CHAPTER V

THE COMMERCIAL WORLD OF THE FRENCH ADVENTURERS

Apart from their military and political role, the adventurers also had strong presence in the commercial and social field of the region. Their vigorous commercial activities became an important feature of the north Indian trading world during this period. It not only provided great spurt to trading activities but also threw ample light on vast potentialities of economic growth that had existed in the region.

The growing interest among the adventurers in the indigo and cotton cloth trade in the last quarter of the century contributed to some interesting changes in the commercial map of the region. Some remote locations which had no previous commercial experience came up as famous indigo trading and manufacturing centers. They not only emerged as thriving commercial centers but were also integrated to the International economy through the large-scale export of indigo to the European markets. During its peak, the production and export of Indigo from upper India even rivaled that of Bengal, the stronghold of the English company's trade and commerce.

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1 Their commercial activities were vigorous in the sense of their zeal and enthusiasm for it which was evident from their high mobility, regularity in correspondence and contacts with their agents and trading partners, constant keeping a tab on the market to make their goods vendible, and wide-ranging knowledge. It was reported that unlike these adventurers, the Indian urban jagirdars were not prepared to do the same amount of labour as these men were doing. It was further stated that the urban jagirdars were also not willing to take such initiatives which characterized these adventurers trading venture. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India: The Letters of Claude Martin 1766-1800, p. 13.

The social dimension of their presence was characterized by their Indianization and their growing attachment and admiration for India. Their matrimonial alliances proved to be a major factor in their quick absorption in the society. It not only led to their growing attachment for their families but also widened their social contacts. Their knowledge of Persian proved to be an important socializing tool. Whereas their marriages formed the source of their attachment for the country, their intellectual pursuits in the form of collection of indigenous manuscripts and texts resulted in their growing interests in Indian culture and civilization. Their painstaking research and vast collection of Indian manuscripts and texts not only familiarized them with India’s glorious past but filled them with appreciation and admiration for it.

One can discern some new trends in the commercial and social field of the region due to the increasing involvement of these adventurers. These trends acquired more recognizable shape particularly towards the end of the century when not only the volume and orientation of the trade changed but the entrenchment of the adventurers in the local social mores also became rather more widespread. The study of commercial and social world of the adventurers helps in understanding the changing trading pattern in upper India due to the economic activities of these adventurers and the fluidity of the local society and the level of their entrenchment in it.

The present chapter is divided in two sections. The first part deals with the adventurers’ economic dimension in north India in the last quarter of the century. By presenting a survey of their trading activities, the section shows their quick and deep entrenchment in the trading world of the region and the changes effected by them in the existing trading pattern. While dealing with facets of their trading activities, the section dwells at length on the commodities pattern that existed. By focusing on the
variety of commodities they traded in, an attempt is made to show not only their sharp commercial acumen but also to bring out the vast potentialities of trade and commerce that had existed in the north Indian region in the last quarter of the century. It would become particularly evident from the trading activities of Polier which throws light on the economic condition of the region where even trinkets, if marketed intelligently, could become a lucrative trade item. A particular concern of the chapter is to examine to what extent these adventurers remained professional and whether trade and politics were isolated or not. The section also looks into the role of the friendly relations of these adventurers with the English company and how it helped in their trade. The section on the social world of the adventurers deals with the process of their Indianization and their family and social ties. It attempts to examine the flexibility of local society in accommodating foreign elements and the commitments of these foreigners to their new social ties.

The adventurers' social and commercial presence in the region has largely remained under-studied theme among the historians. Except some references to De Boigne’s trading venture along with Claude Martin, nothing substantial exists in the available secondary works on this aspect. Virtually nothing exists on the trading activities of Polier, Gentil, and Du Jarday, and as far as the social world of the adventurers is concerned its presentation has so far remained sketchy. Except Jean Marie Lafont’s work on the adventurers' socio-intellectual engagements in India, it is still largely a virgin territory.

The most plausible reason for such a marginal depiction of the adventurers’ commercial and social presence is that its study immediately questions the validity of
their stereotypical presentation as inconsequential temporary settlers who made ‘quick money’ and returned to their native countries.

It is pertinent to point out that we would largely deal with the trading activities of Polier, Du Jarday, and De Boigne as most of the information available on the adventurers’ trading activity is on these personalities.

5.1 Commercial Enterprises of Antoine Polier

5.1 (a) Dynamics of Trade: The Modus Operandi and the Commodities Pattern

Antoine Polier was one of the most successful adventurers in his commercial pursuits in Awadh. He had become involved in trading activities from early 1770s when he took up the service in the survey department of the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula. But after leaving the company service in October 1775 he engaged himself completely in this vocation. In fact, the main reason for his coming back to Awadh after leaving the company service was his heavy investment in Indian markets and recovery of money from various debtors. Therefore, from 1775 until his restoration in the company’s service in 1781, he pursued his economic activities simply as an adventurer. And even after his restoration, the trade remained his dominant profession which he actively pursued until his retirement to Europe in 1787.

Polier’s trading networks spread over a large part of north India connecting the extremes of Garhwal on one end to Calcutta on the other. He deployed his gumashta


4 Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Very Ingenious Man, op. cit., p. 102.

5 In a letter to his agent Diwan Manik Ram, Polier instructs to arrange the departure of his household manager to Calcutta where the latter would meet his business manager. He also instructed the Diwan to
(a trading agent generally employed by the Europeans) in almost every notable commercial centre who struck deals with traders on his behalf and kept him informed of the prices and market trends. He was able to appoint able and efficient agents who diligently accomplished the task assigned to them. It was due to his consideration for merit than any other attributes. At the time of appointment of the gumashta, he did not make any distinction on the basis of their socio-religious background, and recruited them from both Hindu and Muslim communities. His only concern was their ability to handle trade. His chief agents who emerged as important components of his trading world were Raso Sarkar, Shiv Prasad, Oshra Gora Mistri, all in Faizabad; Mir Muhammad Azim, Diwan Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Hussain Ata Khan in Agra, Mir Sulaiman Khan in Patna, Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan and Mir Waliullah Khan in the Farrukhabad region, and Ratan Singh who was sent to explore economic prospects in Garhwal.6

Polier’s trade was not specialized either in commodities or in domain of activity. He traded in diversified objects ranging from spices on one hand to elephants on the other. The discussion on his commodities of trade shows that he was an astute trader who always searched for new avenues and new ways to make commercial gains. For instance, he created the possibility of gainful trade in the Garhwal region by supplying spices and medicines to the local Raja as there was shortage of these items. In 1775, he sent his trusted agent Ratan Singh to the Raja of Garhwal Lalit Shah with five thaans of Chinese cloth, some medicines, and dalchini. Dalchini was particularly supplied as it was not available there. Medicines were supplied to revive the vigour give 50 rupees to the household manager for his expenses. ‘Polier’s letter to Diwan Manik Ram’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ija'i Arsalani, Folio no. 21b, p. 107.

6 Ibid., pp. 60, 107.
and vitality of the raja. Polier also instructed the Raja about the usage of the medicine. Polier had acquired good knowledge about this particular medicine for he told the Raja that it was the most effective medicine available in the region which he had specially sent to Garhwal. In return, he asked the Raja to supply him slave boys and girls between the age group of 8-9 and 9-12 respectively, musk deer, sheep for making fur, ‘sura cow’ and some ‘hill’ birds. 7

Dolchini seems to have been a special ingredient of food items of the high class and Polier saw a possibility in providing it to them at a considerable margin. Hence, he supplied it to Raja Chait Singh, the son of Raja Balwant Singh of Ramgarh. He informed Chait Singh that he came to know about his liking for Dolchini from Gentil with whom the Raja was in contact. 8 Polier supplied a sample of it to the Raja and assured him that if it was liked by him then he would supply even more along with other goods that had to be sent to him through his agent Diwan Manik Ram. 9

Polier also invested money in the laying of fruit gardens whose products were then sold. The selling of high quality fruits was lucrative and fetched high prices. Therefore, Polier paid particular attention to constructing a well-structured fruit garden by using wooden beams. 10 He specially employed two gardeners from Patna who were expert in laying fruit gardens. They were paid in advance and were directed to lay the gardens in Faizabad. Polier instructed that only good quality saplings should be planted which could also include that of plums and peaches. It was emphasized that irrespective of the costs only high quality saplings were to be procured, as only

8 ‘Polier’s Letter to Raja Chait Singh, son of Raja Balwant Singh’, Ibid., Folio No. 5a, p. 97.
9 Ibid.
such saplings could result in quality products. Not only indigenous fruits, Polier also focused on marketing the European ones. He imported European seeds and planted them in his garden. In the sowing of foreign seeds care was taken and the expert gardeners were entrusted with the plantation activity. Apart from the imported seeds, appropriate measures were also taken in the sowing of grape saplings which were particularly sown as per Polier’s instructions.

The investment in fruit-bearing garden certainly proved commercially advantageous for Polier, as later, he appointed one more gardener named Narain at a monthly salary of 6 rupees for the upkeep of the garden. Moreover, the garden was further expanded by the introduction of new varieties such as cypress and narcissus plants, and asharfi flowers.

Transaction in liquor was another profitable venture for Polier. Liquor was generally stored in his haveli at Faizabad from where it was supplied to various places. A letter to Oshra Mistri Gora reveals that usually more than thirty to forty bottles of wine and more than twenty bottles of brandy were stored in the haveli. Gentil whose commercial presence is extremely scanty in the north Indian trading setup was associated with Polier in this trade. Polier through a letter directed his agent Mir Muhammad Azim to send the wine left with the latter to Gentil who at that time had

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12 Polier’s insistence on the sowing of grape saplings as per his direction is one instance of his vast knowledge about the commodities that he traded in. ‘Polier’s Letter to Oshra Mistri Gora, Faizabad’, Ibid., Folio No. 31b, p. 113.
13 Asharfi flowers were most probably modern day money plant. Ibid., Folio No. 55b, p. 127.
14 ‘Polier’s Letter to Oshra Mistri Gora, Faizabad’, Ibid., Folio No. 47b, p. 122. That Polier had a huge supply of wine is evident from his other letter to Oshra Mistri Gora where he ordered the latter to send him 100 to 150 bottles of wine. Polier’s Letter to Oshra Mistri Gora, Ibid., Folio No. 91a, p. 150.
been stationed in Etawah with the army of the Nawab. The chief source of supply of liquor for Polier was his English friends through whom he procured European wines and brandy. For instance, wine had formed an important constituent of the trading items that Polier had intended to bring from Calcutta at the time of his return in 1775. He had written to his gumashta Mir Sulaiman Khan that he would bring ‘lot of madira with him’. It shows that Polier’s friendship with the Englishmen in Calcutta was an important help in his liquor trade.

