Chapter - I

The Evolution of the Armenian-Indian Relations in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Period until the End of the Seventeenth Century
Geographical positions of both Armenia and India played a distinctive role in establishing direct ties and developing of trade-economic, cultural and political interactions between both of them since the ancient times and intensified in the late medieval and the modern period. India with its central position in entire Asia and Armenia as one of major gateways, linking Asia with Europe were certain to cross the threshold and enter into close contacts. One can trace gradually emerging geopolitical and geo-economic patterns in different historical frameworks and power balances both in the South Caucasus-Northern Middle East and the Indian subcontinent.

The Armenian plateau is an elevated terrain from the Kura River on the east to the Euphrates River on the west, with the Pontic and the Anti-Taurus ranges defining the northern and southern boundaries respectively. The historical Armenia lay at the ancient crossroads of orient and occident on this highland, which was a meeting point of diverse civilizations and became the buffer and coveted prize of rival powerful empires. Armenia’s unique geographical position as a corridor between Asia and Europe strenuously attracted invaders and resulted in long periods of foreign domination. All the conquerors have left their impact on the land and the people. Ironically, the same landscape, which invited foreign invasions and encouraged the rise of autonomous nobles, was also partially responsible for preserving its identity. The numerous mountains, which divided Armenia into valleys, prevented it from achieving a united state under a strong centralized ruler during much of its history. This very fact has been a blessing in disguise. For unlike a highly centralized state, such as Assyria, whose entire culture vanished with the collapse of its capital city, Armenia’s lack of political unity meant the survival of its culture even when its kings were deposed and its capital cities were destroyed. Armenia’s strategic position, however, enabled its people to prosper materially and enhance culturally. Under the impact of given geopolitical factors the Armenians were able to create peculiar defensive mechanisms for survival. Very colorful and unique Armenian culture became part of the “shield”. Even during long periods of foreign dominion, internal religious and socioeconomic structures allowed them to preserve their distinct way of life.¹

If Armenia’s geographical location represented a major factor in shaping its political scenery, at the same time it defined by and large the socio-economic development of the country, especially in relation to external dynamics. In fact, Armenia has served as a major highway for merchants since ancient times. Located between the Mediterranean, the Caspian and Black seas, the Armenian plateau has been a meeting point of sea and land routes linking Europe and Asia. The strategic location of Armenia for overland trade between the East and the West was one of the major reasons why, from the earliest times to the close of the early modern period, international trade had assumed a central place in the economic life of the Armenian people. One of the important international traffic routs connected Europe via the ports of the Mediterranean and Black seas, eastward through Armenia with the southern border of the Caspian Sea, and from this juncture reached the Indian subcontinent. Armenians habitually were becoming one of conduits that enabled Europe to learn from Asia during the ancient and medieval periods and for Asia to borrow European technology in modern times.

The vast Indian subcontinent, on comparative background with Armenia, is also geographically located at midpoint. It is midway between West Asia on the one hand and Southeast and East Asia on the other. Bridging remote parts of Asia, thus India “holds the Indian Ocean together”. Interestingly the conjectural map of India can be altered to encompass the region of Western Asia and Iran, in Armenia’s immediate neighborhood.

Apart from being a huge landform of paramount significance for the whole Asia, it constitutes a vital link to Southeast Asia, which historically has had close commercial and cultural ties with the Indian mainland. The mountain ranges on India’s northwest side are pierced by passes through which the passage of people and their products, material and intellectual, occurred. On the north the Indian subcontinent is bounded by the world’s largest and highest Himalayan mountain ranges. Even in that direction some movement occurred, despite the fact that the traffic of goods and people through that region was only marginal. The Indian Ocean also linked India to its neighbors and beyond.

Over the centuries, India has played a key role in the successful functioning of variable Asian trading networks. In substance, this observable fact was conditioned by the following factors. Apart from being a function of the subcontinent’s location, not less important was its capacity to supply the whole market with a wide range of merchandise at highly competitive prices. These included agricultural goods, both food items such as
rice, sugar and oil as well as raw materials such as cotton and indigo. The major strength of the country, however, lay in the provision of large quantities of manufactured goods, especially textiles of various kinds. These included high value products like the Gujarat silk embroideries and the legendary Dhaka muslins. The coarse cotton varieties manufactured primarily on the Coromandel Coast and in Gujarat should be added to the list as vital component for Asian market. The central position of India in the structure of Asian trade was also reflected in the important role of Indian trading groups in the actual conduct of this trade. A decisive factor in the evolution of long distance maritime trade as distinct from early seafaring forays was the unraveling of the monsoon code and deploying it to facilitate long distance sailings. Indian merchants learned to harness the monsoons as early as the first century AD and along with the ancient Persians were largely responsible for the creation of the Indian Ocean world as a self-contained and sustained trading unit.\textsuperscript{2} If we draw closer to the late Medieval Ages, the Gujaratis, the Chettis, the Chulias, the Oriyas, the Bengalis etc. prevailed in trade between the west and the east coasts of India on the one hand, and the eastern Indian Ocean region on the other. To the west they actively conducted along with others their commercial operations in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.\textsuperscript{3}

The intercourse between India and Armenia at the initial phase of history was more of indirect nature, evoked by intensive contacts with Armenia’s immediate neighborhood and gradually acquiring direct nature. The orally preserved literature and archeological evidence disclose continues relations between the people of the Indus region and those of western Asia. Artifacts found on scattered sites connect the early cities of western India with those of Mesopotamia in southwestern Asia from about 3000 BC\textsuperscript{4} and through the latter also with the Armenian plateau. Armenia’s location at the headwaters of two great rivers of antiquity, the Tigris and Euphrates, kept it in constant interrelation with Mesopotamian civilizations to the south. Shared hymns connect Aryan settlers south of Himalayas with Indo-European speakers of the Iranian plateau from whom they separated around 2000 BC. It is also a well known fact that adjacent Iranian and Armenian plateaus and Indo-European population of the both neighboring territories

\textsuperscript{2} Lakshmi Subramanian, \textit{Medieval Seafarers of India}, New Delhi, 2005, p. 13
\textsuperscript{4} Burton Stein, \textit{A History of India}, New Delhi, 2001, p. 6
were closely interconnected. Thus an accurate depiction of early “India” would extend well into western and central Asia and Iran (while attenuating the links between those living in the Indus region and the peninsula). Moreover, the extension of India to the northwest, and already mentioned mental map to reflect this, persisted well into medieval times

While writing about the interrelations between India and Iran, Jawaharlal Nehru in his “The Discovery of India” touches upon racial, religious, linguistic and cultural similarities between the two nations. Many of these arguments are substantially true in case of Armenia and India as well. Armenian and Indian languages and old religions also had a common background. Originating from the same basis, classical Sanskrit and Armenian (grabar) developed separately but many of their root-words were common, as some are common to all the Aryan languages. Current comparison between modern Armenian and Hindi brings to light coinciding features, relating both to grammar and numerous common words in the vocabulary. Another aspect is mythology, where the Indo-European mythology served as common basis for old Indian, Iranian and Armenian traditions.

There had been also a long and continuous intercourse between India and the nations of Asia Minor, western bound neighborhood of Armenia as well as directly with the peoples of the Armenian plateau. The historical developments on the Armenian plateau testify that the local Hurrians joined forces with Indo-Arian warrior castes to form two important kingdoms which reached their apogee in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BC. These kingdoms were the Hurrian monarchy proper, based on the region of Tigranakert in south-eastern Asia Minor, and the state of Mitanni, centered on Urfa, the classical Edessa, in northern Mesopotamia. The Indo-Aryan character of the ruling class in the Hurrian monarchy and in Mitanni is clearly indicated by the names of such rulers as Artatama, which is Iranian, and Mattiwaza and Tushratta, which are Indian,

---

5 Ibid.
corresponding to the Sanskrit Mativaja and Dusraddha.⁹ Even more striking are the names of the gods in the Hurrian and Mitannian pantheons. Here we encounter the deities Mitrasil, Arunasil, Indar and Nasattyana, which are to be equated with the Indo-European gods Mithra, Varuna, Indra and Nasatya.

The existence of early trade ties between Armenia and neighboring to India Bactria is considered very much probable. A double-humped camel is found on the obelisk of the Assyrian king, Salmeneser II, erected in 842 BC. The two-humped camels are listed in that place as part of the tribute of one of the rulers of later period Armenia.¹⁰

During the period of the kingdom of Urartu on the Armenian plateau king Rusa I (735-714 BC) made a mutually beneficial trade agreement with the Iranians, along with his vain attempts to create an Iranian buffer-state in the south. It had a special reference to the transit of goods from Elam and India through Urartian territory to Black Sea or Mediterranean Sea, and its foe Assyria was deprived of the dues she extracted from merchants traveling through her territories, Urartu being the beneficiary¹¹. These goods, together with Urartu’s own famous bronzes, were distributed throughout the Mediterranean lands. Urartu did not possess a Black Sea port of its own and used Trapezus (Trebizond), established by the Greek Milesian colonists in 756 BC. That route was also used by the Elamite and Indian merchants, accompanying their wares, in transit through Urartian territories to the Levantine markets, or selling them to the Greeks on the coastal towns of the Black Sea for shipment to their homelands on the west coast of Asia Minor.¹²

At a later stage of history facts are recorded of mercantile, travel, diplomatic and cultural interactions between the two nations.

Greek historian Xenophon (431-355 BC) in his writing “Cyropaedia” (The Education of Cyrus) hints at possible interactions between Armenia and India, which is the earliest such written source. Xenophon himself passed through Armenia in 401 BC and gained vast knowledge about the country. Xenophon (as well as Herodotus) writes about events of the sixth century B.C., when the Achaemenid Persia was persuading an aggressive policy towards north-western regions of India. The first Persian invasion into

¹² Ibid, p.163.
the area took place as early as the mid-sixth century BC. Cyrus II (reigned 559-529 BC), the first Achaemenid emperor of Persia a little before 530 BC crossed the Hindu Kush mountains and received tribute from the tribes of Kamboja, Gandhara, and the trans-Indus region. Indian north-western *maha-janapada* or "state" Gandhara had been conquered by Cyrus and became the twentieth satrapy or province of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus established contacts with some of the republics and monarchies, into which India was divided at that time, being focused on bordering states. According to Xenophon, King Cyrus, being well aware of the fact, that Armenians frequently visited India along with Chaldaeans and had a good knowledge of the routes to that country, requested some of them to accompany his ambassador to the Indian king. "Cyrus...remembered how Indian ambassadors had come to the Medes to spy out their affairs, and how they had gone on to their enemies - doubtless to do the same there - and he felt a wish that they should hear something of what he had achieved himself. So he said to the company: "Son of Armenia, and men of the Chaldaeans, I have something to ask you. Tell me, if I were to send ambassadors to India, would you send some of your own folk with them to show them the way, and support them in gaining for us all that I desire?" This is an evidence of the fact that the Armenians already enjoyed some kind of relationship with India, possessing knowledge on the routes to the country.

Even much more intensive commercial relations by land and by sea with India existed under the Achaemenids (559-330 BC). After the conquest of the north-western provinces of the valley of Indus, Darius I (521-486 BC) ordered Scylax of Caryanda to explore the way to the mouth of the Indus and to circumnavigate Arabia. This expedition was crowned with success. In order to connect the Nile with the Red Sea, Darius also rebuilt the canal already constructed by former pharaohs. Thus a waterway was created from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and thence to the Persian Gulf and to India. These are apparently the result of systematic efforts to develop world-wide trade relations.

In this period one of the main roads for transit trade was apparently the so-called "Royal Highway" described by Herodotus. The latter connected the Persian capital, Susa, with the Lydian capital, Sardis. From Babylonia this road had a secondary branch which ran past the Zagros and the rock of Behistun to Ecbatana and thence to the

---

border of Bactria and India. This well-organized and safe highway was evidently intended not only for postal and administrative communications but also for caravan trade. According to the account of Herodotus, part of this highway lay through Armenia. “The boundary of Cilicia and Armenia is a navigable river where-of the name is Euphrates. In Armenia there are fifteen resting-stages, and fifty-six parasangs and a half (ca. 300 kilometers), and there is a fortress there. From Armenia the road enters the Matienian land, wherein are thirty-four stages, and a hundred and thirty-seven parasangs”. The section of the road crossing Armenia probably lay near Melitene, the present Malatya.

The expeditions of Alexander the Great in fourth century B.C. towards Indian subcontinent to the East eventually resulted in crushing the barriers dividing East and West and created the necessary environment for enhancing the trade relations between them. Trade took on a world-wide character. Persia, Mesopotamia, India, Central Asia and Egypt had started gradually evolve intensive trade relationships and Armenia in its turn has commenced to play greater role within this emerging trading network. As the Greek civilization eclipses the Persian, and Armenian political hegemony crystallizes, more facts become available of trade and business being conducted by Armenians. And Armenia was reasserting itself as a reliable geographical crossroads for the goods being sent further towards Europe and northern regions. The unparalleled development of trade in this period sought new paths both by sea and land. Already under Alexander a convenient sea-route for communications with India had been found between the Indus and the Tigris and Euphrates. He also founded, at the mouths of the Tigris and the Indus, trading cities which were to serve as rallying points for this trade. Greater Armenia, Lesser Armenia and Sophene had not been conquered permanently by the Macedonians, either under Alexander or under his successors. During the Seleucids they were ruled by local dynasties but being outwardly under their suzerainty.

The Hellenistic centers in Media, such as Dura-Europus, Apamea at the Caspian Gates and Laodicaea (founded and settled by Greeks and Macedonians not under Alexander but at the time of the Seleucids), were situated near the northern caravan route which led to Bactria and India. An important junction point on this route was Ecbatana from which a road led across the Zagros Mountains to Seleucia and through Atropatene

16 Ibid.
to the countries of South Caucasus and the Black Sea. This road was indeed the main highway which was the determining factor both for the economic development of South Caucasus and for the commercial and transit position of Armenia. The appearance of Hellenistic cities in eastern Media must undoubtedly have contributed to the quickening of trade in the eastern satrapies and to the intensification of trade relations along the southern routes and in the north-eastern satrapies. Another important transit route connecting Armenia and India is also worth mentioning. Greater or Major Armenia lay on the world trade route from India to Babylonia through Media to the Tanais (Don River). This international road ran from Media through the plain of Ayrarat (Ararat valley in Armenia) to Colchis (western Georgia), and from there along the eastern shore of the Black Sea to the Maeotid and southern Russia. The cities of Erwandian Armenia, Armavir and Erwandashat, already served in this ancient period as focal points for trade relations on the mentioned route.

Armenian-Indian trade and economic relations received more significance starting third-second centuries BC, when Armenia became actively engaged in the international transit trade network. It is a known fact that prospering Armenian cities of Archesh, Armavir, Artashat (Artaxata), Zarehavan, Van, Tigranakert, Akn, Erznka, Baberd, Van, Khlat, Mush, Vostan, Akhtamar sprung on the main roads, originating in India and China and crossing Iran and Armenia.

