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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

“The Gulfe of Persia devours all”: English Merchants in Safavīd Persia, 1616-1650

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Daniel Ben Razzari

August 2016

Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. Jonathan Eacott

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The Dissertation of Daniel Ben Razzari is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The journey through graduate school and the completion of this present work was long and arduous. Along the way, I have accumulated several academic debts, and it is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the people who have made it possible. Without their support, this work would never have come to fruition and the story of the Englishmen who lived in Persia left untold.

First and foremost, this dissertation could never have been written without Dr. Thomas Cogswell, who I am forever indebted to for his tremendous support for my endeavor into Early Modern English history. It was through his guidance that I came to work on this adventurous, yet wildly entertaining group of Englishmen. I can only express my gratitude, but the words written here pale in comparison to the contribution he made to the pages that follow. But I hope this present work in some way honors the time and effort Dr. Cogswell generously spent towards its completion. I am deeply grateful for his patience and willingness to read and re-read numerous drafts of papers, grant proposals, and most of all the chapters contained below. No less important was his willingness to meet over coffee or a pint in London to discuss the progress and direction of my research, especially as it became overwhelming. For this, I am sincerely grateful.

In addition, I am indebted to several members of the UC Riverside faculty, especially the other two members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Jonathan Eacott and Dr. Fariba Zarinebaf, who willingly read the pages that follow despite their demanding schedules. The dissertation is the culmination of several years of work in graduate school, and before I could arrive at this point I benefitted from the expertise and help of

numerous faculty members along the way. Dr. Randolph Head has provided support, encouragement, and valuable criticism of which I am greatly appreciative. Dr. Alexander Haskell, Dr. Ray Kea, Dr. Dale Kent, and numerous lecturers, particularly Dr. Tofigh Heidarzadeh and Dr. David Gehring, have freely offered advice and criticism. I would also like to thank Dr. Francis Dutra, my former undergraduate mentor, who was more than willing to answer a few questions for a former student. Without these individuals, my progress through graduate school would have been impossible.

I also benefitted from a very helpful library staff at several institutions, especially the interlibrary loan staff at UC Riverside. The staffs at the British Library, London Metropolitan Archives, the Warwickshire County Records Office, and the National Archives (Kew) were incredibly insightful. I would like to thank the British library's curator of the East India Company's records, Margaret Makepeace, for offering valuable assistance and insight pertaining to the collection of English manuscripts. The reference librarians at the British Library (Asian & African Studies reading room) were incredibly helpful and provided outstanding assistance in navigating the vast collection of manuscripts.

Writing and research is only one part of the journey, and the History Department's staff helped me navigate the administrative aspects with ease. For this, I must offer my deepest thanks to Deisy Escobedo, Iselda Salgado, and Susan Komura. The research for this dissertation was possible due to generous financial support from various grants and family. I would like to express my gratitude to the UC Riverside History Department, Graduate Division, and the Center for Ideas and Society for

supporting my research in London. I also thank Dr. Jacques Millaud for providing additional financial support, without which my time as a graduate student would have ended prematurely. Dr. Millaud has been most generous, and for that I am infinitely grateful.

I would also like to thank several of my fellow graduate students who were (and still are) always willing to engage in casual conversation regarding this dissertation and the typical struggles associated with graduate school. For this, I humbly thank Jordan Downs, David B. Wagner, Stephen Teske, Leanna McLaughlin, Katie Koh, Patrick O'Neill, Benjamin Esswein, Heather VanMouwerik, and Jen Kim.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother and brother for their support and encouragement through the years, and especially my brother, Michael Razzari, for taking the time out of his difficult schedule to read portions of this work. I offer my sincerest thanks to my wife Deborah, and our three minions—Eloise, Luca, and Tristan—who have endured my mental and physical absence and inspired me to keep writing and working harder. And finally, to my late father, Steve A. Razzari, who missed the completion of this work by a year, but whose support and teachings were instrumental in my academic journey. Without my father, I would never have found the strength to press on.

*To Steve Razzari, my father,
whose work ethic and struggle for perfection
has always motivated me to go just a little further*

Proverbs 13:1

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“The Gulfe of Persia devours all”: English Merchants in Safavīd Persia, 1616-1650

by

Daniel Ben Razzari

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, August 2016
Dr. Thomas Cogswell, Chairperson

This dissertation focuses on the Englishmen residing in Safavīd Persia from 1616 to about 1652. Relying primarily on the correspondence between the East India Company’s factors, this present work will examine a series of problems, both internal and external, that eventually brought the Company’s silk trade in Persia to a sudden halt in the 1640s and well before the Company lost its monopoly on eastern trade in 1653. This dissertation is divided into two major parts. The first half is concerned with examining the development of Anglo-Safavīd relations before and after the siege of Hormuz in 1623, and how the English responded to the Safavīd’s expectations towards the quasi-military alliance against the Portuguese. The English silk trade depended on their active involvement in Shah Abbas I’s plan to eradicate the Portuguese from the Persia Gulf, but as the English lost their enthusiasm to aid Shah Abbas relations between the two began to erode. Additionally, the English leaders in Surat developed policy that greatly affected their tenuous relationship with the Safavīd State. In 1635, William Methwold’s peace with the Portuguese was a pivotal moment in the East India Company’s history, which was most noticeable in the restructuring of the international political landscape. The second major theme in this dissertation examines the English lifestyle in Persia. This

includes diet, social interaction with their peers, their living space, the terrain, religion, mortality rates, and individual wealth. It shows how the English lifestyle affected the stability of the English factory in Persia, but also how it ultimately created a shift in attitudes in the Safavīd court towards the English factors. As a whole, the dissertation provides a social history of the East India Company's servants in Persia, and how their experience in Persia had a significant role in the outcome of English trade. The conventional approach to the Company's history follows the macro-economic perspective, but the pages that follow will display the importance of isolating pockets, from within the vast network of the wider English mercantile community, in order to reveal alternative explanations for the Company's successes and failures.

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Abbreviations

Add. MS	Additional Manuscript, British Library
CO	State Papers: Colonial, the National Archives (Kew)
CR	Warwickshire County Records Office
Eg. MS	Egerton Papers
IOR	India Office Records
<i>Letters Received</i>	Sir William Foster (ed.), <i>Letters Received by the East India Company from its servants in the East</i> , 6 vols. (London, 1896-1902)
MSS EUR	European Manuscripts, British Library
PROB	Prerogative Court of Canterbury, The National Archives (Kew)
SP	State Papers

In all quotations, I have retained the original spelling and grammar, but I have expanded contractions. I have modified the dates in the text to show that January 1 is the beginning of the New Year. In the notes, the old dating system is shown (i.e. 1 January 1616/17).

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Introduction

I. *The early English East India Company, 1600-1652*

On the island of Ormuz, the ruins of the Portuguese fort continue to stand as an emblem of Portuguese imperialism. The island fortress once guarded the entrance of the Persian Gulf, and whoever held it controlled all maritime activity to and from the Persian Gulf. In 1507, the Portuguese arrived in Ormuz where they constructed the fort before temporarily leaving it in the hands of the island's ruler. In 1515, the Portuguese returned to garrison the fort, and for over a century they controlled all maritime activity in the Persian Gulf.¹ The fort stands as a symbol of Portuguese expansion into the Indian Ocean and the vigorous attempt to subdue the region by force. The crumbling fort also pays homage to a brief moment in the history of the English East India Company. It likewise stands as a symbol of English expansion and the slow rise of the English maritime power. It represents many things, but for us, it stands as an important, although brief, reminder of the Anglo-Safavīd union that forced the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf and opened the backdoor to Persian silk.

