep the guards stationed at the factory in good spirits; indeed, sometimes it was their spirits which compelled the Company servants to provide them with it. In 1727, on noticing the soldiers had an extra ration of punch distributed, William Cordeux accused his nemesis, William Henry Draper, of attempting to bribe the guards to “make them continue firm to his side”.⁵⁴⁴ The two sergeants of the guard, Sharp and Boyden protested, saying that the men were provided an extra ration when they went to Church of a Sunday, by way of encouragement. They went on to say that Cordeux would not have noticed anything amiss had Robert Iles, one of the privates, not been “in liquor” after a visit to the punch house. Sharp and Boyden ended by saying only nine men in the factory were permitted punch, presumably from the Company’s stock. So along with poor water, dazzling heat,

⁵⁴¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.116v and f.121 Consultation on Wednesday 15th October and Monday 10th November 1740

⁵⁴² IOR/G/29/5 f.261 Consultation on Saturday 28th December 1734

⁵⁴³ IOR/G/29/4 f.77v Consultation on Wednesday 12th July 1727

⁵⁴⁴ *ibid*

intermittent plague and occasionally hostile locals, life at Bandar Abbas can add hangovers to its list of attractive qualities, or one was a result of the others.

While alcohol flowed freely, other pastimes were strictly forbidden by the Company's Court of Directors. Most notorious was "the prohibition on gamming [sic]", which was enforced at the factory from November 1728.⁵⁴⁵ How widespread gambling was is not mentioned, though if it required a prohibition to be decreed from London, it was likely considerable. Not only was the decree to be read out publicly by the factory secretary, it was also ordered to be "affix[ed] in a publick place".⁵⁴⁶ The prohibition was unsurprisingly ignored, as proven by the scandalous behaviour of two of the Company's "country" guards who manufactured a panic in 1732, orchestrated to pay off gambling debts they had accrued. The two men, taking advantage of the constant and occasionally realised threat of Afghan raids on the town "fired off their musquets and running in at the Gates told everybody they mett that the Ophgoons were entering". As the civilians fled in panic, the two soldiers began looting their houses and were only disturbed when Mir Haidar, a local Persian commander, led his men to challenge the supposed Afghan threat.⁵⁴⁷ It is unsurprising that the Company legislated so firmly against gambling when considering these events, which harmed the Company's reputation with the Persians. While the scale in this instance was limited to two men, somewhere like Bombay, with a sizeable European population and garrison, would have seemed more like a powder keg. In India, however, taxation of the arak

⁵⁴⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.6v Consultation on Monday 25th November 1728

⁵⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁴⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.144v Consultation on Thursday 20th January 1732

supply was a contributing factor to the Keigwin revolt in 1683 which suggests that the free flow of spirits was a more prized privilege than rolling dice or playing cards.⁵⁴⁸

While on his convalescence in the interior in 1736, William Cockell was accompanied by the factory's surgeon, Dr. Patrick Oliphant, who himself fell ill while attending on the Agent and other Company servants when caught amidst an outbreak of fever at Minab. The presence of one doctor at the factory is remarkable as at any one time there might be less than a dozen Company officers at the factory. Doctors enjoyed the second highest salary of any European at the factory,⁵⁴⁹ and a consultation states that while Dr. Oliphant was away attending the Agent, one Dr. Russell was retained at the factory at 3,000 shahis, nearly equal to the annual salary of a Senior Merchant. The expense of keeping such men ordinarily would have been prohibitive, especially in an organisation where thrift and profit were to be strived for. The Company surgeons, being limited in the medicines and procedures available, supported the Company's officers in more practical ways to preserve their wellbeing. It is documented that the surgeon in 1729 was responsible for stocking the Company Table, the communal dining enjoyed by all the Company's servants at their Honourable Masters' expense.⁵⁵⁰ The surgeons were also responsible for providing reports and post-mortems in cases of suspicious deaths in the factory as in the case of Laurence de Romade, one of the Company's 'Topaz'⁵⁵¹ guards who was killed in a brawl with another member of the garrison, Francis Pereira.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.68 Richard Keigwin, a settler in Bombay, was named governor after the garrison of the city revolted against the Company's council after having their wages cut.

⁵⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/5 f.349v Consultation on Monday 9th August 1736

⁵⁵⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.88 Consultation on Saturday 25th October 1729.

⁵⁵¹ Tupas, Topas, a Eurasian of Portuguese ancestry

⁵⁵² IOR/G/29/7 f.132v Consultation on Sunday 17th January 1748.

It is clear that the Company's governors and council went to great efforts and considerable expense in maintaining the good health of its people in their factories, making provision for Bombay, Madras and St. Helena to be subject to planning laws emplaced in England after the Great Fire of London in 1666 and a further fire in 1671. The Company also outlawed practices such as fertilising trees and plantations with dried fish or “buckshawing”, saying that the practice caused “a corrupting [of] the air with a noisome [sic] smell”.⁵⁵³ This smell, it was believed, caused illness amongst the population at Bombay, which the Company feared more than any gain they might derive from the practice. Stern argues that the Company, where it had the authority to do so, were active in maintaining the health and wellbeing of their servants. This included legislating on the upkeep of water supplies and methods to avoid miasma (a mist or ‘bad air’ that carried pestilence), believed well into the 19th century to cause disease. In the case of the Persian factory, where the Company was not in control of planning, the provision of a doctor(s) for the small communities at Bandar Abbas and another for even smaller Basra, was in keeping with a wider trend.

Rule and Misrule: Company Governance, Jurisdiction and Criminality.

Crime and criminality are also a useful way to understand how the factory was governed as well as an insight into daily life which the following chapter will explore. While Company service was considered good employment allowing for the gaining of great wealth and status, the documentary record provides a large amount of data

⁵⁵³ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.86

concerning crime and criminality amongst the Company's servants, soldiers and the crews of visiting ships. The *Farman* contains permission for the Company to try and punish its own employees according to English, rather than Persian law. This is a major concession by the Persians considering the small size of the English community in Persia.

Many minor issues were handled by the Agent and Council in Bandar Abbas. However more major misdemeanours were referred to Bombay for trial. In 1729, in the public bazaar, there was a brawl between John Fotheringham and William Draper, the Chief Factor. The case was referred to Bombay, though neither party was dispatched there to stand trial. The case revolved around a dispute over shipping orders written up by Draper concerning a Muscati ship. Draper had given orders that the English ship "take, capture or burn" the Muscati vessel, a stance that John Fotheringham and William Cordeux, the Council Secretary, feared would cause undue animosity between the Company and the Imam of Muscat. Despite the orders being changed to suit all three men, the disagreement between them became public and acrimonious, leading Fotheringham and Cordeux to publicly declare that Draper was "no longer our Chief".⁵⁵⁴ After this, Draper and Fotheringham drew swords on each other in the public bazaar and fought; Fotheringham was wounded in "the right breast, left shoulder and hip bone" while Draper was cut "slightly on the right cheek".⁵⁵⁵

Draper's reaction to these events shows how fragile the hierarchy within the factory could be, including the relationship with the garrison. While it is evident from

⁵⁵⁴ IOR/G/29/4 ff.53-61 Consultations on Wednesday 28th June-Saturday 1st July 1727

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid*

the testimonies from all three of the Factors that no one was fully in control of the garrison, which did not react to orders given by Draper, but equally did not succumb to any instigations against him. Eventually, the garrison agreed to support Draper, or at least uphold his position as Chief.⁵⁵⁶ Draper ordered for Fotheringham and Cordeux to be disarmed and put in custody. Draper himself retreated to his rooms, where he had weapons “put around his chair”.⁵⁵⁷ Despite Draper originally ordering for Fotheringham and Cordeux to be sent to Bombay, these orders seem to have been quickly overturned as Fotheringham and Cordeux remained at Bandar Abbas.⁵⁵⁸ The garrison was ordered to read a declaration promising to obey Draper’s orders, which raises questions concerning the garrison’s view of the chain of command and why they did not respond immediately to Draper’s orders. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this case is that Fotheringham and Cordeux, on being released, delivered letters of protest to Draper both against him and against the two other members of the Council, William May and Mr. Forbes, for failing to act with them to curb Draper’s actions. Cordeux also accused Draper of defrauding the Company after examining the accounts and records.⁵⁵⁹

This case raises the important issues, not only of criminality and what might be considered as such, but also of control. Both K.N. Chaudhuri and Philip Stern address the question of control within the factories and how they were in turn controlled by the Court of Directors. Chaudhuri suggests that the Company’s governing bodies, being so far removed from the day to day activity of their employees, relied on a system of

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁷ IOR/G/29/4 ff.67v-8 Consultation on Tuesday 4th July 1727

⁵⁵⁸ IOR/G/29/4 f.62v Consultation on Sunday 2nd July 1727

⁵⁵⁹ IOR/G/29/4 ff.67v-8 Consultation on Tuesday 4th July 1727

consequences wherein “dismissals, forfeiture of financial guarantees, or prosecution in the courts of law”⁵⁶⁰ were used to control and censure the men based in the factories. However, this does not really apply at the ‘ground level’ of the Company’s business, wherein the presence of claims and counterclaims, all faithfully recorded in the Company’s consultations, show how opaque disputes could become. By surveying the Company as a monolith, rather than a sum of its parts, Stern and Chaudhuri do not to consider the human aspect of discipline and disagreement.

Neither Draper, Cordeux nor Fotheringham suffered any censure from either Bombay or London, it perhaps being understood that men living in such trying conditions and close proximity might, on occasion, lose their tempers. This lack of censure may also reflect how difficult it was to reliably replace these employees with people with constitutions strong enough to survive the climate.

Conclusion.

This chapter has shown that the lives of the Company’s servants in Persia were difficult, sometimes short and often complicated by the interpersonal relationships that living and working together in a relatively small, closed community can bring. While previous scholars have considered the ways in which cities like Bombay, Madras or Calcutta were managed, governed and policed, Bandar Abbas, far from these important centres of Company power, has remained unexplored. While it may have only been “an

⁵⁶⁰ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p.32

inch of deal from hell”, it was evidently a lot further from anywhere else. That being said, there were comforts available which the Company hierarchy provided in order to make life bearable. The Company table provided food and drink, while limited entertainment was provided locally by the Dutch punch house. This chapter shows that Bandar Abbas and the Persian factory was a significantly different place to serve the Company and in being so, of interest to scholars trying to understand the Company as an organisation and institution. While it is true that there were never more than a dozen covenanted Company servants in Persia at any given time, the scale of the factory ought not to discount its significance from study. Given that this thesis highlights the challenges of the environment, sometimes violent competition, warfare, pestilence and natural disaster, the Company servant’s fortitude and *sangfroid* is all the more remarkable.

Chapter 6: Brokers, Khwajas and Country Christians: The Company's Employment of non-Europeans in Persia.

The arrival of European companies in the Indian Ocean was far from the discovery of a previously inert region; it was instead the arrival of another competitor in a complex trade network that had functioned for centuries. It is no surprise that this vibrant and flourishing commercial web should have had its own entrenched and experienced trading and financial groups pre-dating European expansion into Asia. Not only was the Company obliged to trade with these groups, but it was essential to conducting business to employ these local experts to ensure optimal trading and good communication especially with Persian officials. This chapter investigates these intermediaries including issues of culture, race, religion, language and legal jurisdiction impacting Company communications with the Persians.

The Banians, a mixed community of traders and bankers, represented one of these groups. The Banians originated in India and traded and settled throughout Southeast Asia and the Gulf, from Persia to Astrakhan. The other major group, the Armenians, originated in the Southern Caucasus and from there built trading and familial networks throughout the Ottoman Empire, Persia, India, Russia and Europe, with members of the community settling as far away as Lvov and Venice. The interaction between the East India Company and these groups has been the subject of some scholarly attention. The Armenian community has been well researched, with the work of Edmund Herzig and Vahé Baladouni informing our understanding of the relations between the East India Company and the Armenians. Baladouni's work with

Margaret Makepeace on sources concerning Armenians in the British Library's India Office Records is a valuable resource for historians considering the intercourse between the Armenians and European traders.⁵⁶¹ Herzig's work has also made a number of Armenian sources accessible, as well as providing a detailed analysis of the Armenian dominant role in the silk trade, while Ferrier's work analyses the Anglo-Armenian relationship in the *longue durée*. This chapter considers the important role in the Company's commercial network played by the Armenian community. Through an understanding of the extensive trading life of the Armenians we can construct a much clearer view of Indian Ocean trade and how it was transacted in terms of financing, commodity trading and transport and distribution.

Sebough Aslanian has also made a significant advance in tracking the historical trajectory of the Armenians' development into both a "service gentry" in Persia and a trade diaspora elsewhere.⁵⁶² Aslanian's work helps to define the world of Armenian commerce from both an institutional and personal level. Most helpful to this study is his description of the collapse of the Julfan trading community in Isfahan. Aslanian also discusses the migration of Julfan Armenians to India via the Persian Gulf after 1722. Unfortunately, Aslanian only recognises in detail the centrality of the Company to these events after their 1688 treaty with the "Armenian Nation", which is more fully analysed later in this chapter.⁵⁶³ More importantly, Aslanian credits the Company with

⁵⁶¹ Vahé Baladouni and Margaret Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Sources*, (Philadelphia, 1998), Herzig, Edmund, *Armenian Merchants* and Ferrier, *The Armenians*.

⁵⁶² Aslanian Sebough, *Diaspora vs. Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company and the High Court*, *Transnational Studies* vol.13, no.1 (Spring 2004, Toronto).

⁵⁶³ Aslanian, *Diaspora*, p.65

supporting the relocation of Armenian trading families from Persia to Europe and India, specifically Madras and Calcutta.⁵⁶⁴

The two main scholarly sources which inform upon the Company and the Armenians in the study period do not cover the specific relationship between the Company's Armenian employees and the Company's *Farman*. Before analysing this further, it is important to establish what both Aslanian and R.W. Ferrier bring to the understanding of this facet of the thesis at a broader level.