Alexander the Great’s conquest of Persia also led in the aftermath to an increase of trade in the interior. For a while travel between the Tigris and the Indus was relatively peaceful. Alexander’s successors, the Seleucids, founded Greek cities and colonies, such as Seleucia, Edessa (Urfa) and Nisibis, on the royal Persian highway from Susa to Sardis bordering the southern reaches of Armenia. And Seleucus Nicator (312-280 BC) sent his governor Patrocles into Armenia to see if a canal could be dug between the Black and Caspian Seas to facilitate east-west trade. Much later Pliny (Plinius) the Elder (first century AD) in his “Natural History” was to remark “the desire for gain brought India nearer”. In this respect Armenia’s role was to connect the South Asian and eastern world

---

18 Ibid., p. 38.
with the Mediterranean and Greco-Roman world. Pliny, quoting the Roman author Varro gives us some additional information concerning the same Caspian-Black Sea route: “Varro further adds that exploration under the leadership of Pompey ascertained that a seven days’ journey from India into the Bactrian country reaches the river Bactrus, a tributary of the Oxus (Amu Darya) and that Indian merchandise can be conveyed from the Bactrus across the Caspian to the Kur and thence with not more than five days’ portage by land can reach Phasis in Pontus”.

Asiatic Greek geographer and historian Strabo (63 BC - 21 AD), who traveled also to Armenia among many other countries, in his “Geography” gives description of the third and fourth centuries BC mercantile developments, concerning Armenia and India. Starbo mentions that Armenia was an important link in the trade between India and the Scythian tribes north of the Caucasus. These tribes transported, he says, “on camels the Indian and Babylonian merchandise, receiving it from the Armenians and the Medes, and also owing to their wealth, could wear golden ornaments.” In the testimony of Strabo the commercial caravan road from Babylonia and India to Tanais is given running through Media and Armenia. The commercial relations of Scythian tribes of the Aorsi and the Siraces with Babylonia and India were carried on primarily through the capital of ancient Armenia, Artaxata. Artaxata became a storage center for the transit trade and a frontier point for commercial exchanges. In this city a custom post for the collection of duties was located. The mentioned caravan route of overwhelming importance ran from Southern Russia along the eastern shore of the Black Sea through Colchis and Artaxata to Media and thence to the East, including India.

Judging from the evidence of the sources, the trade with the East, and in particular with India, in the first two centuries of our era was more important than in the period of the development of the Hellenistic monarchies of the Ptolemies and of the

21 Strabo, Geography, translated by H.L. Jones, London, 1917, XI, v, 8
22 According to Plutarch, “it is said that Hannibal the Carthaginian, after Antiochus had been conquered by the Romans, left him and went to Artaxas the Armenian, to whom he presented many excellent suggestions and instructions. For instance, observing that a section of the country which had the greatest natural advantages and attractions lay idle and neglected, he drew up a plan for a city there, and then brought Artaxas to the place and showed him its possibilities, and urged him to undertake the building. The king was delighted, and begged Hannibal to superintend the work himself, whereupon a very great and beautiful city arose there, which was named after the king and proclaimed the capital of Armenia”.

Seleucids. According to Strabo, in his times, one hundred and twenty ships sailed to India from the port of Mios-Hormos alone, whereas under the Ptolemies barely twenty ships dared to put out from Egyptian ports across the Arabian Gulf and the Straits.\textsuperscript{23} We see from other accounts that sea trade after Strabo was considerably reinforced and extended since the discoveries of the following periods greatly facilitated relations with India. Pliny the Elder tells us that “a merchant discovered a shorter route, and the desire for gain brought India nearer”.\textsuperscript{24} The sea trade with India was in the hands of Persian, Indian and Ethiopian merchants.\textsuperscript{25} On the whole the land routes from India and the whole East remained the same. Due to its geographical position, Iran always served as a bridge in the overland trade with India. Thus Armenia, lying on the great caravan trade routes, served as a transit crossroad for the export of valuable goods from the East, i.e., China, Central Asia, and India, to the West.\textsuperscript{26} The most important products brought at that time from India to the West were rice, cotton fabrics and thread, pepper, cinnamon, spices, precious stones and pearls, various perfumes and aromas, ivory, ebony and dyes.

Side by side with the development of international trade, the foreign trade of Armenia herself must have been growing. Armenia itself exported products like metals, dyes (particularly the so-called “Armenian dye”, sandyx, which resembled purple), grain, wines, oil, horses, mules and, also various local handicrafts. Classical authors mention the rarities found in Armenia. For example, Pliny the Elder mentions the following plants, dyes and minerals: “the \textit{adamantis} plant before which lions fall with open jaws, \textit{laser} the juice of the \textit{laserpitium} which grows in Armenia and also in Persia and Media and is exported as a medicinal plant, the color prepared in Armenia which painters call \textit{orobitis}, the mineral which was sent from Armenia, called \textit{armenium} and which dyed like \textit{chrysocolla}, \textit{alimen-alum}, and grinding stones."\textsuperscript{27}

The nature of Armenian-Indian interactions carries a special significance and a certain extent of uniqueness for the countries that don’t share common border. Throughout history very many facts of movement and resettlement of people in small

\textsuperscript{24} C. Plinius, \textit{The Natural History}, VI, XXVI, 10.
\textsuperscript{26} Vahan Baibourtian, \textit{International Trade and the Armenian Merchants in the Seventeenth Century}, New Delhi, 2004, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{27} C. Plinius, \textit{The Natural History}, XXIV, 162; XIX, 15, XXXV, 47; XXXVI
groups on remote distances are registered. Still each case of their adaptation and functioning on a relatively small community scale has its peculiarity and uniqueness.

Intensive contacts between the Armenian and Indian peoples were not limited solely to commercial activities, but occasionally incorporated a two-way migration, small-scale merger of populations and cases of direct amalgamation of cultures. At different stages of history Indian communities have been established in Armenia and Armenian communities in India. It is reflected in the narration of the Armenian-Indian early contacts that Armenia proper was the first to turn into an interface for initial locally limited amalgamation of the two cultures, mutual influencing and enriching. In the first part of the work “History of Taron” of presumably the seventh or the eight century Armenian author Hovhannes Taronatsi an account has been preserved of Hindu migration to Armenia. Medieval Armenian historians attributed that account to the fourth century Assyrian by origin bishop Zenob Glak, one of the disciples of the Armenian Apostolic Church founder Gregory the Illuminator. Zenob Glak was the abbot of the Monastery of St. John the Precursor (Hovhannes Karapet), who had been appointed the first bishop of the Mamikonian feudal house. The prevailing scholarly opinion is that Hovhannes Mamikonian or Taronatsi found the manuscript of the fourth century author Zenob in the archives of Glak monastery and incorporated into his collection as its first part. In "History of Taron"28 some fascinating facts are recorded. According to Zenob Glak, in the second century BC "two Indian princes and brothers by tribe Demetr and Gisaneh/from Kanauj/ contemplated a plot against their king, Dinakseh. When the king was informed of this, he sent troops after them. And they narrowly escaped and went to the Armenian king Vagharshak. He gave them vast lands in Taron (located to the west of Lake Van, province Taron is part of region Turuberan in historical Armenia) as their principality, where they themselves built a town and called it Vishap. Coming to Ashtishat, they erected idols which were worshipped in India. And after fifteen years the king killed both brothers (for unknown reason, as mentions the author) and gave the principality to their three sons – Kuar and Meghtes and Hori (Horean). Now Kuar built his own settlement and called it by his own name, Kuars; and Meghtes built a settlement on that very plain and named it Meghti. Then the youngest that had gone into land of

28 “History of Taron” was first printed in 1719 in Constantinople, had its second edition in 1814 in Calcutta, later published as a separate work in 1882 by the Mekhitarist Order of Armenian Catholics in Venice and republished for several times.
Palunik, built his settlement and called it Horeans. And after a while the three brothers took council together and went out to Mount Karke, for it had breadth of land for hunting and it was also breezy and abounding in both grass and trees. And they built there country estates and erected two idols, one by name Gisaneh and one by name of Demetr, and they dedicated their race to their service. The reference to emergence of those Indian idols and supposedly of Hindu temple even in prominent city Ashtishat in Taron (initially known as the center of paganism in the country and later on called “first” and “mother church” of Armenia) is of tremendous interest. It is also mentioned in the “History of Taron” that Hindu community erected two brass statues of Gisaneh and Demeter, with height of 15 and 12 feet respectively. The Indian settlers worshiped their forefather princes.

Among several scholarly approaches to the matter one concludes that Hellenic versions of the names Demetr and Gisaneh are used, considered to be quite characteristic for the epoch. Indian historian Panchanan Saha from Kolkata puts forward another version, according to which king Dinakseh is supposed to be one of the Greek kings of north-west India and accordingly the princes come from that region. Professor Saha indirectly concludes that the used names are originally Greek and not just hellenized by the author of the “History of Taron”. Most probably, according to P. Saha, Hindus migrated to Armenia after the decline of the Mauryan dynasty. The immediate heirs of what remained of the Mauryan Empire in 180 BC were the Shungas, whose kingdom had dwindled to Magadha alone. Taxila and north-western regions of India were ruled by Greek kings, who came to be called Indo-Greeks. The name Dinaskya evidently points to the north-western India. Based on this outlook, Hindu migration to Armenia originates from that region of India, and not from Kanauj.

Mesrop Taghiadian in his work “History of Ancient India from Immemorial Ages to the Invasion of Mohammedans” in search of the reason for Indian princes’ migration to Armenia applies the hypothesis of Brahmins possible persecution at the hands of Buddhists in India. This was the reason, according to him, that compelled Hindus to leave India and settle in Armenia. There are recorded facts of abandoning of

29 Hovhan Mamikonian, History of Taron, translated by V. Vardanian (in Armenian), Yerevan, 1989, p. 47
estates and resettlement in different periods of Indian history but luck of evidence for such specific conclusion relating to this case makes it unsubstantiated.

According to P. Saha, Gisaneh should correspond to Kzishna Vasudeva, but it is difficult to say with which Hindu god Demetr should be compared.\(^{32}\) As far as Demeter is concerned, the supposition that it resembles Jagannath or Ganesh also did not find acceptance in scholarly circles. It should be noted that the efforts of many scholars to identify Indian gods on whom Zenob Glak’s account might be based have all been unsuccessful. There were attempts to consider Vishnu and Kincana, the Indian god of fire, Agni/Agnis, Krishna and Vishnu, Ganesan/Ganesha.\(^{33}\) There is another theory that the original tradition of Indians in Taron refers not to those known to the author concerned in his own time, but rather to those non-Indic tribes who earlier had ruled over India and who had political and ancestral ties with Armenia – Kushans, Chionites, Hephthalites, or some other such tribe.

Hindus in Taron enjoyed patronage of both the Artaxiad and Arsacid Armenian royal dynasties. These populous settlements became centers of Indian culture and religion in Armenia. The Hindu community in Armenia existed almost 450 years, being a potent source of direct introduction of the Indian culture in Armenia. With the adoption in 301 of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia, the Indian settlers took the side of pagan Armenians, fighting against forces involved in the dissemination and establishment of the new religion. The Indian community fiercely resisted the evangelization. It is recorded that 5450 people fought for the cause of adhering their religion. Later on the number of fighters reached 7000. Even one of the Armenian princes, named Ashtena changed the sides and joined the Indians with his 700 soldiers.\(^{34}\)

Even after evangelization very many Indians persistently continued to secretly worship their old gods. Even several hundred of them were sent into exile to southeastern province Paytakaran. “And because Gisane had long hair, for this reason his servants also had that long hanging hair, which the prince had ordered cut off. And when this race had turned to Christ, they were not consummated in their faith, and they did not dare to follow openly their paternal mores. They then deceitfully conceived this devise:

---

32 Panchanan Saha, no. 30, p. 78.
33 Levon Avdoyan, Pseudo-Yohannes Mamikonean: The History of Taron: Historical Investigation, Critical Translation, and Historical and Textual Commentaries, Atlanta, 1993, p. 34.
they left a lock of hair on the heads of their children so that, when they saw it, they would remember their former worship. And I beg you to be attentive of this, lest this practice spread even in your lands and lest you be accursed”, writes Zenob. Over the years that followed, the Indians eventually converted to Christianity and were assimilated into the Armenian society. Ghukas Injijyan mentions that the Indian population in Armenian Taron increased in such numbers that they were called a nation within the country. Touching upon the ethnic composition of the Armenian nation, he refers to absorption of the Indians into it. Those were turbulent years, but contacts between Armenia and India were not severed. Because of the geographical location of Armenia, the adoption of Christianity was not only religious phenomenon at the outset, but also means to protect the nation’s identity in the regional environment of constant threat from the side of conquerors. Although the Armenians faced numerous challenges and went through sufferings for the sake of their religion, the combination of Armenian faith and patriotism provided a powerful new defensive mechanism in the increasing struggle for national existence.

Some academics doubt historical trustworthiness of the Hindu community existence in Armenia. According to their arguments, the story originates from distorted folk traditions or is rooted in fiction and legend. In particular, notable Armenian literary critic, linguist and folklorist Manuk Abeghian, who had spent a lifetime studying the folk traditions of the Armenian people and comparing these to that people’s written literature, thought that the history of Gisaneh and Demetr come from folk traditions. According to him, Gisaneh and Demetr are none other than Mamik and Konak, the ancestral eponymous brothers of the Mamikoneans, the lords of Taron, whose origins were believed to have been in China. According to Abeghian, China and India were one and the same to the Armenians and differences in names are common in folk style. It is not possible to accept this theory because, first of all, the Armenians were well acquainted with India since ancient times. So naturally they were able to distinguish India and China and there could not be any geographical confusion. Apart from that, in the “History of Taron” Indians leaded by Demetr and Gisaneh are described as “dark skinned” people,

35 Levon Avdoyan, no. 33, p. 88.
which is not the case in regard to Chinese. Thus, we don’t consider the scholarly opinion of not attributing the story of Gisaneh and Demetr to India a justified one. Academicians N. Marr and V. Ribakov draw similarities between the history of the Hindu community in historical Armenia and the Russian chronology “Story of provisional years” on the establishment of Kiev, the capital of Kiev Russ in the sixth century. They find commonalities in events, names and geographical denominations.\(^{38}\) We believe there is absolutely no similarity, just distant resemblance of it and several artificial conclusions. The establishment of Kiev doesn’t have any Indian trace. All the attempts to find distortions in the Armenian text, including the Indian heritage, are absolutely not justifiable. The names of all townships Kuar, Meghti in Taron and Horeans in the province of Palunik are recorded in Armenian and foreign sources for centuries before the establishment of Kiev. Kuar was located on the bank of river Aratsani (Euphrates) and according to numerous Armenian historical sources was the hereditary estate of Mamikonian feudal house. Meghti is situated in Mush valley of Taron, on the bank of Meghti River, with history rooted in pre-Christian period.\(^{39}\)

Presumably the sole original historical source which reflects the story of Indians in Armenia is the above mentioned “History of Taron”. Interestingly, the thirteenth century historian, theologian and fabulist Vardan Areveltsi also mentions it in passing\(^{40}\) but the original source used by him is not known to us. Professor Rafik Abrahamian notes that probably there was another source at disposal of the latter or another version of “History of Taron”.\(^{41}\) As far as no any reliable information is available in that regard, we may safely conclude that the “History of Taron” is the single available source. The same could be assumed in regard to tenth century author Ukhtanes,\(^{42}\) thirteenth century historian Stepanos Orbelian,\(^{43}\) sixteenth-seventeenth century historian Grigor


\(^{40}\) Vardan the Great, Universal History, (in Armenian), Moscow, 1861, p. 57.