Trading in different varieties of cloths was an important and prestigious engagement for Polier. It not only earned him profits but also facilitated in establishing connections with the ruling elites of the region. Various types of fabric such as Dhaka cloth, velvet, coarse woollen cloth (pattu), and broad cloth (banat) formed important commodities of his cloth trade. They were procured from as distant a place as Bengal. His haveli in Faizabad acted as the storehouse for supply to his clients. It was a high-profile mercantile activity for Polier, as he particularly supplied it to the ruling class of the region. In 1773, the Nawab of Awadh had demanded from Polier the coarse woollen cloths or pattu. The latter sent his agent Raso Sarkar with a dastak to Jaunpur where pattu had been stored and requested the faujdar of Jaunpur to provide carts and carriers at due charges. In 1774, Polier sold Dhaka cloth, velvet, and pattu to the Mughal noble Najaf Khan. The cloth trade with Najaf Khan revealed that Polier

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16 In a letter to Oshra Mistri Gora, Polier ordered him to send wine that had been brought by Mr. Store from Patna. Polier’s Letter to Oshra Mistri Gora, Ibid., Folio No. 88a, p. 148.
18 Ibid., Folio No. 11b; ‘Polier’s Letter to Ras Bihari Sarkar’, Ibid., Folio No. 21a, p. 106.
had acquired great reputation as a trader. That is, although the deal had been struck earlier, the goods were supplied only later, indicating the amount of trust reposed in him by his clients.20

Trade in elephants was Polier’s another lucrative economic pursuit. Considering the number of elephants traded in and the number of trading associates involved in, it can be said that it was quite a big enterprise. The English officers Middleton and Claude Martin were also partners of Polier in this trade. Regarding this trade, Claude Martin was also in touch with Polier’s agents Diwan Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Ata Khan. The trade in elephants was definitely profitable as Polier even agreed to sell other’s elephants. For instance, in 1774 he wrote to Lala Kashmíri Mal, a sahukar, to send the thirteen elephants that the latter had wanted to sell. Polier assured the Lala that the elephants would be taken care of like his own property.21

In 1775, Polier sent his five elephants to Diwan Manik Ram and directed him to sell three of them along with five others which had already been with the Diwan. Thus, eight elephants were instructed to be sold. Manik Ram was informed that sixteen more elephants were on their way for their sale and would soon reach Lucknow. He was also informed that Claude Martin would write to him regarding the sale of elephants.22 Polier informed Manik Ram that of the sixteen elephants only ten belonged to him and the remaining six belonged to other Europeans. But Manik Ram was ordered to buy those six elephants also and then to sell them such that no loss

20 ‘Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim’, Ibid., Folio No. 107b, p. 160. Polier informed his agent Mir Muhammad who was stationed in Lucknow about the dispatch of these commodities from Faizabad. Mir Muhammad was instructed to carry it to Agra and hand over the goods to Najaf Khan.
were incurred.\textsuperscript{23} When five of the sixteen elephants that had reached from Benaras were sold by Ram Sundar Dutt in Faizabad at the rate of 1600 rupees, Polier disapproved of the transaction and ordered Manik Ram to retrieve the sold elephants and had them sold in his presence.\textsuperscript{24} That the rate of 1600 rupees for one elephant was very less became evident from the sale of an elephant in 1777 to Ma’ad Khan Afghan, the zamindar of Hathras at a whopping price of 22,000 rupees.\textsuperscript{25} Polier also took upon himself to sell two elephants owned by another European Dr. Hunter, along with his own, and instructed Manik Ram to do the needful.\textsuperscript{26} Polier certainly had acquired strong grip on the elephant trade for he was well aware of even the dietary habits of elephants so much so that he informed his amil about the diet of an elephant.\textsuperscript{27}

Sugar candy, pickles, cushions, spread sheets etc. were the other goods that Polier effectively marketed. The experts were hired for the quality preparation and attractive finishing of such commodities. But their work could not come up to the expectations of Polier who reprimanded his agent Mir Muhammad Azim for low standard products when the latter sent a sample for the approval. Showing his wide-ranging knowledge

\textsuperscript{23} 'Polier’s Letter to Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Ata Khan', Ibid., Folio No. 268b, pp. 254-255.

\textsuperscript{24} Polier was not satisfied with Ram Sundar Datt’s transaction as he did not trust the latter’s competency to sell. Polier had the information that four of them had been sold cheap and the returns from the sale of five elephants were 8000 rupees, thus giving the selling price of one elephant as 1600 rupees. He even admonished Manik Ram for letting Ram Sundar Datt sell the elephants. ‘Polier’s Letter to Manik Ram’, Ibid., Folio No. 299a, 304b, 306b, pp. 275, 278-279.

\textsuperscript{25} The zamindar bought an elephant from Muhammadi Khan, Polier’s amil of Khalilganj for such a hefty amount when given the fact that Polier had already been using that elephant for riding. Polier directed the amil to sell it to the zamindar. ‘Polier’s Letter to Muhammadi Khan, Amil of Khalilganj’, Ibid., Folio No. 406a, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{26} ‘Polier’s Letter to Manik Ram’, Ibid., Folio No. 299a, 304b, 306b, pp. 275, 278-279.

\textsuperscript{27} Polier wrote that an elephant should be fed 14 ser atta and rice with mothi and masala. Then he wrote that at times the amil could also mix one to two flus in the masala but he advised the amil not to do it regularly. ‘Polier’s Letter to Muhammad Khan, the Amil of Khalilganj’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, Folio No. 406a, p. 356.
about the products he handled, he specified about the quantity of ingredients to be used and hygiene that had to be taken care of. Polier also marketed silver vessels such as paandaan, gulab paash, etc., shoes, and richly embroidered cloths which were prepared on order.

Agra formed an important center of Polier’s trading network. Here, he conducted trade in association with Mayachand who was the famous sahukar of the city. Mayachand was made responsible for the general sale of goods in the city, whereas the business with the high state officials was conducted by him alone. For instance, for the general sale of 15 mans of silk in the Agra market, Polier sent it to Mayachand sahukar. But Dhaka cloths, velvet and pattu which had already been sold to Najaf Khan were later handed over to the khansama of Najaf Khan personally by the agent Mir Muhammad Azim. Cocoons were another important item of sale in Agra for Polier.

For Polier, Agra was important not only as a destination for selling the goods, but also an important station for procuring merchandises. From here he procured gold embroidered cloth, cushions, pillows, and masnad. Polier also wrote to his partner Mayachand sahukar for the finished products of agate (sang-i-yashm), betel box

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28 Polier told the agent that the sample of the 8 mans of pickles that had been prepared was not clean and was very oily contrary to his advice of that it should have been of high quality, clean, and oil free. Regarding the cushions and spread sheets, the quality embroidery work was emphasized and the use of silk and golden threads was insisted. ‘Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim’, Ibid., Folio No. 26b, p. 110.


32 Ibid.
(pandan) and its strudded tray, and the gem-studded hokkah.\textsuperscript{33} Chandeliers and candle-stands formed the commodities supplied to Delhi.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1774, in the wake of increase in the volume of trade, Polier also established trading connections with Achal Singh, a mahajan at Agra, for the procurement of hand-made or manually prepared goods. Achal Singh had begun preparing embroidery works and ‘most other things’ at his own house on Polier’s demand. Polier had even permanently posted a harkara at Achal Singh’s house for the speedy and timely procurement of the ordered material.\textsuperscript{35} In forming trading links with Achal Singh, Polier not only saw extension in the volume of his trade but also stability in the supply of demanded goods as Achal Singh had been expected to continue his profession for longer times.\textsuperscript{36}

Bengal was another important source for Polier to procure trading material for its consequent sale in upper Indian region. Dhaka cloths, silk fabric, and wine formed important trading consignments arriving from Bengal. Besides these, glass tiles and opium were other merchandises that were also coveted from Calcutta for their sale in upper India. In 1775, Polier wrote to Aqa Ali Khan that he would acquire and bring one man of pure opium once he would return from Calcutta.\textsuperscript{37} During the same time, when he was returning, he brought about 33 mans and 10 sers of glass tiles for the Nawab.\textsuperscript{38} Among the commodities sent to Calcutta for sale, clothes, particularly the Tanda cloths, had an important place. The Tanda cloths were sent in large amounts to

\textsuperscript{33} ‘Polier’s Letter to Mayachand Sahukar’, Ibid., Folio No. 169a, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{34} ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan’, Ibid., Folio No. 264a, p. 254.

\textsuperscript{35} ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan’, Ibid., Folio No. 186b, p. 208.

\textsuperscript{36} ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, Folio No. 180a, p. 204.


\textsuperscript{38} ‘Polier’s Letter to Manik Ram’, Ibid., Folio No. 347a, p. 306.
Calcutta for their sale. For instance, in 1775, Polier had directed Manik Ram to buy Tanda cloths for the amount 10,000-12,000 rupees and send that to Calcutta. It was also directed that the cloth to be bought should be in the price range of four to five rupees per than.39

Trade was conducted both in cash payments and through hundi (a bill of exchange). The usage of any particular mode depended upon the amount of discount offered at the place of transaction. Cash was generally preferred to hundi. But hundi was not non-prevalent. Polier preferred to do the transaction or money transfer in hard currency for long distances as hundi could incur losses. For the money transfer from Awadh to Calcutta, he preferred cash in the form of asharfi. For instance, when he was in Calcutta in 1774 he insisted Manik Ram to buy 'big ashrafi' at Farrukhabad and send that through Dr. Thomas. Manik Ram was instructed not to send hundi as that would bring losses.40 It appears from the letters of Polier that for short-distance money transaction, such as between Delhi and Awadh, hundi were preferred over asharfi. He also advised Manik Ram to send money in hundi as dispatch of asharfi would result in loss.41

Apart from his own laborious commercial activity, Polier also owed a great deal to his agents for his commercial accomplishments. The agents had also been willing to work as he never discriminated due to their religious persuasions or regional ties. If he reprimanded them for delay in dispatch of letters or goods etc., then he also showered praises on them for their commercial acumen. They were appointed purely on the

basis of their merit. Polier also showed professionalism when he appointed the 
gumashta supplied by other traders. He took them in his service only after formalizing 
the deal through legal measures. Attractive salary was another reason for the Indian 
agents to join him. And if the salaries of the employees grew in arrears they were 
assured of full payments. In his dealings with other traders, Polier paid attention that 
due interest on the money taken was paid to the other party without any deliberate 
evasion. He was sincere in this regard and constantly assured his partners for the 
same. Such an approach certainly enhanced the reputation of Polier as a trader for it reposed the confidence of the clients in him.

Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan and Diwan Manik Ram emerged as the most trusted agents of Polier. Although he had many agents and trading partners in various cities, most of the transactions were carried out through these two employees. When he had gone to Calcutta, the entire business was handled by him through these agents. That these agents enjoyed insurmountable trust of their master was evident

42 When Polier was in Delhi, he asked Manik Ram for a Bengali agent. Although he mentioned that there were many Kashmiris in the court, he soon clarified that it did not matter to him whether his gumashta was Bengali or Kashmiri and instructions were given to look for someone who could work efficiently. 'Polier's Letter to Diwan Manik Ram', Ibid., Folio No. 368b, p. 323.