The works of Aslanian and R.W. Ferrier inform our understanding of the Company's key relationship with the Armenians, with Aslanian studying the Armenians as a whole and Ferrier delivering an overview of the Armenians interaction with the Company at a high level. Whereas Aslanian studies the Armenians as an international trading community, Ferrier delivers a broad review of the Armenians and the origins of the Company's relationship with them. Ferrier actively considers the interactions between the Company and the Armenian community in the 17th and 18th centuries giving a wide survey of the interactions between the two group. But Ferrier does not concentrate on the personal relations between the Company and its Armenian employees, nor on the conduct of the linguists. Ferrier states clearly that he believes that the Company was completely reliant on the Armenians to carry on their trade in Persia.⁵⁶⁵ His case for this is based largely on the cooperation of Armenian merchants in the Company's trade, as well as giving the Company access to Armenian ready cash for trade in Persia.

⁵⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁶⁵ Ferrier, *The Armenians and the East India Company*, p.54

While these arguments are compelling, they fail to consider that the Company had traded in Persia for 80 years before the period from which Ferrier draws his sources. Indeed, Ferrier's sources come from a period which saw very specific circumstances in Europe, the most consequential of which was the ongoing war through the 1690's between England and France. Masashi Haneda has briefly considered the role played by the Armenian linguists in the Bandar Abbas factory, listing the duties of the role, though not exploring the deeper connection between the Company and the wider Armenian community.⁵⁶⁶

Both Ferrier and James Mather relate to how the Company-Armenian relationship could be much less than cordial, suffering from mistrust and rumours of distrustful conduct.⁵⁶⁷ Apart from Mather's brief comments on discrimination against the Armenians, there is little mention in the secondary literature about whether the Armenians, as a Christian community, were treated as Europeans or Asians and how these distinctions may have affected the Company's treatment of them. Also, details of the Company's potential reliance on Armenian financiers and translators is absent from the current scholarship on both the Company and the Armenian community.

Baladouni and Makepeace's collection of documents referring to the Armenians from the India Office Records sheds some light on the regard in which the English/British held the Armenians, revealing also how this attitude changed over time.

⁵⁶⁶ See Haneda, *Les Interpretes de Bandar Abbas*

⁵⁶⁷ Mather, James, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World*, (Yale, 2009), p.98

The earliest documents, from 1619 and into the 1620's give an impression of the Armenians as a litigious and high handed class of merchants determined to make difficulties for the Company, while protecting their own considerable fortunes.⁵⁶⁸ However by 1695, the Company was actively encouraging its Persian Factors to take any and all advice from the Armenian merchants with whom they did business, including on how best to frame the Company's privileges from the Shah.⁵⁶⁹ The Company's officials seem to have classed the Armenians as distinct from the "black" Indians or Asiatic Persians and Turks and while they receive much opprobrium for their hard dealing the Company seem obliged to work closely with them.

The Armenian and Banian experience of trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean, as well as their ubiquity as merchants throughout the region, reveals to researchers why they were of such use to the European Companies. They provided valuable services and expertise, while also allowing access to financial backing and methods of cash transfer otherwise unavailable to European merchants. Whilst providing these services, this research shows that the Banians also form the basis of the Company's' clientele for the inter-Asian country trade. Stephen Dale's *Indian Merchants and the Eurasian Trade 1600-1750* addresses a specific Banian community in Astrakhan on which this thesis draws as an analogue for this diverse community the Company encountered.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p.26

⁵⁶⁹ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p.186

⁵⁷⁰ Dale, Stephen, *Indian Merchants and the Eurasian Trade 1600-1750*, (Cambridge, 1994).

There is also mention within the records of Persians who were taken into the Company's employ, as well as the many Indian and Arab sailors, soldiers, *hamals* (porters) and teamsters who carried out vital services for them. In many ways, the great diversity within the Company's employees and the essential functions that were performed by non-Europeans would suggest a Company that was far less English than has previously been imagined. Armenian linguists would have been the recognisable face of the Company in many of its encounters, while sepoy soldiers guarded the gate to the factory and a Banian broker provided ready cash to oil the wheels of commerce.

“Such wise men” The Armenians of Persia.

The Armenians had been a fixture of trade in the Indian Ocean from the 15th Century, building networks of kinship and commercial ties from Persia to Poland and the Philippines. It was due to this expansive network that the East India Company found the Armenians to be useful partners and associates in their various dealings with native dynasties and markets. The Armenians, on the other hand, found it equitable to align with the Company in order to take advantage of their large, fast and well-armed ships, which were already serving the trade routes important to the Armenians. The Armenians represented one of the richest communities in the region, drawing favourable comparisons with the wealthiest merchants of London and Amsterdam.⁵⁷¹ From 1604, Shah Abbas I, creating “scorched” earth on his borders, had forcibly relocated the Armenians from the Caucasus to the new Safavid capital at Isfahan. The Armenians were given their own city quarter, which they named ‘New Julfa’ after one

⁵⁷¹ Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, pp.137-138.

of their former commercial centres following their forced migration to Isfahan after 1604.⁵⁷² This relocation was a ploy by Abbas the Great to harness the trading networks of the Armenians to enrich his new capital, while also denying his Ottoman rivals access to the same. Not all Armenians were merchants; many involved in the production of silk were not relocated to Julfa, instead they were sent to use their own skills in Gilan and Mazandaran in the silk industry Shah Abbas was attempting to promote.

For the Company, the overwhelming control of the Armenian merchants had over the silk trade made them attractive partners. The Armenians enjoyed an almost monopolistic trading connection with Russia and Anatolia, while the Company's trade with India offered fresh opportunities without threatening these established concerns. There was no lasting credible threat to the Armenians' control of the silk trade through Russia or the Ottoman Empire from the European companies, therefore both communities by 1688 had learned to derive benefit from the expertise of the other.⁵⁷³

The symbiotic relationship enjoyed by the Company and their Armenian partners is evidenced by the regular use by Armenian merchants of Company ships, either to transport goods or cash between Persia and India. By 1700, these links were well established and led not only to commercial relationships but also to the employment of various Armenians by the European Company as brokers, translators and *Vakils* (Agents, subsidiaries). These roles demonstrated that Armenians were given positions of very great importance, sensitivity and gravity as they not only

⁵⁷² Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p. xx

⁵⁷³ Matthee, Rudolph, *The Politics of Trade*, p.6

communicated on behalf of the Company in their presence as translators, but also acted on their behalf at a distance.

Contained in the India Office Records, is a letter dated 20th June 1723 from Persia to the Court of directors which outlined the commercial relationship between the Company and Armenian families.⁵⁷⁴ This closeness was not only true in Persia, but also in India where in 1716, Khwaja Sarhad, an Armenian merchant was made second in command during John Surman's mission to obtain a *Farman* for the Company from the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar.⁵⁷⁵ While the trust demonstrated by the Company towards its Armenian employees seems considerable, the Armenians themselves put an equal level of trust in the Company, relying on the good offices of Company servants to disburse their wills and ship cargoes of gold, pearl and other valuables to and from India. Such relationships, while essentially contractual in nature, appear to have exceeded purely mercantile bounds by becoming personal attachments. Matthee observes that this process had served the Armenians well when integrating into Persian society after the trauma of the forced migration to Isfahan.⁵⁷⁶ Matthee also describes the Armenians as having become a "service gentry" within Safavid society, having taken advantage of privileges granted to them by Abbas the Great, as well as familial ties with the silk producing regions of Gilan and Mazandaran.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁴ IOR/G/29/15 f.115v Letter to the Court of Directors 20th June 1723

⁵⁷⁵ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.224

⁵⁷⁶ Aslanian, *Trade Diaspora*, p.42

⁵⁷⁷ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p.84

The Armenians benefitted hugely from the good offices of Shah Abbas I who conferred considerable privileges upon the Julfan Armenians who had been re-settled in Isfahan in 1613, far in excess of those enjoyed by the majority of the population.⁵⁷⁸ Shah Abbas' policies to enrich trade therefore assisted both the Armenians, who were given the chance to reinstate themselves at the centre of the silk trade under the Shah's personal protection, but also the Company, which would take full advantage of the Shah's wishes for commercial stimulation while solidifying their place in Persia. The close and mutually beneficial relationship created between the Company and the Armenians may therefore be attributed to the recognition by both groups of the advantages that could be derived from supporting one another in what had proven a very vulnerable and formative period. Ferrier suggests that this relationship was favoured by Shah Abbas I as a way of diverting the silk trade away from his Ottoman rivals, thus weakening them by robbing their treasury of customs and taxation drawn from the sales of silk.⁵⁷⁹ It is clear that Shah Abbas deliberately retained the traditional control over the whole of the supply of Persian silk and controlled the buy price. Shah Abbas I used the Armenians in an attempt to boost production and efficiency. In addition, he used the Armenians and the Company to divert trade away from the Ottomans through Hormuz, by sea, a decision he reversed in time. Shah Abbas I really left neither the Armenians nor the Company with any other choice than to work with each other. Rather than dictate this partnership, Shah Abbas I allowed them to work things out for themselves over time.

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁷⁹ Ferrier, R.W., "The East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries", *The Economic History Review*, vol.26 no.1, (1973), p.39

As evidence that the Company's relationship with the Armenians had become close, by 1688 the Armenians were given permission by the Company not only to trade within the Company's networks, but also to reside in any of the Company's "cities Garrisons or Towns in India and to buy, sell and purchase Land or Houses and be capable of all Civil Offices and preferments in the same manner as if they were Englishmen born".⁵⁸⁰

This agreement was negotiated in London with Khwaja Panous Callendar, who lived there until his death in 1696.⁵⁸¹ It is interesting to consider that the agreement was made on behalf of the "Armenian Nation" by a single merchant, whose family was one of the most influential of the Julfan community. There is no clear definition from the language of the treaty to suggest the scope of the Armenian community covered by this agreement. Baladouni suggests that the "Armenian Nation" was comprised of the wealthy trading families of New Julfa as well as the Armenian clergy.⁵⁸² While this definition does not seem unreasonable, as these two castes represented the most visible and influential sections of Armenian society, it does not take into account any Armenian not living in Julfa, excluding the population in the Caucasus, Gilan or those already living in India. It is also unclear as to the mandate Callendar had to make this agreement on behalf of the "Armenian Nation", if indeed he had any authority at all. Panous is described as "an Armenian of eminency and an inhabitant of Ispahan",⁵⁸³ but any other credentials go unwritten by the Company in the minutes of the negotiation and announcement of the treaty. The negotiation of an agreement this comprehensive

⁵⁸⁰ IOR/H/Misc/634 ff.581-94 Text of agreement between the East India Company and the Armenian Nation, 22nd June 1688.

⁵⁸¹ Ferrier, *The Armenians*, p.50

⁵⁸² Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p. xxvi

⁵⁸³ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p.86

is demonstrative of the closeness between the Company and the Armenian trading diaspora. This agreement cemented the relationship and from this point the Bandar Abbas factory becomes the central hub for Armenian, and joint Armenian and Company trade in the Gulf. This relationship also encouraged the already active private trade carried out between the Armenians and Company employees. In support of this Herzig notes that a 17th Century Armenian merchant called Hovhannes Ter-Davt'yan lent to Europeans in India a number of private individual notes of exchange.⁵⁸⁴

The support of the Armenian Callendar family with their Armenian merchants in London continued through their assistance of the Company in advising them on the proper varieties and colours of cloth to sell in Persia. Additionally, in Persia, the Factors were encouraged to seek the assistance of the Armenian community.⁵⁸⁵ The above agreement also encouraged the Persian Factors to initiate a programme whereby their servants would reside in Isfahan with the Callendar family in order to learn “the Persian and Armenian languages and arithmetics”.⁵⁸⁶ Finally, the agreement with the Armenians and the renewal of the Company's charter in 1693 led to the two parties entering into a series of negotiations on joint ventures. These included a plan to cooperate with the Callendar family to buy up silk previously consigned to the Dutch. The Company promised to take a third of the total, taking advantage of a shortage of silk coming via the Mediterranean, but this plan was met with coldness or outright hostility from the Callendar family. This was presumably due to the huge potential costs involved and the reliance on the Armenians' expertise in pricing and selling the

⁵⁸⁴ Floor and Herzig, *Iran and the World*, p. 450

⁵⁸⁵ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 86

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

silk appropriately.⁵⁸⁷ While the hoped-for cooperation never came to pass, in 1691, the Company was able to sell large quantities of their cloth in Isfahan with the help of their Armenian linguist Da'ud.⁵⁸⁸ Trade agreements seem to have eluded the Company and the Armenian trading firms for a variety of reasons. According to Ferrier, there does not seem to have been a time when the interests of both groups coincided to an extent where wide-reaching collaboration was achievable.⁵⁸⁹ The Armenian agreement with the Company formalised a much higher level of communication and cooperation between both parties enhancing the existing trade with the Armenians that took advantage of Bandar Abbas' the Company's markets and shipping.

The various advantages derived from association between the Company and the Armenians, however never succeeded in redirecting the all-important silk trade from the Ottoman Empire to the Gulf. It is clear from Ferrier's analysis that while the Armenian community was more than happy to assist, guide and be employed by the Company, they were not self-sacrificial and therefore never relinquished their hold over the silk trade from Persia through either Russia or Turkey.⁵⁹⁰ This reinforces the idea of the Armenian community being a self-supporting society, with the necessary structural rigidity to resist and coerce both state power, in the case of the Persians' or commercial pressure, as exerted at varying times by the Company and Dutch. In appreciating this fundamental strength, it is possible to build a balanced picture of the relationship enjoyed by the Armenians and the Company as one of mutual assistance

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸⁸ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 116

⁵⁸⁹ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p.56

⁵⁹⁰ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, p.61

and benefit,⁵⁹¹ rather than a Western organisation taking advantage of a downtrodden and servile sub-class within Persian society.

As already shown in other parts of this research the Company learned to recognise its own fundamental limitations to expansion either politically, militarily, commercially or financially and, in the Armenian example, the power of entrenched local commercial interest. We see again the Company accepted the situation for what it was and created a partnership to make the best of these circumstances. This state of affairs would see a fundamental shift after the Company became the paramount military and trading power after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. This affected its relationship with both the Persian state and the Armenian traders operating between Persia, India and the wider world.

A Question of Customs.