\(^{43}\) Stepanos Orbelian, History of Sisakan Province, (in Armenian), Tiflis, 1910, pp. 18-19.
Daranaghtsi, who makes references to ruining of the Indian temples by Gregory the Illuminator and construction of Christian churches in place of them.\textsuperscript{44}

Nevertheless, the historical events, described in “History of Taron” could be ascertained by numerous related evidences. As convincing arguments could be deemed few distinct elements of Indian culture, noticeable in Armenian geographical denominations and folklore of much later period. Similarly, remnants of Indian historical presence can be traced in the medieval and modern Armenian life, especially in Taron. Until the World War I, in the bordering area between historical Armenian provinces of Taron and Vaspurakan a village was located named Hindstan, meaning India in Armenian.\textsuperscript{45} Based on topographic research, even after the adoption of Christianity in Armenia formally Indian settlements Kuar, Meghtes, Bazu, Demetr and Horean in Taron preserved their original names until the eighteenth century. In Matenadaran, the depositary of the Armenian manuscripts in Yerevan there is a manuscript, which includes along with other materials a “History of the Indian King”. It is an excerpt copy probably from “History of Taron”.\textsuperscript{46} According to the author of the latter the Indians built in Armenia town Vishap (Dragon) or Odz (Snake) and in their honor erected snake shaped idol.\textsuperscript{47} In the place of ruined temple Gisaneh St. Karapet church was built, in proximity of which until the end of the nineteenth century existed village Odz. This can not be considered as accidental circumstance. Ethnographic materials testify that inhabitants of previously Indian populated Armenian areas “performed the dance of Demetr\textsuperscript{48} and “sung Indian melodies\textsuperscript{49}.

The names with “Hindu” root like Hindu, Hindukhanum (Hindu lady), Hindubek and Hindumelik (Hindu noble) were in written and verbal vocabulary of the Armenians in Taron and adjacent areas.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{44} Grigor Daranaghtsi, \textit{Chronology}, (in Armenian), Jerusalem, 1915, Pp. 514-515.
\textsuperscript{46} Matenadaran named after Mesrop Mashtots, Yerevan, manuscript no. 4689, (in Armenian).
\textsuperscript{47} Ghevond Alishan, \textit{Old Belief or Pagan Religion of the Armenians}, (in Armenian), Venice, 1900, p. 321.
\textsuperscript{48} Grigor Magistros, \textit{Papers}, (in Armenian), Alexandropol, 1910, p. 117.
It worth mentioning that currently in Armenia lives a small community of “Boshas” (Gypsies), whose origin is disputed, but prevailing scholarly opinion traces it to India. There is absolutely no evidence that “Boshas” are descendants of Taron Indians. Presumably they settled in Armenia in much later period.51

The relations between Armenia and India got further boost in last two centuries of ancient era, especially in the area of trade. Trading with India was advantageous for foreign merchants, as far as conditions for commercial activity in the country were very favorable. Brightest intellectual, the founder of the “science of politics” in India Kautilya (4th-3rd centuries BC) in his masterwork “The Arthashastra” writes that apart from promoting trade (“the third pillar of economic activity”) by improving the infrastructure, the state was required to keep trade routes free of harassment by courtiers, state officials, thieves and frontier guards. Import and sale of foreign goods was encouraged in order to make them freely available all over the country. To promote imports, tax exemptions were given to importers. Foreign merchants were given limited immunity from being sued and a higher profit margin allowed for imported goods compared to local products.52 Over the centuries many Indian rulers followed Kautilya’s designated path, thus attracting prospective merchants, including Armenians, to India.

Roman trade with the East via Armenia flourished in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. After Trdat I acceded to the throne of Armenia in 66 AD there was fifty years of peace between Rome and Parthia. From India and China came rice, fabrics like silk and cotton, gems, perfumes. Rome, in turn, exported lead, copper, pewter, and glassware. Armenian cities provided important links in the chain of trade, also adding their own exports of dyes, minerals, rare and medicinal plants, and textiles.

51 The Armenian Gypsies, having a special ethnonym Bosha are Christians of the Armenian Apostolic Confession. Philological studies in the 18th century established the fact that one in every three words in the Romani language is Hindi, which supports the theory that they originated in India. The language of the Armenian Gypsies, called Lomavren or Armenian Bosha, having occupied a special place in the system of Gypsy dialects, belongs to the Indo-European group of languages (an Indo-Aryan dialect).51 It is grammatically restructured to be like Armenian with phonology and lexicon also influenced by Armenian. Boshas are descendants of Gypsies who came to Armenia perhaps in the 11th – 13th centuries as part of a large Gypsy migration from India, their historic homeland. The armenization of the Gypsies who had settled in Armenia must have occurred perhaps in the 14th to 16th centuries. By the early 19th century they did already have an Armenian identity, though had retained their language, rather as a clandestine slang, a particular lifestyle and a feeling of belonging in a group. Even anthropologically there is slight resemblance to people of northern India. Some Bosha families gave forth a number of prominent figures of the Armenian culture in the 19th century.

Two among the founders of the Armenian historiography Agathangelos and Pavstos Buzand (fifth century AD) write about some aspects of the Armenian-Indian commercial contacts. Agathangelos in his “History”, which is a patchwork of several different sources, narrates that the Armenians were bringing from India into Armenia and selling wonderful jewels. The Indian jewels beatified royal crowns. According to the seventh century historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the Armenian kings and princes were font of using Indian gems and jewels also for decorating their palaces and furnishing them in Indian style.

Agathangelos also gives description of merchandise imported into the country from India. Apart from gems and precious stones, often references relate to medicinal herbs. The names of the latter can be found in medieval Armenian medical manuscripts. The list of imports from India to Armenia proper or for further transit to other countries also includes fine muslins, among jewels especially beryl and pearls, spices, incense, condiments, as well as costus, lyceum and other cosmetics. There was great demand for pepper, which remained one of the most highly prized luxuries in the West. Blue from Lahore was acknowledged in Armenia by the name “indicon”. Armenia itself was exporting, including to India, some of the items like carpets and textiles. The dye which colored these draperies and other textiles of a flourishing industry was the reddish purple kermes dye from the Artashat district. Similar to cochineal and produced from both the dried bodies of certain insects and the dried scales of oak trees, kermes is the root of the word red in Arabic and Armenian, and the English crimson. Other manufactured products included tapestries, shawls, colored hides, jewelry, porcelain, copperware, wine presses and oil mills, furs and leather goods. The Armenian merchants were also exporting to India colored leather, dye and cotton print. The Armenian product is known to be used in dyeing red the famous Indian silk.

The sixth century Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, describing the Armenian city of Dvin as a trade center and “an excellent place”, first mentions Indian

---

55 About Armenian carpets the tenth century Arab chronicler Ibn Hauql says there is “scarcely an equal in any place which possesses manufactures resembling them”.
56 Another Arab writer Djahiz praises the textiles of Armenia and considers that the best and most expensive draperies are crimson once made with Armenian goat hair.
57 K.S. Papazian, no. 19, pp.9-10.
merchants among the other foreign traders, who come to Armenia. As a consequence of
the decline of the Arsacid dynasty in Armenia the kingdom was divided between the
Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Persia in 387. Since then Dvin became the capital of
Eastern or Persian Armenia. In his “History of the Wars” Procopius says of Dvin: “It is
blessed with a healthy climate and abundance of good water.... Many very populous
villages are situated in very close proximity to one another, and numerous merchants
conduct their business in them. For from India and the nearby Iberia (Georgia), and from
practically all the nations of Persia, and some of those under Roman sway, they bring in
merchandise and carry on their dealings with each other there.”58 In this period five major
trade routes passed through Dvin, two among which reached the borders of India and
China.59

According to Armenian historian Ghevond Alishan, distinguished Chinese
traveler Hi-U-Yen (Siuan Tsi) met Armenian merchants in Northern India in 620 AD and
accomplished successful commercial deals with them.60

Illustrious Armenian mathematician, astronomer and geographer Anania
Shirakatsi (610-685 AD) in his “Ashkharhatsuits” (Geography) elaborates the geography
of India. The author of this work based himself on earlier Greek sources, notably Pappus
of Alexandria, who’s original Geography has been lost. India is 41st in the list of
described Asian countries. Upon his account the “world” of Arians and Scythia bound
India. The river Indus fractionates India into two parts – eastern and western. In the
western region 58 peoples reside in, and 72 in the eastern area. Anania Shirakatsi gives
detail description of people inhabiting the country and the extent of their differences. The
author tells vividly about mountains, rivers and islands of the country, mentions the
animal world, and wealth of the country. He enlists different merchandise that can be
acquired in India: gold, silver, copper, lead, pearls, different jewels, pepper, and
medicine. At the end he enumerates the type and the value of Indian gems.61 This piece of
information carries certain value not only in the scope of Armenian-Indian commercial
relationship but also highlights to some point the role of India in the trade of the whole
East.

60 Ibid., p. 184.
The presence of Indian merchants in the markets of Dvin and other Armenian cities is reported in the sources of the ninth century as well. In that period of history the relations between major regional powers Arab Caliphate and Byzantium were hostile. Direct trade between them was hindered due to this circumstance. Neutral Armenia fitted well in the picture as convenient place for exchange of commodities between Arab and Byzantine merchants. The mentioned factor along with abundance of needed commodities contributed to attracting to Armenian trading centers also merchants from other countries, even from remote India.

Throughout the first millennium of the Christian era, India’s trade was widespread and Indian merchants controlled many foreign markets. It was dominant in the eastern seas and it reached out also to the Mediterranean.

In the meantime trade contacts between the two countries showed a trend to further develop. An evidence of increasing mercantile dealings is the fact recorded by eleventh-twelfth century historian Matteos Urhayetsi that Armenian king Smbat II Bagratuni (977-989), while expanding the capital city Ani, a major urban center in Armenia, acquired from India the famous crystal chandelier for the cathedral. Urhayetsi adds that it cost many treasures to the king to get it in India. Ani’s blooming market was frequented by Indian merchants.

The eleventh century Byzantine statesman and historian Michael Attaliates in his “History”, written as an eyewitness and contemporary, notes that imported from India merchandise was also sold in Armenian towns, mentioning Artsn in particular.

It is well-known that eleventh-century India with its immensity and vast resources was attracting zealous Muslim invaders. Apart from them, international merchants, including Armenians, were also familiar with commercial and economic at large advantages of the country, not counting socio-political system. As well as exotic produce like spices, peacocks, pearls, diamonds, ivory and ebony, the “Hindu country” was renowned for its skilled manufactures and its bustling commerce. India’s economy was probably one of the most sophisticated in the world.

---

62 Ghevond Alishan, No. 59, p. 434.
63 Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 214.
66 John Keay, India: A History, New Delhi, 2000, p. 188.
and provided credit; the roads were safe, ports and markets carefully supervised, and tariffs low. Moreover capital was both plentiful and conspicuous. Since at least Roman times the subcontinent seems to have enjoyed a favorable balance of payments. Gold and silver had been accumulating long before the “Golden Guptas”, and they continued to do so. Figures in the Mamallapuram sculptures and the Ajanta frescoes are as strung about with jewelry as those in the Sanchi and Amaravati reliefs. Divine images of solid gold are well attested and royal temples were rapidly becoming royal treasuries as successful dynasts endowed them with the fruits of their conquests. Due to peculiarities of the caste system, Indian society also seemed admirably stable, if excessively stratified. Politically, according to Muslim observers, India comprised many kingdoms, each with a formidable army that included elephants and cavalry as well as infantry. In the country very peculiar system was functioning, which was constantly contributing to the relative balance of power. India had learned to contain conflict and to minimize its effects. “When a king subdues a neighboring state, he places over it a man belonging to the family of the fallen prince who carries on the government in the name of the conqueror. The inhabitants would not suffer it to be otherwise. Once again one is reminded of Megasthenes’ description of agriculturalists “ploughing in perfect security” while armies did battle in the next field. Although the ploughmen may have had a stake in the outcome of the battle or may have contributed to the equipage of one of the protagonists, they were not expected to get involved. Warriors fought with warriors; the ploughman’s dharma was to plough.\footnote{Ibid, pp.188-190.}

Armenian handwritten sources contain certain information on interaction between Armenians and Indians. An example of such source is presumably the twelfth century Armenian guide-book called “Names of Indian and Persian Towns”. It has survived in eight manuscripts of the Matenadaran (the depositary of manuscripts in the capital city Yerevan). The earliest among them is registered in Matenadaran under number 1898 and is written on parchment in the thirteenth century.\footnote{Matenadaran, Yerevan, (in Armenian), manuscript no. 1898, Pp. 124a-126b.} The others are copied in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. The unanimous author cites the roads, the towns, distances between them, informs of the economic life, the administrative system, the trade and daily round of the Indians. As it appears from the text the author of the
guide-book is an Armenian merchant, knows India pretty well and definitely traveled over there. His description of the country he starts from North India, tells about Lahore, Kashmir, Panklar, Nahruala, Mlepar and other cities and towns and concludes with South India and Ceylon. The author gives also detailed report on the economic activities of these habitats and their mercantile interrelations. He refers to the type of merchandise possible to acquire in these cities. For example, the author mentions a region, which he calls Zeminzar Remizar or “golden land”, telling about precious stones, extracted in the area, their prices and quality.

Precise data about the author of this interesting text is lacking. Nevertheless in the text we find a hint that allows to judge on time period of his writing. Coming to Lahore’s description the author writes: “Sultan Mahmud conquered it six hundred years back and made it tax bound to him”. In history several conquerors under name Mahmud are known to invade India. The most notorious among them was Mahmud who established Ghaznavid Empire, stretching from the Caspian to the Indus. In the manuscript no. 5950 it is mentioned that Sultan Mahmud conquered Lahore one hundred years back, in comparison with other manuscripts not using six hundred years timeframe instead. It is known that Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030) conquered Multan in 1005 and Lahore in 1006. So according to that the unknown author of the travel account lived either in the twelfth or the seventeenth century. The difference is stipulated by the text copiers’ writing of the Armenian letter “Z” in capital or small letter. Depending on that the figure turns into “one hundred” or “six hundred”. Obviously one of them is written mistakenly during the recopying process. It definitely can not be written in the seventeenth century because, first of all, there are two manuscripts of the text copied in the thirteenth and sixteenth century, prior to the seventeenth. We have another clue to make the write conclusion. The author writes further: “The Panian lands are inhabited by Indians, but being subject to Ghaznavids; Nahruala and Multan are large and magnificent cities and are subject to Ghaznavids”. Ghaznavid Empire fell in 1161. Deriving from this fact we can safely conclude that the author lived in the twelfth century, in the timeframe encompassing 1106 to 1161.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Armenian merchants were intermediaries in the trade between Italy and Mongol Asia. The prominent Venetian traveler Marco Polo, who visited the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in Eastern
Mediterranean in 1271, says that whoever wishes to travel to the depths of Asia will have to make his start from Ayas. Armenian harbor city of Ayas in Cilicia gained significance in eastern commerce with the fall of Acre and the silting up of the harbor of Tarsus and became an emporium of trade for European and Asian merchants, namely Persian, Indian, Syrian and Chinese in the second half of the thirteenth century. Marco Polo, who disembarked in Ayas to begin his trip to China, testifies that Cilician markets were full of Indian goods.

Late thirteenth – early fourteenth century Armenian Cilician author Hetum the Historian’s sixth chapter of the “Chronicle” is another interesting account of India. Hetum never visited India. He used Armenian manuscripts of the royal library and reports of the Cilician merchants. He reflects facts of closed commercial bonds between India and Cilician Armenia. Hetum the Historian writes: “In India pearls, gold and many sorts of medicine are available. People purchase them and bring to our country.” It is possible to reach India only through Persia, as far as the country is surrounded by a sea, called ocean, he continues.  