43 Polier used to sign a bond called tamassuk with the person who used to send the person to work as an agent. For instance, Jugal Kishor who worked as an agent of Polier was appointed through such means by giving a tamssuk to Gokulchand Sah. 'Polier's Letter to Gokulchand Sah', Ibid., Folio No. 165a, p. 195.

44 Writing to his trading partner Mir Sulaiman Khan, Polier clarified for the delay that had taken place in the payment. Afterwards, he wrote that the money would be paid in full along with the interest. 'Polier's Letter to Mir Sulaiman Khan', in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi's the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, Folio No. 240a, p. 238.

45 Polier made both of them in-charge of his business. He however emphasized that they worked in consultation with each other and no decision was to be taken unilaterally by anyone of them. Diwan Manik Ram had learnt to handle the letters in English which had made Polier's task easy on occasions and Mir Muhammad Ata Khan was mature and intelligent and fit for commercial dealings. 'Polier's
from the fact that they were allowed to deal with money exceeding even 1 lakh rupees.\textsuperscript{46}

Regularity in communication with the agents was the hallmark of Polier’s economic exercise. He himself wrote regularly to his agents and directed the same to them as well.\textsuperscript{47} A gap of more than twenty-two days in the communication with the agents was considered worrisome and inimical for trade.\textsuperscript{48} Polier showed particular concern to the regularity in correspondence and when there was delay in the arrival of letters and money during his sojourn in Calcutta in 1775, he reprimanded them for not writing regularly.\textsuperscript{49}

It appears from the available evidence that no serious competition was faced by Polier or Gentil from Indian traders. Rather, it emerges that Polier established even more trading contacts with Indian traders and sahukar. Nor are their references which may indicate Indian traders’ unwillingness to entertain these foreigners. It was more likely due to the fact that the population of the European adventurers as traders was extremely limited, and secondly, the Indian merchants did not see any overt competition to their trade from such a miniscule group of individual and independent traders.

\textsuperscript{46} 'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 314a, p. 284.

\textsuperscript{47} Polier had asked his agent Manik Ram to write regularly if not everyday then every alternate day. 'Polier’s Letter to Manik Ram', in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s \textit{the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani}, Folio No. 417a, p. 367.

\textsuperscript{48} 'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 33a, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{49} He said that Dr Thomas was like his brother and friend and moreover the dispatch would reach him fast. 'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 292a, p. 271.
The commodity pattern of Polier's trade and his *modus operandi* establishes him as an astute trader who knew how to squeeze profits even from seemingly insignificant commercial transactions. His professional approach in his dealing with his agents and trading partners not only imparted clarity to his transactions but also reposed the clients' faith in him.

5.2 Polier and his European Trading Associates

We find that a significant number of Europeans, particularly the English, associated themselves with Polier for their trading activities. It was not only reflective of Polier's high stature as a trader but also highlighted the confidence that his commercial successes generated among the English traders to invest money in such varied commodities. Dr. Thomas, Chandelier, Lacos, Math, Lloyd, Mr. Store, Mr. Perceret, Claude Martin, and Gentil were some of the Europeans who either pursued business with Polier's assistance or were his trading partners. Gentil, in particular, had an important place in Polier's trade. Not only he kept Polier's goods at his residence, he also advised Polier on his purchasings.\(^5^0\) Polier also procured useful items for Gentil. He procured a shawl for Gentil through his agent Mir Muhammad Azim from a trader named Khawaja Karim.\(^5^1\)

Claude Martin was an important trading partner of Polier. Polier traded in glasses, iron goods, and cloths etc. in partnership with him which were generally sold to the

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\(^5^0\) Polier directed his agent Mir Muhammad Azim to have four mirrors kept with him polished and give them to Gentil. However, later Gentil changed his plans and instructed Mir Muhammad Azim to send the mirrors to him to Faizabad. Gentil appreciated the trading skills of Polier and his agent when he approved the mirrors as good. On another occasion, Polier instructed his agent Diwan Manik Ram to send the goods that could not be sold in Agra to Monsieur Gentil. *'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim’*, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s *the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani*, Folio No. 22b, 23a, 31a, pp. 108, 113; *'Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram’*, *Ibid.*, Folio No. 43a, p. 120.

\(^5^1\) *'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim’, Ibid.*, Folio No. 35b, p. 115.
Nawab. Another European named Mr. Lat was also associated with them in this transaction.\(^{52}\) When Polier had gone to Calcutta, he also brought large consignment of trading items for Martin which he had dispatched in two boats.\(^{53}\) That a strong camaraderie had existed between the two was also evident from Polier’s direction to his Indian trading partners to supply the ordered goods to Martin sahib in his absence.\(^{54}\) That Martin was also treated as a close confidant by Polier comes to the fore from an instance of 1775 when Polier delegated to Martin the authority to pay the salaries of his employees in Faizabad.\(^{55}\)

Mr. Math and Mr. Lacos appear in significant proportion in Polier’s business deals. While not much is known about Mr. Math, Mr. Lacos was a Frenchman and quite a visible character in Polier’s trading world.\(^{56}\) Polier sometimes took the assistance of these European friends for the procurement of his goods from certain places. For instance, in 1774 Polier wrote to Gokulchand Saha of Benaras to supply the sample of ‘tash’ fabric of large and small size along with its prices. He informed Gokulchand to convey it through Mr. Math.\(^{57}\) Later Polier directed Gokulchand to hand over the same to Mr. Lacos who was also arriving in Benaras at that time. It was a big order

\(^{52}\) ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan’, Ibid., Folio No. 264a, p. 252.


\(^{54}\) In 1774, Polier wrote to Mayachand Sahukar in Agra to hand over the goods he had ordered for namely agate (sang-i-yashm), betel box (pandan), and its studded tray, and the gem-studded hookah to Martin sahib once they were ready. ‘Polier’s Letter to Mayachand Sahukar, Akbarabad (Agra)’, Ibid., Folio No. 169a, p. 198

\(^{55}\) ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram and Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan’, Ibid., Folio No. 264a, p. 254.

\(^{56}\) ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram’, Ibid., Folio No. 299a, p. 276.

\(^{57}\) ‘Polier’s Letter to Gokulchand Saha, Benaras’, Ibid., Folio No. 205a, p. 219.
consisting of fourteen \textit{thans} of tash of different varieties and two pairs of khilat and Mr. Lacos was asked to procure it from Benaras.\textsuperscript{58}

Dr Clugh and Colonel Thomas Muir, the other European private traders, were helped by Polier in their purchase of cloths. Nur Ali who was the \textit{gumashta} of both Dr Clugh and Col. Thomas Muir was in correspondence with Polier, and the latter assisted him in the purchase of goods particularly clothes for his English friends and advised not to be negligent in the purchase of clothes. He also agreed to give money to the agent to help his English friends in their transaction.\textsuperscript{59}

Polier also helped Lloyd Sahib when the latter requested him for a \textit{dastak} to obtain grains from Mirzapur. He instructed his agent Manik Ram to apply to the Nawab for the same and asked the latter to send grains to Lloyd after confirming what type of grains he had wanted.\textsuperscript{60}

The above discussion shows the dependence of many Europeans particularly the English one on Polier’s trading connections for their commercial activities. Polier also benefitted from his trading associations with these Europeans as on occasions he procured trading items through these Europeans.

\textsuperscript{58} Polier asked Gokulchand to make the entry of prices in his account. The thans were of 1041 rupees and 2 annas and the jor khilat was valued at 551 rupees and 8 annas. ‘Polier’s Letter to Gokulchand Saha, Benaras’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s \textit{the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani}, Folio No. 207a, 212a, pp. 220, 223.

\textsuperscript{59} ‘Polier’s Letter to Nur Ali, gumashta of Colonel Muir’, \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 233b, p. 234. Polier agreed to give 5000 rupees to the \textit{gumashta} which Colonel Muir had asked for.

\textsuperscript{60} ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram’, \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 43a, p. 120.
5.3 As a Professional Trader

Polier’s commercial success was largely the result of his acquired understanding of the trading milieu of the region, his knowledge of Persian, and his high-profile contacts. In addition to it, he also believed in the principle of being clear and straightforward in his dealings with other traders. Polier’s letters reveal his transactional clarity and professionalism in his dealings with the clients. For instance, Polier warned Jaspat Rai who was the naib of suba Allahabad for his excuses in making ‘tankhwah’ payment which had been assigned to him by the Nawab of Awadh. Jaspat Rai had promised to pay the sum in one month but he resorted to delay tactics and did not pay the amount even after four months. Polier however clarified to him that the delay would only accrue more interest and he would ‘not forego even a single penny of the interest’.61 In a letter to his trading partner Mir Sulaiman Khan, Polier wrote that he would pay only 5% commission on the sale of his goods than 10% as had been expected by the latter. Similarly, at the time of the proposal of selling elephants of Lala Kashmiri Mal, Polier unambiguously wrote that he charged 50% of the profit on the sale of goods, which was applicable on his European partners also, and after that, he left it on the Lala’s discretion to enter into trading alliance with him.62

Nowhere Polier appeared resorting to exploitative ways for commercial gains. Unlike the Company official traders who made money through fraudulent and dishonest means, Polier maintained his trading activities unambiguous. John Bristow who was the Company Resident and Martin’s friend and business associate was a glaring

example of fleecing the Nawab of his wealth through dishonest means.\textsuperscript{63} His depredations were reported by William Palmer to Hastings in September 1783 when he explained how as a resident he had taken control of Awadh’s land revenues and by falsifying the expected returns made fortunes.\textsuperscript{64} Reporting the height of depredation carried out by Bristow, Palmer wrote to Hastings, ‘he had carried off the Carpets, Purdahs & Cloths from those houses of the Vizier which he inhabited and which were furnished by His Excellency’.\textsuperscript{65} Bristow had also overcharged the Nawab on goods obtained for him in a private capacity. Apart from this, many undocumented incidents had been there where Bristow made easy money by selling trinkets etc at high prices. For instance, he sold the Nawab the corals on the breakfast table in November morning 1782 for a whopping 1900 rupees (nearly pound 200).\textsuperscript{66} Russel who was the board’s solicitor reported that Bristow also juggled the exchange rates of various rupees circulating in Awadh at that time to his advantage and might have made an ‘immense profit’.\textsuperscript{67} Polier’s contacts with the ruling authorities of the region proved quite crucial in the manoeuvring of his trade. His high-profile connections with Najaf Khan and the Nawabs of Awadh were instrumental in his largely uninterrupted trade. And Polier was also seemingly unhesitant in using these connections to his advantage. For

\textsuperscript{63} Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, \textit{A Very Ingenious Man}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 114, 117. John Bristow was the Resident at Cuttack from 1757-58. In 1774 he succeeded Middleton as the Resident at Lucknow. Though supported by the majority in council he was recalled in 1783 through Hastings’s efforts and replaced by Middleton. Fort William-India House Correspondence, Vol. IX, (Public Series), 1782-1785, edited by B. A. Saletore, NAI, 1959, p. 662.
\textsuperscript{64} Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, \textit{A Very Ingenious Man}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, p.116.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 115.
instance, at the time of his journey to Delhi via Agra after his return from Calcutta in December 1776, he requested Najaf Khan to provide him escort for his person and belongings. For the smooth functioning of his trade and to provide assistance to his agents, he had also established contacts with the kotwal of Lucknow Makhu Khan.\textsuperscript{68}

The culture of giving gifts to enhance trading relations was another method to manoeuvre trading activities. Polier was also not immune from it. To strengthen his economic ties with Najaf Khan, who was a potential buyer of his goods and also an influential person, Polier gave him valuable items in gift. In 1774, he received essence of cinnamon from Calcutta and he gave 11 tola of it to Najaf Khan as a gift.\textsuperscript{69}

Similarly, he gave the Nawab of Awadh a gift of printed cloths with the expectation that it would facilitate his work.\textsuperscript{70} On one occasion he had admonished Manik Ram for not being able to do sycophancy up to the mark and openly suggested him to do it to the best of his ability to win the Nawab’s favour.\textsuperscript{71} Polier had also gifted the Nawab Asaf-ud-daula a musical system which was considered a precious and rare gift. Along with the musical instrument he had also deputed one expert and one mechanic for its smooth functioning. He had requested the Nawab to pay them handsomely as they knew about the instrument and could maintain it properly.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{68} 'Polier’s Letter to Mir Muhammad Azim', in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s \textit{the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani}, Folio No. 26b, pp. 110-111; 'Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 357a, p. 313.