This dissertation argues that from Safavīd expectations for the English to maintain a naval presence in the region and internal delinquency within the English community, the factory in Persia failed as the English factors struggled to adapt to the difficult circumstances. The English residence in Safavīd Persia was short-lived and emerged

¹ Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Publishers, 2006), 1-7; Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of trade in Safavid Iran: silk for silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27-28.

from a set of unspectacular circumstances. Poor cloth sales in India forced the English to consider alternative buyers for English cloth. The decision was the product of several discussions in Surat to counter early failures in moving English cloth in India where local authorities seemed largely uninterested to deal with the English in the early stages. The decision was mostly unplanned, if not out of desperation, but in 1617 the English established a residence in Safavīd Persia. The English concluded terms with Shah Abbas I in 1619 which compelled the English Company to accept an uneasy military alliance with the Safavīd State against the Portuguese. The alliance was impractical, and it quickly eroded in the late 1620s. English trade in Persia failed, in part, as a consequence of this unusual commercial-military agreement, but it was not the only issue that hurt English trade. The move to Persia was undertaken out of desperation, and despite their efforts the venture was haphazardly organized. The English who resided in Safavīd Persia struggled to cope with their environment, they fought amongst each other, and broadly the English community was wrought with social disorder, confessional disputes, and illicit activity.

It is necessary to take a moment to address the emergence of the English East India Company, and how historians have approached its history. The English East India Company officially received its charter from Elizabeth I in December 1600, and in the following spring Sir James Lancaster led the Company's inaugural voyage to the Spice Islands. The charter was legal for twenty-one years, and it gave the newly formed East India Company a monopoly on trade to the East Indies. English historians have generally agreed that the impetus which compelled a few English Levant Merchants to establish a

fresh route into the eastern spice and cloth trade was a direct consequence of three broad concerns: Barbary pirates, the stagnation of English cloth, and a series of successful Dutch voyages to the east.² Chaudhuri suggests that a fourth explanation tied to a general awareness of the English maritime strength after 1588.³ There is a fifth, and more recent view, that suggests that early English imperial motivations were the product of Protestant ambitions to counter Catholic Spain.⁴ After Lancaster's experimental voyage to the east in 1591, Sir Thomas Smith and his colleagues were determined to establish a route into the east to circumvent the Mediterranean Sea. A previous attempt from the Muscovy Company to reach Safavīd Persia through Russia via the Volga River was minimally successful. Ultimately, war between the Safavīds and Ottomans disrupted the scheme, and the Muscovy Company's attempt to circumvent the Mediterranean was unsuccessful.⁵

² Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World 1550-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18; S. Yakobson, "Anglo-Russian Relations (1553-1613)," in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, v.13, n. 39 (April 1935), 598; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 13; J.W. Veluwenkamp, "The Murmands Coast and the Northern Dvina Delta as English and Dutch Commercial Destinations in the 16th and 17th Centuries," in *Arctic*, v.48, n.3 (September 1995), 261; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 13; Brenner, 'The Social Basis of English Commercial Expansion, 1550-1650,' in *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1972); Ann Bos Radwan, *The Dutch in Western India, 1620-1660* (Calcutta, 1978); C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*; Kristof Glamann, *Dutch Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740* (Nijhoff, 1958); Hugh G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India, 1579-1657: An Account of the early days of the British Factory of Surat* (Clarendon Press, 1920); James Mill, *History of British India*, vol. 1 (James Madden and Co., London, 1848).

³ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 10.

⁴ Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India and the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016). Also see, Rupali Mishra, "Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court," in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 53 (2014). Threads of this perspective follow in the pages below, particularly in chapter 2.

⁵ Rhodes Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), 3-6; Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives*, 18; S. Yakobson, "Anglo-Russian Relations (1553-1613)," in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, v.13, n. 39 (April 1935), 598; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 21. Brenner also

If the English hoped to circumvent the Mediterranean, their only option was to take the cape route around South Africa. The Dutchmen, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, reported that the Portuguese power was noticeably fading in the Indian Ocean during his brief tenure in Goa during the 1580s and early 1590s, which made it possible for their European rivals to compete for the trade.⁶ Between Lancaster's explorative voyage in the 1590s and Linschoten's report, the route between London and India was a viable option; especially given that Lancaster's voyage and several Dutch voyages in the late sixteenth century successfully sailed into Portuguese waters unhindered. In early 1601 the English Company's inaugural voyage departed for the Indonesian Archipelago, a year before the Dutch Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) made its first voyage.

The Company's first voyage under Lancaster was first and foremost an exploratory venture, but he eventually landed a few factors (merchants or agents) in Bantam at Achin and in the Spice Islands to observe local commerce. Lancaster successfully returned with a cargo of pepper, but perhaps most importantly Lancaster and his merchants determined that the Company would need to rely on a mixture of European goods if they hoped to carve their niche in the eastern trade.⁷ After the Company's initial voyage, they frequently shipped quantities of English cloth, tin, lead, swords, and other

notes that the Muscovy Company was in the hands of the Levant and East India merchants. Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Politics and Transit Rights: The Seventeenth-Century Trade in Silk between Safavid Iran and Muscovy," in *Cahiers du Monde russe*, v.35, n.4 (October-December, 1994). Mildred Wretts-Smith, "The English in Russia during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, v.3 (1920), 80.

⁶ Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 31-32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

European goods which they supplemented with gold and silver specie for trade. The transition from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean was gradual and irregular at first, but the English spent the first decade exploring prospective commercial opportunities. The Company delayed additional fleets until Lancaster returned, and the second voyage, for example, did not depart until 1604. But by the end of the decade the Company's outbound fleets departed annually in February or March.⁸

Historians of the English Company have examined this initial effort to redirect English trade into the east from two broad perspectives: London politics and macro-economics. Both historiographical approaches obscure the small community of Englishmen living in the Company's network of factories (trading outposts), which apart from their significance to the history of the Company have only received minimal attention from scholars. The Victorians and early twentieth century scholars attempted to describe the English community, but their narratives were mostly limited to the intense conflict between the English and Portuguese and how it tied into the conversation of empire and the Company's commercial expansion. This approach created a Eurocentric narrative of the ruling elite at the state and local level, which led Arnold Wright to suggest that "Makarrab Khan was a typical Mogul official, proud, arrogant and avaricious."⁹ Yet Wright never really questioned why Mukarrab Khān might have responded unfavorably towards the English.

⁸ K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: the study of an early joint-stock company, 1600-1640* (Franck Cass, 1965), 39; Furber, *Rival Empires*, 39-40.

⁹ Arnold Wright, *Early English Adventurers in the East* (Andrew Melrose, Ltd, 1914).

The Eurocentric discourse of empire and commerce caused early scholars to ignore several local problems and political developments. As a consequence, the early narrative dismisses the developments at the local and state level that ultimately shaped the English factory and commerce in Persia, India, and the Far East.¹⁰ In the 1920s, Hugh Rawlinson attempted to break from the Anglo-Portuguese narrative trap, but his study was limited to the factory in Surat, India.¹¹ Rawlinson's work began to chip away at the old narrative, but in the end, Rawlinson was unable to completely escape the traditional view that followed the European struggle for trade and commercial expansion. To Rawlinson's credit, he began to acknowledge that local officials were equally important to the story, and in numerous examples he articulated how local and state officials shaped the Company's commercial approach in Surat.¹²

Despite the obvious shortcomings in framing the Company's development in the context of the inter-European rivalry, these scholars do raise important questions about the Company's attempt to expand commercial operations into Portuguese waters. When the English arrived in 1601, the Portuguese held several outposts that stretched from Sofala, Mozambique to the Island of Timor.¹³ This included important strategic outposts

¹⁰ Sir William Hunter, *History of British India*, 1899-1900); James S. Mill, *History of British India*, vol. 1. (James Madden and Co., London, 1848); Rev. Philip Anderson, *English in Western India*, (Bombay, 1854); David Macpherson, *The History of the European commerce with India* (1812); John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East-India Company, 1600-1708* (1810); Wright, *Early English Adventures*.