India is one of just few remote countries that the process of settling of the Armenian merchants at the earliest stage can be referred to. The history of arrival of the first Armenians in India dates back to the eight century. According to several accounts in 780 an Armenian merchant, traveler and pilgrim by the name Thomas Cana (the Malayalam form is Cnai Thomman) settled in Malabar in South India. He found local Christians, who were descended from the disciples of the Apostle St. Thomas. Thomas Cana together with the local Christians built the town of Cranganore, which was previously a wasteland. He and the Christians who had come with him played a considerable role in the organization and building up the church and community of Cranganore and apparently exerted an immense influence in the whole Christian community of Kerala. In the sixteenth century Portuguese Alvaro Penteado writes in the letter to the king of Portugal about the origins of the Christians of St. Thomas in Quilon.

---

69 Hetum the Historian, Chronicle, (in Armenian), Venice, 1842, pp. 10-12
70 Thomas Cana should not be confused with Apostle St. Thomas, who reached India in the middle of the first century, preached the Gospel, converted many to Christianity and suffered martyrdom. The Malabar tradition, whether recorded by the Portuguese or by local accounts, is always careful to distinguish Thomas the Apostle from Thomas of Cana. The Armenians’ veneration of St. Thomas is well-known. It is told that “in olden times people came from Armenia asking for the body of Apostle, but the people of the place gave them the body of a disciple of the Apostle and thus deceived them”.

and Cranganore: "The first origins are from the Apostle Thomas. For the period after St. Thomas, as far as Cranganore is concerned, there came an Armenian merchant, advanced in age. As he had no hope of returning home he bought from the king of the place an unoccupied land with all its income, with property rights of both land and water within the bounds of this land. He had two sons. His elder inherited the income of the land which the merchant bequeathed to the church, at the time of his death. The second son was made a judge over the slaves whom the father had bought, freed and converted." 71

The local account of Fr. Mathew refers to copper plates relating to the story of Thomas Cana. According to this eighteenth century source all the grants and honors conferred upon him by king of Malabar were engraved on copper plates. These plates were found preserved among the Christians when the mentioned account was written in 1730. 72

The sixteenth century Portuguese sources contain information on arrival of Christians from Armenia not only in the eighth century but in the proceeding period as well. According to the testimony of Bishop Abuna in 1533, about 700 years ago (that is in the course of the ninth century) "two saintly brothers, natives of Armenia, came to Quilon and from there went to Cranganore and thence to Ceylon. One was named Xaor and Aproit. They brought from Ceylon big logs of wood belonging to a temple. They brought these to Quilon and made use of them in building a church on some land they obtained from the king of the place". 73 The church stood there when Abuna gave his testimony.

Interestingly Malabar is also known as a region that first activities of the Armenian clergy in India are attributed to. Some historical sources, predominately Portuguese, refer to the outbreak of Armenian religious activities in Malabar at the consequent period. The Christians of St. Thomas in Cranganore and so called Quilon Christians "were governed by Armenian bishops who resided there and were therefore subject to the "patriarch" of Armenia". 74 Early Portuguese travelers and missionaries refer to help received from hospitable Armenians long established in the district. It was

73 Abuna, "His Testimony in the 1533 Inquiry about the Tomb of St. Thomas", Goa 31, f. 18f, Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu.
concluded that the Armenians, both clergy and laymen, were well established in this area by the fifteenth century, before the arrival of Vasco de Gama in 1498. An Italian missionary Father Nicolo Lancilloto of Urbino wrote on 26th December 1548: “Here in Cochin there is a very old Armenian bishop. For forty years already he has been teaching things of our faith to the Christians of St. Thomas who are here in this land of Malabar”.75 The great St. Francis Xavier in his letter of 26 January 1549 to King John III himself paid tribute to the pioneer work of this venerable Armenian prelate, whose name was Jacome Abuna, a bishop from Armenia.76 Sixteenth century Portuguese author Duarte Barbosa writes: “Thus from the time of the Apostle the Christians lived in the kingdom of Quilon, with their church in their midst... These Christians, thus continuing without instruction and with no priests to baptize them, were for a long time Christians in nothing but name only. Then they determined to send forth some from among them... the land of Armenia where they found many Christians and a Patriarch who ruled them, who sent with them a bishop and five or six clerics to baptize and instruct them, and this bishop tarried with them for five or six years, and when he went back there came another, who stayed with them for many years.” 77 Already mentioned Alvaro Penteado, after his first visit to the Christians of St. Thomas in Cranganore and its vicinity, wrote to the king of Portugal in 1518 that “the Christians of St. Thomas were looked after by priests from Armenia; they came in batches of six at a time and their spiritual care lasted 80 to 100 years. They were subject to the “patriarch” of Armenia”. 78

In this regard, an arguable academic issue needs to be addressed. Surprisingly the Armenian sources keep silence on neither the Armenian community nor any kind of activities of the Armenian Church in Malabar as well as in India in general related to the period concerned. The probability that existence of a substantive community and such kind of vigorous and systematic Armenian clerical activities, as mentioned in the above sources, could be left without any reference in the Armenian historical sources is null. Especially, when the Portuguese underline even constant links with the “patriarch” of Armenia and assignments of clergy ascribed to him. At the same time it is a well-known

---

76 Ibid, p.149.
78 History of Christianity in India, Vol. I, p. 176
fact that St. Thomas Christians in South India were under the Chaldean Catholicos and were of the East-Syrian rite.

There are several attempts to give feasible explanations to this apparent contradiction. The East-Syrian Church followers from Mesopotamia and Persia spoke Aramaic and were known in Malabar by their language as Arameans, and their country was known as Aramea. But according to historian of Eastern Churches Fr. Henry Hosten, Portuguese seem to have confused these names with Armenians and Armenia.\textsuperscript{79} Georg Schurhammer thinks the error is outcome of a geographical, ethnical and linguistic confusion.\textsuperscript{80} Geographically the province of Diarbekir, which was the residence of the patriarch of the Chaldeans, belonged to Upper-Mesopotamia. But this province was also part of the country of Armenia. So when the Portuguese texts mentioned Christians from Armenia, it is likely, according to Hosten, that they meant Chaldeans from Upper-Mesopotamia. Besides, as the Muslims in India and the Middle East called all the Europeans Franks, so they also called those that came from Upper-Mesopotamia Armenians, without distinguishing between Armenians and Chaldeans.

In the meantime scarcity of information relating to Malabar in Armenian sources impedes thorough research of the matter, at the same time not excluding a possibility that this is just a ramification of the suspected confusion, but merely a partial one. The Portuguese were in contact with Armenians for several centuries, while Portuguese missionaries of Dominican and other catholic religious orders were zealously trying to proselytize the Armenians in Cilicia, in Eastern Armenia and the Armenian communities of Iran. Apparently, they never had difficulty in distinguishing the Armenians. So the version of confusing Arameans and Armenians on such a scale is just not probable. If we can really accept the possibility of geographical confusion Upper-Mesopotamia-Armenia, especially when East-Syrians themselves referred to their catholicosate as being located in Armenia, in this case several references in Portuguese historical sources to pre-seventeenth century Malabar Christians of being Armenians by nationality again leave the issue open. A letter of 1523, written in Cochin, from “Mar Jacob to John III of Portugal” begins with “Most high King and Lord, Jacom Abuna, Armenian priest who

\textsuperscript{79} Henry Hosten, \textit{Antiquities from San Thome and Mylapore}, Calcutta, 1936, p. 55f.

rules over the Christians in India...deputed there and sent by the Patriarch of Babylon.”

So in this letter appears Jacom Abuna’s own description of himself as an Armenian priest, which clearly states his nationality. Historian Roberto Gulbenkian presents weighty arguments of possibility for an Armenian to be consecrated bishop by an East Syrian Catholicos for accomplishing any religious mission amidst the Christians of Malabar. Another interesting reference from Fr. Pierre du Jarric’s “Akbar and the Jesuits” work comes to reinforce the above mentioned argument and even showcases that Armenian clergyman could be appointed as prelate of Southern Indian Christians. “...The behavior of the Armenians (in India) was also influenced by the fact that their new Archbishop, on whose advent they had been counting, died on his way to India. Having reached Ormuz, he had been prevented from continuing his journey by sea and set out for Lahore by way of Persia in 1599. He perished on the road...His books and all else he possessed were stolen. The former fell eventually into the hands of father Pinheiro, which greatly annoyed the Armenians, who had desired to present them to the King. They thought that their prelate was coming to India to be Archbishop of Serre that is of the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar, but that office was filled in a different manner”. It should be noted that the Armenian Apostolic and the Syrian Jacobite, but not Nestorian, churches were and are very close to each other and considered to be sister churches.

In our opinion, not just bishop Jacom Abuna could be Armenian but also many others among so called Christians of St. Thomas. Even nowadays a segment of Christians in Kerala is distinguished by locals as historically having different origin. What does it mean “different origin” and what kind of origin the talk is about, religious or ethnic factors are under consideration? All this apparently lost its trace and there is no clear idea about that. As some possible clue could be regarded the fact that nowadays the above-mentioned group of southern Indians is referred, in a misty way, to Thomas Cana himself (Thomas of Knai) - Knanaya community (Knanaites).

Some Christians that came from Upper-Mesopotamia were probably called Armenians not just because of geographical confusion but also in the main due to real input of the Armenians in Malabar Christian community. As far as many other above-


mentioned references to the Armenian clergy in Malabar of pre-sixteenth century period are concerned most probably those are results of explained confusion. Apparently there was no significant Armenian presence in India to be singled out as distinguishable community before the sixteenth century. But, as was mentioned above, Armenians in small groups or individually settled in India, especially in its southern part along with other Christians.

In the sixteenth century the activities of the Armenian merchants increased considerably. Many very prosperous commercial townships had come up. And from these towns, including the affluent Julfa on the bank of Arax River, Armenian trade spread in different directions. It has always shown a preference for the major routes linking India and Persia to the West either via the commercial ports of the Levant and Asia Minor, or via the Caucasus.

The Turkish victories of the fifteenth century in Asia Minor, the Balkans, and North Africa, and especially the seizure of Constantinople in 1453 and the fall of the Byzantine Empire became a real calamity for Europe’s eastern trade. The trade routes from the Adriatic Sea to the borders of Hungary all the way to the Persian Gulf fell under the control of the Sultans. These events deprived the West from the prospects of having consistent contacts with the East. The international trade route connecting Europe with the East was substantially disrupted. The Western merchants were divested of possibility to establish lasting economic and trade contacts with the Middle East, India, and China through Asia Minor, Syria and Armenia, while requiring raw material resources and stable export markets.

The economic policies of the Ottoman Sultans appeared to be extremely arbitrary. Thus, Europe was cut off from the eastern trade markets. The “Silk Road”, through which Europe received silk products and raw silk, was also closed. The establishment of the Turkish rule in Egypt threatened the other route which was called the “Spice Road,” and which stretched via the sea from India to Egypt. Following the example of his predecessor, Bayazid II, Sultan Selim Yavuz continued the conquest of the Arab lands and conquered Syria, Palestine, and Arabia. Thus, the entire trade of the Middle East came under the tide control of the Ottoman Turks.

However, the unnatural disruption of the ties between the East and the West could not have been permanent in nature. The West, poised toward an ascending path, felt the
pressing need to maintain trade-economic relations with the East. The steady growth of
the capitalist economy in the West made it imperative to secure sources for raw materials
and stable consumer markets. Two major developments served as a breakthrough. The
rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by Portuguese Bartolomeu Dias in 1488 provided for
the first time the potential of an all-water route connecting Europe to Asia. The Cape
route also implied the overcoming of not only political but the transport-technology
barriers to the growth of Euro-Asian trade. The volume of this trade was no longer
subject to the capacity constraint imposed by the availability of pack animals and river
boats. The arrival of three Portuguese ships of Vasco d'agama at Calicut in 1498 marked
a new era in the history of Euro-Asian contacts. Notwithstanding, the potential of this sea
route was realizing gradually, not fulfilling all demands in commercial terms. Under
these circumstances the advent of intermediate merchants between the East and the West
became vitally important. In the meantime numerous Armenian towns and villages on the
left bank of the Araxes River such as Julfa, Astapat, Vanand, Agulis, Agarak, Dasht,
Ernjak etc emerged as trade centers. The Armenian merchant khoja\textsuperscript{84} class, engaged in
international trade, emerged on the historical stage in the sixteenth century. These
merchants commenced a process of reestablishing themselves as mediators in the trade
between Europe and Asia. So the Armenian khoja class, already in ascendancy, assumed
that significant role, and shortly gained such a position, that at the end of the sixteenth
century and the entire seventeenth century, it had no competitors in the area of
intercontinental overland trade of Levant and the Middle and Far East countries. With the
support of an increasing number of local associates and small merchant communities,
trading activities of the Armenian merchants rapidly developed into an immense network
stretching from Amsterdam to Manila. This network, with its center in New Julfa, a
suburb of Isfahan in Iran, established its own set-up both in Asia and in Europe. The
Armenian merchants attained crucial role in the whole East-West transit trade.

During the early modern period trade originating in Europe (or visa versa)
reached the ports of the Mediterranean and Black seas, moved eastward through or near
Armenia and extended to the southern border of the Caspian Sea. From this juncture, one
route continued in a northeasterly direction through Central Asia to China, while another
took a southeasterly course to reach the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Yet

\textsuperscript{84} The term “khoja” is a Persian word, meaning “master”, “prince”, “landlord” or simply “wealthy”.

another route runs from the Caspian region northward to Russia. However, Armenian merchants were active not only on the transit route that cut across Armenia but also on the many other routes that traversed the Eurasian continent. Caravan trade was the preferred mode for the Armenians. In addition to the overland trade, Armenian merchants were also engaged in maritime trade in India, where many of the most important merchants owned ships. Their maritime trade extended from the east coast of Africa through the Indian Ocean to the Philippine Islands in the Pacific. We will touch upon this issue in more details in following pages.

The emergence of the seventeenth-century Armenian trading network and diaspora was stipulated by the following factors and historical events. The first “quake”, causing outflow, occurred at the fall of Armenia’s Bagratid capital Ani to Byzantium in 1045 and its seizure from Byzantines by Seljuks in 1064. Consequently, with the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in Eastern Mediterranean in 1375, Armenia as an autonomous political entity ceased; as a geographical area it remained coveted; as a nation it survived. Rival Islamic dynasties struggled to dominate it and in so doing to exploit its resources. The structure of Armenian life was badly damaged, nearly destroyed, and, finally, changed. The core of Armenia’s ancient society – the nakharar system of hereditary landowning nobility – had collapsed and disappeared. The Armenian population underwent severe ordeals such as wars, pillage, famine, and ruin. Though the population in Armenia declined, it remained sufficiently Armenian to guarantee national continuation. Yet just as these years witnessed the annihilation of the Armenia of kings, they prepared the way for a cosmopolitan, mercantile nation ready to compete in a modern world dominated by the West.