\textsuperscript{69} 'Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 157a, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{70} 'Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 428a, 430a, pp. 376, 378. Guns and shawls were other items that were also given in gifts.

\textsuperscript{71} Manik Ram had presented many gifts to the Nawab and had his favour also yet he could not get the tankhwah of Martin and Lloyd sanctioned, which displeased Polier. 'Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 304b, p. 279.

\textsuperscript{72} 'Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram', \textit{Ibid.}, Folio No. 371b, pp. 325-326.
Polier’s attempts to have the favour of the ruling authorities of the region, particularly the Nawab of Awadh and the Mughal noble Najaf Khan, shows that for successful manoeuvring of the trade high-profile connections were pivotal. Although Polier adopted professional approach in his commercial transactions but he was astute enough to know the deft and skilful use of politics for trading activities. Perhaps no other evidence supports this argument in a better way than the one where he admonishes his agent Manik Ram for not being able to ingratiate himself with the Nawab and suggests him to do his best to win the favour of the Nawab.

5.4 New Challenges in an Era of Political Misfortune

The pursuit of gainful commercial activity was certainly a challenging engagement amid fluctuating political fortunes of many ruling elites, erosion of authority, and ambiguity in territorial jurisdiction. And to compound the problem further, getting the payment from the clients for the sale of merchandises was another difficult task. Therefore, manoeuvring the trade towards gainful ends was no less tough for Polier also.

The most excruciating set back he faced in his trade was the non-payment of money by his customers. Polier encountered this problem particularly with his high-profile trading partners who had bought goods from him but had not paid. For instance, Najaf Khan’s indebtedness had particularly bothered him. He had to write many letters of persuasion to the Mughal noble for the payment of the amount that the latter owed to him. The amount owed by Najaf Khan was definitely quite considerable as Polier had even decided to jeopardize his friendly relations with him to realize the sum.⁷³

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⁷³ ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s the Persian Letters of Polier—the Jjaj-i Arsalani, Folio No. 255a, 260a, pp. 247, 250. Comte de Modave wrote that Najaf Khan had
The difficulty was also faced by Polier in realizing money from the *jaidad* of influential people such as Ghulam Murtaza Khan and Rajgopal. And he had to resort to issuance of special *shuqqa* from the Emperor to resolve the matter.\textsuperscript{74}

Local political conditions had a considerable bearing on the functioning of trade and any deterioration in it also disrupted the trading activities. Polier in spite of having high connections did not take any risk under such conditions and acted prudently. For instance, when he was in Delhi, he cancelled the dispatch of 200 man of glass on cart from Lucknow to Delhi due to disturbances on the route. He also asked his agent Manik Ram to forbid Mr. Perceret from coming to Delhi with cartload of goods as there were Sikh disturbances in Delhi and people were scared. Later, he asked the agent to inform Mr. Perceret to stop in Farrukhabad and wait for his orders. What is important to note was that Mr. Perceret was not made to halt for long in Farrukhabad and was directed to come to Delhi through another but safe route—clearly indicating that the trade was not stopped despite disturbances. Rather, other routes were used for the smooth run of the trade. Perceret was forbidden to take the disturbed Kol route for Delhi.\textsuperscript{75}

Transportation of goods from different territorial jurisdictions was another trading hassle that Polier had to tackle despite his friendly relations with ruling elites. Often the caravan of his goods was stopped and his agents were made to wait for further purchased cloths from Polier for the uniform of his army and thus owed a sum of 50,000 rupees. Comte de Modave, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

\textsuperscript{74} ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s *the Persian Letters of Polier—the *Itjā-i Arsalani*, Folio No. 403a, 404b, p. 354.

\textsuperscript{75} ‘Polier’s Letter to Diwan Manik Ram’, *Ibid.*, Folio No. 371b, 376b, 382b, 383b, pp. 324, 329, 334-335. Polier suggested Perceret to take Mendu, Jawar, Brindaban, Chhata and then Hodal route to reach Delhi. For the safety of the goods, Polier also informed that he would send fifteen to twenty Mewatis to Jawar to receive Perceret.
orders despite possessing the *parwanas* from Najaf Khan, the highest authority in this regard. Even the supply of cloths that Najaf Khan had bought from Polier had been confiscated by the kotwal at Firozabad when they were being sent to Agra on the ground of non-payment of *rahdari* or road-tax.76 Not only that, the people of Najaf Quli Khan who was another influential noble, created disruption in the sale of silk and ‘other goods’ of Polier which had been stored at his trading partner Mayachand’s house in Agra.77

Similar hassles were encountered by Polier at the time of his return from Calcutta. He had dispatched four boats laden with goods from Azimabad (modern Patna) to Faizabad. Although they had smoothly sailed from the territory of the English, they were stopped and captured at a ghat called Maner from where the jurisdiction of the Raja Chait Singh started. Polier had to manage the release of his goods by writing to the Raja.78

Polier had to lament with the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula also regarding the smooth functioning of his affairs, particularly the *tankhwah* of 20,000 rupees assigned to him from the suba of Allahabad. He complained that the payment was delayed by Raja Chait Singh and no headway could be made due to the machinations of Raja Kripa 9nd no headway could be made due to the machinations of Raja Kripa.

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76 ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Khan’, in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Ali, *the Persian Letters of Polier—The Iqaf-i Arsalani*, Folio No. 182a, p. 206; ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Quli Khan’, *ibid.*, Folio No. 183a, 184a, pp. 206-207. Polier wrote to Najaf Quli Khan that goods were being sent under the *parwana* of *rahdari* from the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula, and asked to issue a *dastak* of *rahdari* for the transportation of goods from Firozabad to Agra.

77 ‘Polier’s Letter to Najaf Quli Khan’, *ibid.*, Folio No. 181a, p. 205.

78 ‘Polier’s Letter to Raja Chait Singh’, *ibid.*, Folio No. 349a, p. 307. Polier’s goods were once even stolen in Chait Singh’s territory. But he was fully compensated with the amount of 2500 rupees.
also not willing to release the sum until a parwana was issued by the Nawab. In addition to it, he wrote to the Nawab that the emoluments from another source i.e. Benaras was also not forthcoming and he had not received anything from the assigned tankhwa of Benaras also. The main cause of grievances for him was that the Nawab’s own people were creating hassles for him despite being in his favour.\textsuperscript{79} Due to this disruption, there was a delay of four months in the payment of his tankhwa whereas ideally it should have been paid within one month.\textsuperscript{80}

However, the connections ultimately did help Polier wade through such routine commercial hurdles. He also acknowledged it when he said that his commercial success was due to the support and favour he received from the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula. He further admitted that if there had been any lapse in the Nawab’s kindness towards him, his position would have been irrevocably lost.\textsuperscript{81} Polier’s own admission makes it abundantly clear that trade was not entirely an isolated terrain and was certainly influenced by the politics. That Polier who otherwise attempted to deal professionally in his commercial transactions was also not away from such tactics brings out that the trade and politics were not isolated fields even for these adventurers.

Nevertheless, Polier emerged as one of the most successful European traders operating independently of the English company influence. He made enormous commercial fortunes which was evident from his handling of goods worth lakhs of

\textsuperscript{81} ‘Polier’s Letter to Nawab Shuja-ud-daula’, Ibid., Folio No. 210a, p. 222.
rupees. Apart from this, a considerable sum of his money was given to people on credits. At the time of his journey to Calcutta, he had written to his agent Manik Ram to make a list of people who had owed money to him. And another letter, which he wrote while on his way to Calcutta, affirmed that a lot of money was to be collected from different people. This was particularly the reason that even after leaving the Company service, he returned to Awadh to recover his earnings.

The grant of jagir by the Mughal Emperor further enhanced Polier’s trading credentials. It provided him a foothold in the indigenous trading milieu. The grant of the mahal of Khalilganj with the revenue yield of 50000 rupees provided him a fixed supply of revenue returns which could be used in trade.

The source of money for Polier for the trade was largely from the tankhwhah assigned to him at various places by the Nawab. Another source of money was the tankhwhah from Calcutta. Once the jagir of Khalilganj was given, it formed another monetary source for him. Apart from this, he also borrowed money from his European friends who were involved in private trade in the region.

The mercantile activities of Polier presents him as a typical merchant who invested in a variety of products some of which brought a large, quick profit, and some of which not so profitable but vendible in most of the cases. His mercantile activities clearly indicate his deep entrenchment in the prevailing milieu where he earned money by

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employing nearly similar trading methods as used by native traders. That Polier had become completely Indianized was also evident from his statement where he said, “I thus quit Calcutta, to go to Faizabad, residence of the Nawab and, on establishing myself there, I took on the customs and the usages of the Indians with whom I lived”.  

Thus, Polier’s commercial presence was in stark contrast not only to that of the English company officials but also to that of Claude Martin. Unlike Polier, Martin who remained an English company official throughout his life never identified himself with anything Indian. Like other English company officials he remained prejudiced against the Indians whom he hatefully called ‘blacks’.

5.5 The Commercial Enterprise of Du Jarday and Changes in the Contours of Trade

In the period from 1778 to 1787 there began to appear certain changes in the European adventurers’ business activities in the region. Trade in indigo acquired prominence and it became a focused business activity. A European adventurer Du Jarday about whom we have studied in the previous chapter became the chief proponent of this trade. He settled in the neighbourhood of Aligarh much earlier than De Boigne and made indigo trade as one of the most lucrative business activities. In an autobiographical reference he mentioned that he was a stranger in the country and after arriving in the region he took to mercantile activities and engaged himself in the cultivation of indigo. It appears from his autobiographical account that there was
hardly any attempt on the part of the native traders to try to ward off Europeans from the trading arena.