The close relationship between the Armenians and the Company can be traced through a variety of different practices undertaken by both groups in support of the other. The East India Company's freedom from paying customs and duties at Bandar Abbas was one of its most valuable privileges meaning that goods that they imported could be sold cheaper, undercutting their competitors, especially the Dutch.⁵⁹² Yet again, this advantage highlights the significance to the Company of their privileges through the *Farman* and the value of a continued presence in Persia. Early attempts to

⁵⁹¹ Baladouni and Makepeace, *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth Century*, pp.86-90

⁵⁹² IOR/H/628 f.23 *Farman* from Abbas I to the East India Company

extend this privilege to Armenian merchants and freighters coming from India met with sanctions when the Persians found out, usually with Dutch assistance. In one instance in 1737, the Dutch actively informed upon the Company, damaging their relationship with Nader Shah's subordinate, Taqi Khan.⁵⁹³ The Company persisted, however, in negotiating advantageous terms for those Armenians who worked for and with them, making clear the value of Armenian merchants to the Company's business while reciprocally showing how useful Company patronage could be. This came in various guises such as Armenian merchants being allowed to land goods at a lower rate of customs than would normally be charged, or the right to land goods and have them processed and customs calculated at the Company's factory.⁵⁹⁴ These attempts to ease or circumvent Persian restrictions and charges for Armenians using the Company's ships appear to show a desire by the Company to gain a further edge against their competitors in the Asian carrying trade between India and the Gulf.

This facilitation of Armenian trade was part of a wider effort to co-opt the Armenians more fully into the Company's trade and business, encouraging Armenians to settle in the Company's Indian settlements. Armenians who took up residence in the Company's possessions in India were given a tranche of other rights, including the right to worship freely in their traditional manner, to trade and freight on Company ships, and to hold office.⁵⁹⁵ Armenians, albeit Christians, belonged to a separate religious tradition, and were viewed by the Company as a safer and more reliable population for Madras and Bombay, likely to invest in and defend the cities in which they lived. Stern

⁵⁹³ Floor, *Iranian Navy*, p.43

⁵⁹⁴ IOR/G/29/16 f.241 Letter to the Court of Directors 8th June 1742

⁵⁹⁵ Stern, *Company State*, p.39

suggests that the Company was consciously mimicking the resettlement policies of Shah Abbas I in their treatment of the Armenians.⁵⁹⁶ While Stern is almost certainly right that the Company was inspired by the success of New Julfa, their choice of who to emulate seems unfortunate. The Company evidently believed that the Armenians would take well to the idea of relocation, as historically they had done so before. It is hard to believe that the Company could be so callous and crass to imagine that any repetition of this experience would be profitable. Those Armenians who did decide to move to the Company's Indian settlements no doubt did it for pragmatic reasons, such as the explicit military protection offered by the Company from local oppression and financial extortion. Implicitly, the Company was also providing the Armenians with a home base and shipping ready to transact their own trade. The Company's main benefit from the Armenian presence in its settlements appears to have been access to financial instruments which the Armenians were able to make available in return for the benefits they received from the Company. Stern shows that the Company believed that by co-opting the Armenians into its settlements they could use them to counter the "falsitys and untruths" propagated by the Company's commercial and political adversaries in India, which surrounded the Company's dealings in Asia.⁵⁹⁷

A Question of Credit.

The Company suffered, over the course of its history, from a lack of ready cash and available capital with which to transact its trade in the Indian Ocean. The Armenians were seen by the Company as a pool of investors with established financial

⁵⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid*

instruments and networks, which could be deployed to back the mercantile aspirations of the Company and their Armenian backers.⁵⁹⁸ The Julfans in Persia were themselves not short of credit when the Armenians required extra support; their merchants were capable of attracting vast financial backing from their own family firms and communities or could take advantage of modern European banking methods. A letter from Danvers Graves, the Company's Kerman factor, shows a group of Armenian merchants trading in Isfahan in 1750 using 70,000 toman in cash and credit supplied by bankers in Venice.⁵⁹⁹ This record reveals the truly vast sums that Armenian merchants could call upon from across considerable distances, as well as showing the Company's awareness, not to mention jealousy, of such transactions. It also became common practice in Persia for Armenian traders to pay for the goods they were purchasing with bills and writs on fellow Armenians living in Madras and Bombay, rather than Julfa.⁶⁰⁰ This demonstrates the extensive links and relationships garnered by the Armenian community across Europe and Asia, the likes of which the Company simply could not replicate.

The co-option of the Armenian trading community into the fabric of the Company's Indian possessions was therefore a shrewd strategic decision, as it not only provided an educated corps of men with local experience and fluent in local languages, but also a vast reserve of cash and credit. The same process, as has been shown above, was happening in India, where Armenians had been encouraged to migrate to the Company's cities and take part in the financial and administrative life of the Company's settlements.

⁵⁹⁸ Ferrier, *The Armenians*, p.55

⁵⁹⁹ IOR/G/29/17 f.98 Letter from Danvers Graves at Isfahan on October 31st, 1749.

⁶⁰⁰ IOR/G/29/16 f.259, IOR/G/29/6 f.276v Consultation on Tuesday 26th December 1743

Armenian and Banian bankers were incentivised by the Company to shift their working capital to the protection of Company settlements including India. These valuable concessions and Company protection included the promise of freer trade across existing networks. In the Company's settlements, the protection of the Company was more tangible, however, as the case of Bandar Abbas makes clear. The intangible protection of the Company's privileges and advocacy in Persia were just as attractive.

Venice had for centuries been the centre of the banking world of Europe, only in the 17th and 18th centuries being eclipsed by the exchanges in London and Amsterdam. As already noted, was the ability of Armenian merchants to draw credit from far away and in large amounts. But perhaps more interesting is that Madras and Bombay were also becoming nodes of commercial credit for the Armenian family firms. With the arrival of the Company in the early 17th Century and the efforts of Abbas I to stimulate Persia's trade, Bandar Abbas was also part of a growing network of trade, functioning as an entrepot for European goods imported by the VOC and Company, as well as an outlet for Persian commerce flowing to India.⁶⁰¹

Aslanian does not consider or attribute the importance of Bandar Abbas as the connection between the Armenians of Persia and the wider Indian Ocean trading world, especially the Company settlements at Madras and Bombay. In this way, Bandar Abbas, and by extension, the Company and VOC factories there, formed a vital link between the Armenians and their trade partners and lines of credit in India and Europe.

⁶⁰¹ Aslanian, Sebouh, p.44

As we have seen, the shift from “old world” sources of finance, such as Venice, to closer, Indian settlements under the Company’s jurisdiction is central to understanding the relative positions of the Company and the Armenians in the 18th Century. This research, along with the work of Aslanian and Stern, shows that the Armenians were capable of linking these two circuits of trade together, drawing credit from one side to the other, facilitating both their own commercial ventures and providing the Company with a source of capital and income through freighting. This meant that both the Company’s ships travelling between Europe and India, their factories at Isfahan and Bandar Abbas and their settlements at Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, had become as indispensable to the good management of Armenian business as the Armenians had for the Company.

Gainful Employment

Their various financial facilities led Armenians to be directly employed by the Company for a number of tasks. Their facility with Middle Eastern and European languages also made them ideally suited to employment by the Company as translators and interpreters. For their part, the Armenians who worked for the Company in Persia were doubly protected as they were subject to the privileges granted in the treaty signed in 1688 by the Company on the Armenian community, while also benefitting from the conditions of the Company’s *Farmans*, which guaranteed their safety explicitly. These privileges included protection of physical property from theft, damage or seizure, and freedom from taxation and extortion by the Persian government. This was a marked departure for many Armenians who were often targeted by the Persian authorities for

‘gifts’ and extortions.⁶⁰² The Company also provided for their servants’ physical wellbeing: They were fed and clothed by the Company from their allowance, which was limited and audited by the authorities in Bombay and London. They were also given gifts at Christmas.⁶⁰³ In this way the Armenians were granted a measure of “state power” protection that they had previously lacked.

The Armenians hired by the Company were forced to navigate between two identities that did not always mix comfortably. While the Company's protection was evidently valuable and trusted, the translators were still considered by the Persians as being subjects of the Shah. Therefore any benefit or defence derived from association with the Company was secondary to this status. Indeed, according to the Company's records, sometimes claiming European protection was a significant disadvantage. The Dutch *Vakil* at Kerman, “Owanooze”,⁶⁰⁴ was repeatedly beaten during Nader Shah’s occupation of the city in 1747, he was also extorted by Persian and Afghan soldiers on the Shah’s orders. On being targeted in this way and brought before the Shah when he was unable to pay what was demanded, he was beaten severely and only worsened the beating when he protested that he was under Dutch protection.⁶⁰⁵ Owanooze, who may have only tried to use his Dutch status in extremis, clearly did not have the desired effect. This incident reveals Nader Shah did not feel obliged to stay his hand concerning the lives of his subjects by outside influence. Owanooze was beaten because he was uncooperative and the attempt to use his Dutch status a further impertinence. Considering the brutality with which Nader Shah extracted money from the general

⁶⁰² IOR/G/29/5 f.350-351 List of Rogums in Consultation on 12th August 1736.

⁶⁰³ IOR/G/29/15 f.237 and IOR/P/341 f.240

⁶⁰⁴ Most likely a derivation of “Hovhannes”, the Armenian cognate for John.

⁶⁰⁵ IOR/G/29/7 f.82 Consultation on Monday 2nd March 1747.

population, it seems likely, in this case, that Owanooze's race was not at issue, but his inability to comply and then claim protection of a foreign power was.

As well as being viewed as subjects by Persian officials, the Armenians' position was made somewhat precarious as they had to communicate with officials who might not like the messages they received and thus ran the risk of being punished as proxy for their masters, who as Europeans were much less likely to be physically threatened. The Company's *Farmans* also covered this eventuality, promising protection and good treatment for those carrying messages for the Company.⁶⁰⁶ At least notionally, the Armenian linguists were given protection by the Company's *Farman* against punishment or rebuke by their Persian interlocutors, although, as the case with Owanooze demonstrates, that may not always have been effective. This again shows that the Company's employees derived significant protections and benefits from their service. These benefits also included a regular salary, often calculated on the rupee, rather than the shahi, which was desirable to those working in Persia due to the advantageous exchange between the rupee and the often debased Persian currency.

Mutual Benefit or Taking Advantage?

The benefits that both the Company and Armenian communities brought to one another appear to have created an exceptionally durable connection. The case of Sultan David, an Armenian merchant trading between Persia and the Coromandel Coast in the

⁶⁰⁶ IOR/H/628 f.29 *Farman* from Abbas I to the East India Company

1740's provides a clear example of how the relationship could be stretched, both in terms of time and distance.⁶⁰⁷

The incident is first mentioned as a simple transaction for cloth, which was paid for by a bill on Sultan David in Madras for the sum of 14,800 rupees. This is a considerable sum, representing the wages of the Company's Agent in Persia for twelve years, demonstrating the trust in and durability of financial instruments agreed between Armenian family firms and the Company across large distances and long periods of time. The disbursement of the bills seems to have been complicated by Sultan David having left Madras for Pondicherry, at the time still under French rule, and the Company therefore being unable to reach him.⁶⁰⁸ It is a testament to the relationships maintained between the Company and the Armenians that the bill was not invalidated immediately after the failure of Sultan David to pay it. Eventually, it was agreed that "Shawmeer",⁶⁰⁹ Sultan David's son, would be permitted to go to India and secure the payment from his father, with the interest that had been accruing over the previous six years. The Company was evidently capable of tracing sums of money accurately across a variety of currencies in a wide geographical area and calculating the appropriate interest over long periods of time. Equally, the value of Armenian credit, both in India and Persia, is made clear by the willingness of the Company to risk allowing Shawmeer to leave Persia to pursue the debt further.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ IOR/G/29/7 f.61 Consultation on Tuesday 3rd June 1747

⁶⁰⁸ IOR/G/29/7 f.127v Consultation on Sunday 20th December 1747.

⁶⁰⁹ Possibly Shahamir.

⁶¹⁰ While Aslanian devotes a chapter of his book on the question of trust, he limits it to Armenians dealing with each other through contracts like the *commenda*, rather than looking at those relating to business with outsiders. For the various types of contracts used by Armenian merchants see Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, pp.122-136

There were times, however, when the Company's relations with the Armenian community were significantly weakened by bad practice on one side or the other. There are recorded cases, for example, of the Company's linguists having abused their positions and therefore the good name of the Company. This is illustrated by the case of "Stephen" who served as the Company's linguist at Isfahan while the city was under siege by Safavid Loyalists attempting to oust the Afghans in 1730. Stephen appears to have colluded with the Afghans to keep the Company's employees in Isfahan, rather than allowing them to leave to avoid the siege, according to the account in the Company's minutes. In so doing he betrayed the confidence of his employer and was dismissed, as well as being banned from any further Company service.⁶¹¹

After 1730, the Company employed Joseph Hermet as their linguist and members of his family as interpreters and assistants. The Hermet family were of French descent and appear to have had no connection to any of the local communities in Persia.⁶¹² This seems to signal a break in trust with the Armenians of Isfahan as interpreters. The Armenians are also reported to have been caught misleading inexperienced Company servants into making poor decisions amounting to fraud and deception in their business and signing off added expenses.⁶¹³ One instance of this was discovered during a case for incompetence made by the Company against two of its employees. It transpired that they had borrowed huge amounts of ready money on credit and then attempted to cover up their fraud with deception.⁶¹⁴ From the letter outlining

⁶¹¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.119 Consultation on Monday 13th July 1730

⁶¹² *ibid*

⁶¹³ IOR/G/29/17 f.99v-100 Letter to the Agent from the Court of Directors 31st October 1747

⁶¹⁴ *ibid*

the trial, it appears that the two employees, Peirson and Blandy, had been incompetent to start with, but had then been badly advised by some Julfans into making poor investments and financial transactions that benefited the Armenians to the detriment of the Company's credit.⁶¹⁵ In this report, the Armenians were accused of having stolen gifts destined for the Persian Court and withholding deliveries from the Company's servants under the licence of the factory.⁶¹⁶ It is unclear whether these accusations against the Armenians were substantiated, or whether they represented an attempt by Peirson to shift the blame away from himself (Blandy had died before being charged with misconduct). In either case, the privileged position of Armenian merchants as advisors, partners and suppliers at Isfahan is clear from the fact that accusations against them could be deemed realistic enough to be a defence for Peirson.

Conversely, the Company was equally capable of manipulating their relationship with the Armenians to their own advantage. Sometimes cargoes carried on Company ships and charters were directed to be landed at Bandar Abbas, rather than other ports preferred by the freighters, in order to collect a share of the customs the Armenians were liable to pay there.⁶¹⁷ In this way, the Company was seen to be augmenting the trade to the port, while lining their own pockets both in carrying freight to Persia and receiving their cut of customs from the goods landed there.