With the lost of last remnants of independence the doors of opportunity to occupy state and public positions were closing for the Armenians in the motherland under foreign yoke. The state service became practically impossible for them. Only trade was largely not prohibited for non-Muslim subjects in Islamic states. And the nation devotes itself to this business, investing in it its whole vigor and entrepreneurial spirit. The development and maturity of the merchant class was exactly the phenomenon through which their lives

---

85 Vahe Baladouni and Margaret Makepeacc (ed), Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Company Sources, Philadelphia, 1998, p. XVI.
were submitted to the rules of historical evolution. Solely trade was accessible for the stateless Armenian nation to enable changes in life conditions and could open up a prospect of participation in economic and cultural movements of modern times. Such a great role could be assumed by the merchant class engaged in international trade and which enjoyed relationship with civilized nations. The striving for merchant class could pave its way and advance only in the form of trade colonies. Commercial interest compelled them to settle firmly in remote countries.\textsuperscript{87}

In the sixteenth century Armenia had fallen prey to the geopolitical ambitions of two rival states: the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran\textsuperscript{88}. As a result of this rivalry the Armenian homeland was divided between them, the larger part (it is accustomed to call that part Western Armenia) falling to the Ottoman Turks, the smaller part (Eastern Armenia) to the Iranians. Throughout the century and a part of seventeenth century Armenia served as a military borderland between these hostile powers, often turning into a theater of savage wars. This period of wars lasted one and a quarter century with some interruptions, starting with the battle of Chaldiran (1514) and ending with Treaty of Zuhab (1639). Armenians were subjugated to all kinds of hardship by the invading or retreating armies. Towns and villages were devastated and looted, people were massacred, thousands were deported or taken away in slavery and the economy was in total shambles. The scorched earth policy was applied both by Safavid and Ottoman armies in Armenia. Still, by the second half of the sixteenth century Armenian merchants, particularly those of the city of Julfa on the Araxes River enjoyed a reputation as brokers and representatives of European commercial firms and interests in the silk and cloth trade.\textsuperscript{89}

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, during the Armenian campaign of 1603-5, Iranian Shah Abbas I (1587-1629) ordered large-scale deportation of Armenians to Iran with a policy of leaving behind a scorched land. In addition to being a military strategy, Shah Abbas' decision to deport a large number of people to Iran was also based on economic considerations. The Armenians as traders, artisans or farmers would greatly help develop the Iranian economy. Furthermore, as Zimmi (non-Muslim, mainly

\textsuperscript{88} The Safavid kingdom in Iran was established in 1501.
Christian and Jewish) subjects to the Shah, they would pay Jizya (poll tax paid by non-Muslims as a price for their Zimmi status), which would increase the royal revenues. In a matter of days in October-November of 1604 the retreating Safavid troops deported hundreds of thousands of Armenians into Iran. Thousands of families were transported to the silk-growing regions of Gilan and Mazandaran, south of the Caspian Sea. Many of the deportees died of epidemics. Only a group of well-established and prominent Armenian merchants, the great barons and the khojas, as well as skilled craftsmen and artisans were shown consideration by the Shah. The latter resettled them in a suburb of his new capital Isfahan, after they were sheltered during the winter of 1605 in Tabriz and in the spring were transported to Isfahan, where they were granted a large plot of land on the right bank of the River Zayandarud and were allowed to build a town. This all-Armenian suburb was called New Julfa after their town of origin, Julfa on the Araxes. The prosperous community enjoyed an exceptional and highly privileged political status within Safavid Iran. Although the Armenians prior to settling in New Julfa have been good silk traders, it was only after their arrival in Iran and under Safavid political protection that their international network was perfected. New Julfa became the hub of Iran’s silk trade and the center of a vast commercial organization covering half the world, from Amsterdam in the west to the Philippines in the east and from Arkhangelsk and Narva in the north to the coast of Coromandel in India, the Moluccas, and Siam in the south.

Shah Abbas’s objective was to enrich and modernize Iran by developing the silk trade and enhancing Iran’s relations with Europe. In the Uzbek’s letter to Mirza written in 1715 it says: “Some ministers of Shah Soliman (1667-84) had plotted to force all the Persian Armenians to leave the kingdom or become Mohammedans. ...I am sure that the great Shah Abbas would have preferred to have his two arms cut off rather than sign such an order. He would never have sent his most industrious subjects to the Mughal or to other Indian kings, for then he would have felt as if he was giving away half his kingdom.” The remarkable prosperity of New Julfa became a decisive factor in the

---

integration of Armenian trade in the seventeenth century. There was a general redeployment of merchant activity, spanning mentioned far-flung and diverse regions. Stimulated but also hampered by European expansion, this activity continued for two centuries before being absorbed by other trade circuits or transformed into industrial capitalism. New Julfa was not the only center of Armenian trade, but it effectively emerged as its focal point. It supplied oriental goods to European markets, particularly Persian silk and precious stones, and, to the eastern markets, fabrics and elaborate European objects. This network or diaspora brought together existing local networks, such as in Astrakhan, Lvov, Aleppo, Tabriz, Bursa, Constantinople and Rumelia, extended the local networks, or revived temporarily abandoned circuits (as for example in the direction of China where visits had become rare). Venturing abroad and establishing trade communities in key cities in Europe and Asia, the Armenia merchants created the infrastructure for a successful long-distance trade. Among other things, the resulting commercial network served as a medium for the regular exchange of business information, the maintenance of trust and credit, and the organization of a system of arbitration and adjudication in business disputes, Together with the merchants of the homeland, these widely dispersed but highly interrelated Armenian trade communities constituted what is known as a “trading diaspora”.

“Few peoples have lived through the Armenian experience: colonies so numerous, so enduring, so varied in their geographical distribution and so well integrated into social, economic, cultural and even political structures of their host countries while still retaining for many centuries the basic distinctive characteristics dating back to their origins.” But first it is necessary to establish what is meant by the terms Armenian diaspora and Armenian “colonies” These latter certainly are not something very similar either to the Greek colonies of antiquity or to the Western colonies of modern times. The ancient Greek colonies were indeed the bearers of a culture whose strength and glamour, of course in concomitance of other historical factors, supplanted at the end the local cultures

---

94 Professor V. Baladouni and M. Makepeace follow the precedent of Abner Cohen, who wrote in his “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of the Trading Diasporas”: “The use of the term ‘diaspora’ in this context has been criticized on the ground that it is applicable only to a specific historical case. This issue is similar to the controversy about the applicability of the term ‘caste’ to systems of stratification outside India. The term ‘network’, which has been suggested as a substitute for ‘diaspora’ has in recent years been used to cover different sociological phenomena and its use in this context is likely to be confusing. The term ‘diaspora’ can be relatively more easily understood to be referring to ‘an ethnic group in dispersal’ than the term ‘network’.”
originating a major process of Hellenization through Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world. The Western colonies of modern times had also a similar cultural effect if we think, for instance, of the British impact on India or the French impact on Africa, just to mention some well-known cases. But in contrast with the Greek diffusion in antiquity modern colonizers could impose their culture mainly by virtue of a lasting military conquest and administrative hegemony. Armenian colonies were almost never accompanied by a military or political force (with a couple of exceptions in ancient and medieval period) nor were they ever able or were pursuing themselves a goal to impose cultural supremacy. They succeeded, however, more than once to accomplish top level achievements in the most varied fields of life within the structures of a given society. They even succeeded in the time period of our consideration in reaching a world-wide economical primacy, thus having a prosperous period of their history, while “stateless”. So Armenian diaspora’s original and proper meaning is “dispersion”, keeping in mind that the term comes from the Greek word for scattering, as in the sowing of grain.

Seventeenth century English traveler John Fryer gives his description of Armenian merchants’ pillars of success. “The Armenians being skilled in all the intricacies and subtlties of trade at home, and traveling with these into the remotest kingdoms, become by their own industry, and by being factors of their own kindreds honesty, the wealthiest men, being expert at bargains wherever they came, evading thereby brokeridge; and studying all the arts of thrift, will travel for fifty shillings, where we can not for fifty thomands (tumans); setting out with a stock of hard eggs and a metarrah of wine, which will last them from Spahaun (Isfahan) to the port, riding on a mean beast, which they sell or ship off for advance, their only expense being horse meat; traveling with no attendants, their mattress serving at once for horse cloth, and them to lye on; they are a kind of privateers in trade, no purchase, no pay; they enter the theatre of commerce by means of some benefactor, whose money they adventure upon, and on return, a quarter part of the grain is their own; from such beginnings do they raise sometimes great fortunes for themselves and masters”.  

---

96 Persian word, meaning a flexible leathern drinking bottle or cup used by travelers.
In the given context a couple of orientalist misrepresentations should be eliminated. First, the history of Armenian merchants falls into a larger scholarly debate, namely the role played by Asian merchants in Eurasian trade. Typically scholarship has portrayed these Asian merchants – Indians, Armenians, Persians, Arabs and Turks alike – as peddlers, in contrast to the well-organized European East India Companies. Claude Markovits writes in relation to Asia that "the merchant world before colonialism was a very complex and heterogeneous world, with activities ranging from peddling to extremely sophisticated inter-regional and even international financial operations. Such diversity does not correspond to the simplified picture of eastern trade as the "peddling trade". Dr. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe in her "The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver" put forth a revisionist views, arguing not only for the existence of an Armenian Commercial Company, but for a centralized and highly organized system of trading which preceded its inception. Baghdiantz-McCabe hypothesizes that The Trading Company of New Julfa must have been formed sometimes in the 1640s when the New Julfa merchants lost their privileged monopoly on Iran's silk trade. Her assertion is that in contrast to the English East India Company, the Julfans' Trading Company was not organized around the principle of publicly owned shares; rather it was conglomerate of the smaller family-owned companies that had pooled together their capital under a single, unified corporate structure. This organization was made part of the internal management of Iran's economy, creating a centralized system for the collection of bullion. This view is not always supported by available sources; especially there is no any evidence on the existence of The Trading Company of New Julfa. We can quite confidently state that it was rather a trading house. Second, the Eurasian silk trade, according to her, was until very recently believed to have been under European control by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The mentioned analysis argues for the dominance of local traders in this trade, specifically for the leading role played by the New Julfan Armenians. The later eighteenth century successes of the European Companies have masked the initial difficulties the Europeans had in establishing their trade in India and in Iran. Fortunately, scholars studying Dutch and English archives and the Dutch and English trade have demonstrated the relative insignificance of the Dutch or English in silk trade at initial

98 Claude Markovits, "Major Indian Capitalists", in Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, p. 311.
Asian merchants, including Armenian merchants, ruled practically all overland routes. As far as maritime trade is concerned, they were also engaged in it. Let's consider an example of important overland and at the same time maritime route out of Bandar Abbas. The Europeans mainly used the maritime route from that Iranian port to India via the Persian Gulf, although Armenian and Indian merchants also shared it on their way to India. In Bandar Abbas and in Indian ports like Surat, European Companies survived their relative commercial failures in the region and their crises at home by becoming carriers for local Armenian and Indian traders. The land route to India through Qandahar was in use, despite easy access through the Persian Gulf.

As opposed to the single, large, hierarchically organized joint-stock company, such as the English East India Company, the Armenian trading house was a network or alliance of organizations centered on a notable merchant, the khoja, who was at once business financier and entrepreneur. These widely spread but highly interrelated individual enterprises operated under the ethos of trust. Trust, and the shared moral and ethical norms underlying it, helped the Armenian trading houses to avoid the relatively rigid and costly operation of the hierarchic system of organization practiced by the British, Dutch and French. Based on family kinship and trusted fellow countrymen, the Armenian trading house did, indeed, rely on trust as its principal means of organization and control.100

Apart from the major European centers, especially Amsterdam, Brugge, Marseilles, Leghorn, Ancona, Venice and Danzig, adding to the list Astrakhan in Russia and the establishments of the Levant, Armenian trading network had numerous outlying stations in Asia, like Basra, Baghdad, Kermanshah, Shiraz, Hurmuz, Bandar Abbas in Persian Gulf, Pegu, Ava, Syriam, Rangoon in Burma, Ayuthia in Siam, Batavia, Manila and Canton. India occupied a very special place in the whole network by the significance of its geographical location, a country providing convenient connecting harbors between remote stations of the East and the West, for the reason of being a source country for variety of valuable merchandise and a huge market in its turn. Starting sixteenth century the Armenian merchants were regularly visiting India, traversing the long caravan routes across Afghanistan and Kashmir and sailing from the Persian Gulf (especially Hormuz)
in Arab vessels to Cambay near Surat. Gradually significant Armenian presence was established in numerous Indian towns and villages: Agra, Delhi, Lucknow and Lahore in the north, Surat, Diu and Bombay on the western coast, the Malabar and the Coromandel coasts and Madras in the south, Saidabad, Chinsura, Hughli, Calcutta, Benares and Dacca in the east. Some of these settlements outgrew their specific trade diaspora functions by evolving into full-fledged communities equipped with their own churches, sometimes schools, clubs printing houses, and so forth. Thus the process of formation of permanent settlements of Armenians in India and emergence of their close-knit societies was launched. Worth mentioning is the fact that the Armenians later on also set up bases in Patna, Kathmandu and Lhasa as well. It should be noted that this initial wave of the Armenian migration to India was limited in number of settling people and carried purely business character. The arriving Armenians were from Armenia proper, mainly from the eastern part of the country, which was not the case in consequent centuries. The Iranian-Armenian community and New Julfa, in particular, after its establishment in 1605, became the main source of human reinforcement of the Armenian settlements in India and setting up of new ones.

The first relative concentration of the Armenian population in India, while small in numbers but, nevertheless, which allows us to note the emergence of “embryonic” Armenian community, relates to the first decades of the sixteenth century and geographically arises in South India, then expanding to the west and the north. When the Portuguese first reached the western coast of India in 1498 and shortly afterwards began to settle in the southern region of the country, they found many Armenians already living in those parts. The small town of Mylapur (later renamed San Thome) on the outskirts of Madras had Armenians inhabitants in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. According to Portuguese sources, it was Armenian merchants residing in Pulikat (or Pulekat in the kingdom of Vijayanagar, Coromandel) who first led them to the tomb of the apostle Saint Thomas in Meliapur (Mylapur) where a small church had been built. According to Om Prakash, the trading community of Pulicat consisted of members of the Muslim communities of coastal southeastern India, known as Marakkayars on Coromandel,

---

Telugu-speaking Chettis of the Balija and Komatti communities as well as Armenians. In two letters written by Andre Corsal Florentin from Cochin we find other evidences of the Armenian presence. The first one, dated 6th January 1515, is addressed to Julien Medicis: “All the people in Malabar are kind. And the majority of population is Mauritanians, lesser part is Jewish, and the rest is Christians following St. Thomas. Very beautiful churches testify about them, one of which is located on a distance of five miles from Cochin and nine miles from Elongallor (Cranganore), and another one is in Colon. Armenians who reside in India serve to these churches.” In the second letter, addressed from Cochin to the Prince-Duke Laurent de Medicis, and dated 18th September 1517, he writes: “As far as I am concerned, I decided to go on a tour and study in detail the whole country. This year with Pierre Strozzi I reached the house of St. Thomas, which is located on a distance of 250 miles from here. And from there I went to the port Paleacate (Pulikat) in Narsinga kingdom, where big quantities of ruby are brought from the kingdom of Pegu. Afterwards with some friends, Armenian Christians, I decided to travel on the mainland and to spend some five-six months over there, to be able to see all the provinces of this huge kingdom, famous for its riches.” Some Armenians dwelt among the Portuguese near the Sepulcher of St. Thomas, as can be seen in a letter from the Portuguese residents of St. Thome to King Joao III, dated 27th December 1535: “At present we are sixty men with our wives and children living here and there are also some married Armenians living here, they are good Christians and many of us have houses made of stone and lime and have wooden floors”.