¹¹ Hugh G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India, 1579-1657: An Account of the early days of the British Factory of Surat* (Clarendon Press, 1920).

¹² William Foster's introductions to the *Letters Received* also show that historians began to consider the role of local authorities in the Company's ply for trade in India.

¹³ Glenn J. Ames, *The Globe Encompassed: The Age of European Discovery, 1500-1700* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 35.

at Mocha, Qishm, Hormuz, Damān, and Goa, but the Portuguese also established a considerable presence in Agra and other inland cities or towns in India as well. To maintain their extensive system of outposts, Holden Furber argues that the Portuguese dispatched roughly 254 ships (down from 451 in the previous century) in the first half of the seventeenth century to the Indian Ocean.¹⁴ By comparison, the annual outbound English fleet rarely exceeded four and five ships (approximately 82 ships in the same period) not including small, unnamed vessels.¹⁵ Comparatively, the English Company was a considerably smaller venture. The English were numerically outmatched, and it is unsurprising that early historians focused on the increased tension between the two European powers.

Towards the middle of the twentieth century, historians of the English East India Company discarded the traditional narrative, and replaced it with an economic narrative that examined the financial and commercial aspects of the Company. K.N. Chaudhuri was at the forefront of the shift in the 1960s, and numerous economic studies began to dominate the field.¹⁶ This perspective allows us to conceptualize the fusion of American

¹⁴ Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 26-27; Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), xvi-xvii. For the types of ships used in the Portuguese fleet, see Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), xvi-xvii.

¹⁵ See appendix III.

¹⁶ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*; Om Prakash, *Bullion for goods: European and Indian merchants in the Indian Ocean trade, 1500-1800* (Manohar Press, 2004); Idem, *The Dutch East India Company and the economy of Bengal, 1630-1720* (Princeton University Press, 1985); Ward Barrett, 'World bullion flows, 1450-1800,' in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* ed. James Tracy (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Precious Metals Flows and Prices in Western and Southern Asia, 1500-1750: some comparative and conjectural aspects," in *Studies in History* (1991); Foster, *The John Company*, 62-69. Also see, Erikson, Emily and Peter Bearman. 'Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: The Structure of English Trade in the

silver and gold into the eastern trade, and how Europeans, in this case the English, relied on the exchange of precious metals and English commodities for luxury items from Persia, India, and the Far East. There is some variation from within this historiographical narrative ranging from the Company focused studies of Chaudhuri to the global narratives as in Ward Barrett's study on bullion.¹⁷

English ships returned with silk, Indian cloth, indigo, and a wide range of spices from the Indonesian Archipelago. In the context of this specific study, Persian silk was just one of many commodities that the English East India Company imported to London. Early on, the English strategy was to trade English cloth, supplemented with bullion, for local goods, but shortly after their arrival Chaudhuri noted that the English relied on a

East Indies, 1601-1833,' in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 112, no. 1, (2006); Jan de Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (University of Minnesota Press, 1976); Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans, and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European-Asian Trade in the Early 17th Century* (Copenhagen, 1973); B.E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England, 1600-1642, a study in the instability of a mercantile economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1959); D.K. Bassett, 'The Trade of the English East India Company in the Far East, 1623-84: Part I: 1623-65,' in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1/2, (1960).

¹⁷ Ward Barrett, 'World bullion flows, 1450-1800,' in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* ed. James Tracy (Cambridge University Press, 1990). Most recently, Dr. Eacott has examined how Indian goods helped shape America. See, Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India and the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016). There is also another part of the field that looks at the movement of people either across the complex of networks that the English established globally, and also the movement of people across larger regions such as the Indian Ocean. For these, see: Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008). For a broad look at people across the Indian Ocean region, see, Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (Routledge Press, 2003); R.J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: the Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: a History of People and the Sea* (Oxford University Press, 1998); Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century* (Curzon Press, 1979). Also see, Ruby Maloni, "Europeans in Seventeenth Century Gujarat, Presence and Response," in *Social Scientist*, vol. 36, no. 3 &4, (2008); Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (University of Minnesota Press, 1976); Farhat Hasan, 'The Mughal Fiscal System in Surat and the English East India Company,' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, (1993).

new strategy.¹⁸ Interport trade became a critical aspect of the English Company's scheme in the east, and the vital component that made trade possible. In this model, the English used a portion of the goods purchased from one town to purchase goods in another.¹⁹ In Persia, for example, the English depended on bullion and English cloth shipped from London, and pepper from the Spice Islands in exchange for Persian silk. This economic scheme had benefits, but one of the major drawbacks occurred in the event of regional crises. Political upheaval or regional famines or natural disasters could severely disrupt the availability of goods, which made it difficult for the interport scheme to function properly. If the English could not import a sufficient quantity of goods to trade in Persia, they were forced to rely on higher portions of bullion or English cloth. The effects of these disruptions on the English factory are generally left untold, and economic historians have touched on them only to address specific points pertaining to English commerce.

The past two hundred years of historiographical research has done much to uncover the early history of the English East India Company, which primarily refers to the period between 1600 and 1652. In 1653, Cromwell's Parliament dissolved the Company's charter, and the Company would not resume operations under the protection of a monopoly until 1657 after which point the historiographical pool explodes.²⁰ But for

¹⁸ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 4-5.

²⁰ For studies on the English Company in London and its relationship to the English government, see: Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton University Press, 1993); *Idem*, "The Civil War Politics of London's Merchant Community," in *Past and Present*, no. 58, (1973); *Idem*, "The Social Basis of English Commercial Expansion, 1550-1650," in *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 32, no. 1, (1972); Sir William Foster, *England's Quest for Trade* (A&C Black LTD, 1933); *Idem*, *The East India House: It's*

the early period, historians have nonetheless made strides to understand the Company's place in English history. Unfortunately, in the attempt to construct a narrative, the Englishmen who lived in the Company's factories are largely ignored. The broader historiography has ignored questions concerning how these men lived, what they experienced, and how they overcame numerous obstacles. This dissertation will begin to answer some of these questions from the perspective of the factory in Safavīd Persia.

II. *The English in Persia*

The decision to examine the English factory in Persia, instead of say Agra or Broach in India, is somewhat due to the factory's physical isolation from the Surat presidency establishing it as a relatively unique position. Two English presidencies dominated the first half of the seventeenth century: Bantam and Surat. A president with his councilors, which typically consisted of four or five underfactors, oversaw English trade in the region. The English president acted as an extension or voice of the ruling body of merchants in London. The Surat presidency oversaw factories in northern India and Safavīd Persia, while the Coromandel Coast (eastern coast of India) fell under the authority of the Bantam presidency. The factors in Safavīd Persia were subordinate to the president in Surat, and they were expected to follow the presidency's instructions. This proved inherently difficult due to the distance between Safavīd Persia and Surat, and one of the consequences saw the factory in Persia develop with a fair amount of autonomy.