⁶¹⁵ *ibid*

⁶¹⁶ *ibid*

⁶¹⁷ IOR/G/29/16 f.190v Letter to the Court of Directors 15th December 1737

Employees or Subjects? The Legal Status of the Armenian Community.

The compact of 1688 between the Company and the Armenian community resident in India returns to the complex questions of legal sovereignty and subjecthood explored in Chapter 4 with regard to the Company's European servants. The agreement recognised Armenians as having all the same rights as "Englishmen Born", thus opening positions within the Company's hierarchy and civil service to them and permitting them to trade and travel without restriction between the Company's cities and factories. It would appear from this that the Company was granting citizenship, of a sort, to the Armenians. Nevertheless, the idea of citizenship in this context is problematic on several levels. Stern has put forward the argument that the Company constituted "government, state, and sovereign in Asia".⁶¹⁸ While this is true, especially for the Company's large settlements in India which were under the direct jurisdiction of the Governors, Presidents and Councils, in Persia it was not nearly so simple. The Persian factory was a small, distant outpost of the "Company-State" and therefore lacked the mechanisms by which state-like functions could be enforced. This was as true for the Armenians in Company service there as for the Company's English employees. Essentially, the realities of communication and extending authority over long distances made the Company's nominal rights of the Company's servants moot in the face of immediate threats and concerns.

The position of the Armenians in particular was further complicated by the claim of Nader Shah to be sovereign over all Armenians, not just those in his empire

⁶¹⁸ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.3

but also those who lived outside of it.⁶¹⁹ While Nader Shah was unlikely to be able to assert his status as ruler over all Armenians, whether they were living in the Russian Empire, Poland or just across the border in the Ottoman Empire, for those Armenians living in Persia, the message was clear. How then, could the Company contend that the Armenians of India, and those in their employment elsewhere, were citizens of a trading organisation based in London, rather than of a resurgent Persian Empire? In reality, Nader Shah could only assert his claim of rulership over the Armenians who were physically or evidentially financially present in his domain. The Company could likewise use its physical and legal presence to counter any attempt by Nader Shah to attack or dispossess the Armenians in the Company's employ. The Persian recognition of the Company's rights granted in the *Farman* to extend the non-payment of tax and other benefits to the Armenians shows how the legal sovereignty of the Shah could be curtailed within his own realm, while abroad, Persian rulership could only be notional.⁶²⁰

For much of its existence, the Armenian community had lacked a state of its own. In this way, the claim by Nader Shah to rule over all Armenians has questionable merit. Nader Shah did rule Armenia itself and therefore most Armenians, including their religious leaders, and they lived as his subjects and paid him tax. The East India Company did, however, fulfil some state-like functions for the Armenian community, which was not limited to only their employees. The most commonly documented of these functions, excluding the nominal protection offered by the Company to those Armenians who worked for it, was the administration and disbursement of the wills

⁶¹⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.324 Consultation on Saturday 8th March 1746.

⁶²⁰ IOR/G/29/5 f.350-v List of the Company's Rogums 1730

and estates.⁶²¹ The evidence for this comes from copies of the contents of packets sent between Bombay and Bandar Abbas, as well as notifications of the disbursements of money from the wills of Persian Armenians in the Bandar Abbas Consultations. There is no easy explanation as to why the Company was entrusted with this task, nor why they agreed to carry it out. While the Company was willing to carry out various legal functions for its English employees, including the administration of wills and disbursement of payments and estates, doing so for Armenians would seem a long jurisdictional stretch. A possible reason for these transactions could be that the Company was attempting to secure debts that it was owed by the merchants, effectively making the Company a priority investor in the estate of the merchant and guaranteeing, as far as was possible, that the Company received its due.

The Armenians, along with other minority groups, had no protection for their goods against seizure by the local Khan or the Shah on their deaths. It was Persian custom that anything belonging to a Persian subject ultimately belonged to the Shah and was held by his subjects only for as long as it pleased that Shah. This being the case, when a Persian subject died, their property was liable to be repatriated to the Shah through local officials. By using the Company as a guarantor and executor, the estates of wealthy merchants could instead be safely disbursed through the Europeans, whose property was not liable to confiscation by officials. Between 1700 and 1750, there were five reports of the Company actively being involved in the management of the estates of deceased Armenians. One of which, “Yakub John” appears to have made the

⁶²¹ IOR/G/29/7 f.7v List of items in a packet to the Bombay Presidency from Persia Friday 22nd August 1746 and IOR/G/29/5 f.57 Consultation on Thursday 1st May 1729 and f.169 Consultation on Friday 7th July.

Company his executor, or possibly the Agent in his capacity as the Company's representative. Demands and payments on his will appear six times between May 1729 and July 1732 in the Company's consultations.⁶²² Unfortunately, there is no stated reason as to why Yakub John decided to make either the Company or one of its officials his executor, although it can be imagined that he may have chosen to do so to protect his estate from seizure by the Persian authorities.

This leads to the question of whether the Company, as Stern suggests, was the case in India,⁶²³ was undertaking state-like functions with regard to the Armenian population or whether this was a more personal arrangement. The Company was often the agent for the estates of its employees who died whilst abroad, organising the sale of personal items and goods to be sent back to the deceased's family as cash.⁶²⁴ It is possible that the Armenians who worked for the Company, including brokers, were aware of this, and thereafter the benefits of the custom spread through the community. This does not mean that the Company viewed the Armenians as being subjects, though as employees of the Company they were bound by certain codes of conduct, nor does it suggest that the Armenians considered themselves to be so. In this way, the Armenians appear to have been using the Company as a sort of tax-haven, whereby they could avoid losing a portion or all of their estate after death to the Persian authorities and therefore guaranteeing the continuation of their family firm.

⁶²² IOR/G/29/5 f.57 Consultation on Thursday 1st May 1729 and f.169 Consultation on Friday 7th July.

⁶²³ Stern, *The Company-State*, p.13

⁶²⁴ IOR/G/29/1 ff. 26-28, Letter from Edward Monnox at Hormuz to Isfahan, 8th April 1622.

Aslanian tracks the movements of Armenian merchant families from Persia to Europe and India during and after the oppressive reign of Nader Shah. Many Armenians from influential families are shown by his research to have moved to Madras⁶²⁵ and Calcutta;⁶²⁶ indeed, Aslanian suggests these as possible foci for a new commercial circuit around which the Armenians could rebuild their wealth and society. Both of these cities were governed by the Company, which seems too much of a coincidence to avoid comment, though Aslanian does not mention this specifically in his work. It appears that the Armenians, on seeing the collapse of Persian and then Mughal power, gravitated towards the Company cities and authorities in India most closely aligned with their business interests. Looking back at the long connections between the Armenians and the Company this is no surprise. Aslanian seems to suggest that stateless and vulnerable, the Armenians were forced to comply with the Company's "intense monopolising rivalry" and ceased to be independent traders.⁶²⁷ That being said, Aslanian's later description of a flourishing trade, not to mention the first Armenian printing press in Madras, demonstrates that the Armenians took advantage of their privileged relationship with the Company.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, p.208

⁶²⁶ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, p.213

⁶²⁷ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, p.220

⁶²⁸ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, p.208 and p.51

The Banians.

Unlike the relatively homogenous Armenians, the "Banians"⁶²⁹ were a collection of itinerant merchants from a wide variety of religious, social and caste groups. James Onley explains the many divisions within the Banian community, while also stressing that this term was accepted and used ubiquitously when talking about the Indian community in the Gulf.⁶³⁰ As such, it is difficult to speak of 'the Banians' as a whole, but to try and cover every caste, family and ethnicity from the *Lawatiyya* to the *Mappilla*, or *Memon* to *Kshatriya*, would become impossibly cumbersome. Unlike the Armenians, the Banians do not appear to have had any recognisable political relationship with the Safavids. Having voluntarily migrated and settled in the Gulf region, they appear to have simply been treated as subject peoples, in a similar way to the Arab tribes. This differs from the Armenians, who were recognised as their own "nation" as discussed above; their long history, Christian religion and strong communal ties demarcated them from the looser, more fragmented Banian groups, or the fiercely independent Arabs. The Banians also appear to have been considerably more numerous in the Gulf region than the Armenians. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that the Armenians' traditional homeland, as well as their post-migration homes, were in the North and West of Persia, and the Banians, coming from India, arrived in the Southeast.

⁶²⁹ Banyan, Vania, Bania, a caste or occupational designation in India for merchants, bankers and those involved in commerce generally. Most commonly rendered as "Banian" in the Company's sources.

⁶³⁰ Onley James, "Indian Communities in the Persian Gulf", in *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times*, ed. Lawrence Potter, (Palgrave, 2014), p.240

The Company, by 1710, with its connections between the Subcontinent and the Gulf, rapidly discovered and cultivated useful relationships with Banian merchants, who acted most often as brokers, whilst also sometimes assisting with translation and interpreting.⁶³¹ The Company's broker at Bandar Abbas appears to have always been a Banian merchant who as a Company employee, gained certain rights and protections from the Persian authorities, such as freedom from taxation for his household, or Company intervention in legal disputes.⁶³² Serving the Company in this capacity was therefore very attractive and potentially very profitable to the broker, over whom the Company was able to extend its patronage and protection.⁶³³ The connection with the Company could also be familial, with the position of broker being passed down from father to son on at least one occasion.⁶³⁴ Other positions were also passed down within families. This family connection with the Company was not simply notional, as demonstrated by the giving of gifts by the Company on special occasions, including Christmas, but also family events, such as the marriage of the broker's son, who received a princely 50 tomans.⁶³⁵

The Company made it a condition of the employment of "Sankhar" as broker in 1730 that he would pay a stipend to the family of the former broker "Noqua Chittra".⁶³⁶ This suggests that Sankhar's family would, in turn, receive a similar pension should Sankhar be unable to support them. The broker was also given rooms from

⁶³¹ IOR/G/29/2 f.19 Consultation on 15th June 1710.

⁶³² IOR/G/29/5 f.350-351 List of Rogums granted to the Company in Consultation on the 12th August 1736.

⁶³³ IOR/G/29/2 f.7 Consultation on 6th May 1709.

⁶³⁴ IOR/G/29/4 f.75v Consultation on Wednesday 12th July 1727.

⁶³⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.363v Consultation on Friday 7th January 1737

⁶³⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.110 Consultation on Monday 27th April 1730

which he could carry out his business within the new factory completed in 1750.⁶³⁷ This gave him security for his goods and cash, while also giving him a place of business separate from his house, which was vulnerable to occupation by avaricious Persian officials.⁶³⁸ In one particular instance in 1732, the Company paid:

“100 Venetians for a Rogum to get Chitrah’s house back from Mirza Mahomett who took possession of it without any consent or privity which villain promised to repay and therefore you must see that he does it”.⁶³⁹

This was not the first time the Company had been forced to intervene to protect their broker’s property, which had been seized twice during the Afghan occupation of Persia in 1729.⁶⁴⁰ The Afghans had been evicted with an order from the Court and the withdrawal of the Company’s assistance and collaboration in the running of the port, upon which they seem to have been reliant.⁶⁴¹ Eventually, Baru Khan, the offending Afghan, sent his son to beg the Company’s pardon, bestowing a *kalat*, or robe of honour, upon the broker for his pains.⁶⁴² As was the case with the Armenians, the Company could use its political position to the benefit of the Banian merchants in its service, paying bribes to Nader Shah's officials or withdrawing support from the Afghan administration.

⁶³⁷ IOR/G/29/16 f.176v Letter to Court of Directors January 28th, 1737

⁶³⁸ IOR/G/29/5 f.189v Consultation on Sunday 24th December 1732

⁶³⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁴⁰ IOR/G/29 ff.44v-45 Consultation on Saturday 22nd February 1729.

⁶⁴¹ IOR/G/29/5 f.48 Consultations on the 12th-21st March 1729.

⁶⁴² *ibid*

The Company's broker was a vital member of the factory's staff. He not only provided ready cash with which the Company could carry out its various transactions but was also a major purchaser of their imported cloth.⁶⁴³ As the Company's broker, the legal protections extended to him could be invaluable as a safeguard against extortion, which was not uncommon,⁶⁴⁴ and also against spurious criminal charges. On one occasion in 1732, the Banian community at Bandar Abbas was held collectively responsible for the death of a thief, despite the fact he had been beaten to death by the *Katwal*, the local constable.⁶⁴⁵ In response, the Company demanded a public apology and restitution for those taken prisoner⁶⁴⁶ while only half of what was taken was ordered to be returned.⁶⁴⁷

The broker was also reimbursed for his work on behalf of the Company, as he was entitled to a one percent levy on all transactions carried out in the factory for which he and the Agent were responsible.⁶⁴⁸ In return for these privileges, the broker was very often the sole purchaser of the Company's shipments of cloth, which he then sold off as best he could. Eventually, the opportunity was taken to end the brokering system at Bandar Abbas in preference for direct payments, triggered by the resignation of Sankhar from the post. In return for his service, Sankhar was given considerable time and leeway to repay the money he owed the Company, including a facility for credit on the Company to bring his own business back into order before leaving his position in 1739.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴³ IOR/G/29/5 f.364 Consultation on Thursday 13th January 1737

⁶⁴⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.382 Consultation on Monday 4th July 1737

⁶⁴⁵ IOR/G/29/5 f.172v-3 Consultation on Friday 4th August 1732

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁴⁸ IOR/G/29/16 f.251v Letter to the Court of Directors 18th November 1742

⁶⁴⁹ IOR/G/29/6 f.58v Consultation on Thursday 4th October 1739

The Banians, like the Armenians, provided the Company with a ready network of financial support, predicated and guaranteed by the status and good credit both of the Company and their broker in Bandar Abbas. The business of the Armenians and Banians overlapped geographically but did not necessarily form competing interests. The Armenians, with their major commercial enterprises lying in the land bound trade carrying silk to the Ottoman Empire and Russia then onward to Europe, only rarely competed directly with the Banians, who traded a wide variety of goods between the Gulf and India. In terms of the Company's finances, the Armenians could provide credit based on Europe, while the Banians could do likewise via India.