Later in the seventeenth century when Francois Martin, the founder of the French colony of Pondicherry retired in San Thome to write his famous memoirs, he noted the following about Armenian relations with the town: “It is held that the commencement of the building of San Thome was the work of many Armenians who were frequenting there an account both of trade and also of their pious devotion to the Saint whose name the town bears. When the Portuguese secured themselves in India, the members of that nation settled in all parts of the country, and a number of them in San Thome, where they united with the Armenians who were already in residence there. They

104 Roberto Gulbenkian, Armenian-Portuguese Relations, p. 297.
then built a town and residences by the help of their trade with other parts of India. It is assured that in former times there were families in this place whose opulence reached millions, and the trade in this place in the early days was a gold mine.105

Coming to the city of Madras, which was a Portuguese trade station since 1504, before the English took it under their possession in 1602, we can state that the Armenians were well established there in the first half of the sixteenth century. On the mount of St. Thomas in Madras area an Armenian inscription is preserved on the date of construction of Christian church in the same location. The year of 1547 is mentioned on the wall gate inscription, despite the fact that there is no standing Armenian church nowadays in that area or there is another possibility that there never was an Armenian church in that location and Armenians were using the common Christian church. Upon simple logic, in both cases the availability of at least some Armenian permanent inhabitants is supposed.106

Sebastian Fernandes S.J., who remained in India 25 years (1594-1619) expressed the opinion that it was quite likely that some Armenian Christians live among the Moors in the city of Goa for purposes of trade before the arrival of the Portuguese, in the same was as Gentiles, Moors and Armenian Christians established there were at that time living amid the Portuguese.107 The fact that the Armenians were Christians helped their commercial and political relation with the Portuguese authorities, at least until the 1550s and 1560s, when the religious mood changed with a more militant Catholic Church. At the same time there was a change in the political orientation of Estado da India, whose main concern was the reformulation of its structure. Unlike other trading communities from India, the Armenians were not very interested in investing in the space controlled by the Portuguese. They used Estado da India108 ports of call mainly as by-passers, but only a few of them established in those towns and fortresses. Nevertheless we were able to trace the Armenian lasting presence in some areas of India associated with Portuguese, as was evident from above mentioned sources.

106 Torgom Gushakian, Armenians of India, (in Armenian), Jerusalem, 1941, p. 44.
107 Roberto Gulbenkian, Armenian-Portuguese Relations, p. 297.
After the founding of the Mughal dynasty in India in 1526, starting mid-sixteenth century Mughals were conducting a policy of encouraging Armenian merchants to settle in the country. When Nasiruddin Humayun, second Mughal ruler of India (1530-1540, 1555-1556), accompanied by Safavid immigrants, regained control of the kingdom in 1555-1556 after forced exile in Iran, he brought with him some Armenians. Humayun had come in contact with Armenian traders during his refuge in Iran, some of whom followed him back to India. Historian Samaren Roy touching upon this event gives the following comment:” Armenians spoke Persian - the language of the Mughal court - and were Christians, though not of the same denomination as the Portuguese. They were eminently suited to be middlemen”.

Mughal emperor Akbar the Great’s (1566-1605) domestic and foreign policy made India of special attractiveness for the Armenians. Akbar’s broad religious outlook, his imperial concept of consolidation, unity and especially the laissez-faire policy in respect of trade created enlarged opportunities for conducting overland trade for Armenian merchants in India. Akbar’s reign has been characterized as strong, benevolent, tolerant, and enlightened. He extended the empire from Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal and southwards to Gujarat and the northern Deccan. He had a powerful and original mind although he was illiterate. Being religiously tolerant, he was seeking interaction with Christianity. He favored the establishment of open relations with Christians, granted them the right to practice their religion openly, and encouraged their visits and even settling in the capital and the whole country. His unprejudiced inquires into Christian doctrines misled the Jesuit missionaries to the extent of thinking that he was on the point of conversion. During his reign permanent Armenian settlements were established in Agra, Surat and Lahore.

An Armenian settlement was established in Agra, which later on became a significant one. In order to sustain the economic development of his constantly expanding empire and promote the local trade, Emperor Akbar granted the permission to Armenian traders to come and settle in the imperial city of Agra and adopted a liberal stance on the religious belief of the new settlers. At one of his incognito visits to Kashmir, Akbar met Armenian merchant Hakobjan and invited him to come and settle in Agra. The emperor also told Hakobjan to persuade his countrymen in Punjab and elsewhere in India to come

---

At this time Padree Farmatiun arrived at the Imperial Court from Goa, and was received with great distinction. ...With him came a number of Europeans and Armenians who brought silks of China and goods of other counties, which were deemed worthy of his Majesty’s inspection.”

Domingo Pires served as interpreter to the Jesuit Fathers at Akbar’s Court before they learned the Persian language. According to the letters of catholic monks, when Pires married an Indian woman in 1582 the Emperor translated himself to the Indian woman Father Rudolf Aquaviva’s Persian Sermon and sat down with afterwards with his children at a banquet *a la Portugese*, in the missionary’s house. Later on at Akbar’s Palace within the Lahore fort, continue the Jesuits, “the daughter of the King (Akbar) calls out to us from above, ...and it seems she learned this from a small girl, the daughter of Domingo Pires, an Armenian, who brought us from Goa, and who (the girl) is with the Queen the greater part of the year.”

According to Ain-i-Akbari (the Institutes of Akbar) Abdul Hai, “the Qazi of the Imperial camp” or the chief justice was an Armenian. His last name is also a testimony of that, Hai meaning Armenian in Armenian language. The daughter of Abdul Hai was married by Akbar in 1590 to an Armenian at his Court, named Iskandar (Alexander). Originally a merchant from Aleppo, he reached prominence in royal service in capital Agra. The elder son of Iskandar was given the name of Mirza Zul-Qarnain (means the two-horned, the famous title of Alexander the Great) by their family’s protector Akbar. Mirza Zul-Qarnain, who was brought up in the royal palace, became grandee (Amir) of the Moghul Court during the reign of successor emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

It seems quite reasonable that at the stage of Armenians’ settling on Indian soil Surat was a focal point of their consideration. This city was located in Gujarat, western India, at the mouth of river Tapti on the Gulf of Cambay. In 1514 the Portuguese traveler Duarte Barbosa described Surat as a leading port. It became the emporium of India, exporting cloth and gold, also specializing in textile manufacture and shipbuilding. For the Armenian merchants initially, before Bombay came to prominence, it was the gate into the Indian subcontinent for traveling by sea from Basra, Bandar Abbas and Hurmuz. According to Mesrovb Seth, “in the Armenian cemetery at Surat, adjoining the

---


cemeteries of the early British and Dutch factors, there is the tombstone of an Armenian lady who died there in 1579 AD. The inscription, which is an ancient Armenian verse, can be translated thus: In this tomb lies buried the body of the noble lady, who was named Marinas, the wife of the priest Woskan. She was a crown to her husband, according to the proverbs of Solomon. She was taken to the Lord of Life, a soul-afflicting cause of sorrow to her faithful husband, in the year one thousand and twenty eight of our Armenian era, on the fifteenth day of November at the first hour of Friday, at the age of 53.\footnote{Ibid., p. 225} For determining the year of her demise we should add 551 to 1028 (upon the Armenian calendar). So the year is 1579 AD. So the presence of the Armenian priest in Surat testifies at the existence of the Armenian “flock” and points at the probability of having a church or chapel or at least holding religious services in a house. There is a reference of later period on the existence of an old Armenian church in Surat, which was destroyed by fanatics. In two hundred years a new Armenian church was built in the city.

At the closing stage of Emperor Akbar’s reign an Armenian community came into being in Lahore, Moghuls’ summer capital. Being a significant trade center in Punjab it caught the attention of the Armenian merchants. Four Armenian tombstones are preserved in Lahore; one of them bears the date 1601 AD. (They used to be at Lahore Central Museum; in the current period there was no possibility for the author to check their current status). Father Jerome Xavier writing from Agra on the 6th September, 1604, says “the poorer Armenians in Lahore made their livelihood by selling wines, for which they often get into trouble, as the Viceroy holds their trade in detestation (though he drinks well himself) and it was when Pinheiro had persuaded these Armenians to desist from this calling that they were safe from persecution of the Viceroy. Owing to Akbar’s Firman, the Christians might practice their religion quite openly”\footnote{Ibid., p. 201}. The same Jesuit missionary, in a letter from Lahore, dated the 25th September, 1606, says that when the city was in turmoil in 1606, owing to the revolt of Prince Khusru, the son of Jehangeer, the Armenian merchants stored their goods at the Father’s House, for safety. According to another piece of information, at one time the Moghul Governor had threatened to exterminate the Christians in Lahore and the Armenian community were in such fear, writes Fr. Pinheiro, on the 12th August, 1609, that “some twenty-three Armenian
merchants fled with haste, escaping through different gates, as it seems they have no mind to be martyrs, may God make them good confessors.\textsuperscript{120} We should take note of the fact that these events took place after the death of Akbar the Great, at whose times persecution on religious ground could have been impossible.

Summarizing the presented Jesuits’ reports on the Armenians in Lahore, we can conclude that there was a quite sizable Armenian community in that city already at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The big number of Armenian merchants confirms the vigorous commercial endeavors in Lahore. More interestingly the evidence of presence of the Armenians that were “poorer” means that certain number of them was definitely not engaged in international trade or domestic trade of a big scale. The outlined social diversification of the Lahore Armenian society points at the process of shaping full-fledged community, not necessarily composed only of merchants. This process in a more crystallized manner is observed at a later stage in all of the Indo-Armenian communities.

The analysis of the state of affairs of the Armenians in Akbar’s era brings us to the following conclusions. Akbar the Great’s favoritism towards the Armenians was stipulated first and foremost by the fact that it proceeded from and entirely corresponded to his imperial policy. The Armenians as skilled merchants, who gained fame on international commercial landscape, were thought to enrich India’s economy and trade. Being Christians, given the background of Akbar’s religious policy and rapprochement desire with the Christianity, the Armenians suited well in his schemes. They could serve as intermediaries, interpreters, experts in various matters as well. The Christian Armenians were known as an eastern nation, which was counted as an advantage. The core of this perception is that they were not regarded as an alien element. The given treatment of Christians on the side of Akbar naturally could be transient. Christianity was not only just a religion but a powerful world. Different countries of this economically and technically advanced entity were manifesting first signs of their aggressive plans in India. The Armenians were not backed by their own state. So they didn’t pose any threat to the Mughal state neither at the reign of Akbar nor in perspective. Quite naturally in the light of the powers’ contraposition the attitude and the policy towards the Christians in India were supposed to alter. But the Armenians due to the mentioned factor were somehow

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
reserved from that. We can add to that a point of anticipated wave of resistance to proselytizing plans of the European clergy. That was not the case with the Armenians either. Being easterners, knowing well Middle Eastern and wider Asian environment, applying their creativity and rapidly adjusting to new conditions the Armenians merited Emperor Akbar’s affable treatment.

As Bhaswati Bhattacharya points out, “At this stage Armenians living in India were well integrated into the existing socio-economic fabric of India. For commerce overland they traveled in caravans consisting of merchants of different Indian and west Asian communities. Overseas commerce too was carried out with merchants of different origins.”

The seventeenth century constitutes a qualitatively new period in the history of the Armenian trade and in parallel the spreading and the advancement of the Armenian community in India. With the emergence of New Julfa upon forcible transfer of the large population from Armenia proper into Iran, the outburst of Armenians’ mercantile zeal was naturally directed towards India as a vital link and a huge platform for the activities of the newly shaped Armenian vast trading network. That phenomenon coincided with some other factors that gave substantial impetus to the expansion of the Armenian trade in India. Starting 1602 Shah Abbas conquered the island of Bahrain, captured the port of Gambrun (renamed Bandar Abbas), and continued to expel the Portuguese from the area. The weakening of Portuguese control over the Arabian Sea trade, reaching its nadir with the fall of Hurmuz (“the kea to Estado da India”) in 1622, opened the possibilities of a practical state of “free trade” in the Gulf-India sector. At the same time, on the continental mass an enormous political consolidation had taken place, with the Mughal emperor Akbar placing the Indian frontier beyond Kabul (1585) and Qandahar (1592), and Shah Abbas II establishing Safavid control up to the Mughal frontier (ultimately recovering Qandahar, 1622). Such unification of control on the Iranian and the Indian sides, and especially the laissez-faire policies of the Mughal government in respect of trade, created enlarged opportunities for conducting overland trade and for operating at inland marts in India. The Armenian elite settled at New Julfa in Iran have made a

---

remarkable effort, despite their apparent position as exiles under siege, to gather together the requisite amount of capital in order to exploit these opportunities.\textsuperscript{122}

K.N. Chaudhuri, one of the most prominent researchers of the commercial economy of Asian countries, writes: “Due to their mobility and knowledge of languages and customs, Armenian merchants managed to penetrate the local milieu, and find necessary support for their business. They were welcomed because they were not proselytizers, did not advocate the use of arms, nor they tried to intervene or change the rules set by the Asian partners. In India, the only foreigners capable of competing with the Indian merchants in the textile sector were said to be Armenians “who not only knew almost every town and village with a substantial weaving industry but also purchased at prices 30 per cent below those paid by the English East India Company”\textsuperscript{123}. He characterizes the Armenian merchants as “a group of highly skilled arbitrage dealers” who brought their services to the world of India, also Middle East and Europe.\textsuperscript{124} Broker, moneylender, transporter: the same man could be all these at the same time. Some Armenian merchants also were agents, interpreters, functionaries and diplomats in the service of local sovereigns and the European companies. This capacity for adaptation, allied with an unequivocal solidarity, constituted an important asset in the face of the risks and uncertainties inherent in trade: fall in prices, piracy, misuse of power, armed conflicts, etc.\textsuperscript{125}

The historical sources broadly confirm that the Armenian merchant network in India developed because its numbers were united by bonds of solidarity and trust based on awareness of common membership of one nation, identified with an autocephalous church that was on many levels a natural substitute of state. A distinctive feature of the network, which was connecting settlements in different parts of India, was a kind of merchant hierarchy on the basis of fortune and participation in the affairs of the nation. All these people spoke the same language, they used the same writing and, as in case of

\textsuperscript{122} Shireen Moosvi, “Armenian Trade in the Mughal Empire During the 17th Century”, paper presented at international seminar “Armenians in Asian Trade: 16th to 18th Centuries”, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 8-10 October, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., Pp. 137-138.
\textsuperscript{125} Michel Aghassian, “Keram Kevonian, Armenian Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, New Delhi, 2000, Pp. 157-158.
settlers from New Julfa, had their own calendar, that of Azaria (the calendar was used only by Iranian-Armenians and Indo-Armenians). This began in 1615 and in a sense paved the way for the great commercial boom. The network had an undisputed cultural identity. The importance that they attached later to the matters of education of their young generation, the transmission of technical knowledge, its transcription into a special language, and sometimes the unique peculiarity of that knowledge, also contributed to this phenomenon. There are also some other reasons for the success of Armenians in India: thorough knowledge of Persian, which was the Mughal court language, as well as many other local and foreign languages, including European; relative emancipation of the elite connected with the rise of the Mughal empire, excellent knowledge of the “terrain”, of itineraries, sources of supply and market conditions; constant exchange of information regarding the evolution of European demand and Asian supply; capacity to adapt to the prevailing economic conditions and crisis situations by moving on to new commercial circuits; absence of any desire to dominate or proselytize. 126 Some indices also reveal the extent of profits realized or fortunes amassed. In Hyderabad in 1666, two brothers, John and Joseph Margarian decided to trade with Mylapur (Madras), jointly investing a capital of Rs. 27,950. Thirty-one years later, on John’s death, the sums withdrawn by him from the profits amounted to Rs. 73,650. Joseph, who died in 1704, according to his testament, was worth half a million rupees – of which 320,000 were invested in a company which he formed with his son-in-law, in the form of cash, goods, precious stones, ships-not counting the florin deposits. 127

The question of initial financial capabilities of the Armenian merchants in India arises recurrently. Shireen Moosvi notes that, undoubtedly, in the initial start up of the Armenians small amounts of capital were involved. 128 We partially agree with that opinion. The advancement of the julfan and other merchants from Eastern Armenia in India at the initial stage and since the beginning of the seventeenth century of Newjulfan and other Iranian-Armenian merchants occurred with involvement of a certain capital, sometimes pretty big sums of money. The formation of the trading network, in which India constituted a formidable but a fragment of the whole, was accompanied with

126 Ibid, p. 163.
128 Shireen Moosvi, Armenian Trade in the Mughal Empire During the 17th Century, p. 2.
accumulation of capital. The Armenian traders were investing in their Indian commercial ventures the revenues derived from their Iranian monopolistic raw silk trade, the earnings coming from Russian and European trade, and even from vine growing, gardening and winemaking in Isfahan’s adjacent areas. The process of reinvesting was also a feature of trading in India. It is noteworthy that money borrowing and credit represented a widespread phenomenon as well. Merchants getting credit for Indian commercial endeavors not necessarily lacked their own capitals. Borrowing for trade in India and worldwide in Armenian merchant circle was regarded both for lender and borrower as a mutually convenient and profitable mode of business.