History and Associations (The Bodley Head Press, 1924); A.R. Ingram, *The Gateway to India: the Story of Methwold and Bombay* (Oxford University Press, 1938)

Chaudhuri argued that the Persian trade was a key component to the early Company, but historians of the Company, including Chaudhuri, have given the branch in Persia little attention.²¹ Most of the work on Persia comes from Dutch historians, Rudolph Matthee and Willem Floor, who have acknowledged the English—although limited—in their respective narratives.²² But in general the English presence is narrowly understood in context of the Safavīd silk trade or as a comparison to the Dutch Company. The English are generally presented as a fledgling group of merchants who could not compete with the Dutch and certainly not the Armenian merchants, which is, in part, true. There is much more to the story than this simplistic illustration, and the current historiography does not satisfy our curiosities and as a consequence little is known about the English community in Persia aside from silk acquisitions.

Much as they had in India, the English arrived in Persia with vague expectations and a limited familiarity of the people, the trade, the environment, and the local politics. They were largely unprepared, but nonetheless the venture came to fruition in 1616. What they found was a landscape that was geographically, culturally, and ethnically

²¹ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 17-17; Also see Games, *Web of Empire*. Games touches on specific Englishmen living in India, but she does not include those ministers and factors in Persia; although her larger work generally neglects the factors altogether.

²² Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*; Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Publishers, 2006). Also see, R.W. Ferrier, “The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (1986); Idem., Idem, “The First English Guide Book to Persia: A Description of the Persian Monarchy”, in *Iran*, v.15, (1977); Idem., “An English View of Persian Trade in 1618: Reports from the Merchants Edward Pettus and Thomas Barker,” in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (1976); R.W. Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries” in *The Economic History Review*, v.26, n.1, (1973). Ferrier’s work is not comprehensive and touches on brief moments in the English residence in Safavīd Persia.

diverse.²³ Safavīd Persia was home to Persians, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, and a mixture of western and eastern Europeans. Aside from Islam, both Protestants and Catholics inhabited Safavīd Persia, particularly in the Safavīd capital at Isfahan.

The Portuguese dominated the southern coast and the Persian Gulf, while Armenian merchants acquired a large portion of the silk trade from Isfahan to the Mediterranean.²⁴ The Armenians played a dominant role in the caravan trade that linked Persia to the Mediterranean, and Professor Matthee suggests that Armenian traders were probably active on the route since the thirteenth century.²⁵ The standard way that silk arrived in Europe was through the Levant, and for several centuries Armenian merchants played a significant role in the silk export trade. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Armenian merchants emerged as the single most important group in the silk trade. Matthee suggests that this was due, in part, to royal favor, but also their keen sense for efficiency and resourcefulness.²⁶

Yet for their importance in the silk trade, the English merchants expressed very few concerns about their Armenian competitors or so the English correspondence would

²³ Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale University Press, 2013), 417-418.

²⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 22. Also see, Roger Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries” in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (1973), 38-39; Dale, *The Muslim Empire*, 120. For their role in India see, Furber, *Rival Empires*; Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: a History of People and the Sea* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 22. Also see, Roger Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries” in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (1973), 38-39; Dale, *The Muslim Empire*, 120. For their role in India see, Furber, *Rival Empires*; Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: a History of People and the Sea* (Oxford University Press, 1998)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

have us believe. In the first couple of years, the English voiced their aspirations towards redirecting the entire Safavīd silk trade. This was an idea that Sir Robert Sherley (ambassador at Shah Abbas I's court) cultivated early on, and he proposed that the English factors seize the opportunity before the Dutch could take the entire trade. Despite Sherley's enthusiasm, the English were unlikely to redirect all Safavīd silk through London. Especially as Roger Ferrier has argued the Armenians established a reputation for over two centuries and a vast network of commercial ties that the English were not likely to overthrow.²⁷ For whatever piece of the silk industry the English hoped to acquire, the Dutch stood as their primary competitors for that portion of the trade.²⁸ The English probably understood that supplanting the Armenians was an unlikely feat, but in the very least they certainly hoped to outperform their Dutch rivals who at the time were relatively friendly in the Indian Ocean—the one exception was the Massacre at Amboina in 1624.²⁹

The English established trade under the authority of three Safavīd shahs: Shah Abbas I (r.1587-1629), Shah Safi (r.1629-1642), and Shah Abbas II (r.1642-1666). While the English merchants faced tough competition for Safavīd silk from the Armenians and Dutch, their primary concern was maneuvering within the constraints of the state's monopoly on silk. In a sense, this was positive because the English could focus primarily on appeasing local and state officials to gain an advantage over their rivals, and their fleet functioned as an important bargaining tool. In the first years (1616-1621) of the

²⁷ Ferrier, "The Armenians and the East India Company," 44.

²⁸ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*.

²⁹ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 65.

Company's silk trade, the English established a niche in Safavīd Persia on the shoulders of a commercial-political alliance with Shah Abbas I. The state of this alliance would shift over time, but the English trade in the Safavīd Persia, much unlike their factory in India, depended heavily on their effort to maintain the alliance. This was virtually impossible as the English dispatched very few ships to service their entire network of factories from Persia to Indonesia.

Shah Abbas I, according to Linda Steinmann, "took control of the silk production in Iran as part of an overall policy of centralizing the state under his personal authority."³⁰ In India, by comparison, the English were not strictly limited to trade in Agra, and they traded regularly with numerous Indian merchants throughout northern India where markets in Ahmadābād, Broach, Baroda, Surat, and Agra were opened to them. In Safavīd Persia, the structure of export trade was significantly different, and the English had to travel to Isfahan for all commercial transactions. On one hand it may have simplified the process of commercial exchange, but it also meant that the English were forced to purchase silk directly from the Shah of Iran in Isfahan.³¹ The Company was uncomfortable with the silk trade from the beginning, and for most of the period the English factors insisted that the trade would succeed.³²

From a historiographical perspective, the English factory faced a complex set of issues in Persia that need to be explored. The historiography suggests that the English

³⁰ Steinmann, "Shah Abbas," 68; Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 63-67; Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 91-118.

³¹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*.

³² Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 54.

found limited success in the silk trade, and Matthee illustrates that by 1640 the English exported their final bale of silk. The general consensus among historians is that the English failed because their commodities failed to sell and they lacked a surplus of bullion; yet this tells us very little about the English factory in Persia. This dissertation questions a number of social and political aspects pertaining to the English factory, and I have traced the evolution of Anglo-Safavīd relations to uncover alternative explanations for the factory's failure in Persia. As a contrast, I have also explored the English factory and English lifestyle in Safavīd Persia to develop a sense of how these men lived. By looking critically at the English factory life, the problems of English commercial expansion become abundantly clear, and that there is significantly more to the story than grasping the nuances of trade in the region.

II. *Sources*

This is first and foremost a study in British History, and it is entirely from an English perspective thus I have decided not to examine Portuguese, Persian, and Dutch sources. The English viewed their world through a biased lens, but their perspective is still important for understanding how the English understood the world around them and how they associated with their countrymen. The selection of manuscripts used in this dissertation primarily consists of the original correspondence between the English merchants who resided in Safavīd Persia and India, and between the English merchants and their superiors in London. These letters and Company *Minutes* (records from the

General Court in London) are kept in the British Library located in London.³³ In addition, I have examined approximately 800 English wills, although I have used them sparingly and specifically for the material in chapter six. I have also used a number of printed newsbooks and travelogues, mostly from English authors, but I have limited the use these sources to specific chapters.

A prologue will outline the development of the Surat Presidency and the subordinate factories in India from 1613 until 1652, which will provide a useful comparative framework for highlighting specific differences in the Persian branch. The conditions in which both branches developed were significantly different, and the contrast provides context for understanding the factory in Persia, especially in illustrating the differences in lifestyle. Chapter 1 will examine a variety of printed material and travelogues from the early sixteenth century until the first couple years before 1616 to construct a narrative or image of what the English merchants would have read, at least potentially, before arriving in Persia. The chapter will provide a foundation for what Englishmen in general would have learned about Persia, and how this information may have affected the Company's decisions for trade in the region.