The Company's reliance on the Banians for access to ready cash again highlights the important trust relationships formed between the Company and its native intermediaries. In only one year, 1728-29, the Company exchanged money with fifteen Banians from Bandar Abbas and Kerman: this does not count transactions where the individuals are not named and mostly consists of bills being issued for 'black money', adulterated silver coinage, with which the wool trade at Kerman could be carried out. The broker, as the premier lender to the Company, sometimes had to be paid with bills of exchange (credit notes) on the Company's office in Bombay, rather than being satisfied with cash or cloth at Bandar Abbas. This demonstrates both the level to which the Company was indebted to, and therefore relied upon, its brokers, while also showing the reach of the broker as an individual. The broker would have to have an agent at Bombay for the transaction to work, as well as the capital to support himself through the long wait between being debited in the Gulf and then receiving his credit from India. An example of the amounts and distances of these transactions can be seen

when in 1734, Sankhar, the broker, drew a bill for 15,000 rupees on the Company in Bombay while also being provided with bills for Bombay himself for 550,000 shahis to cover the Company's wool investment for that year.⁶⁵⁰ This is evidence for a business, if not familial, connection back to Bombay, where such large withdrawals on the Company suggest either adequate security or a trusted intermediary to make good on the sums being exchanged.

The bills of exchange presented to the Company at Bandar Abbas also provide valuable information about the geographical extent of the Banian community. Stephen Dale's work sheds light on the truly vast reach of Indian merchants throughout Eurasia, not only penetrating into the Persian hinterland to Kerman and Mashhad, but also through Persia to Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Caspian littoral.⁶⁵¹ The distance travelled by these merchants was considerable, though not necessarily exceptional when considering the long distance travelled by the Armenians, Portuguese, English and Dutch. It is also important to consider the numbers of people involved, Onley has outlined the size of the Indian population in the Gulf, suggesting that as many as 3,000 Banians lived in and around Hormuz and Bandar Abbas, though this fluctuated considerably with the shipping season.⁶⁵² The size and apparent wealth of the Banian community does not appear to have translated into political power. Whereas the Armenians had been able to gain positions of significance in the Persian hierarchy, the Banians do not seem to have done so. This may have been due to the Persian distaste

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid f.242v Consultation on Friday 11th June 1734 and f.253 Consultation on Saturday 21st September 1734.

⁶⁵¹ Dale, Stephen, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750*, (Cambridge, 1994).

⁶⁵² Onley, *Indian Communities*, p.242

for Hinduism, though some of the Banian groups were Muslims, including Shi'a groups like the *Lawatiyya*.

The Banians were often targets of extortion and bribery by the Persian authorities, therefore the ability of the Company to mediate in disputes between the community and Persian officialdom, even with the Shah himself, was invaluable to them as a method of influencing key political figures. One can see here again how the Company's ability to deploy its political power, as granted by the *Farman*, could be used to the advantage of the Asian merchant communities. This was perhaps more important to the Banians, who unlike the Armenians, had no entrenched elite within Persian society on whom they could call in times of difficulty or danger. These efforts were not always effective and could sometimes lead to unexpected circumstances, such as in 1747 when "Lecheram", the Company's broker in Kerman, was burned to death by Nader Shah's soldiers.⁶⁵³ This seems to have been partly punishment for his inability to pay various bribes and demands, but also as a show of disregard, by Nader Shah for the Company and the protection they were believed to offer. The Armenians, despite being Christians, were still arguably "native" to Persia, while the Banians seem to have remained essentially foreign.

⁶⁵³ IOR/G/29/7 f.70 Letter to Thomas Grendon at Basra 2nd July 1747

Brokers, Writers, Mullahs and Merchants: Persians in Company Service.

The last significant group employed by the Company were local Persians, who worked in a variety of specialised roles. While the Armenians were trusted to represent the Company's interests to Persian officials and to translate faithfully for them, Persians were generally not employed to do so. As brokers, Persians tended to lack the connections with India which so benefitted the Banians in their ability to circulate cash and credit. There were advantages to hiring Persians for certain tasks, for example, only a Persian would have been an appropriate Mullah, while Persian local merchants employed as brokers had a more intimate knowledge and connection with local suppliers, traders and buyers. The Company seems to have been able to provide enough encouragement to attract otherwise wealthy and locally influential men to their service with the potential to facilitate the Company's trade. Service with the Company was, however, a potentially fraught life for those who chose it. Persians, rather than Armenians, Banians or Englishmen, were more vulnerable to intrigue, coercion and reprisal by the local authorities, not to mention pressure to spy and inform upon their European employers.

Persians fulfilled a number of functions within the Company's organisation, the most prominent of which was the brokerage at Kerman. Kerman was a vital arena for the Company, as the wool from this region was particularly highly prized and was exported in bulk to Europe, mostly for the trade in felts and hats. Kerman was therefore a centre of considerable investment for the Company and as such required constant supervision. Over the course of the period between 1700 and 1750, the brokerage at Kerman was under the supervision of a pair of Persian merchants named Khosrau (d.

1732)⁶⁵⁴ and “Seawax” (probably ‘Siavash’, d. September 1747).⁶⁵⁵ The Company's minutes for the meeting on the 14th of March 1732 report that Khosrau's estate was to be taken into the charge of William Cordeux, who was sent to take over the wool investment when Khosrau died. This again shows the Company's ability to keep assets out of the hands of the Persian authorities, even when the estate belonged to an irrefutably Persian subject. While it is not recorded when Khosrau was appointed to his station, the terms of Siavash's employment with the Company are listed in their consultations. It is reported that Siavash was paid at the same rate as Khosrau, one toman per month, as well as being given a *kalat* to show that he was now in the Company's favour and therefore under their protection.⁶⁵⁶ Not only was the Kerman broker paid more than most of the Company's servants in Persia, he was also responsible for three other Persians hired by the Company there, two assistants Sevan and Rostam, and a wool merchant named Kasim. The broker was therefore evidently a trusted individual, undertaking business worth 1,400 toman in 1733,⁶⁵⁷ managing other employees and negotiating with the Khan of Kerman on the Company's behalf.

While the Company was able to extend some of its legal and diplomatic privileges to its Persian agents in Kerman, there were limitations on how effectively these could be upheld. During Nader Shah's visit to the city, this became particularly clear. Not only was the Dutch Armenian Vakil, Owanooze, beaten to death, but Siavash, Esfandiar (Siavash's son in law) and Mohammed, the Company's linguist in Kerman, were all beaten and financially ruined.⁶⁵⁸ While the Company's representative

⁶⁵⁴ IOR/G/29/5 f.200 Consultation on Wednesday 14th March 1732

⁶⁵⁵ IOR/G/29/17 f.39v Letter to the Agent at Bandar Abbas September 25th, 1747.

⁶⁵⁶ IOR/G/29/5 f.204 Consultation on Thursday 26th April 1733

⁶⁵⁷ IOR/G/29/5 f.200 Consultation on Wednesday 14th March 1732

⁶⁵⁸ IOR/G/29/7 f.86v-7 Consultation on Sunday 8th March 1747

in Kerman, Danvers Graves, was never harmed, he was equally unable to do anything to protect Siavash, who eventually died from his wounds, nor to gain financial reprieve for the other two men. Nader Shah, when challenged by Graves, made it clear that he wished the Company no ill will, nor did he wish any conflict with the British. Nader Shah insisted, however, that Siavash and the other men, as Persians, were his subjects and therefore his to do with as he pleased.⁶⁵⁹

While Graves' inability to intercede effectively for Siavash reveals a fundamental weakness in the Company's ability to uphold its promises of protection to its employees, the incident also reveals the extent of Siavash's own wealth. Siavash alone appears to have paid over 600 toman to Nader Shah, showing that he was a man of considerable means in his own right, if not among the highest ranking merchants in Persia. It also highlights how violence was an ever-present theme in Persia at this time, as it was throughout the Early Modern world. The total and arbitrary rule of the Shah and therefore the authority of his subordinates permitted for little to no resistance unless money, political will or physical force could be brought to bear, *Farman* or no. The fear of retaliation in any of these forms by the Company appears to have often been enough to protect its European servants, though the native employees of the Company were still expected, at times, to submit to threats and demands as Persian subjects.

The Company employed Persians for more than directly commercial purposes, as demonstrated by repeated mentions of the "Company Mullah". This means that the Company hired a local Persian cleric, but it is unclear exactly why they chose to do so.

⁶⁵⁹ *ibid*

Sadly, no reason is given for the periodical appearances of this individual, who seems to have mostly worked as an intermediary or negotiator.⁶⁶⁰ It is possible that he was contracted to interpret Islamic law for the Company, or provide religious succour for its Muslim employees. The Mullah was paid with a *kalat* worth 1,000 shahis per year as payment, which amounts to rather less than most of the Company's other native employees.⁶⁶¹ Apart from his function as a negotiator and someone to greet visiting officials, it is not clear what the Mullah was employed for, nor why the Company felt employing a Muslim holy man would be advantageous. One can imagine that this was an attempt to make their guests and visiting Persian officials feel more at home when dealing with the Company, or as a way of demonstrating sensitivity to local religious beliefs.

Lastly, the Company employed a man called "Mullah Zenaul", who was listed in the Company's payroll as their "Persian Writer". The duty of this man seems to have been to translate the messages from the Company from simple replies to something framed in the correct courtly language and in a pleasing hand.⁶⁶² Presumably the writer would have provided neat copies in the correct register of letters both from the Agent to regional officials, but also, when necessary, any correspondence to the Shah. If this is the case it goes some way to proving the relative weakness of the Company's European employees' acquisition of Persian, which is also partly evidenced by their constant need for interpreters. The Persian writer was paid 1,400 shahis a year, or three and a half times the wage of a European Writer and could expect the customary gifts given to all the Company's servants at Christmas. On the death of Mullah Zenaul, his

⁶⁶⁰ IOR/G/29/6 f.278v Consultation on Sunday 14th January 1743

⁶⁶¹ IOR/G/29/6 f.93v Consultation on Friday 9th May 1740.

⁶⁶² IOR/G/29/5 f.117v Consultation on Friday 10th July 1730

son Mohammed Jafer was employed in his father's stead and on the same terms. On his accession to the role he was also given the traditional *kalat*, publicly demonstrating his attachment to the Company.⁶⁶³ The rationale for this decision is indicative of the Company's attitude, both to its servants and to the conception of itself: "as We apprehend [he] will be more Firmly attached to the Hon. Co.'s Interest than a Stranger, Who has never Experienced the advantages their Family have for many years received from that Employ".⁶⁶⁴ This quotation demonstrates that the Company believed that they were a benefit to their employees, not only in as much as they paid them a salary, but also of more notional advantage in status, not only to the individuals themselves but also their families.

Conclusion.

The Armenian involvement with the Company in Persia and the interactions between these two groups reveal a great deal about the perceptions of both communities. The enduring uniqueness of the Armenian community, which resisted full assimilation into either the Persian or Company sphere, is a demonstration of the durability of non-state links before the modern period. This uniqueness, derived from religious freedom granted by both the Company and the Persians, was reinforced by shared mercantile interests garnered and spread across the globe. While such business necessitated cooperation with European shipping, this was predicated on the acceptance and recognition of entrenched norms within Armenian society. The merchants of Armenian family firms used European ships and beneficial rates of

⁶⁶³ IOR/G/29/7 f.124 Consultation on Tuesday 1st December 1747

⁶⁶⁴ *ibid*

freighting and duties to further their own goals, while some also served the Company as intermediaries with officials in India and Persia, translators, and brokers. In many ways, by seeking to integrate with the Company, the Armenians repeated the same process they had undergone while finding a place within the Safavid Empire; finding and fulfilling a range of functions that were required but did not fit in with religious or social norms. In Persia, they formed an international trading network based around silk, an industry that directly financed the Royal Treasury, while for the Company they acted as interpreters and a source of capital. In both cases they formed a kind of ‘service gentry’ and in return received protection for their cultural heritage and religion. Under the Company’s administration, the Armenians were granted further rights, amounting to legal equality with their English interlocutors, while not sacrificing their own commercial interests, as seen by the continuation of the silk trade through the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, the interests of the Armenians would drive them into the Company’s Indian possessions, fleeing the barbaric cruelty of Nader Shah and the interregnum and chaos that followed his death in 1747.

The East India Company is often described as an impressive combination of European innovation, mercantile prowess and military power; however, the Company was far more complex than this. The Company may have been chartered in London and under the control of English merchants and officials from the Court of Directors all the way to the factory agents, but the Company did not have a European face. Most business in the Gulf factory was transacted through an Armenian or Persian interpreter, while the hard currency necessary for everything from paying for the wool investment in Kerman to the salary roll was provided by an Indian Banian. The letters composed and written to Persian officials were prepared by a local artisan, while a Mullah was

employed to provide guests and visitors with a familiar interlocutor. Indeed, for a long time the Company's largest investment, the Kerman wool trade, was overseen by a local merchant of independent means. The Company was English, but its investors and customers were relatively unlikely to have had much to do with the *koolah-pushan* (hat wearers) who lived in the factory.

The Company provided the Banians and Armenians with legal protections they would never have otherwise enjoyed, while in return, these merchants supplied capital and advice to the Company in their business. The Armenians were happy to assist the Company in their endeavours but never lost sight of their own communal interest, scuppering any attempt by the Company to redirect meaningfully the silk trade away from the Ottoman Levant. The Company, Banian and Armenian communities, sharing common links and even living as neighbours and in-laws in Bandar Abbas, Bombay and Madras, formed a mutually supportive bond which would continue to benefit both until the eventual collapse of the Company's organisation. The Company's ability to use its *Farman* as a means by which to protect the wealth and wellbeing of its local servants was a heretofore unforeseen boon to the Banian and Armenian merchant communities, even if there were practical limitations to this notional protection. The Company could practically protect the person and property of people who were not even directly employed by them, as demonstrated in the execution of the wills of Khosrau and Yakub John, without recourse to the Persian legal system, under which their estates might have been taken as forfeit by the Shah.

The established trading relationships of the Armenian and Banian communities between Persia and India was a necessity for the often capital-poor Company, for whom the well-worn financial instruments deployed across the continents were of vital benefit. The ability to exchange large sums of money over great distances and considerable lengths of time facilitated the purchase of the Company's goods, providing much-needed ready cash in Persia. Such instruments also required trust, evident from the case of Sultan David and the debts accrued by his family firm. The ability to borrow large sums of money also made it possible for the Company to finance large investments in goods for shipment back to Europe, most clearly demonstrated in the case of Kerman wool. This particular investment required the local, specialist knowledge of Persian merchants and brokers, who worked for the Company over long periods of their lives; Siavash worked for the Company for 15 years before his death.