A unique document – merchant’s ledger, preserved in the Manuscripts Department of the National Book Depository in Portugal and later published in Armenia, discloses very many practical aspects of the Armenian trading in India. The ledger of the merchant Hovhannes Joughayetsi covers his life and business mission in diverse cities and regions of India, from Surat, Khurja, Agra, Sironj, Aurangabad, Lahurpur, and Khairabad to Patna, Hooghly, Calcutta, Katmandu and Lhasa. Hovhannes, son of priest David, started his voyage to India by signing a contract in New Julfa on 19th December 1682, upon which he received from brothers Zakaria and Embroomagha merchandise (red and green English broadcloth) and money of 250 tumans. The condition for him was getting a quarter of the profits. Interestingly, before acquiring merchandise and money for India Hovhannes himself lent money to merchant Mooradkhan for trading in Turkey.¹²⁹

The case of Hovhannes depicts the fact that the Armenian merchants refrained from taking big money during their trips. The main capital was put into circulation, using the bill of exchange upon the need of money remittance from a place to another. The entries made in the ledger show how these deals were made. “I have transferred 1,000 rupees from Ekra to Patna; this is also evidenced by Mr. Avetik’s accounts. Remittance charge was 1.275 per cent; in all 13.5 rupees. On the 14th of the month of Ghamar, Hovhan of Shiraz made from Surat a transfer of 1,000 rupees in my name to Mr. Avetik for a period of 41 days. The remittance charge was 4.5 per cent, i.e. 45 rupees in all. On the 3rd of the month of Ayram in Ekra, through the middle-man of Birju, I made a transfer to Surat (in Nazaret’s name) of 3.250 rupees. I paid remittance charge of 8 per cent of the

transferred sum which came, in all, to 260 rupees.”\textsuperscript{130} The money transferring institution had a networking all over the country. The charge for money transfer depended on several circumstances like distance, road condition, safety, money amount and so forth.

The factor of trust in the Armenian commercial circle was already highlighted. There is need to add that the Armenians conducted their trade also basing themselves on trust vis-à-vis local Indian merchants, the middle-men, sarrafs and others involved. Following the path of Hovhannes, the following is observed: In the city of Amdanagor in 1684 he gives 1,800 rupees to Baba, son of Panos, at 0.75 per cent interest a month, provided he should get the sum back in Agra in 41 days. In carrying out this transaction Baba gives no bill to Hovhannes. “You go now and I’ll send the bill to Aurankapat (Aurangabad).” Hovhannes remarks: “When I came to Aurankapat the receipt was there.” It is also interesting to note that Hovhannes willingly pays to Manvel his debt of 200 rupees though the latter had lost the receipt.\textsuperscript{131}

Having created such kind of an internal sphere of financial operations, the Armenians also made use of the Indian credit and commercial network. Brokerage was an important institution in Indian commerce, the profession being monopolized by the banyas. The sarrafs who run the credit and the banking structure were indispensable to the working of the monetary system. The Mughal coinage system, with its uniform imperial standards of weights and measures, was imposed throughout the empire over dozens of local monetary systems. Centrally appointed functionaries of the imperial mints accepted bullion or coin from local sarrafs or other private individuals. There are many registered cases of local brokers’ assistance to the Armenians. Hovhannes calls the Indian bill “yendvi”, obviously a transcription of “hundwi”, the spelling normally employed for “hundi” in Persian writing at the time.\textsuperscript{132} The Italian from Venice Niccolao Manucci, whom the fate brought to India in 1650s, tells a story of a default of sarraf’s bill. “When I was at Patnah I saw an Armenian friend of mine called Coja Safar (Khwajah Safar), of Agrah. He had a letter entitling him to receive from a sarraf (money changer) twenty-five thousand rupees. On his arrival he learned that the sarraf had become bankrupt. The Armenian dissimulated. As all the merchants new him, they brought cloth, and he took delivery up to thirty thousand rupees’ worth. He loaded up all this cloth for Surat,

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p. 175.
\textsuperscript{132} Shireen Moosvi, \textit{Armenian Trade in the Mughal Empire During the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century}, p. 9.
continuing himself at Patnah. When the time came for paying the merchants, he, in pursuance of the custom of the country, lighted two candles in the morning, as a sign that he had become bankrupt, he sat in his house with no turban on his head, a simple cloth bound round his head and loins, his seat an old bit of matting, and a dejected expression on his face. A great tumult arose in the city, and the merchants thronged to learn the cause; there was a storm of questions, answers, and bad language. To all this he replied with a sad countenance, calmly, and without heat, by the word “Divalia” (diwala), which means “bankrupt”. No other response could they get. They carried him off to the court; but on the quiet he had given the judge a bribe of five thousand rupees. At the hearing he (Safar) produced the bill of exchange that he got at Agrah upon the sarraf of Patnah, and made the defense that this sarraf was the cause that he, too, was a bankrupt. The judge decreed that the merchants must take the bill of exchange and procure payment for them, being fellow citizens of the sarraf. It was unreasonable that a stranger should suffer in a foreign country. The Armenian, being thus absolved, made his way to Surat.

On the whole the Armenian merchants were trying to stick to the principle of settling their disputes on the instructions and advice of the local Armenian community. In cases of particular community being a small one or having a small number of Armenian merchants available in the place they invited foreign or local merchants to take part in the discussion of the controversial item. From the ledger of Hovhannes Joughayetsi we find out that facing a similar problem in Tibet the Armenian merchants invited the Kashmiris from India, residing and trading in Lhasa. Only in exceptional cases, when the routine ways of dispute settling proved fruitless, did they apply to the local courts.

By the 1620s they were already source of irritation for that characteristically large firm, the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch and the English were trying their best to establish a monopoly over Bayana indigo grown near Agra and, then, regarded as the best in the world. In 1626 Pelsaert, the Dutch factor at Agra, complained of the Armenians “running and racing about like hungry folk” in the indigo areas, ...making as if they

---

would buy up the whole stock, raising prices, losing a little themselves and causing great injury to us and other buyers, who have to purchase large quantities.”

When in 1635 the Mughal Emperor abolished a brief and abortive monopoly over indigo trade, the Armenians were in the field well ahead of the Dutch and the English, transporting the indigo overland to Persia and securing “a very great price” for the product there. The Armenians were thus setting up a fairly competitive overland trade. In 1639 they were reported to be conveying to “Spahan (Isfahan) and other parts thereof, by the way of Candahar (Qandahar or Kandahar)” large quantities of cloth and sugar grown between Agra and Lahore; they brought in return, overland, “very great quantities of broadcloth and sold it at such low rates” as to ruin the Lahore and Agra markets for their European competitors.

One of the reasons of Armenian merchants’ success among other already mentioned is highlighted by Georges Roque (Roques), an agent of the French East India Company: “These people are shrewder than the Indian sarrafs, because they do not work alone, when it comes to evaluating their merchandise and money. More enterprising amongst them deal with all that is there (to trade in), and do not ignore the price of any merchandise, either from Europe or Asia, or any other place because they correspond with all others and receive rapid information on current prices wherever they are. Thus they do not get cheated in their purchases, and are very economical, and work unbelievably hard to trade so as not to overpay on the merchandise. They spend very little towards their living. They are by nature accustomed to living frugally…”

As a result, the Armenians could tap commodities and markets which the Dutch and the English tended to ignore. The Armenians bought not only the Bayana indigo, but the chipper Koria and other varieties of indigo from the same region, whose “price is commonly broken by Mogulls and Armenians”, since the English and Dutch ignored these varieties. Seventeenth century French physician Francois Bernier writes in his

---

137 English Factories in India, 1637-41, p. 135.
138 English Factories in India, 1642-45, p. 18.
140 English Factories in India, 1642-45, report of 1645, p. 303.
“Travels in the Mogul Empire” in relation to 1663: “The Dutch used also to make extensive purchases of cloths not only at Jelapour (Jalalpur), but at Laknau (Lucknow), a seven or eight days’ journey from Agra, where they also have a house, and dispatch a few factors a season. It seems, however, that the trade of this people is not now very lucrative, owing probably to competition of the Armenians, or to the great distance between Agra and Sourate (Surat)."¹⁴¹ At Sironj (Central India) too the Armenians had an established presence in 1678, while the French and English trade was “not regularly fixed.” The Armenians, we are told, “purchase 2000 corges (costing Rs. 40,000-60,000) in a year and make a great profit in taking Jaffarconi chittes (Jafar-khani chintz, or printed cloth) to Persia, Bantam and Manila."¹⁴² This last report is interesting in indicating that, apart from the land route to Iran, the Armenians were now getting involved in the sea-traffic to South-East Asia. At least in the latter half of the seventeenth century, this interest in overseas markets complemented, but did not yet replace, the Armenian participation in the Indo-Iranian overland trade. In 1673 Chardin still noted how great a caravan “composed of Armenians and Indians” annually went to India, carrying goods and cash claimed to be worth 300,000 tumans (1,4 million), or about Rs. 7,5 million, though Jean Chardin believed the real capital involved to be half this sum.¹⁴³

Being competitive and successful on overland routes of both Euro-Asian and intra-Asian trade, the Armenian merchants initially didn’t consider maritime trade as a domain worthy of applying their efforts. The traditional specialization in overland trade enabled them to secure immense profits and even explore new opportunities in terms of expanding geographical scope of mercantile operations and using perfecting techniques in tactics and strategy of their business. In addition, there were numerous reasons why merchants would be disinclined to invest in shipping. Large ships would tie up too much of the trading capital of even an affluent merchant. Ship-owning at the Indian ports was almost invariably a matter for the individual and a ship lost at sea would mean a crippling blow, especially as a vessel as distinct from its cargo does not seem to have been secured by insurance. Profits in the carrying trade fell short of what was regarded as profit inn the

¹⁴² Roque (Ruquia), p. 394.
trade of a good season. Nevertheless in the course of the seventeenth century some major changes started to happen in the Indian trade conduct. East India Companies of major European powers stepped into the Indian Ocean commerce, using their advantage of having huge commercial fleets and capability to build new ones. The strong emphasis on maritime trade changed not only the mode of business but also its scale.

The Portuguese monopoly of the all-water route was challenged at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the English East India Company (officially chartered in 1600 by Queen Elizabeth I) and the Dutch East India Company (founded in 1602 by the States-General, the national administrative body of the Dutch Republic), who eventually came to dominate this trade. The only other body of any consequence engaged in this enterprise was the French East India Company (founded in 1664 by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, finance minister to King Louis XIV). The so-called minor companies - the Danish, the Ostend, the Swedish and others - never really accounted for more than an insignificant proportion of the total trade between two continents and within Asia. The Dutch East India Company carried on a substantial amount of trade within Asia. Employees of corporate enterprises also engaged in intra-Asian trade in their private capacity. By far the most important category of these employees was that in the service of the English East India Company. And understandably India was the center of all the Europeans trading activities. The European trading companies were following closely the Armenian merchants' India bound overland commercial operations. William Lesk, on board the Globe at Plymouth, writes in his letter to the English East India Company's headquarter in London: “The Armenian drive a rich trade between India and Persia for in regard of the great wars between the great Turk and the king of Persia the inhabitants of the country not able to make the most of there sale buy at deere rates many commodities of India so that several commodities from thence carried thither by land, all charges deducted afford two, three and four for one if then they by land make so great gain, what might you do transporting the same by water and yet such and so great was the selfish negligence of your factours that notwithstanding of the plenty they had both of money

Europe, especially in Amsterdam, served as a positive factor to the advantage of direct shipment.

During the course of the seventeenth century Armenian engagement in sea trade was gradually established. The vessels of the Armenian merchants flew their own flags – red, yellow, red, with the Lamb of God in the center – respected in most ports in the Indian Ocean. In 1630 the Surat factors of the English East India Company were reporting to their headquarters that “the Persians and Armenians who take yearly passage on your ships (from Gombroon to Surat and back) do invest great sums of money in India” The goods they took back from India and sold in Gombroon were then dispersed all over the Ottoman Empire. The Gulf-India sea trade appeared in the center of Armenian merchants’ attention who were considering an option to invest in it. In 1667, French traveler and diamond merchant Jean-Baptist Tavernier noted that formerly the English and Dutch monopolized this navigation (Gulf-Surat trade); but for some years past the Armenians, Musalmans of India and Banians have had their own vessels also.

Shireen Moosvi notes: “Among the Armenian sea-traders and ship-owners, the name of Khwaja (Khoja) Minas of Surat now begins to occur: he was certainly the most prominent Armenian merchant in India involved in the seventeenth century sea trade to the Gulf, Red Sea and South-East Asia.” In 1672, according to Abbe Carre, he “had four large ships, which by their yearly trade with all the oriental kingdoms brought him more revenue than he would have got from the best estate in Bruce”. These four ships were St. Michael, Selimony (Sulaimani), Queddah Merchant and Hopewell. Minas bought Hopewell from Oxenden, a well-known official of the East India English Company, in 1665 for Rs. 1400. It was a 150-ton ship built at Surat for the English Company in 1662. In 1665-1666 it had an Italian captain Bernardo; but in 1672 when

---

148 English Factories in India, 1630-1633, pp. 124-125.
149 J.B. Tavernier traveled extensively in India with intervals from 1640 to 1667, describing in detail his voyages. He had an opportunity to apprise the Great Mughal’ fascinating collection of jewels and precious stones in 1665. For two and a hundred centuries – since mid-17th century to the end of 19th century – the specialists were using “Tavernier’ method” for appraisal of diamonds. See I. Magidovich and V. Magidovich, *Sketches of Geographic Discoveries History*, (in Russian), Vol. III, Moscow, 1986, p. 156.
151 Shireen Moosvi, *Armenian Trade in the Mughal Empire During the 17th Century*, p. 4.
Abbe Carre sighted it going the Island of Kharg it had an English acquaintance of him as captain, Thomas Quin. Khoja Minas’ ships were heading from Surat to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, as well as to the South East Asia and the Philippines.

Between Bengal and Iran there was considerable trade in which the Armenians actively participated as the English East India Company factors in Persia indicated. In 1694 the Muscateers took an Armenian ship worth 500,000 shahis at Kong on the Persian Coast.¹⁵⁴

Returning to the Europeans’ organization of trading activities in India, it worth mentioning that in addition to transportation, the procurement of the Indian goods was now organized by the Europeans themselves. The goods procured had to be paid for overwhelmingly in precious metals. The working of the Spanish American silver mines had tremendously expanded the European silver stock. The Armenians found their own place in this exchange. It is known that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Armenians exchanged Persian and Bengali silk for Mexican silver from the New World mines, brought back to Europe by the Iberian trade.¹⁵⁵ The brightly colored textiles of the Coromandel Coast were also part of this exchange.