Chapters 2 and 3 will detail the course of Anglo-Persian relations throughout the period in context of commerce and international politics. Chapter 2 will examine the factory from its beginning in 1616 to 1634. It will follow the development of Anglo-Safavīd relations and the acquisition of Persian silk. Chapter 3 will continue after 1634 with the rapid deterioration of relations and eventual collapse of the English silk trade.

³³ See Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*. For a discussion on the Company's organization in London, see pages 32-38.

This chapter purposely begins with President William Methwold's peace with the Portuguese, because in its aftermath significant changes followed in both India and Persia. In a sense, 1635 was a pivotal year for the Company, which saw the political landscape change significantly in context of international rivalries.

The second half of this dissertation will focus on several aspects of the English lifestyle in the factory. Chapter 4 will look at the "English Road" or the route from the port towns of Jask and Gombroon to Isfahan where the English purchased silk. This includes a look at the English house, diets, mortality rates, and general perceptions of the local people. Chapter 5 will examine a set of problems from within the Company in Persia, chiefly internal squabbles, drunkenness, and the threat of popery. The final chapter will offer an overview of English wealth, probates, and the families these men left behind in England. With this, our story begins.

Prologue: India from arrival to dissolution and the First Anglo Dutch War, 1608-1652

The English East India Company arrived off the coast of India in 1608, and “for the first time from the deck of an English ship Englishmen gazed on this fair and spreading scene in which the fabled wealth of India seemed to be so happily typified.”¹ Charles Markham commented that “the journey of William Hawkins to Agra, and his residence at the court of Jehanghir, may be looked upon as the opening scene in the history of British India.”² It certainly was the opening scene, but it was not a pretty one. Once they established trade, the English hoped that large shipments of English cloth would supplement the costs in India for various types of Indian cloths and most importantly indigo. The English also imported tin and small quantities of weapons in order to defray the reliance on bullion. But direct trade from London to India was not feasible without incorporating local goods through an interport scheme. The English continued to trade directly, but the interport trade began to dominate the English commercial enterprise. They purchased spices in the Spice Islands, especially pepper, and shipped a portion to India in exchange for Indian commodities.³ At first the interport

¹ Arnold Wright, *Early English Adventurers in the East* (London: 1917), 73. Wright’s argument is typically Eurocentric and sees the entrance of the English in India as expanding western influences into a region that already enjoyed the subtle touches of western customs. Those customs became evident in the despotic governments and states that ruled through Asia. This, of course, is a problematic line of argument.

² Charles R. Markham, “Introduction” in *The Hawkins’ Voyages during the reigns of Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, and James I* (London, 1878), xlv.

³ K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: the study of an early joint-stock company, 1600-1640* (Franck Cass, 1965).

trade seemed to work relatively well, but as English goods became less vendible in India the Company was forced to rely more heavily on bullion.⁴

The early part of the seventeenth century proved to be fairly lucrative for the East India Company. In the first decade of its existence the Company gained a profit of about 155% on an investment of around £517,784. And between 1613 and 1623 the first joint-stock company averaged an 87% return on £418,691. After 1623, however, the Company saw a decrease on their returns. From 1617 to 1632 investors of a second joint-stock poured £1.6 million into the company, but over the period the profit margin dropped dramatically to about 12%. Meanwhile, consecutive Persian voyages in 1628, 1629, and 1630 cost roughly £375,000 with an average profit of 60%. Each voyage cost £125,000, £150,000, and £100,000 respectively with a 60%, 80%, and 40% return on the investment. A third joint-stock between 1631 and 1642 invested £420,700 with a 35% return.⁵ In 1653 the East India Company lost its charter, and it would not formally resume trade until Oliver Cromwell issued a new charter in 1657. This data, however, obscures aspects and is not necessarily a good barometer for testing the Company's success and failures from a regional perspective. For example, which commodities did the Company benefit most from, and what regions were most profitable for English trade, are lost in the

⁴ Om Prakash, *Bullion for goods: European and Indian merchants in the Indian Ocean trade, 1500-1800* (Manohar Press, 2004); Rudi Mathee, 'Between Venice and Surat: The Trade in Gold in Late Safavid Iran,' in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, (2000), 223-224; Ward Barrett, 'World bullion flows, 1450-1800,' in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* ed. James Tracy (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Erikson, Emily and Peter Bearman. 'Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: The Structure of English Trade in the East Indies, 1601-1833,' in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 112, no. 1, (2006); Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 111-112; K.N. Chaudhuri, "The East India Company and the Export of Treasure in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, v.16, n.1 (1963), 25.

⁵ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*; Furber, *Rival Empires*, 38-39;64-66.

data. Until the data can be narrowed significantly, we have to look to regional developments to move the narrative forward.

The Company's early venture into India (1608-1652) went through three critical phases. The first phase (1608-1619) was primarily a struggle over trade between the English and the Portuguese, but also the English and the local ruling elite in Surat. The second phase (1620-1633) was dominated by rebellion, political upheaval, and famine, which all but ended English commercial activity in India. The final phase (1634-1652) was a period that saw a slow revival of commercial activity that was ultimately cut short after the English Civil War erupted.

I. *The First Phase, 1608-1619*

The first four years the commanders of the English fleet attempted with great futility to establish relations with the Mughals in India.⁶ The Portuguese Jesuits in India convinced many of the Indian officials that the English arrived to pillage the Mughal state.⁷ In spite of Captain William Hawkins (1608) and Captain Henry Middleton's (1610) consecutive victories against the Portuguese, the Mughals, particularly Mukarrab Khān (governor of Gujarat), remained highly suspicious of the new arrivals. Mukarrab Khān slowed the English Company's push into India by detaining their goods at the

⁶ Sir William Foster, "Introduction" in *Letters Received by the East India Company from its servants in the East*, v.1.

⁷ Hugh G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India, 1579-1657: An Account of the early days of the British Factory of Surat* (Clarendon Press, 1920), 35-51; Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 74-75; K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 85.

customs house in Surat. This quickly became a nuisance as the English were expected to pay fees or let the shipments rot, but the governor had the tendency to pilfer the shipment as well. Initially, the Company veered away from coercive policies to establish themselves in the region, but they discovered early on that trade could not proceed without at least some level of coercive measures.⁸

This was apparent in 1612 when Captain Middleton's frustration with Mukarrab Khān manifested as a voracious assault against Indian shipping between the Red Sea and India. After Mukarrab Khān detained Middleton's shipment at Surat, the goods became wet and rotted. Middleton was convinced that the Mughals would not repay the English for the loss, and he decided to sack any Mughal ships returning from the Red Sea to satisfy the loss. This only made matters worse for the merchants in Surat. The first four years culminated in several unsuccessful attempts to attract Jahāngīr's attention (even after Hawkins' mission to court), but more importantly it displayed intense naval conflict off the coast of India between the English and Portuguese and resistance in Surat from Mukarrab Khān.

⁸ Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 53; Valerie Forman, *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 114. A contrasting view persists with I. Bruce Watson, "Fortifications and the "idea" of Force in Early English East India Company Relations with India," in *Past and Present*, n.88 (August 1980). By 1660, the English realized that without a plan for necessary force, Mughal officials could exact monetary fees; although this was recognized during the period covered here. K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 111-116.