The Company made itself an attractive employer, garnering the good will of its workers through generous salaries and regular gifts, which were not only financially attractive, but also demonstrated an understanding of local culture in the presentation of *kalats*. The Company also provided security for the relatives of their people, insisting on stipends for their widows and offering work to their sons on generous terms. In this way, the Company was consciously building a system of support in which they were accruing the loyalty and service of capable individuals in areas where they lacked the required skills.

Conclusion.

The chapters of this thesis have explored the important relationship between the East India Company and Persia through a period of significant dynastic change. Far from being a “glassy tideway”,⁶⁶⁵ the decades after 1700 in Persia are shown to have been a period of dynamic engagement between the Company and Persia, one of the major empires of Asia.

The climatic joint Persian and Company campaign at Hormuz in 1622, enabled the Company to displace their Portuguese rivals from this vital pivot of their Indian Ocean Empire. At Hormuz, the Company added its significant naval power to the Persian assault against the Portuguese fortifications and warships on and around this island city. Shah Abbas I in recognition of this contribution, bestowed a *Farman* on the Company that proved to be the foundation stone of a long-lasting relationship. Over time, the Persians were to update the *Farman* through a combination of mutual or exchangeable, political, strategic and commercial interests. This *Farman* stayed in force for well over a century, surviving the accession of four Safavid Shahs through whom it was renewed twice, the Afghan invasion and occupation, Safavid restoration and the reign of Nader Shah. The *Farman*, far from being a literary fiction, was the core of the Persian states relationship with the Company. Shah Abbas I must be credited with initiating the relationship as he recognised the new strategic, technological

⁶⁶⁵ Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p.220

potential that European naval powers represented to restore and maintain the balance of Persian power in the Gulf and protect their trade interests.

Ogborn gives an accurate characterisation of the Company's use of the written word to create its own reality. Importantly, through this thesis, it can now be seen that the Company was not the only power capable of doing so.⁶⁶⁶ We have seen that the Persians were highly sophisticated at unilaterally manipulating the terms of the Company's *Farman* to their needs, whether military, diplomatic or commercial. This new evidence from research for this thesis, contradicts Barendse's view that the Persians were either incapable of controlling their trade, or alternatively completely disinterested.⁶⁶⁷

The Company's role as a 'navy for hire' in the Persian Gulf and the central part they played in the formation of the Persian navy in the Gulf is a continued demonstration of the intertwined interests that existed between the Company and the Persian state. This thesis is the first time this aspect of the Company's presence in the Gulf has been explored and represents a momentously different kind of engagement with an Asian power.

What began, under the rule of Shah Abbas I with a campaign to eject the Portuguese from the Gulf, developed over a century into a complex web of naval services, through the blockade of ports, capture of fugitives, and attacks on rebels. The

⁶⁶⁶ Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p.36

⁶⁶⁷ Barendse, *The Arabian Sea*, p.1570.

Company invested considerable naval resources maintaining its own and consequently, the Persians' reputation in the Gulf.

As this thesis shows, the Company did not limit its maritime assistance to Persia for solely military purposes. Indeed, the Company's ships were an integral part of Persian strategy to project diplomatic influence around the Indian Ocean. Occasionally reimbursed, the Company provided ships to carry embassies to the states of the Indian Subcontinent and beyond. This thesis has evidenced that the Company actively used the good favour of these services to gain and maintain their trading privileges, as enshrined in the *Farman*, when these were threatened.

This new research into the Company's records has revealed its vital role in creating Nader Shahs own fleet. Although Floor, Axworthy and Lockhart document the creation of Nader Shah's fleet they do not recognise the Company's key role. There can be no doubt that the Company continually sought and was sought out by the Persians for maritime capability. In this way, the Company filled a strategic niche and became a ubiquitous, useful presence in the Gulf.

The Company's privileges in Persia gave it a number of advantages in its trade. The Company had hoped that silk would provide a valuable luxury export for the markets of Europe but this never fully met the Company's expectations so other goods and sources of income were found. The Company's exportation of Kerman wool to Europe, sometimes in huge quantities, helped make up for the vicissitudes of the Persian silk trade. The Company also prioritised the production of wine and rose water

at their house in Shiraz, using these goods as tradable commodities but also as prestigious gifts both to European employees of the Company, in India, and foreign dignitaries.

In addition to Matthee's work on the place of wine in the Persianate world, we have now revealed that the Company both elevated production and increased demand through wider exportation of Shiraz wine. This was important revenue for both the Company and even more so for the Persians who had few exportable commodities, especially ones considered of premium quality. While it is true that Persia did not yield the same scale of trade as that of India, Persia did provide a steady market for English cloth. On top of these benefits were the cash income from port duties, consulage and trading passes. Another reason for the continued interest in Persia is that the Company's servants, found a variety of lucrative private avenues of personal trade. The Company, who permitted private trade, unlike its Dutch rival, therefore took advantage of this situation, charging fees and consulage to private merchants in exchange for extending the Company's freedom of customs. Private merchants benefited from paying a significantly lower customs rate than they would have at the Persian customs house, and the Company drew a steady cash income from these fees.

In this way, the Company used the terms of the *Farman* to gather revenue that was clearly against the spirit of the agreement. however, the Persians in turn failed to provide the Company with its full share of the customs of Bandar Abbas. The argument as put forward by Floor identifies the collection of customs and the Persians default as a major issue. Importantly this is not supported by the new information gleaned for this

project. Company records show that the payment of its share of the Bandar Abbas customs was not the be all and end all of the its financial interests. In reality the Company asserted their entitlement to arrears in a later *Farman* revision, demonstrating an ability to influence and negotiate with the Persian state. What this thesis reveals is that the Company gained an income from both the payments they received from the Persians for well over a century, as well as the lucrative taxation of private trade. It is useful to reflect how important liquidity was to the Company and how they could use ready money to magnify its value through trading.

While the Company was using its position and favour in Persia to gather revenue which circumvented the Persians' own system of customs, it should not be imagined that the Persian state was not also benefitting from the Company's presence. On the contrary, the Persians continually used the terms of the *Farman* and the granting of fresh privileges to promote their own goods either under state monopoly, such as silk, but also to encourage the Company to explore other products. The Persian state monopoly of hing is the most obvious example of this tactic and the lengths Nader Shah went to press for its trade.

The Persians gained significantly from the Company's presence, whether this was through investment in the wine industry of Shiraz or the creation of new markets for Persian wool in Europe and for copper from Kerman's mines to India. Both sides benefited symbiotically from the presence of the other, with the provisions of the *Farman* acting as a guideline to both sides, though equally both failed to live up to the full demands of the document.

The Company's position and relationship with the Persian state necessitated a close relationship with other ethnic groups in the region. The Armenians, who had carved an important place for themselves in the Persian and intra-Eurasian trade in silk and other goods were especially important to the Company. The Armenians provided access to capital, financial instruments and local expertise without which the Company would have continued to find it difficult to operate in Persia.

While much work has been done exploring the connection between the Armenians and the Company,⁶⁶⁸ the reciprocal benefits to the Armenians that the Company represented, especially legal protection through the *Farman*, has never been considered before. The 1688 agreement made between the Company and the Armenian community resulted in a concerted effort to forge strong ties with the Armenians, from Persia to India and onto London. The Company in Persia, the port in Bandar Abbas and the major trading hub they represented, form the most vital communication link in the Armenians' web of commercial bases. The Company, by granting specific protections to Armenians in their employment, as well as allowing Armenian goods to benefit from the Company's freedom from taxation, was highly prized by the Armenian community.

As well as the Armenians, the Company also made significant efforts to provide its Banian employees with more than just a salary. The Company used the *Farman* to afford this community protection against taxation, the seizure of goods, property and physical violence. The Company gained significantly from the Banians' ability to move

⁶⁶⁸ As we have seen, Aslanian and Ferrier both consider this relationship, but did not cover the stipulations in the *Farman* granting the Armenians protection under the aegis of the Company's own extraterritorial concessions.

money between India and Persia, while the legal protection that the Company could afford the community, as well as extending the same benefits in trade as it did to the Armenians, made for a reciprocally beneficial relationship. In Persia, the rights and privileges which the Company could extend to its employees and their families made it an attractive employer and business partner. The Company's employment of local Persian merchants as brokers in the wool trade, as well as artisans and scribes to create official documents in the Persian style and register of language, meant that the Company represented a significant employer in Bandar Abbas. Because of the large amounts the Company spent monthly on feeding and clothing its employees, the presence of the Company also boosted the local Persian economy.

The conspicuous consumption in which Company servants indulged was only a part of the wider life of the Company's factory. The factory was a home, workplace and market for a small number of English merchants, whose lives have been left unexplored by historians. Unlike in India, where the Company established its own fortresses, cities and ports, the Persian factory was a small community under the direct rule of a foreign power, very unlike the situation in India, Stern has so ably illuminated in his work.⁶⁶⁹ The Company's *Farman* was all that stood between the Company's Factors and direct Persian rule. In many cases, disagreements arising in the factory were much less likely to be due to any issues with the Persians, with whom the factory's Agent or Chief Factor appears to have maintained cordial relations. Instead, disputes seem to have arisen from within the factory owing to the opacity and developmental nature of the Company's own rules. The remoteness of the factory in the Gulf made communication with the higher levels of the Company's hierarchy in Bombay slow at

⁶⁶⁹ See Stern, *Company-State*.

best, but despite this, many cases and conflicts were referred to the higher echelons of the Company's leadership in Bombay.

The Company employees in their various Persian factories had considerable business and personal contact with local Persian people and officials. The Company adapted to local customs, maintaining a garden, as well as a store of luxury goods, for the comfort of their Persian interlocutors. The Company invested heavily in the creation of gardens to emulate the Persian style of polite social interactions and adopted habits such as the drinking of coffee and smoking of Nargileh. These Persian and Asian habits were quickly adopted by the Company in India, to support interactions with their Asian connections.

Adoption of such social practices helped to provide Persian officials with a familiar setting through which they could negotiate with the Company and in turn the Company could gain favour by pampering its guests in a manner that was familiar to them. Life for the Company's employees, on the other hand, could be hard, painful and short due to the prevalence of disease and the harshness of the climate. However, despite these problems, the factories could keep their presence, while turning a profit for the Company. Chaudhuri has suggested that the Company functioned as a mechanism.⁶⁷⁰ This underplays the significant adaptation and improvisation through autonomous action required by the staff in the Company's factories. Evidence in this thesis demonstrates both the Company mechanism and the ability of the Servants to overcome major issues. A good example, can be seen through the occasion when all

⁶⁷⁰ Chaudhuri, *The Trading World*, p.39

the senior factory employees in Bandar Abbas die in less than a fortnight but junior Company servants continue the work. Far from an engine turning over, the Company was far more flexible due to the ability of the individual employees to adapt closely to their own tasks and surroundings.

John Keay's assertion that the period between 1710 and 1740 was calm and profitable clearly does not take account of the life and times of the Company in Persia. While the Company's business in India may have been stable, Persia was a hive of activity. The new research conducted for this thesis, revealed from the Company's own records, demonstrates how the factory at Bandar Abbas and the Company's staff there actively took part in and witnessed major events, especially those transpiring during the death throes of the Safavid Empire. It is impressive how nimbly the Company servants adapted to culture, regime and ruler change, making themselves equally relevant both to the Afghan invaders who toppled the Safavids in 1722, then just as quickly forging bonds with the regime of Nader Shah.

Lastly, there remains the question of the dynamic of power between the Company and the Persians. This is impossible to quantify, nor was it a zero-sum game. In many ways, the Persians had every advantage over the Company, from the strength of a state with complex bureaucratic functions, desirable goods that the Company wanted and the ability to deploy overwhelming force. The Company, on the other hand, had only its ability to deploy naval power to offer, however, the Company's employees were able to effectively harness this to gain and maintain their privileges through the *Farman*. The power relationship was therefore based on mutually beneficial exchanges,

as well as the strength of the attachment felt by both parties to the terms of the *Farman* itself. Neither the Company nor the Persians were able to threaten the existence of the other, both stood to gain from a long-term settlement, which is what was managed.

The wealth of new information researched and catalogued for this project concerning the Company in Persia reveals, in great detail, the way in which the Company adapted to situations beyond the Indian Subcontinent, finding innovative ways of working with local powers to the betterment of the Company's trade. The Company was an instrumental link in the connections between the Persian Empire and the world of the Indian Ocean and beyond, while providing them with assistance and services that were not replicated anywhere else that the Company did business.

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Appendix One: Glossary.

Beglerbegi- A military rank with responsibility over a major city or province.

Choppar- Postal courier on horseback.

Cossid- A postal messenger.

Farman- A royal decree or order. In the Company's records, a *Farman* was a collection of *Irqam*. See *Raqam*.

Garmsir- The southern regions of Persia, especially those bordering the Gulf. Lit. 'Hot lands'.

Grab- a sailing ship used in the Gulf, name derives from the Arabic *Ghurab*, crow.

Kalantar- Urban civil official.

Khan- Title of both military and civil rank.

Khasseh- Crown Land.

Khwaja- An honorific title, often used when referring to Armenians and other merchants.

Appendix Two - Maps and Images.

Outline Map of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea.

Aa, Pieter van der, The Coast of Arabia the Red Sea, and Persian Sea of Bassora Past the Straits of Hormuz to India, Gujarat and Cape Comorin, 1707.

Blaue, Willem Janszoon, Persia or the Safavid Kingdom, 1635.

Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library.

"Persia." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed September 24, 2017.

Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "Gamron ; De eilanden, Ormus, Lareke, en Kismis." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed September 24, 2017.

Image of a European Drinking, Taken at the *Ali Qapu* Palace by the author, October 2012.