Du Jarday took in *ijara* (farm of revenue) a number of villages from Raja Himmat Singh of Etah (1780-1812) where production of indigo was promoted.\textsuperscript{90} The reason for taking several villages in *ijara* was to invest in indigo as it fetched considerable profit.\textsuperscript{91} For the processing of indigo, factories were set up in the *ijara* villages of Pora, Pilwa, Marehra and Farrukhabad. Polier who had not been involved in the indigo trade until then was also initiated into it by Du Jarday. They entered into a big partnership to carry out indigo trade extensively.\textsuperscript{92} See the adjoining map for Du Jarday's area of trading activity and for the indigo towns where he was most active.

Indigo was cultivated in the villages and it was processed in the indigo factories established by Du Jarday himself. The revenue records for the years 1778 to 1780 show that due to extensive cultivation of indigo, yearly income of many of these villages considerably increased over these years.\textsuperscript{93} For instance, in the first year (1778), the overall average for the nine villages was 15.4 per cent which was increased to 13.4 per cent in the next year. The income from the talluqa of Pilwa for 1779 had amounted to rupees 5290. Indigo plantation was given more importance and it became the largest contributory factor in the income generated from the total revenue of the region. For Pilwa, the percentage of income from indigo plantation as a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} S Nurul Hasan, 'Du Jardin Papers: A Valuable Source for the Economic History of Northern India, 1778-1787', *op. cit.*, p.188
\item \textsuperscript{91} *Ibid.*, p. 195
\item \textsuperscript{92} *Ibid.*, p. 188.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Some of these villages such as Pilwa showed 10 per cent per annum increase and others such as Tatarpur registered 20 per cent per annum increase. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
percentage of the total revenue was 88. It was 85 for another village Baragaon. For Tatarpur and Jaisinghpur it was 87 and 79 respectively.\textsuperscript{94}

Du Jarday’s indigo trade led to the transformation of several villages into indigo producing centres. However, Du Jarday’s enterprise largely remained an individual’s pursuit and except a few collaborations with other Europeans it could not touch great heights. But he was definitely a pioneer among the adventurers who commercialized indigo in the region and unveiled its vast marketing potential. Later, under De Boigne, indigo trade reached great heights when it was pursued not only in an organized manner but also became a medium of connectivity between Indian indigo manufacturing centres and European markets.

5.6 General De Boigne: Another Facet of his Presence

De Boigne is known more for his military accomplishments than for his economic enterprises. But his economic activities were no less significant. Unlike Polier or Martin who had pursued it in a full-fledged manner, De Boigne, owing to his hectic military schedule, conducted it in partnership with Martin. De Boigne’s dabbling into trading activities began almost along with his military career in north India.\textsuperscript{95} But after his establishment in his jagir of Aligarh, it grew both in proportion and vigour. The Aligarh region emerged as a commercially viable zone which invited both Indian as well as European traders. Many towns came up as important commercial centres characterized by quality indigo production and significant mercantile presence.


\textsuperscript{95} When De Boigne had left Mahahdji Sindhia’s job on the issue of raising a full-fledged brigades, he returned to Lucknow and involved himself in mercantile activities in partnership with Claude Martin. Victor de Saint-Genis, op. cit., pp. 178-179.
De Boigne's trading career has remained overshadowed under his extraordinary military achievements. But it was considered no less important by De Boigne himself. It would be seen that trading activity remained his consistent engagement throughout his presence in north India and he did not abandon it even after his departure to France.

5.7 Shifts in Trade Pattern

By the time De Boigne took up to trading activity, there had come up a marked change in the adventurers' approach to their trade. In this phase, the focus of the adventurers was no longer on diversified trade, the approach that had been adopted by Polier. In fact, the focus of the trade had shifted to specific commodities such as indigo and cotton piece goods which were procured and marketed. Another important change that could be discerned was the creation of new networks of trade and internationalization of local commodities. That is, trading commodities no longer remained confined to north Indian territories as was the case during Polier's time, rather, the trading items during this phase were mostly exported to European markets from Calcutta. Indigo trade in particular received great impetus from the adventurers of this period. The reasons were that earlier indigo was exported to Europe from West Indies and the West Coast of North America. But after the American War of Independence, their supply of indigo from America was completely disrupted. As a result, the Company made efforts to promote the cultivation and production of indigo in India. To make indigo trade more widespread, in 1788, the Company abolished its monopoly on it and opened up the trade in indigo to its servants and other Europeans under its protection.96 The abolition of the monopoly had a crucial bearing on adventurers'

96 Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Very Ingenious Man, op. cit., p.163-164.
indigo trade. Hereafter, the entire indigo procuring activity of the adventurers was focused on its exportation to European markets where it fetched high prices. The other reason for indigo becoming one of the favourites was that there were certain advantages with the indigo trade. Unlike the trade in cloths, indigo trade could be conducted without the aid of Indian *gumashta* and even Europeans could directly engage in it and could pursue it. Besides this, the cheap labour and low manufacturing cost further made it an enormously profitable business. As a result, the period witnessed an unprecedented surge in indigo trade. It had the involvement not only of the adventurers but also of 'free' English merchants.

### 5.8 Trading World of De Boigne

De Boigne involved himself in indigo and cotton trade. He entered into it in partnership with Thomas Masseyk and Martin and invested a huge amount of 50,000 Pound in it. He promoted the cultivation and processing of indigo in his jagir of Aligarh where earlier Du Jarday had also been active. But during this period the farming of indigo was done at a larger scale and new areas were brought within its fold.

De Boigne's indigo trade led to the emergence of new indigo producing and manufacturing towns. Aligarh, Khurja, Mendu, Jalesar, and Khair came up as leading indigo producing centres. Among these centres, Khurja, Jalesar, and Jalali received

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98 This venture took place before 1791. For Martin had demanded the credited sum to Masseyk in 1791. 'Letter of Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 22nd April 1798, Lucknow', in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), *A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India*, op. cit., pp. 353-356.

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recognition for their high productivity of quality indigo. In the Aligarh region, the annual production of indigo ranged between 3000 to 5000 maunds depending upon the season. The annual yield of 5000 maunds was considered good. The town of Jalali had attained special distinction in this regard which produced 5000 maunds of indigo in a year. It was far greater than that produced in some of the highly organized indigo centres in Bengal. De Boigne’s indigo trade led to marked improvement in the economic status of several villages. It was reported that expansion of indigo farming led to an annual growth of 10-20 % in the income of several villages which was considered astonishing.

The towns of Pora, Pilwa, Marhera, and Farrukhabad became more prominent as industrial towns. Farrukhabad came up as the chief entrepôt from where indigo was sent to Calcutta for further export to European countries. Thus, unlike Du Jarday’s trade, De Boigne’s indigo trade was characterized by its exportation to European markets. Supply of indigo to European markets gave enormous returns in specie and bullion which found its way to the indigo towns of Upper India.

De Boigne’s support to trade and commerce led to the settlement of many European traders in the region. Peace and stability established in the region was another reason for considerable European migration to Aligarh. Amongst European indigo planters

99 Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 114. It was noted that the indigo production in Khurja, Jalesar, and Jalali mahals during this period was of the value of three lakh rupees a year.
100 Thomas Longcraft, one of the officers of De Boigne and also an indigo planter, provided this particular information regarding the average indigo produce in normal and good seasons.
who settled here were, Mr. Orr at Mendu, Thomas Longcroft as an incharge of indigo plantation at Aligarh and Jalali, and Monsieur Jourdan in pargana Khair.\textsuperscript{104}

In the Awadh region Pundri and Najafgarh emerged as the two most famous indigo towns. Najafgarh\textsuperscript{105} was acquired by Martin from Polier who had in turn received it from the sister of Najaf Khan to collect land revenue until the latter’s debt was paid. The collection rights over the land were acquired by Martin from Polier in September 1785. Although Martin carried out varieties of activities from Najafgarh, it was the production of high quality indigo that became the defining feature of the town. Indigo manufacturing in Najafgarh gained momentum from 1787 onwards when apart from indigo cultivation, indigo makers were settled and a large number of vats were built.\textsuperscript{106} As many as 25 stepped indigo vats with arrangement of filter holes and sluice gates for the processing and manufacturing of indigo were built. It was also the phase when Martin and De Boigne formed an association for joint indigo trade. The establishment of such a large number of indigo vats led to considerable production of indigo. It was reported that during its peak the exports from Najafgarh indigo rivalled those of Kanpur which was considered the best in Awadh.\textsuperscript{107} It was stated that in 1796-97 which was also the peak of Najafgarh indigo, a consignment of the value of pound 50,000 was shipped to London.\textsuperscript{108} Besides this, the careful processing techniques

\textsuperscript{104} Jadunath Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. IV, p. 114. There were at least six European settlers that had settled in Aligarh under De Boigne’s protection. P. J. Marshal, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 477.

\textsuperscript{105} Najafgarh lies on the west bank of the river Ganga, seventeen miles south-east of Kanpur. In the 1780s the jagir comprised thirteen villages; Najafgarh itself, Sondhila, Alipur Bigha, Narainpur, Babusi, Kamalpur, Salimpur, Maharajpur, Kharoti, Peetha, Nakapur, Sarsoor, and Mandahna. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, (edited), \textit{A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, op. cit.}, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp. 268-269.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., pp. 268-269

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp. 127-128.
imparted quality to Najafgarh indigo. As a result of which some of the best indigo was also produced here.\textsuperscript{109} Najafgarh remained a popular indigo producing centre till the end of the century for high quality product and cheap manufacturing investments.\textsuperscript{110}

Pundri was another indigo producing town that acquired prominence during this period. However, compared to Najafgarh the indigo of Pundri was inferior.\textsuperscript{111} But Pundri indigo also contributed in the trade and till the very end of the century it continued to be exported.\textsuperscript{112}

Apart from Indigo, business in cotton had emerged as another lucrative engagement. Like indigo trade, De Boigne also conducted his cotton trade in association with Claude Martin. He formed a ‘Society’ or a limited company around 1789 in association with Martin and Queiros to carry out trade in piece goods. The company invested in piece goods in the very year of its formation as in that year it could be procured cheaper due to other Europeans’ investment in indigo. Hence, three lakh rupees with each one’s share of one lakh were instantly invested in it. The cloths were to be procured from Tanda which was famous for its piece goods. Orders for the goods