In the fall of 1612, Captain Thomas Best arrived in India where he scored a decisive blow against the Portuguese fleet on the 28 November 1612.⁹ Captain Best's victory at sea was in plain sight of local Indian residents and merchants, and the victory sparked a deeper sense of curiosity in local merchants towards opening trade with the English.¹⁰ A few nineteenth-century historians, predominately James Mill, have cited Best's defeat as a turning point.¹¹ Mill was convinced that Best's defeat frightened the Mughals into a commercial alliance, but interestingly contemporaries were not quite as enthusiastic. Shortly after the defeat, Best dismissed the Indian trade, and he argued that the Company's estate was best invested elsewhere. His chief concern was that a show of local support did not reflect attitudes at the state level, and he certainly saw not support forthcoming from Mukarrab Khān.

The steady naval conflict at sea, Mukarrab Khān's resistance, and the sluggish arrival of trading rights from court were signs for Captain Best that the Indian trade was not viable. The proposal to abandon India, however, unsettled several merchants who arrived on Best's fleet the previous year, predominately Thomas Aldworth, Thomas Kerridge, and William Biddulph. After a heated disagreement, Best was unwilling to delay his voyage any longer and boarded the *Hosiander* for the Spice Islands. The stubborn merchants resisted his attempt to force them on board, and he decided to leave

⁹ Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Surat, 25 January 1612/13, *Letters Received*, 1:236; Thomas Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 12 March 1613, *Letters Received*, 1:257. Also see Hugh G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*.

¹⁰ "13 Articles granted by the Governor of Surat", IOR/G/40/8, f.35-40. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 52.

¹¹ James Mill, *History of British India*, vol. 1 (James Madden and Co., London, 1848); John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East-India Company, 1600-1708* (1810). Also see Arnold Wright, *Early English Adventurers in the East* (Andrew Melrose, Ltd, 1914); Sir William Hunter, *History of British India*, 1899-1900).

them and their assistants behind in Surat. In the wake of the disagreement, Aldworth, Kerridge, and Biddulph were poised to establish the English factory in India. Shortly after, their patience was awarded and a rough agreement had arrived from court. The English opened the Surat factory in 1613 and Aldworth became the first chief of trade in India.

Presidents of Surat	
Thomas Aldworth (1614-15)*	Thomas Rastell (1630-31)
Thomas Kerridge (1616-21)	Joseph Hopkinson (1631-33)
Thomas Rastell (1621-25)	William Methwold (1633-39)
Thomas Kerridge (1625-28)	William Fremlen (1639-44)
Richard Wylde (1628-30)	Francis Breton (1644-49)
John Skibbow (1630)**	Thomas Merry (1649-52)

Table 1: Presidents of Surat from the first chief (Thomas Aldworth) and the first official president (Thomas Kerridge). John Skibbow acted only as a provisional president until Rastell arrived. Aside from the chief of trade in Persia, these men were in control over the branch in Persia.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese were unable to dislodge the English from Surat and instead began a series of attacks against Mughal shipping, from which they seized approximately £80,000 of goods and money.¹² It was clear that local merchants began to sympathize with the English, and news of the loose trade agreement probably reached the Portuguese in the area. The attacks were in retaliation against the Mughal elite for failing to dismiss the English from their coast. In an odd turn of events, Mukarrab Khān looked to the English for support the following year, but Captain Nicholas Downton refused to risk their fleet when the Mughals extended little favor towards the English trade,

¹² William Biddulph to Sir Thomas Smith, Surat, 28 October 1613, *Letters Received*, 1:300-301; Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Ahmadabad, 9 November 1613, *Letters Received*, 1:305. Thomas Aldworth suggests roughly £100,000.

especially at Surat.¹³ The English missed an opportunity here, although not entirely unwarranted, but the consequences left the English vulnerable to heavy criticism from Mughal leaders. Mukarrab Khān’s successor to the governorship of Gujarat, Zulfikār Khān, and Prince Khurram (later Shah Jahān) felt betrayed, and it fostered an anti-English party among a few Mughal officials.

The English struggled to convince Jahāngīr that establishing commercial ties with the Company would benefit him, but their failure to find success at court was tied to Jahāngīr’s distaste for merchants, or so they claimed.¹⁴ After several unsuccessful attempts to impress the emperor in 1612 and 1613, Aldworth wrote to London for an ambassador.¹⁵ The English also struggled to bridge the gap between themselves and the local ruling elite—particularly Mukarrab Khān and Zulfikār Khān in the first decade—which led to one historian’s erroneous charge that “Makarrab Khan was a typical Mogul official, proud, arrogant and avaricious”¹⁶ The Portuguese—primarily the Portuguese Jesuits—obstructed early English attempts at commercial expansion into India.¹⁷ They were well entrenched in India by the seventeenth century, and the Mughals, such as

¹³ Captain Nicholas Downton to the Company, Swally Road, 20 November 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:168; Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Surat, 19 August 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:96; William Edwards to the Company, *Hope*, 2 December 1615, *Letters Received*, 2:150.

¹⁴ Nicholas Withington to Sir Thomas Smith, Ahmadābād, 9 November 1613, Egerton MS 2086, f.1.

¹⁵ Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Ahmadābād, 9 November 1613, *Letters Received*, 1:303.

¹⁶ Wright, *Early English Adventurers* Also see Mills, *History of British India*.

¹⁷ Nicholas Withington to Sir Thomas Smith, Ahmadābād, 9 November 1613, Egerton MS 2086, f.1; William Biddulph to Sir Thomas Smith, Surat, 28 October 1613, *Letters Received*, 1:300. Also see, Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 15-16; 43-45; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 58-59; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 61;

Mukarrab Khān, feared that once the English fleet departed India the Portuguese would retaliate against Mughal ports and shipping.¹⁸ Even as the English presented their arguments, the Mughals noticed that few Englishmen and ships arrived from England. Michael Pearson argues that the Portuguese brutality developed a lasting impression among Mughal elites, which clearly created a barrier against English commercial activity early on.¹⁹

In 1615, however, the circumstances began to change in favor of the English when Sir Thomas Roe arrived in India. Roe's embassy is generally thought of by modern historians as the event that swung the pendulum in favor of English trade in Mughal India after he successfully concluded a trade agreement with Jahāngīr.²⁰ The argument is fair considering the years prior to Roe's arrival English trade was almost nonexistent, but the historical record suggests that English success was the combination of Roe, Portuguese aggression, and inter-Mughal rivalries that eventually caused a few Mughal officials to lend support to the English. Allies, such as Āsaf Khān, Ibrahim Khān (governor of Surat in 1616), and Mahābat Khān (governor of Burhānpur), played a critical and equally important role in both the Company and Roe's success in India during his embassy from

¹⁸ M.N. Pearson, *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 69-70.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁰ Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 87. This argument is common among other historians writing in the field. See also, Sir William Foster, "Introduction" in *The English Factories in India, 1618-1621; a calendar of documents in the India Office, British Museum and Public Record Office, 1618-1621* (Oxford, 1906), viii-ix; Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade*, 43. William Foster, "Introduction" in *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mughal, 1615-1619*, vol.1 (London, 1899 reprint), xii-xiii. For more on Roe's embassy see, Rupali Mishra, "Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court," in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 53 (2014). For more on Roe's interaction within the Mughal Court, see Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

1615 to 1619.²¹ It was much more complicated than Roe riding in on his white horse to save the Company.