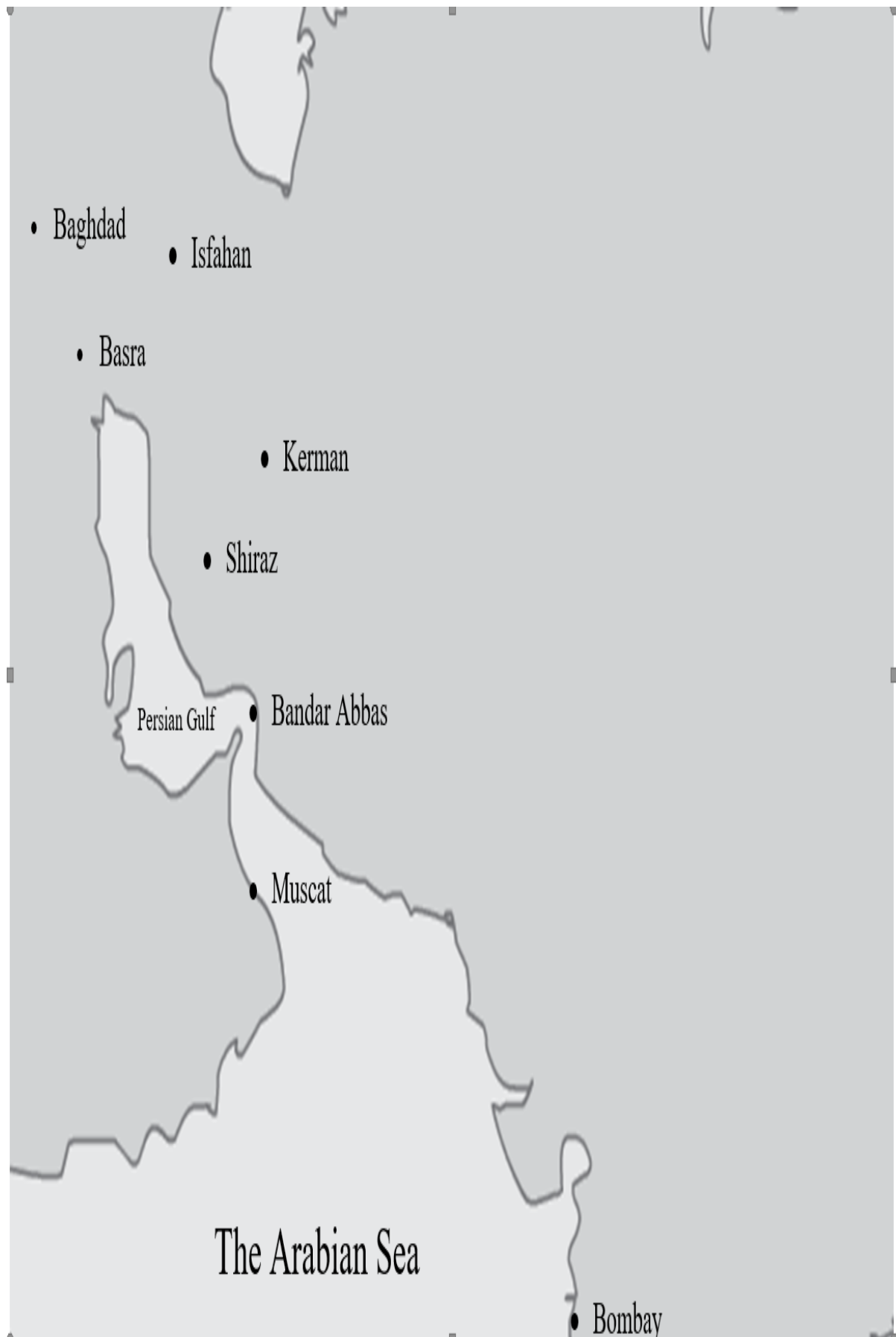
Image of a European Gentleman, Taken at the *Ali Qapu* Palace by the author, October, 2012.

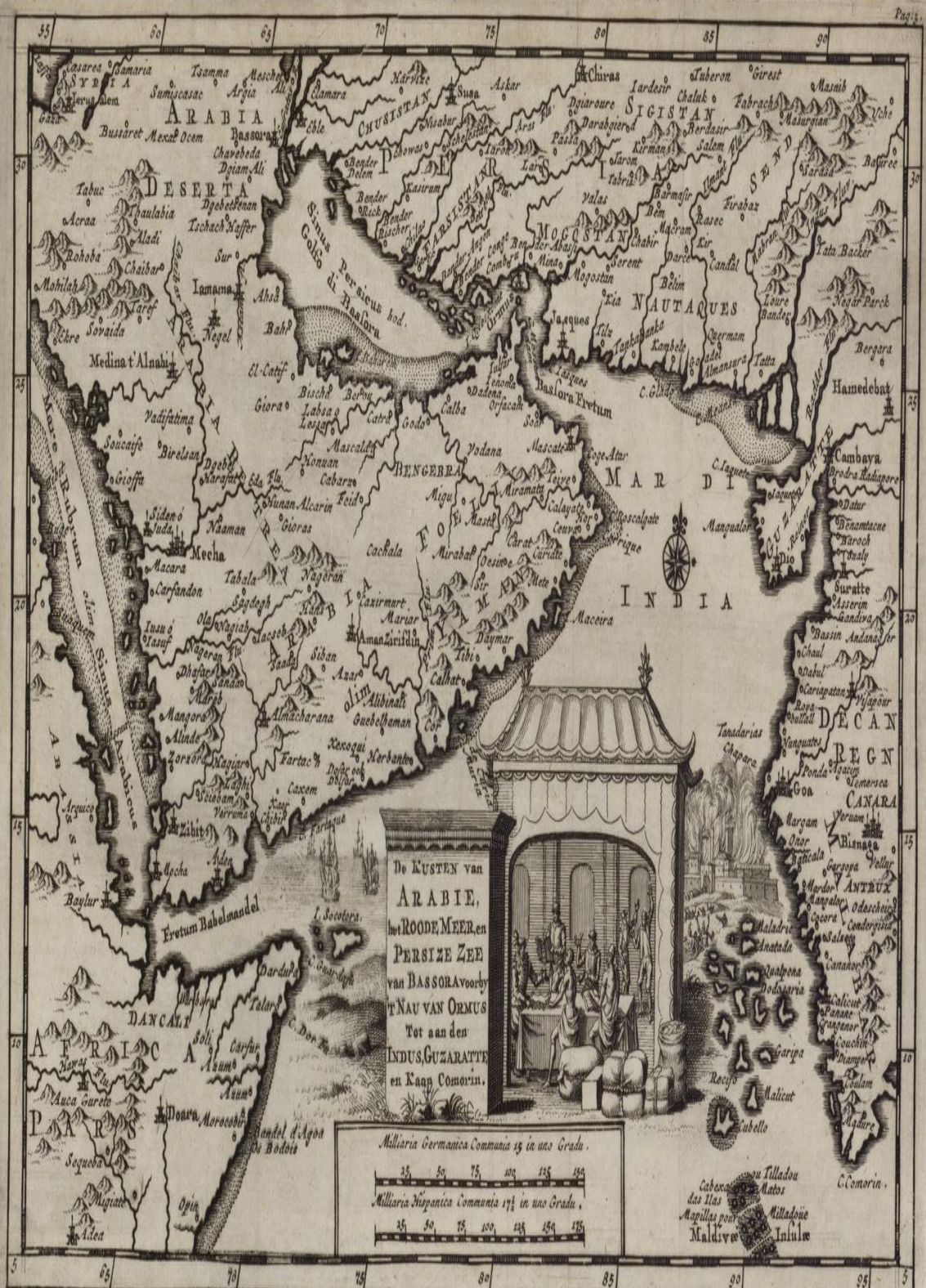
Image of Shah Abbas I, 17th Century, held at Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Mohammed Riza Hindi, Portrait of Nader Shah, c. 1740, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

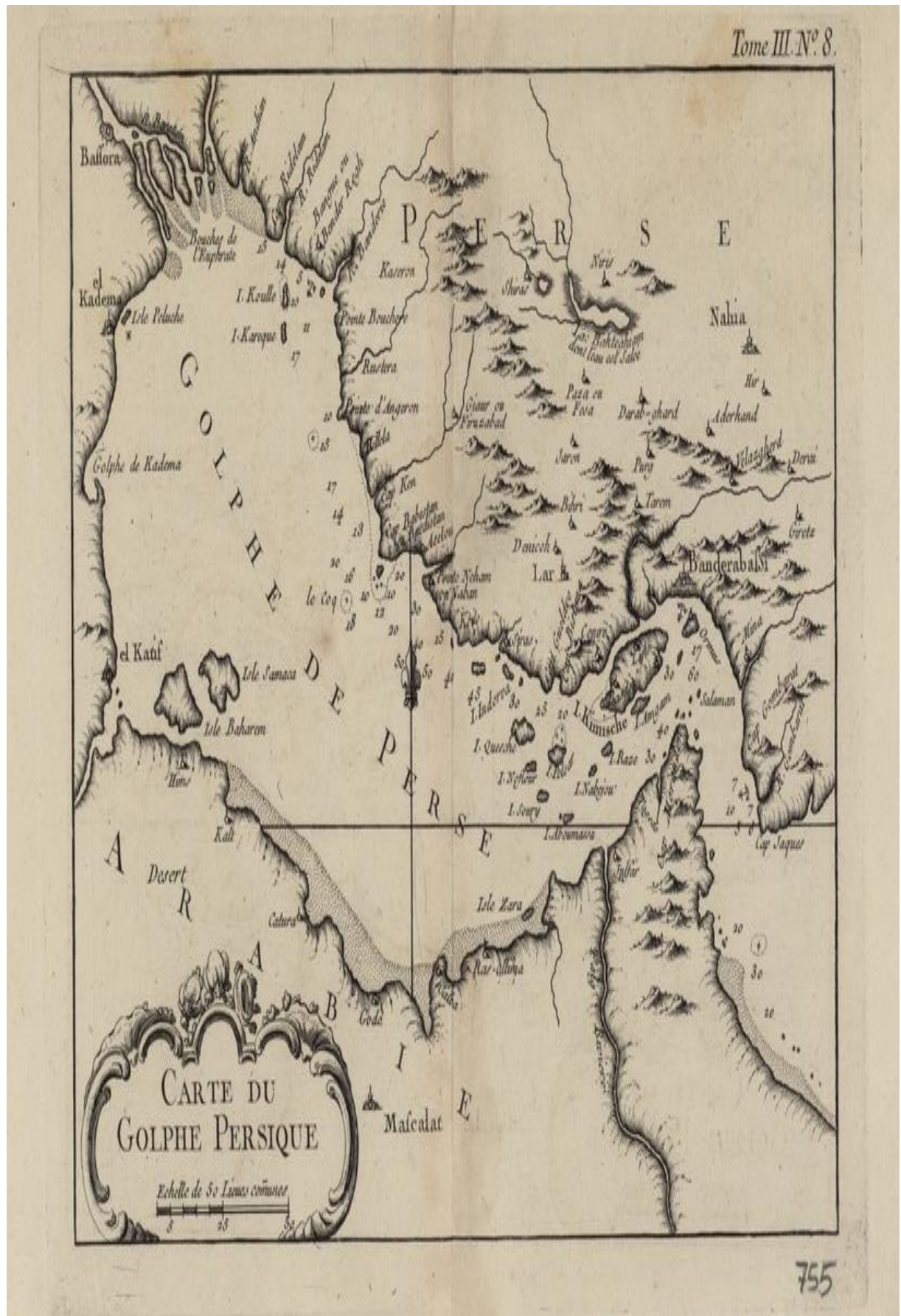
Image of Silk samples sent from Persia by the East India Company, IOR/G/29/1 f.232