Since 1670s the English East India Company intended to sharply consolidate its positions in India by stopping English interlopers trade, suppressing the trade of the Armenians and other predominant trading groups. A fierce competition evolved between the English East India Company and the Armenian merchants. Despite scores of advantages, the Company yielded to Armenians in knowledge of the interior, their infrastructure was pricey and conceded to khojas’ cost-effective business style, the Armenians established themselves both on overland and to a certain degree on maritime routes etc. In this circumstance, realizing that the struggle with the Armenian merchants would be long-dated and not judicious for the time being, the English inclined to adroitly offer them cooperation.

The basic reasons for seeking collaboration with the Armenian merchants for the Company was to increase cloth exports and silk imports, reduce shipments of bullion, promote English shipping, lessen the Company’s charges by limiting the proportion of “dead” stock to “live”, diminish reliance on unsatisfactory local brokers, widen the range

---
¹⁵⁴ India Office Records G/40/4 Surat to E.I. Co., 14 December 1694.
of articles available for European investment, tap further opportunities for local credit, procure local Armenian knowledge, trading expertise and enterprise, and in so doing expand and render more profitable the Company’s trade. The colonial trade at this time was increasing. There was no problem in disposing of Indian goods at home and abroad, but the Company aimed to provide them on the most profitable terms for itself, irrespective of where it procured supplies, provided it was within the area of its charter, or whether it competed the Levant Company (another English company). It was, however, the complementary trade of cloth and silk that was, at this stage, the heart of the matter. The English also needed the Armenians to further their own designs in India, as when they sailed to Manila using Armenian “colors” and Armenian-owned ships instead of their own company vessels, which were barred from Manila by the Spanish authorities, or when they acquired Mughal farmans granting them land to build factories and attendant trading privileges.

Another essential reason for the English was securing support for Bombay’s development. The English and the Dutch companies carried out their trade in northern and western India from the premier Mughal port of Surat. However, the English had their eye on the natural harbor of Bombay further south on the coast which was then under Portuguese control. In 1661, the island was ceded to England under the terms of marriage treaty between the English king Charles II and Catherine of Braganza, sister of the king of Portugal. In 1664 the British crown took its formal possession and soon after ceded to the English East India Company. Humphrey Cooke, governor of Bombay appealed to the Armenian merchants, residing in Surat, to resettle in his town. Few merchants, among them eminent Khoja Minas, Khoja Karakuz and Khoja Delaune, did so but their number was not big. The 1670s and 1680s witnessed a sharp deterioration in the relations between the Company and the Mughal authorities. Josia Child, the governor of Bombay in East India House, initiated the changeover to the policy of armed trading. The English needed greater security for their stock of incoming and outgoing goods. The uncertainty of the political situation in India was conditioned by the military actions of the Marathi Shivaji’s (who was crowned in 1674 at a ceremony reminiscent of the Hindu Vijayanagar

---


Empire) formidable fighting force against Mughal empire, dissensions within the Mughal Court and insubordination of generals such as Shayesteh Khan in Bengal. Competition with the French and the Dutch was becoming fiercer. In this context in 1686 the Company launched a naval conflict against the Mughal Empire with the aim to make territorial conquests in the coastal areas and to fortify new settlements. After the capture of eight Indian vessels sailing to Surat Emperor Aurangzeb, among other measures, ordered the stoppage of all English trade. The Company in 1686 issued instructions therefore that “now is our time or never to settle our head factory upon our own land at Bombay, the best port and most valuable of any in all the East Indies, if we had the political science and martial prudence, which the Dutch to their great honour exercise in all the Indies…”158 They pursued the goal of making the island self-sufficient in all respects and resourced for self-development. The Company proposed to encourage Jews for “we could heartily wish you had three good rich Jews Houses settled with you in Bombay” and invite the Armenians, “that some good rich houses of them might settle with you at Bombay and bring all their silk this way”, and “the principal inducement must be that they shall have liberties to transport their returns back in cloth upon the terms of our present indulgence to these men”.159

On 22nd June, 1688 trade agreement between the “Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies” and the “Armenian Nation” was signed by Governor Benjamin Bathurst, Deputy-Governor Josia Child and other Company’s officials on the English side and prominent merchant Khoja Panos Calendar (Ghalandarian), a native of New Julfa then residing in London, on behalf of the Armenian merchants. According to this agreement, the Armenian merchants were proposed to carry on “a great part of the Armenian trade to India and Persia and from thence to Europe by way of England which will redound greatly to His majesty’s advantages in his Customs and to the increase of English Navigation, if the Armenian Nation might obtain such Licenses from this Company as will give them encouragement so to alter and invert the ancient course of their Trade to and from Europe.” Further in the agreement it is clarified what “ancient course of their trade” means: “…the said Armenians have and used to drive a great Trade from India to Turkey overland by the way of Persia and Arabia”. In return

158 India Office Records L.B. E/3/91 Company to Surat, 3 September 1686
159 India Office Records L.B. E/3/91 Company to Bombay, 6 June 1687.
for diverting their accustomed trade routes the Armenian merchants were getting from the English East India Company the following privileges: “First, that the Armenian Nation shall now at all times hereafter have equal share and benefit of all indulgences this Company have or shall at any time hereafter grant to any of their own Adventurers or other English Merchants whatsoever. Secondly, that they shall have free liberty at all times hereafter to pass and repass to and from India on any of the Company’s ships on as advantageous terms as any Freeman whatsoever. Thirdly, that they shall have liberty to live in any of the company’s Cities, Garrisons, or Towns in India, and to buy, sell and purchase Land or Houses, and be capable of all Civil Offices and preferments in the same manner as if they were Englishmen born, and shall always have a free and undisturbed liberty of the exercise of their own Religion... Fourthly, that they may voyage from any of the Company’s Garrisons to any other Ports or Places in India, the South Sea, China, the Manillas, in any of the Company’s Ships or any permissive free Ships allowed by the Company, and may have liberty to trade in China, the Manillas, or any other parts or places within the limits of the Company’s Charter, upon equal terms, duties, and freights with any free Englishman whatsoever. Rates and charges for permission, customs and freightage on a range of articles were enumerated. These tended to encourage the shipment of goods outside the mainstream of the Company’s trade but including cloth and silk.

The English also knew well about the Armenians’ devotion to their Church, and if the Armenians could have their own churches in the Company’s towns, only that would make their stay long term. So, a special provision was enclosed in the agreement: “The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies ... by these presents declare grant and agree, that whenever forty or more of the Armenian Nation shall become inhabitants in any of the garrisons, cities or towns belonging to the Company in the East Indies under our jurisdiction, the said Armenians shall not only have and enjoy the free use and exercise of their religion, but there shall be also allotted to them a parcel of ground to erect a church thereon for the worship and service of God in their own way and that we will also at our own charge, cause a convenient church to be built of timber, which afterwards the said Armenians may alter and build with stone or

160 Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Company Sources, p. 86-88.
other solid materials to their own good liking.” In the same agreement, given at the English East India Company’s larger seal, as also under the hands of the Governor Benjamin Bathurst, Deputy Governor and three Committee members it is stated: “And the said Governor and Company will also allow fifty pounds per annum during the space of seven years for the maintenance of such priest or minister as they shall choose to officiate therein.”

On the same day as the Agreement was signed the English East India Company in Committee signified its approval. This treaty, however, was not considered binding on all Armenian merchants of New Julfa origin, and it was intended to be respected by those merchants who were already active with their own independent shipping in the “country trade” (i.e., port-to-port trade) in the Indian ocean.

The trade agreement with the English East India Company did not trigger an immediate mass exodus of Armenian merchants from Iran. However, it served as a point of departure for the gradual relocation of several prominent families to India during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Along with the progression of commercial activities of the Armenian merchants, the Armenian settlements in India were growing in number, spreading geographically and increasing in population. The development of the naval routes to India also played a role in drastic increase of the number of Armenian settlers. Bengal, the most prosperous eastern province (Subah) in seventeenth century India, could not stay out of Armenians’ area of interest. Emperor Aurangzeb, the last of “the Great Mughals” called it “the paradise of nations”. In the first decades of the mentioned century individual Armenians and families started to settle in Bengal. The first material evidence with proper inscription, referring to probably first Armenian inhabitants of Bengal was found in Calcutta. It is a tombstone dating from 1630, which was found by Mesrovb Seth in 1885 in the yard of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, where previously was an old Armenian cemetery. The inscription reads: “This is the tomb of Rezabeebeh, the wife of the late charitable Sookias, who departed from this world to life eternal on 21st day of

---

161 Ibid., p. 90.
162 India Office Court Minutes B/39 pp. 132-135, 22nd June, 1688.
163 Sebouh Aslanian, Trade Diaspora Versus Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of Admiralty in London, 1748-1752, p. 50
Nakha in the year 15 i.e., on the 21st July, 1630.” Until this discovery it was assumed that the English were the first foreign settlers and founders of Calcutta. It is regarded that Calcutta was found by Job Charnock, the English East India Company’s most experienced factor in Bengal, in 1690. The presence of the mentioned tombstone makes the Armenians first foreign settlers of place, sixty years before the English. Another aspect of historical reality is that when Job Charnock landed in Sutanuti in 1690, the three villages of Sutanuti, Govindapur and Kolikata were already there, and their zamindary rights were vested with the Saborna Roychaudhuri family.

The reference to the first duly documented Armenian settlement in Bengal relates to Saidabad, a suburb of Murshidabad, founded in 1665. Murshidabad at that time was capital of Bengal. In the same year Emperor Aurangzeb issued a royal Farman, granting Armenians a vast piece of land at Saidabad, with full permission to establish a settlement there. They have been reassured of all trading privileges, granted the rights of succession of the property in case of the death of a member of family and the duties on the two principle items of their trade there, piece-goods and raw silk, were fixed at three and one-half percent. Their main occupation was the export of the raw silk for which Bengal was so renowned. It is remarkable to note that Saidabad as suburb of Murshidabad was an exclusive Armenian colony. Another suburb of Murshidabad was Kasimbazar, the most important center of silk production. From nearest Dhaka finest textiles were coming, especially the legendary muslins.

The next destination of the Armenians’ dispersion in Bengal was the village of Chinsura on the bank of river Hughli, two miles to the south of port town Hugli. The Dutch East India Company established a factory at Chinsura in 1635, which was recognized in 1656 as the chief factory of the region and the seat of the Dutch directorate of Bengal. Some Armenian merchants, like opulent Margar family, who had commercial bonds with the Dutch, appeared in Chinsurh in 1645. The regular Armenian colony was formed there in 1680s – the beginning of 1690s. The foundations of the Armenian Church in Chinsura, St. John the Baptist, were laid in 1695 by Khojah Johannes Margar, the son of Khojah Margar. St. John the Baptist church is the second oldest Christian church in Bengal. In 1697 Khojah Johannes passed away. When his accounts were

164 Mesrovb Jacob Seth, Armenians in India from the Earliest Times to the Present, p. 419.
checked, it was found that as a result of partnership with his brother Khojah Joseph Margar since 1666 at Hyderabad with a joint capital of Rs. 27,550, the net profit of Rs. 2,000,000 had been made in 31 years. Upon the latter’s will Rs. 20,000 was envisaged for the Armenian church at Chinsura.

The Armenians also settled in Hyderabad (Deccan). The kingdom of Golconda (and later Hyderabad) extended over much of the Telugu-speaking parts of India, including the Coromandel Coast, and was ruled from 1500-1687 by the Qutb Shahis, a Muslim dynasty of Turkish origin. The French traveler Jean de Thevenot was “surprised to see rich merchants, bankers, and jewelers not only native but also Persians and Armenians” in the capital of Golconda in 1666-1667. It is a fact that the ruler of Golconda patronized the Armenians. When the Dutch envoy Wemmer Van Berchem arrived at the court of the king of Colonda, an Armenian merchant from Masulipatam complained that the Dutch had seized his vessel “Tanzasary” in the port of the kingdom because it carried Portuguese Cargo. The king secured the release of the cargo of the Armenian, much against the wishes of Berchem. Some Armenian inscriptions at the old cemetery at Hydarabad date from 1640. An Armenian priest, Reverend Johannes, the son of Reverend Jacob, died in 1680, is buried at this cemetery.

In 1687, the kingdom of Golconda was conquered by the Moghuls, who then divided the Deccan region into six provinces with the capital at Aurangabad. Two new centers of economic life emerged in the south: the peripatetic center of Moghul power at the Emperor’s camp and the English city-state of Madras. Many Armenian merchants moved to Aurangabad with the Mughals.

Another major trade center, were Armenian merchants had settled was Madras. From a valuable Armenian manuscript, written at Masuliapatam by Sarkies Johannes in 1790, we find that the Armenians settled permanently at Madras in the year 1666. The site of Madras was obtained by the English East India Company by a grant from the Qutb Shahi Sultan dated March 1, 1639. Many Armenian merchants assumed the role of

---

166 Jean de Thevenot, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, in Surendranath Sen (ed), New Delhi, 1949, Pp. 94-97.
intermediaries between the English and the Qutb Shahi court. They felt pretty comfortable in multiple cultures. The town of Mylapore (San Thome, currently part of Chennai) was captured by Sultan Abd-Allah Qutb Shah of Golconda from Portuguese in May, 1662. The Sultan appointed an Armenian Markus Erezad its governor. In the Public Records Office Museum in London in case K, no. 113 a document is kept, which is a letter of Mylapore governor Erezad to the English king Charles II, dated February 4th, 1664 and written in Portuguese. The Portuguese was the official language of usage in Mylapore not only until the end of Portuguese rule over it in 1662 but also was in circulation a couple of more decades. The most fascinating part of it is that letter signed by the author in Armenian - Markus Erezad.¹⁷⁰

In the letter of 29 February 1692 from the governors of the English East India Company in London to the Council of Fort St. George, Madras the following interesting fact was mentioned: “We have discoursed Sir John Goldsborought about enlarging our Christian town to a quadrangle so as it may be done without detriment to the Company with handsome stone bridges over the river in which designed new moiety of the city. One quarter of that moiety may be set apart for the Armenian Christians to build their new church at their charge with stone and other durable materials and convenient dwelling houses for their merchants... And the quarter so set apart for their use you may call Julfa, that being the town from whence Shah Abbas the Great brought them when he conquered Armenia and settled them in a suburb of his new made metropolitan city of Isfahan, and called the quarter he allotted there to the Armenians Julfa by the name of the city from whence he brought them, and they are increased there to be richest people and most expert merchants that we know in the universe.”¹⁷¹

Kostand Jughayetsi (Constant of Julfa), principal of the New Julfa Armenian School of commerce, traveled extensively in India at the end of the seventeenth century. In his “An introduction to commerce, a most necessary and profitable lesson” he presents a list of cities, towns and provinces, where the Armenian merchants frequented, unsurprisingly also residing in many of them. Cashmere, Mooltan, Attock, Sirhind, Janabad (Shahjehanabad, i.e. Delhi), Akbarabad (Agra), Khurja, Hundwan, Bangalah (Bengal), Behar (Bihar), Phathanah, (Patna), Benares, Movcn (probably Mawana),

¹⁷⁰ S. Ter M. Grigorian, Armenians in South India, Venice, 1922, reprint from “Bazmavep” journal, pp.6-7
¹⁷¹ Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Company Sources, p. 112-113.
Ghaziropore, Jalalpur, Shahzadpur, Khairabad, Daryabad, Daulatabad, Sirhinj (probably Sironj) Berhampore, Surat, Gujerat (Gujarat), Aurangabad, Shahgarh, Huderabad, Moochleebandar, (Masulipatam), Bhutan, and Cochin are reflected in it.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{172} Matenadaran named after M. Mashtots, manuscript no. 5994