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 3
\textsuperscript{110} Records show that, between 1791 and 1800 chests of indigo went annually down to Calcutta from Najafgrah estate and other farms that Martin rented. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, \textit{A Very Ingenious Man, op. cit.,} p.163; Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, (edited), \textit{A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, op. cit.,} p.269.
\textsuperscript{111} Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, (edited), \textit{A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, op. cit.,} p.269.
\textsuperscript{112} Towards the end of the century when Martin and De Boigne both began to incur losses in the trade, Martin wrote to De Boigne that if it had continued further then the indigo production in Pundri would be stopped first. Martin did not mention anywhere that the losses were incurred due to increased competition between Europeans for indigo. \textit{Ibid.,} p. 128.
were placed through Queiros who fixed the deal with gumashta of Tanda aurangs.113 As there was little competition that year, 20% interests were paid to the weavers on the sum advanced. The interest could go up to 150% if there were other buyers or raw material was limited. De Boigne’s ‘Society’ in partnership with Martin and Queiros also supplied material in bulk to other Europeans. For instance, a European Mr. Decker invested two lakhs in the ‘Society’ for the stock of 1790. Such orders helped the ‘Society’ recover its investments. In this case, he invested 10,000 pounds in the business of piece goods. Besides exporting indigo and cotton piece goods from Aligarh, De Boigne also made profits by importing English red broadcloth uniforms and muskets for his army through Martin.114

The impact of the mercantile activities of De Boigne was that in the last decade of the century the Aligarh region emerged as commercially one of the most active regions in Hindustan. Not only Europeans, the region was also flocked by many workers, craftsmen, traders, merchants, and entrepreneurs. Aligarh, in particular, emerged as a market, entrepôt, and a commercial centre frequently visited by the ‘sarraf’ (money changers) of other important cities namely Lucknow, Agra, and Delhi. Aligarh’s commercial importance can also be gauged from the fact that traders from as far a

113 Aurang were Indian factories where weavers and craftsmen made the cloth once the orders were placed by the traders. A certain amount was advanced to the weavers through gumashta and a fixed time for the delivery of goods was secured.
114 Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Very Ingenious Man Claude Martin, op. cit., pp. 159, 161, 164. The broadcloth uniform came from Calcutta, sometimes as a finished product and sometimes it was stitched in Aligarh. Procuring proper readymade uniforms was a time-consuming process and Martin had to apologize for the delay in November 1789 when he wrote to De Boigne on 3rd November that unfortunately the uniforms could not be made ready on time.
distance as Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras reached there and established their centres.\textsuperscript{115}

De Boigne continued with his commercial enterprise even after his return to France. He pursued it through Martin who was his long time friend and trading partner and with the help of the agency houses Hamilton & Co. and Cockerell & Co.\textsuperscript{116} Martin was entrusted with the task to invest De Boigne’s money according to his discretion in whatever enterprise he deemed fit.\textsuperscript{117} He made De Boigne’s investments in the Company Bonds. The reason for the preference to invest in Company Bonds was that towards the end of the century indigo trade had witnessed a certain slump. Many traders including Martin and De Boigne had begun incurring losses in it.\textsuperscript{118} Unlike in the middle of the 1790s when indigo export from upper India was at its peak, in later 1790s there was downfall in its export.\textsuperscript{119} Therefore, there developed a trend among

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\textsuperscript{115} Victor de Saint-Génis, op. cit., p. 188.
\textsuperscript{116} ‘Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 22\textsuperscript{nd} April 1798, Lucknow’, in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, p. 354; ‘Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798, Lucknow’, op. cit., p. 366-367.
\textsuperscript{117} ‘Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 365, 367.
\textsuperscript{118} Claude Martin had already stopped producing indigo in his jagir of Pundri in 1797 due to losses incurred. After that it was only in his jagir of Najafgarh where indigo was prepared. But Martin had losses in the sale of Najafgarh indigo as well, and intimated his agency Messrs William & Thomas Raikes & Co. that if similar market condition would persist he would discontinue Najafgarh indigo as well. Similar concerns were voiced by him in his letter dated 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798 also. Robert Orr’s large indebtedness to many people including 40 thousand to Martin was due to his losses in indigo trade. Martin wrote that he was an honest man but had failed in the trade. Similar fate had been met with by Masseyk who had been unable to sell his indigo. ‘Letter by Claude Martin to Messrs William & Thomas Raikes & Co., 10 May 1797, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 330; ‘Letter by Claude Martin to Messrs William & Thomas Raikes & Co., 1 October 1797, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 343; ‘Letter by Claude Martin to Messrs William & Thomas Raikes & Co., 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 363; ‘Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 367.
\textsuperscript{119} It was said that in its peak years of 1796, 97, 98, about four million pound of indigo was annually exported to London. And nearly 2/3 or 3/5 of the entire indigo came from the upper Indian region. P. J.
these adventurers to invest in the Company Bonds which fetched more interest. Martin
gave similar reasons to De Boigne when he invested the revenue from the latter's jagir
of Bareilly in the Company Bonds at an interest of 12%. For similar reasons, De
Boigne's money from his other jagir of Jaipur was also invested in the Bonds.

Later, Perron who also delved into trading activities in association with Martin
invested in Company Bonds. When losses were being met with by the traders in indigo
trade, investment in the Company Bonds was highly profitable. Martin wrote to De
Boigne that in 1798 Perron had invested a modest amount in the Company Bonds
through him, but in the next year he pumped in several lakhs of rupees into the Bonds
indicating lucrative returns that could be accrued from investing in Company
Bonds.

During his commercial activities from Aligarh, De Boigne had also lent money to
various European traders. But many of them had not been able to pay him back.
Masseyk, Mr. Robert Orr, William Palmer, and Queiros were some of them who were
indebted to him. The recovery of money from these Europeans was another form of

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Marshall, op. cit., p. 466. It was due to various cumulative factors. Towards the end of the century the
Najafgarh indigo was severely affected by the attack of locusts which brought down the production.
Apart from this, in the wake of increased export of indigo from north India, in 1797 the Governor-
General had imposed 15% extra duty on the North Indian indigo which restricted the export of indigo.
P. J. Marshal, op. cit., p. 477.

120 'Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 28th May 1798, Lucknow', in Rosie Llewellyn-
Jones (edited), A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India: The Letters of Claude Martin,
op. cit., p. 365.

121 'Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 28th May 1798, Lucknow', Ibid., p. 367.

122 'Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 29th September 1798, Lucknow', Ibid., p.375;

123 Thomas Masseyk was long indebted to De Boigne for a sum of 16, 3000 pounds. Robert Orr was
another European who had been credited a huge sum by De Boigne. He was stationed in Lucknow and
commercial engagement for De Boigne from France. He corresponded with Martin and also hired the services of the agency houses Hamilton & Co. and Cockerell & Co. for the purpose.\textsuperscript{124} On one occasion, on his advice, the agency house of Hamilton & Co. even helped Masseyk in the sale of the latter's indigo so as to enable him to pay De Boigne's debt.\textsuperscript{125}

The study of De Boigne's trading activities in partnership with the English company officers show that his friendly relations with the English company played a crucial role in his trading pursuits. His partnership with Claude Martin and Thomas Masseyk proved crucial in his successful trade as he could involve himself only in the nature of an investor whereas the field work was done by his associates. Although there are no direct references, one can draw inference that his amicable relations with the English helped him secure the services of the English banks for his transactions. Even from France, he could keep a tab on his economic activities in India only through Martin and the Hamilton & Co. banking firm. After incurring losses in indigo trade in the last couple of years of 1790s, his investments were made in the English Company Bonds which was an English company enterprise. Even Perron invested several lakhs of rupees in the Company Bonds. It clearly indicates that the friendly relations of the adventurers with the English company had an important role in furthering their trade.

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was indebted for more than 10 lakhs of rupees. He was also indebted to Perron for 40 thousand rupees. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 387.

\textsuperscript{124} 'Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 20\textsuperscript{th} August 1799, Lucknow', in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), \textit{A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India: The Letters of Claude Martin, op. cit.}, p. 387.

\textsuperscript{125} 'Letter by Claude Martin to General De Boigne, 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1798, Lucknow', \textit{Ibid.}, p. 366.
5.9 The Social World of European Adventurers

This section deals with the social world of the adventurers and their social and family ties. It shows how their social engagements led to changes in their perception of India. The study of their social world also throws light on their Indianization process which began to acquire recognizable shape from Polier’s time onwards. The life style of Polier, for instance, was a typical example of an adventurer appropriating Indian manners and customs and becoming completely Indianized. The present section focuses on this aspect and argues that their social presence was in no way inferior to their other forms of existence, such as, military officers or traders. It shows that it was in fact their social links that provided them organic cohesion in the society.

5.10 Modes of Indian Attachment

The adventurers’ matrimonial alliances played a crucial role in the creation of their social world in India. It gave them immediate social recognition and helped them in creating wide ranging contacts. Madec’s marriage was of this nature which witnessed an exceptionally large gathering with celebrations continuing nearly for three months. Madec’s marriage had taken place in 1766 when he was in the service of the Ruhela state. 126 The occasion emerged as one of the grandest social gatherings where people from diverse backgrounds and status were invited. All the arrangements were done by Madec’s father-in-law who in turn was assisted by the governor of the region. The marriage was solemnized by the famous priest Wendel. Except the performance of the

126 Madec married a Christian girl named Barbette which was later changed to Marie-Anne (or Marianne). Her father was a councilor in Shuja-ud-daula’s court. The family was originally from France who had settled in Agra during the reign of the Mugal emperor Jahangir who had displayed special likings for foreigners. During Madec’s time, the family’s descendants were still living with as many as thirty members in the family. Madec, ‘Mon Mariage à Farrukhabad (Juillet, 1766)’, in Guy Deleury’s Les Indes Florissantes, p. 624.
marriage according to Christian traditions, the marriage was, by and large, more like a Hindu affair. Madec wrote that he followed the general Hindu customs of marriage prevalent in the region. Citing an instance, he wrote that as per the custom of the country he did not see the face of his bride before marriage and saw her for the first time only after the wedding. He further wrote that this custom was generally followed by all the people of high class and was considered self-degrading if opposed.127

Giving a vivid description of the marriage and about the large gathering, Madec wrote that the marriage took place at 7 o’clock in the morning after which the spouse was taken back to her father’s house and he returned to his camp along with other men. The entire day was spent in revelry and merrymaking. Madec wrote that the evening turned out to be more memorable for the entry into the bride’s house was made amid canon and fire shots. Moreover, the presence of men of authority both military and civil on their richly decorated elephants and a long trail of populace behind them made the occasion even more gracious. About 200,000 people had attended the marriage.

The eight-day celebrations that followed after the marriage provided Madec wide audience for social interaction. Each day a different set of people were invited who spent the entire day celebrating the marriage with Madec followed by a party at night.128 On an average, around 10,000 people dined every day during the

127 Madec mentioned, Dans ce pays-ci, les Catholiques qui s’y marient sont obligés de se conformer à l’usage reçu parmi les naturels. On ne voit point sa femme qu’après l’avoir épousée, on ne la voit pas même pendant tout le temps des divertissements de la noce, et ce n’est que quand le marié emmène la mariée chez lui qu’il a le droit de la voir. On est obligé de suivre cet usage qui règne parmi les grands, et ce serait s’avilir que de ne pas s’y conformer. Madec, ‘Mon Mariage à Farrukhabad (Juillet, 1766)’, in Guy Deleury’s Les Indes Florissantes, p. 627.