Image of Cloth sent to Persia by the East India Company, IOR/G/29/17 f.3







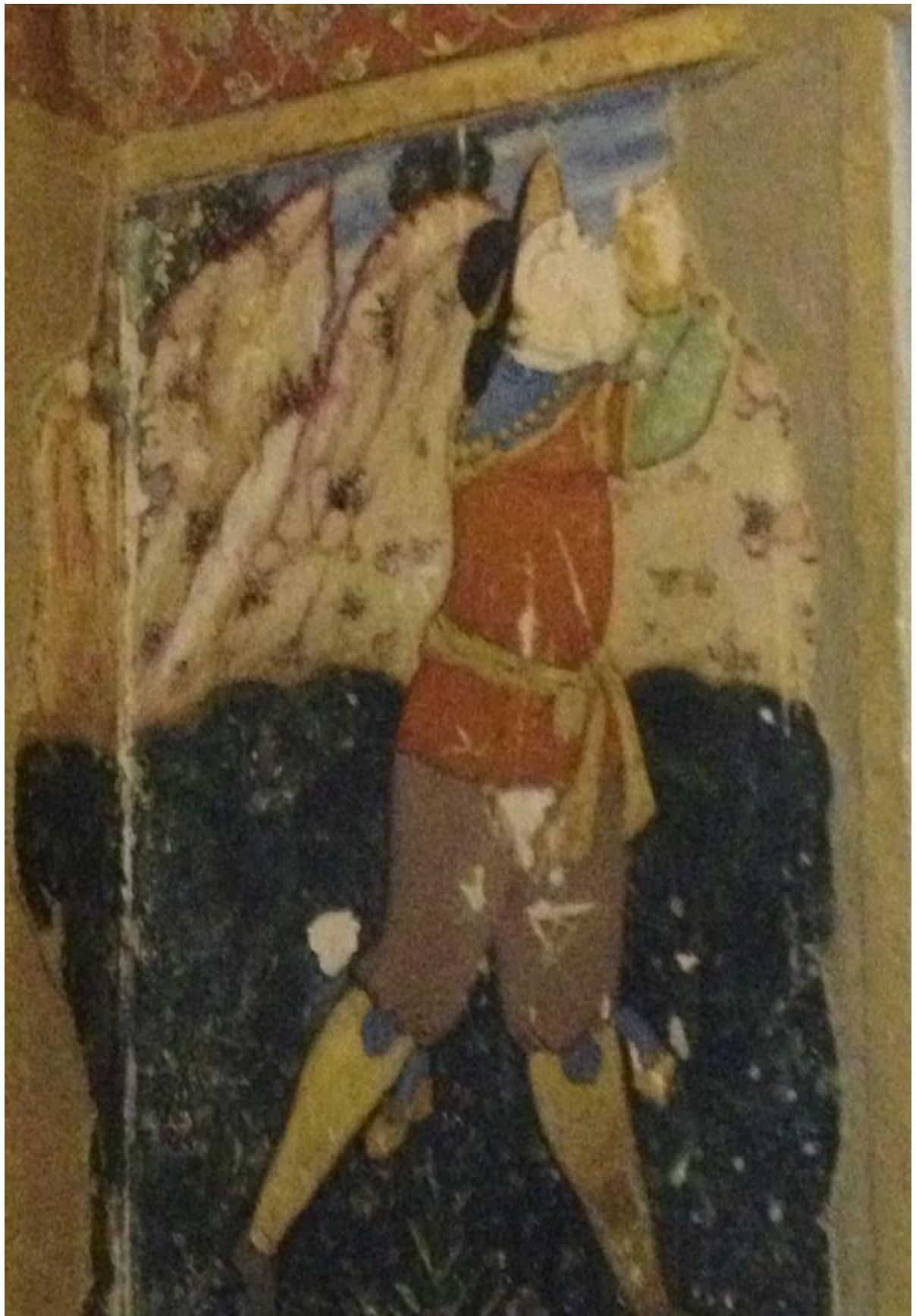


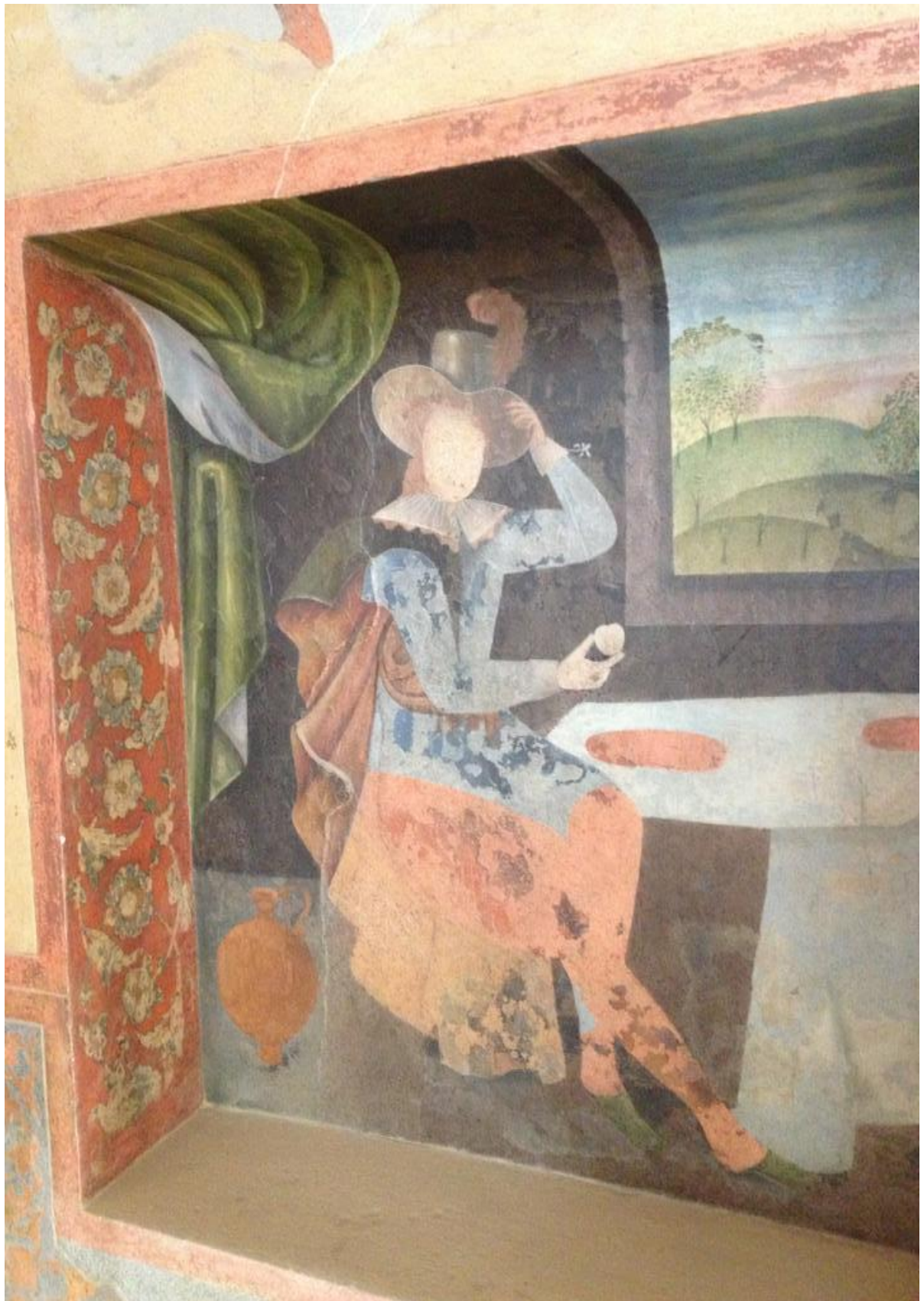


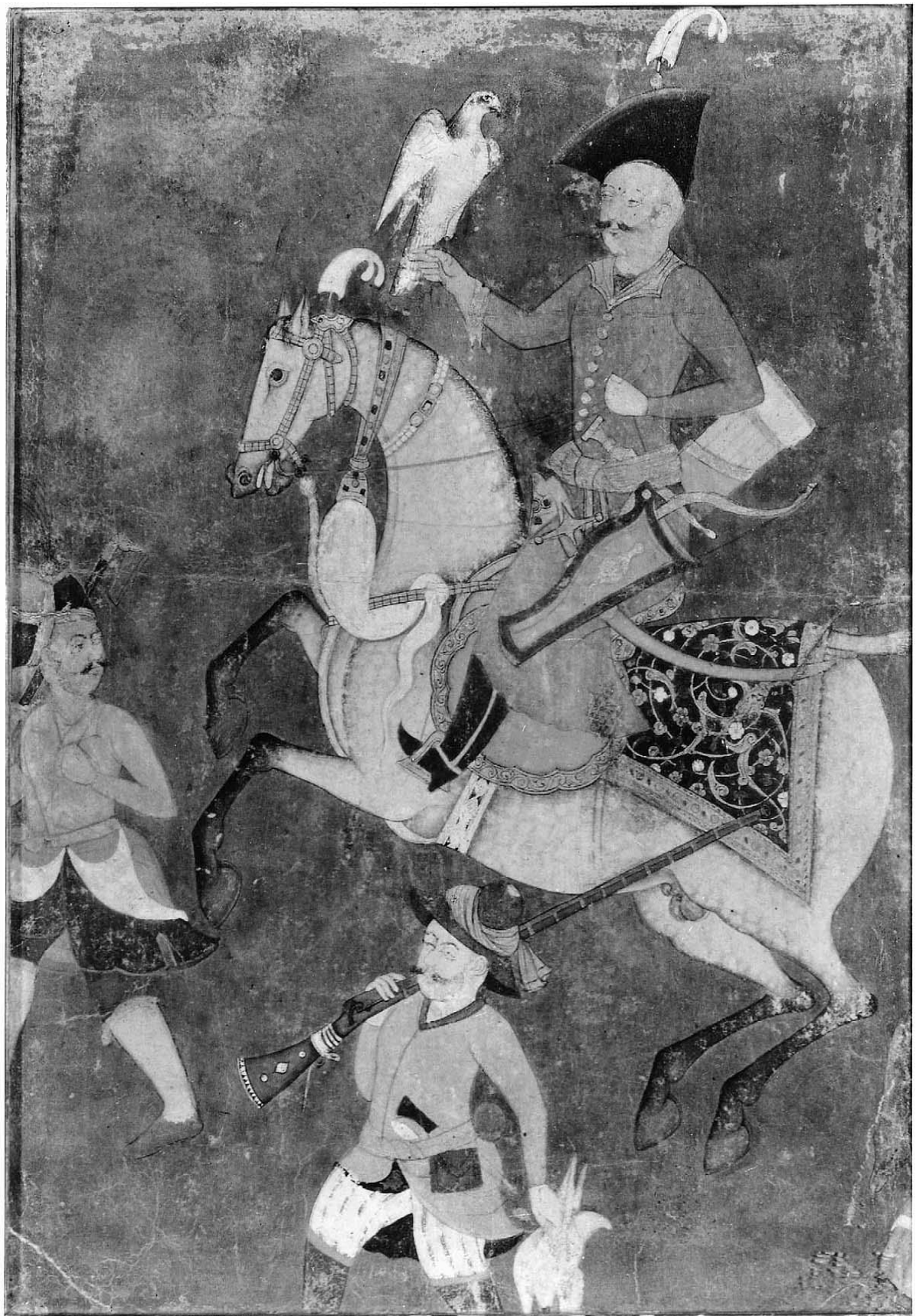
GAXRON.



DE EILANDEN, ORMUS, LAMBE, EN KISMIS.











Appendix Three – The evolution of the

Company's *Farman*

The Farman of Abbas I: Dec. 1621-22.

1. That for the assistance of the English ships against the Portuguese at Hormuz and Kishme (who exacted upon both nations) half the spoils of Hormuz (when taken) should be divided to the English and half to the Persians.
2. That the castle at Hormuz should be garrisoned by half English and half Persians.
3. That the ports and castles in India should be divided equally.
4. All English and Persian ships bound for India should be customs free.
5. All strangers' customs should be forever equally split between the English and the Persians.
6. That Christian captives should be handed to the English and Muslims to the Persians except for the captains of Kishm and Hormuz who are to be handed over to the Persians.
7. All expense of ammunition etc. to be split equally.
8. Neither side should entertain those who change religion to that of the other.
9. Any ships left to defend the Gulf should be paid for.

The Farman of Abbas I: 1629

1. Undated- Farman to Mullayam Beg fixing the rates at which he is to receive goods for silk.
2. June 1627- Farman conferring all previous grants.

3. June 1627- Farman to Mullayam Beg directing performance of the commercial contract with Mr. Burke.
4. June 1627- Farman to the Khan of Shiraz ordering that the English have their full share of customs.
5. June 1627- Farman to the Khan of Shiraz commanding that the English and their goods be protected.
6. June 1627- "Mandall" to the Shahbandar of Gombroon commanding fair division of the customs with the English.
7. June 1627- Khan of Shiraz's Farman commanding that all customs should be received in the presence of the English, that they receive their full share and that no pass be granted without their permission.
8. June 1627- Khan of Shiraz's Farman giving Mr. Burke permission to build a house.
9. June 1627- Khan of Shiraz's Farman ordering his officers to provide guards and security for the Company's people, goods, debts etc.
10. June 1627- Certificate of customs paid by Cogiah Hassan.

Farman of Shah Safi I.

1. May 1628- Letter from the Shah to the Company.
2. May 1628- Farman to Mullayam Beg to receive the Company's goods on the same terms as the Dutch.
3. May 1628- Farman to Mullayam Beg to receive certain goods on the Shah's behalf from Mr. Burke and pay the charges thereon.
4. June 1628- Letter from Mullayam Beg to the Agent announcing the coronation of Shah Safi I. All English and Dutch privileges confirmed.
5. August 1629- Farman to Mullayam Beg to deliver silk in return for $\frac{3}{4}$ goods and $\frac{1}{4}$ specie.
6. August 1629- Farman clearing the Company of paying *Rahdari*.

7. August 1629- Farman for the transportation of nine horses yearly.
8. August 1629- Farman to rectify former abuses of the Company's privileges.
9. June 1630- Confirmation of the Company's ownership of the factory of Gombroon.
10. Khan's Farmans confirming all the above Royal Farmans.

Farman of Shah Soltan Husayn 1697.

1. Rogum for the Company's house in Shiraz wherein it is ordered that no officers in Shiraz do presume to meddle with the said house or give the English the least trouble about it but continue in the quiet possession of it.
2. A rogum ordering all officers, rhadars etc. that whenever a caphila belonging to the English goes from Spahaun to Gombroon in case there is any danger in the road from rogues that the said officers shall supply the English or their servants with guards if they desire it and not suffer any damage to happen either to their goods or persons.
3. A rogum ordering the English shall have liberty to export twelve horses annually and that in case they send less one year they may transport so many more the next.
4. A rogum ordering the Vizier of Shiraz to permit the English to make drink and export what quantity of wine they please and notwithstanding among the Musselmen it is not allowed yet the English are at full liberty to do it.
5. A rogum ordering that the English are free of Rhaddarage all over the Kingdom mentioned as a present to the Chief of Isfahan.
6. A rogum ordering that all goods belonging to the English that come to Spahaun are free of Sad-yeck and Havoy and they may bring them into their house and disperse of them without the least molestation.
7. A copy of a rogum ordering the English twelve jareebes of ground in what part of Gombroon they please and that no officers presume to molest or hinder them on this score.
8. A rogum ordering all governors, viziers, *Darughas* and other officials all over the dominions of Persia for this reason that there is a perfect harmony between the King of England and me

and the English are my Guest and whenever they have business with the aforesaid officers that they do not refuse but do them justice and not ask any the least gratuity for such services of them.

9. A rogum ordering the Shahbandar and his officers to treat the English and merchants civilly that they may promote and increase the trade of Gombroon and I have likewise ordered another Shahbandar and directed him to do as the English desire and the English may be assured of my favour and make the merchants content that they shall likewise receive the same and that afterwards nobody shall treat them ill that they may trade and make the port flourish.
10. A rogum ordering the English their house in Spahaun and that the Meerob or Head of the Waterways does not prevent the water coming to their garden.
11. A rogum ordering that nobody presume to force the Chief or his servants to sell goods to them and if the English Chief etc. sell any goods that he or they shall receive ready money for them and if any presume to act contrary to this order, they shall be severely punished.
12. A rogum ordering that one house belonging to the Linguist be free of the *Jizya* and all duties and assessments.
13. A rogum ordering that six banians and a broker be free of *Jizya* and all Duty and assessments.
14. A rogum ordering that the English be treated with respect all over the dominions and that no Khans or officers presume to use any the least force nor ask anything from them or injure them on any account or manner whatever, but assist them about their affairs.
15. A rogum ordering that whereas the English Banians in Gombroon and Spahaun have nothing of their own and what is in their hands belongs to the Company, nobody presume to force or take anything from them and if any person owes them anything he shall pay it back again.
16. A rogum ordering that the English are permitted to one hundred loads of silk in Gilan at the current price free of all duties whatever.
17. A rogum ordering that if the English servants commit any faults the governor or *Darughah* of such place those crimes are committed shall send them to the English to be punished and not ask anything at all of them.

18. A rogum ordering that the English are permitted to buy 2,000 maunds Kandahar of hing free of all duties (added in 1730).
19. A copy of a rogum attested by the Sheikh-ol-Eslam ordering that the English are free of customs and all manner of duties whatever.

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