From 1615 until 1619 the English began to gain political allies in India, which also meant additional protection of their trade. While the English offered some monetary incentives, these men were drawn to the English through political rivalries of their own. Āsaf Khān, for example, was not terribly fond of Mukarrab Khān, and Mahābat Khān similarly saw Zulfikār Khān as a rival and was not particularly enthused with the Portuguese. These relationships were incredibly important for the English commercial venture, and without them Roe's embassy may not have achieved as much success as it had. Towards the end of the decade the English began to see their efforts come to fruition. Aside from establishing a semi-sympathetic voice at court, the English established allies willing to protect the English, and with Āsaf Khān they found an ally at court who insured that English complaints were resolved. This was a significant departure from the first few years, and by 1616 Ibrahim Khān was promoted to governor of Surat making it the first time a pro-English governor held the position. As the decade concluded, Sir Thomas Roe prepared for his return to England. He named Thomas Kerridge the first president of English operations in India, and he bid India farewell. The Company's trade, for a time, was settled.

²¹ Mahābat Khān to Broach, 29 Tir (June-July), *Letters Received*, 5:142-143. Tir is one month in the Persian (Ilāhi) Calendar; Thomas Kerridge to William Biddulph, Surat, 11 August 1616, IOR/G/36/84(1), f.138; Sir Thomas Roe to Thomas Kerridge, Mandū, 21 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:129-130; Thomas Kerridge to Sir Thomas Roe, Surat, 23 July 1616, IOR/G/36/84(1), f.73. Also see, John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2005 reprint).

II. *The Second Phase, 1620-1633*

The first decade was taxing but by the end the English made progress in a few critical areas. They established amicable relations with a few officials and obtained rights to trade. The articles of trade initially agreed upon between Jahāngīr and Thomas Best, and later ratified under Roe's guidance, extended free and protected trade unto the English. The agreement that was finally settled between Roe and the emperor gave English merchants the right to trade, but it also gave the English protection under the emperor's royal seal.²² This was enormous progress, and it theoretically put an end to the endemic abuse suffered under the regional governors and other officers. Before they could rejoice, however, the 1620s followed with major political upheaval that disrupted commercial activity in India.²³

In 1619, the Deccan Province rebelled against the Mughals. The province was a large swath of territory that began just south of Burhānpur and continued deep into Southern India. Malīk Ambar's rebellion began with a siege at Burhānpur, a city that English caravans often travelled through during their journey to and from Agra.²⁴ On the 15 March 1621, disaster struck. President Thomas Kerridge received a letter from his subordinate factor, Robert Hutchinson, informing the presidency that Malīk Ambar's

²² "13 Articles granted by the Governor of Surat", IOR/G/40/8, f.35-40.

²³ John F. Richards, "The Seventeenth-Century Crisis in South Asia," in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.24, no. 4(October, 1990), 625-628; idem, *The Mughal Empire*, 112-114; Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201.

²⁴ Malīk Ambar is an interesting figure. Originally from Africa, slavers captured Malīk Ambar and sold him into slavery, and he eventually landed in India where he rose in the military ranks of the Deccan. There he raised and led the rebellion against the Mughals in the 1619, and shortly after bent his knee to Jahangir. See, John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2005 reprint), 112-113.

forces sacked the English caravan from Agra worth over £46,000.²⁵ In this moment, the English had few choices but to respond with armed force, and Thomas Kerridge, before his return to London, instructed the fleet to seize all shipping belonging to Malīk Ambar.²⁶ As valiant as Kerridge's attempt was, the English made a critical mistake and sacked a ship that belonged to Safī Khan's (Mughal governor at Ahmadābād) daughter. The immediate backlash from Mughal officials, especially from Safī Khān, led to the arrest of all Englishmen and their goods in Ahmadābād until the governor was reimbursed. Rastell was forced to hand over the ship.

As this incident began to unwind, the entire northern region disintegrated into utter chaos. In 1623 the Mughal Civil War began and continued until Shah Jahān ascended the Mughal throne in 1627.²⁷ The succession crisis mostly erupted in the Gujarati and the Sind regions, which consequently ended all commercial activity in northern India, especially in 1623. It ended with the ascendancy of a man who expressed anti-English tendencies early on, and embroiled the whole of Northern India in a dynastic war that placed the English factories in a very difficult and dangerous position. The rebellion began in March 1622 when Prince Khurram suffered a portion of his estates transferred to Shahryar as a consequence of his refusal to leave the Deccan and confront

²⁵ Consultation aboard the Hart, Swally Road, 16 March 1620/21, IOR/G/36/1, f.29; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 112-113.

²⁶ Directions for Richard Wedmore, Surat, 4 April 1623, IOR/G/36/1, f. 58; I. Bruce Watson, "Fortifications and the "idea" of Force in Early English East India Company Relations with India," in *Past and Present*, n.88 (August 1980), 70-87.

²⁷ Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 102-103; 112-115.

Shah Abbas I at Qandahar.²⁸ Having already murdered his eldest brother Prince Khusrau, Prince Khurram found support from the Deccan princes and two parties emerged in the struggle for the throne—the Shahryar party and the Khurram party. What initially began as a struggle between two princes for the Mughal throne—Khurram and Khusrau—it expanded to a third when Nur Jahan, Jahāngīr’s wife, married Jahāngīr’s youngest son Shahryar to her daughter Ladili Begam.²⁹ To make matters worse, many of the friends the English acquired in the previous decade sat on opposite sides of the line. For their safety, the English factors were detained in the factories of Agra, Ahmadābād, Baroda, Broach, and Surat for the duration of the rebellion.

The hostile environment in India slowly eased once Prince Khurram ascended as Shah Jahān I in 1627. To consolidate his rule, he instructed Āsaf Khān to murder his rivals and their children at a feast in 1628 in Agra, which the English referred to as the Linen Cloth Massacre.³⁰ In the aftermath commercial activity regained a little momentum until the 1630s. In 1630 and 1631, Gujarat was hit hard by torrential rainfall. In 1631, the loss of crops caused a deadly famine throughout the province of Gujarat.³¹ Mortality was

²⁸ Thomas Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 29 November 1626, IOR/E/3/11, f.146. Also see, Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 114-115. While in the Deccan, Prince Khurram had his brother killed, and the newly anointed prince, Shahryar, remained the final threat to Prince Khurram’s throne.

²⁹ John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2005 reprint), 102-103; 112-113. Richardson wrote that Nur Jahān before her marriage to Jahāngīr was the widowed wife of a Mughal officer. She began ruling in Jahāngīr’s stead after he fell ill, which created tension between her and Prince Khurram over authority.

³⁰ Gregory Clement to President Kerridge, Agra, 17 February 1627/28, IOR/G/36/102, f.556-557. Also see, Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 203.

³¹ Consultation at Surat, 18 February 1633/2, IOR/G/36/1, f. 157-158.

high, and Indian bodies littered the roads between Surat and Agra.³² The high levels of mortality and the dearth of crops forced many to migrate east, leaving the region depleted of its inhabitants and its workforce, particularly weavers and dyers. Around the same time, Shah Jahān provoked another war with the Deccan princes in 1631 causing another round of disruption to commercial lines.³³ When William Methwold arrived in India in late 1633 the state of India and English trade was dreadful.³⁴ The president of Surat, Joseph Hopkinson, was as Hugh Rawlinson wrote, too weak to perform any of his duties and lingered in the factory until his replacement arrived.³⁵ The upheaval of the 1620s and the famine of the early 1630s, caused the English estate in India to stumble, perhaps beyond the point of recovery. At sea, the Portuguese continued to clash with English shipping near Surat and along the Persian coast.

III. *The Third Phase, 1634-1652*

If the English could not control natural disasters or the course of Mughal politics, they could do something about the volatile relations between themselves and the Portuguese; and in 1634 William Methwold began laying the foundations for a peace

³² Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, vol. 2. ed. Mary Lavinia Anstey (London, 1914 reprint), 44.