128 Ibid., p.626. See the appendix for the details of Madec’s marriage.
celebrations. Madec wrote that following the customs of the country, he spent an exorbitant sum on his marriage which amounted to 50,000 rupees excluding the expenditure of his bride’s family. 129

After the marriage, in spite of a highly mobile military life, Madec kept his family with him. His attachment for the family was testified when at the time of his departure he took his family to France and settled in Quimper. 130

Marriage became a source of social stability also for Gentil who is otherwise known more for his political and military roles in Awadh. In 1772, he married an Indian girl of Portuguese origin. The girl had belonged to the illustrious family of Juliana who had been in the service of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and also his successors. Bahadur Shah I who was the son and successor of Aurangzeb had kept Juliana in such an estimation that he had said, “If Juliana would have been a man, I would have made her a wazir”. In recognition of her services, the Emperor Bahadur Shah had also given Juliana the title of Khanam 900,000 rupees and four villages with annual revenue of 50,000 rupees.

The family had fallen on bad times and had shifted to Faizabad in 1761 after the assassination of the girl’s father by Ahmad Shah Abdali. There they lived on a pension sanctioned by the Nawab Shuja-ud-daula. The misfortune of the family had

130 Marianne went to France with Madec in 1779. She was quickly assimilated in the French society of Quimper where Madec had moved to live. The people of Quimper liked Marianne for her exalting exoticism, and charming innocence, and affectionately called her the Begum Barbette. Madec had two daughters with Marianne. The younger one was Marie Henriette who lived with her mother until her marriage in 1800. Marianne later sold her hotel in Quimper in 1811 and moved to her daughter’s house where she lived until her death in 1841. Max Vignes, L’Histoire du Nabab René Madec, 1983, Paris, pp. 255, 263-266; Comte de Modave, op. cit., p. 446.
also been known to the Nawab as his own father Safdar Jang had been involved in the family’s ruin.\textsuperscript{131} Therefore, Gentil who was also touched by the condition of the family intervened and requested the Nawab to help the family. Later Gentil decided to marry the girl himself.\textsuperscript{132} Gentil’s marriage to a poor Indian girl showed the benevolent effort on his part to help the family. Gentil’s attachment with the country grew even more after his marriage to the Indian girl and the birth of his son, a fact which found resonance in his memoire.\textsuperscript{133} He also did not leave his family behind when he was forced by the English company to leave Awadh in 1775, and took his wife and son to France.\textsuperscript{134}

Sombre’s socio-cultural ties as an adventurer was more proverbial due to his marriage to the girl who later became famous as Begum Samru. Sombre’s two marriages early in his career proved crucial in the expansion of his social world. With his first wife Bahai Begum, Sombre had a son Zafaryab who followed Islam.\textsuperscript{135} Later he became a Christian when he was baptized by the Father Gregorio on 7\textsuperscript{th} May 1781 and given the name of Louis Balthazar Reinhardt. But it was Sombre’s much celebrated marriage to Begum Samru that immortalized his name. Sombre gave full freedom to his wife as a result of which she wielded considerable influence on him. The marriage with the Begum had a crucial bearing on Sombre’s strong entrenchment at Sardhana in Meerut, the area where the Begum had social and political linkages.

\textsuperscript{131} After the death of Juliana in 1732, her family members and successors kept living in the house of Dara Shikoh. Gentil says that it was Safdar Jang, the father of Shuja-ud-daula, who led to the ruin of the family when he bought the house of Dara Shikoh and thus rendering the family homeless. Gentil, ‘Mon Maraige à Faizabad (1772)’, in Guy Deleury’s Les Indes Florissantes, p. 629.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., pp. 627-630.
\textsuperscript{133} Jean Marie Lafont, Indika, op. cit., p.102.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 103.
Sombre's European identity was considerably liquidated due to this marriage and his eclectic religious outlook. For instance, although he was a Christian by birth, his inclination was more for Islam. He even died without any confession of sins the general practice in Christianity. And after his death, he was not even buried as per Christian traditions. It was only when Begum Sombre herself was baptized by the Father Gregorio in May 1781 that she had the body of her husband interred in the Portuguese cemetery at Padretola in Agra according to Christian traditions.136

Unlike the families of Madec and Sombre which were comparatively small, from Polier’s time there emerged among the adventurers the trend to keep big families. As the maintenance of big families demanded high resources, its possibility increased from Polier’s time as, unlike Madec and Sombre, the adventurers of the later years could supplement their income from their trading activities apart from their military vocation. Polier’s family was constituted of three wives. Jugnu and Zinat Begum were his two Indian wives whom he married early and had one son each. The sons were named Antony and John. He later married another Indian girl named Durdanna around 1788 just before his departure from India. He had a son with Durdanna also who was sent to England where he was raised by De Boigne’s wife Halima. As Polier was unable to make a provision of pension for his wives at the time of his departure, Martin who was Polier’s close friend generously allocated a sum of 10 rupees as monthly pension for Jugnu and Zinat Begum and 20 rupees for Durdanna for life.137

137 Polier addressed his senior wife as Bibi Jawahar and the junior one was addressed simply as Junior Bibi. But their names as Jugnu and Zinat Begum appeared in the will written by Claude Martin. 'Polier's Letter to Bibi Jawahar', in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi (translated), The Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, op. cit., Folio No. 142b, p. 183; 'Letter by Martin to De Boigne, 20th August 1799 from Lucknow', in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-
The letters of Polier show his deep concern for his family. On many occasions he was immersed in advising his two wives particularly the elder one to live in harmony with his other wife. Despite the evident harassment of the younger wife by the elder one and consequent reprimand from Polier, the latter’s love remained undiminished for both of them. He wrote regularly to his son whom he addressed as Antony babajan and kept a constant check on the latter’s health.\textsuperscript{138} Polier also advised his son to socialize with people and not stay put at home.\textsuperscript{139} Polier was also aware of the milk-giving up ceremony performed for infants and advised his elder son to take the money from his agent Manik Ram and celebrate the occasion.\textsuperscript{140}

Like Polier, De Boigne also maintained a big family. He had three wives named Halima, Mehr-un-Nissa, and Zeenat.\textsuperscript{141} Halima was his first wife whom De Boigne married in 1788.\textsuperscript{142} He married Mehr-un-Nissa after his capture of a fortress town.
near Bikaner during his Rajput campaign. The marriage with Mehr-un-Nissa established De Boigne’s relations with the family of Mughal noble Najaf Quli Khan, the former governor of Delhi, as Mehr-un-Nissa was Najaf Quli Khan’s adopted daughter.143

At the time of his retirement to France, De Boigne left two of his wives Mehr-un-Nissa and Zeenat in India and took along with him Halima and their two children.144 While Mehr-un-Nissa stayed in Aligarh, Zeenat lived in Delhi. What is important to note is that De Boigne made adequate monetary provisions for his wives in India who received regular income from his jagir.145 Apart from stipulating a regular pension for them, De Boigne had also made a provision of monthly pension of 500 rupees for his mother-in-law.146

member of the City Council of Chambery and various administrative bodies of the city. After being elected as the president of the Royal Academy of Arts, Literature, and Science, he devoted whole of his life to public service and to his children. He died in Chambery, France, on 23 July 1853. Banoo, the daughter of De Boigne, was christened as Anne when the family moved to England. But Anne died young at Paris in 1810. Victor de Saint-Génis, op. cit., p. 303; ‘Letter by Claude Martin to De Boigne, 22nd April, 1798, Lucknow’, in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, op. cit., p. 356


144 Rosie Llewellyn-Jones contradicts herself when at first she says that De Boigne left his Indian women at the time of his departure and soon afterwards mentions that De Boigne took Halima to France. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, A Very Ingenious Man, op. cit., p. 145.

145 Mehr-un-Nissa and Zeenat had been allocated a monthly pension of 55 and 80 rupees respectively. ‘Letter by Martin to De Boigne, 16 February 1800, Lucknow’, in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (edited), A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India, op. cit., p. 396.

146 The wives and the mother-in-law were paid from the revenue of De Boigne’s jagir of Jaipur which had been given to his infant son Ali Baksh in 1793. But after his retirement, the power of attorney for the jagir was given to Joseph Queiros. However, Martin collected the revenue and disposed it accordingly. ‘Letter by Claude Martin to De Boigne, 22 April, 1798, Lucknow’, Ibid., pp. 354, 356; Letter by Claude Martin to De Boigne, 26 May 1798, Lucknow’, Ibid., p. 366.
Perron, the successor of De Boigne, had also set up a family in India. He married Madeleine Deridan in 1782 who was the daughter of Major Deridan\textsuperscript{147}, a French officer in Sindhia's service. The marriage was solemnized in Agra by the Father Gregoire and Father Joseph Tieffenthaler who was the head of the Church at Agra. The marriage took place as per Catholic traditions attended by many people.\textsuperscript{148} Perron had a large family of ten children. The noticeable feature of Perron's family was that it was more Indian than French as his wife Madeleine Deridan had more inclination for Indian culture than French.\textsuperscript{149} Herbert Compton says that Perron's Indian family had lived in his house in Aligarh till 1871.\textsuperscript{150}

Whereas marriage definitely created strong local ties for the adventurers, love interest was another emotional attachment that held the adventurers back. Drugeon who was a military officer in De Boigne's army had fallen in love with the niece of a Nawab Salim Mahabat Khan and had developed intense emotional attachment for the girl. It had put him in an embarrassing situation where the head pushed him for France but the

\textsuperscript{147} Major Deridan was a French of mixed blood. He was originally from Pondicherry. He had one more daughter named Anna who married another adventurer Colonel John Hessing who had commanded the troops of Sindhia. John Hessing also had two children George and Madeleine. George also joined Sindhia's army and became Colonel and Madeleine was married to another European adventurer Robert Sutherland. Alfred Martineau, \textit{Le Général Perron, op. cit.}, pp.96-97.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 211.

\textsuperscript{149} Alfred Martineau, \textit{Le Général Perron, op. cit.}, pp. 96-97. Herbert Compton wrote that the Deridan family had been in possession of the house of Perron at Aligarh till 1871. Compton further wrote that a Deridan family had also been living in Agra till the last decade of the nineteenth century. Herbert Compton, \textit{op. cit.}, 1892, p. 345.

\textsuperscript{150} Herbert Compton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 345.
heart wanted him to stay back. The choice between the homeland and love rendered Drugeon so confused that he sought the guidance of De Boigne on the matter.\textsuperscript{151}

Another adventurer Chevalier Dudrenec\textsuperscript{152} had become completely ‘Indianized’. He had not only begun dressing himself up in Indian attire but had also begun following various Hindu customs. Dudrenec’s adoption of Indian culture became particularly evident when he surrendered to the Mughal noble Amir Khan by placing his turban at the noble’s feet while keeping the hands folded in a traditional Hindu manner.\textsuperscript{153} René Madec, Gentil, and Polier had also adopted Indian ways of dressing.\textsuperscript{154} Polier wrote, \textit{j’ai pris les coutumes et les usages des Indiens avec lesquels je vivais.}\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Drugeon wrote to De Boigne about his love for a 17-year old girl who was the niece of a Nawab Salim Mahabad Khan. He further wrote that the girl was equally in love with him and would not live without him. Drugeon sought De Boigne’s advice about how he could bring the girl to Europe as he could not cheat on her. Drugeon also admitted that without her he would not be able to do anything. ‘Letter by Drugeon to De Boigne from Delhi, 30 April 1802’, in Victor de Saint-Genis, Le Général de Boigne, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 365-369. See appendix for the original in French.
\item Dudrenec was a native of Brest in France. He came from a noble family of Breton. His father was a commodore in the French navy. He came to India in 1773 and made his way to Delhi. In Delhi he joined the troops of Rene Madec. On Madec’s departure from India, he took up service with Begum Sombre. Later, he joined Holkar’s army in 1791. Lester Hutchinson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 139.
\item Gentil took to Indian dresses not long after joining the service of the Nawab of Awadh. He was shown wearing Indian dress in a painting which was about his meeting Carnac as the representative of the Nawab for peace negotiations after the battle of Buxar. Jean Marie Lafont, \textit{Indika}, p. 126; Madec also dressed up like the nobles of the country wearing thin cotton robe reaching up to the knees and a flat turban on the head. Max Vignes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74.
\item Polier, ‘Apres un Aussi Long Sejour (1788)’, in Guy Deleury’s \textit{Les Indes Florissantes, op. cit.}, p. 43.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
5.11 The Settled Life

Apart from matrimonial alliances, the adoption of various oriental habits also shaped the adventurers' Indian life. It not only introduced elements of Indianness in their outlook but also acted as catalysts for their growing attachment for India. The adventurers' liking for Indian dance form known as *nautch* was one such habit. Performed by Indian dancing girls, the adventurers' taste for the *nautch* was as a piece of spectacle and it largely acted as a substitute for European theatre. The adventurers' growing taste for *nautch* was also evident from the fact that it became a potent entertainment item for Indian merchants to offer to their European guests. Polier had special liking for the *nautch*, so much so that he even conceded to be painted as watching a *nautch*.\(^{156}\) The popularity of *nautch* among Europeans continued for long even after the departure of adventurers. For instance, Victor Jacquemont writing in the later years of 1820s appreciated the *nautch* and said that it was liked by those who had forgotten European musical time.\(^{157}\)

Hookah was another Indian custom which began to be increasingly used by the adventurers. As Hookah demanded high maintenance cost, its popularity increased only when more monetary gains began to be made by the adventurers. Polier had

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\(^{156}\) Tilly Kettle who was the first European artist to visit Awadh painted Polier at his Faizabad house in 1772. In the painting he was shown watching a *nautch* performed by a group of Indian dancers. His dress and his long moustache all depict Indian elements in his lifestyle. Unlike Polier, Martin never had himself painted in Indian dress. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A very Ingenious Man*, op. cit., p. 122.

specifically adopted this custom. Moreover, he frequently mentioned it in his Persian correspondence. He had even traded in it.\textsuperscript{158}

5.12 The Adventurers' Intellectual Engagements: Adoption of Indian Culture and Civilization

The adventurers' intellectual pursuits led to important development in their perception of India. They collected Indian manuscripts and books on Indian history and religion, an activity, which provided them deep understanding of India's past.\textsuperscript{159} They built big libraries in Lucknow also where apart from numerous books on various topics they also kept some of the rare collections of Indian literature. Polier, for instance, had a vast collection in his library which indicated about the in-depth research that he had carried out to accomplish the task. His collections included rare books on the subjects that were still almost unknown in Europe. He was the first European who had the complete copy of the Vedas.\textsuperscript{160} He had prepared the copies of these volumes from the Raja of Jaipur's collection after painstaking research at Awadh, Lucknow, Agra,

\textsuperscript{158} 'Polier's Letter to Mayachand Sahukar, Agra', in Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi's the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, Folio No. 169a, p. 198. Polier asked Mayachand about his order of gem-studded hookah which had not been prepared till the time of writing of the letter.

\textsuperscript{159} Gentil collected 174 manuscripts in all which included 76 Sanskrit and 98 Persian manuscripts. They were on diverse topics ranging from the books on cooking etc. to history of famous religious figures. Polier's collections included manuscripts and books related to Indian and Persian history. Sanskrit literature had also formed a major part of his vast collections. Jacques Maissin, Un Manuscrit Francais du XVIIIe Siècle: Recherche de la Vérité sur l'Etat Civil, Politique, et Religieux des Hindous, with Introduction and Notes by Rita H Regnier, Paris, 1975, p .314; Jean Marie Lafont, Indika, pp. 97, 100. Jean Marie Lafont has done detailed work on the adventurers' quest for Indian manuscript and their role in the emergence of 'Farenghi Painting' in Awadh during this period. Jean Marie Lafont, 'The Quest for Indian Manuscripts by the French in the Eighteenth Century, and Company Paintings or Firighee Paintings? French Contribution to an Eighteenth Century School of Painting in India', in Indika, op. cit., pp. 90-149.

\textsuperscript{160} Comte de Modave, op. cit., p. 442.
Delhi, and Udaipur. He had even lent his personal set of the Vedas to William Jones, the famous ‘Indologist’, who kept them in his private library for almost a year.\textsuperscript{161} Jones had also acknowledged Polier’s passion for Indian culture and civilization when the latter discovered Ragavibodha of Soma. Jones also owed some of his important collections to Polier. For instance, he had written to Polier to get a good copy of Rajtarangini at any cost.\textsuperscript{162}

After his return to France, Polier gifted his collections to various libraries. His vast collections were distributed in the libraries of Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the British Museum in London, the library of King’s College at Cambridge, Eton College in London, the Islamic Museum at Berlin, and the Bibliothèque Cantonale in Lausanne.\textsuperscript{163} The distribution of his collections in various libraries led to quick dissemination of knowledge about India’s civilization and culture in Europe.\textsuperscript{164}

The characteristic feature of Gentil and Polier’s Indian collections was that it was done irrespective of Hindu or Muslim categorization of the texts.\textsuperscript{165} That is, if they collected Hindu texts then they procured books on Islam as well. For instance, Gentil had nearly an equal share of Hindu and Muslim manuscripts and at the time of the departure from India in 1775 he was offered a huge sum of 1, 20,000 rupees for his collections. But he was aware of India’s rich cultural tradition and the importance of the manuscripts, therefore, he carried all his collections to France and presented most of them to the King Louis XVI.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{161} Jean Marie Lafont, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p. 105.
\textsuperscript{163} Muzaffar Alam & Seema Alvi’s the Persian Letters of Polier—the Ijaj-i Arsalani, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{164} Jean Marie Lafont, op. cit., p. 99.
\textsuperscript{165} Guy Deleury, op. cit., p. ix.
\textsuperscript{166} Jean Marie Lafont, op. cit., p. 138.
In the last decade of the century, De Boigne also made such collections indicating that appreciative view for India continued to hold sway long after Polier or Gentil’s retirement.\textsuperscript{167} De Boigne also exhibited Indian sensitivities when he managed to secure a fixed allowance for the repair of the Taj Mahal.\textsuperscript{168} Earlier, Madec had also expressed his admiration for the Taj Mahal for its architectural beauty and dazzling variety.\textsuperscript{169} General Perron also displayed his curiosity for Indian civilization when he made numismatic collections and tried to have them read by the Indian experts.\textsuperscript{170}

The foregoing study shows that the adventurers also had a strong commercial and social presence in the region. Their commercial venture and consequent huge gains shows their rise as successful traders in the existing trading milieu. That many other Europeans, particularly the English private traders, wove their economic world around the activities of these adventurers signifies the high reputation attained by these men. Available sources clearly show that despite approaching the trade in a professional manner, the adventurers could also not stay away from the practice of using politics for smooth functioning of the their trade. It is shown that Polier often tried to ingratiate himself with the Nawab of Awadh by giving him costly gifts. Besides, he also strongly suggested his agent Manik Ram to cultivate such qualities to derive advantages from such connections. The versatility in Polier’s commodities of trade and his ability to extract maximum gains out of their transactions presents him as an

\textsuperscript{167} Jean Marie Lafont, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 107.

\textsuperscript{168} Lester Hutchinson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{169} Expressing his admiration for the Taj Mahal, Madec said, \textit{Ce mausolée est d’une merveilleuse beauté, par la richesse de son architecture et des sculptures qui en font l’ornement, l’intérieur est tout revêtu de marbre incrusté de différentes couleurs, les logoglyphes sans nombre sont de même ouvrage. La variété éblouit.} Max Vignes, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 102-103.

\textsuperscript{170} Alfred Martineau, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 199. Martineau wrote: \textit{il mit sous les yeux et dans les collections de plusieurs savants des médailles inconnues que jamais les plus habiles d’entre eux n’expliquèrent.}
astute trader. At the same time, the profits accrued from such a wide range of commodities also indicated about the huge economic potentialities that had existed in the region despite the apparent political turbulence.

The friendly relations with the English company certainly helped the adventurers in the growth of their trade. Polier’s visits to Calcutta were in addition to procure goods also to renew ties with his English friends. Although the links with the Company does not appear to have overtly helped Polier in his trade but it would have been useful in his procurement of goods from Calcutta, the English company’s bastion, and its smooth transportation to upper India from the territories of the English company jurisdiction. However, the friendly connections of De Boigne and Perron with the English company did have a bearing on the course of their trade in upper India. The abolition of trading rights by the English company in 1788 provided these adventurers the opportunity to use their friendly links to export indigo to foreign shores through English banking firms. After incurring losses in the indigo trade, the adventurers later invested considerable sum in Company Bonds which was an English company enterprise. Thus, the amicable relations of the adventurers with the English proved pivotal in the furthering of their trade.

The study of the social world of the European adventurers shows that they established deeper bonding with their adopted country than has generally been portrayed. The Indian families that they created through marriages provided them strong social connect. They adopted Indian customs and traditions and became ‘Indianized’ in their dress, behaviour, and language. For instance, Polier’s lifestyle presented him in a completely Indian frame where he not only adopted local customs and manners but also picked up oriental habits of hukkah smoking and watching nautch, an Indian
dance form. They also played a crucial role in popularizing Indian culture and civilization in the West. Their vast collections of manuscripts, books etc. pertaining to Indian history and religion and its donations to various libraries after their return to Europe led to growing awareness about India’s glorious past among the Europeans. That intellectual curiosity had been aroused among Europeans for India became evident when Paris was made the base of oriental learning. Later, a Chair of Sanskrit was formally created at Collège de France in 1814 to propagate knowledge about India and its civilization.