³³ President Hopkinson to Persia, Surat, 23 January 1631/32, IOR/E/3/13., f.161; Thomas Rastell to Persia, Surat, 10 June 1631, IOR/G/36/84(3), f. 9.

³⁴ Instructions for Captain John Weddell, 30 December 1634, IOR/G/36/1, f. 338; President Methwold to the Company, Swally Road, 29 December 1633, IOR/E/3/15. A.R. Ingram, *The Gateway to India: the Story of Methwold and Bombay* (Oxford, 1938), 50; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 99-101; Furber, *Rival Empires*, 67-68.

³⁵ Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 99.

treaty with the viceroy of Goa. In 1635, President Methwold settled almost two and a half decades of conflict with the Portuguese in the region, and the ensuing peace brought the two sides together in a reasonably strong alliance.³⁶ The cessation of Anglo-Portuguese hostilities created opportunities for the English that included the use of Portuguese ports, navigators, and easier access to Malabar pepper. The end of Anglo-Portuguese aggression in the Indian Ocean opened new avenues for the English merchants in both the short and long-terms, but the ensuing decade and a half was devastating for the English Company.

With the Anglo-Portuguese Peace out of the way, the English could focus on trade or what little of it they could obtain in the aftermath of the famine.³⁷ At the same time, the union brought an increase in tension between the English and Dutch Companies, and competition over indigo between the two steadily increased in the 1630s. In one example, Methwold was pleased with their broker in Agra, Dhanjī, after learning that he “sourced the Hollenders” into overbidding for the Biāna Indigo. Trade was not the only issue the English had to contend with in the 1630s as piracy and interlopers from England provided another challenge for the presidency in Surat. In April of 1636, the presidency suffered a significant blow when William Cobbe captured two junks identified as the *Mahmudi* of Diu and the *Taufiqi* of Surat.³⁸ The act of piracy set off a firestorm in Surat, and the recently appointed governor, Hakīm Masīh-uz-Zamān, had the president and his council

³⁶ Ingram, *The Gateway to India*. See Chapter 3.

³⁷ President Methwold to Benjamin Robinson, Surat, 27 February, 1635/36, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.83.

³⁸ President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 28 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.190v; 204-204v.

arrested and placed under armed guard.³⁹ In Ahmadābād, local officials imprisoned Benjamin Robinson and his subordinates, and their goods were confiscated.⁴⁰ Almost immediately, the entire English enterprise came to a grinding halt as most of the English factors were either detained or imprisoned in their respective factories.

William Methwold and his subordinates caught a break, however, and, after several years of establishing relations with key individuals, a number of important men, such as Mīrzā Mahmūd (Indian merchant) and Vīrjī Vōrā (broker), vouched for the English.⁴¹ In Agra, long time friend and former governor of Surat, Mīr Mūsā, begged Shah Jahān to reconsider the actions taken against the English. Mīr Mūsā was convinced that the English could not have committed the attack since the nature of the attack was excessively violent and uncharacteristic of his English friends.⁴² Hakīm Masīh-uz-Zamān decided to release Methwold and his council, and the president instructed Captain John White, master of the *Blessing*, to search for William Cobbe.⁴³ If White failed to capture Cobbe, the Company would have sustained an estimated loss of 107,000 rupees (£13,375).⁴⁴ Captain John Proud of the *Swan* ran Cobbe aground in the Comoros Islands,

³⁹ Diary of William Methwold, 28 February 1637/38, IOR/G/36/1, f.528.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Robinson to President Methwold, Ahmadābād, 18 April 1636, IOR/G/36/102, f.605; President Methwold to the London, Surat, 28 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.198v-199.

⁴¹ Diary of William Methwold, 28 February 1637/38, IOR/G/36/1, f.528.

⁴² A letter to Hakīm Masīh-uz-Zamān, April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.181.

⁴³ “Copy of the proceedings against the President and council”, Surat, 30 April 1636, IOR/E3/15, f.221v-222.

⁴⁴ Instructions for Captain John White, Surat, 1 May 1636, IOR/G/36/1, 457-458; Instructions for Captain John White, [1] May 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.227.

and Cobbe was promptly taken into custody with £9,700 in jewels and money.⁴⁵ The matter was settled and Hakīm Masīh-uz-Zamān exonerated the English.

Meanwhile, English interlopers threatened the East India Company's monopoly in the India Ocean.⁴⁶ Interlopers, as Robert Brenner argued, belonged to a group of "new merchants" who were excluded from trade in the East Indies and responded with interloping voyages into Company territory in spite of the monopoly.⁴⁷ After the Company rejected Charles I's request to join the Company as an investor, Charles granted Sir William Courteen rights to trade in the East Indies; and in 1636 the Courteen Association made their first voyage into the east.⁴⁸

In London, the governors petitioned Charles regarding Courteen's fleet, and not entirely convinced that Charles understood the severity of the situation, proposed a ban on independent shipping from importing commodities that the Company regularly imported (indigo and Indian cloth).⁴⁹ The members of the board were alarmed that Courteen's original expedition expanded from a ship and a pinnace to four ships and a pinnace. The East India Company could ill afford competition given the current state of

⁴⁵ Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 102-103.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 100-117.

⁴⁷ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 168-169.

⁴⁸ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 70.

⁴⁹ Court Minutes, 7 March 1635/36, IOR/B/18, f.144-145. Also see Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 70. For more on Courteen see, Robert B. Potter, "Spatial Inequalities in Barbados, West Indies," in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, v.11, n.2 (1986); Gary Puckrein, "Did Sir William Courteen Really Own Barbados," in *Huntington Library Quarterly* v.44, n.2 (Spring, 1981); Louis B. Wright, "The Noble Savage of Madagascar in 1640," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, v.4, n.1 (January 1943); Sir William Foster, "An English Settlement in Madagascar in 1645-6," in *The English Historical Review*, v.27, n.106 (April 1912).

affairs in India: “the trade of India hath subsisted for almost 7 yeares last past ever since the unparalleled famine and plague had almost depopulated this opulent kingdome.”⁵⁰ The Courteen Association arrived at the worst possible time, and the Company hoped to resolve the issue by offering Courteen a place in the Company; he refused.⁵¹ As it happened, the Courteen Association spent most of its efforts in the Far East except for a brief moment in the 1640s when they attempted to break into Southern India. They were more of a nuisance than a real problem for the Indian trade, but the Company nonetheless continued to log complaints in London.⁵²

In 1639 Methwold handed the reins of the presidency over to William Fremlen. After a brief hiatus, Mīr Mūsā returned as governor of Surat in 1639. Fremlen’s presidency began as another conflict erupted in India that saw a coalition of Mughal (led by Prince Aurangzīb) and Dutch forces threatening to overthrow the Portuguese at the port of Damān.⁵³ Fremlen and Mīr Mūsā immediately intervened on behalf of the Portuguese by suing for peace, and for the purpose of securing the safety of Indian shipping travelling between the Malabar Coast and Surat. An agreement was eventually settled, and Mīr Mūsā praised Fremlen for successfully maneuvering for peace.⁵⁴ At the

⁵⁰ Ibid., f.250v.

⁵¹ Court Minutes, 6 February 1636/37, IOR/B/18, f.254-255.

⁵² President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Hole, 4 January 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.184; President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 29 January 1641/42, IOR/E/3/18, f.71v; President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 26 February 1639/40, IOR/E/3/17, f.236v.

⁵³ President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Hole, 15 January 1638/39, IOR/E/16, f.226; President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.179-179v.

⁵⁴ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.171.

same time, the incident illustrated the steady increase in tension between the English and Dutch, and through the web of players involved the two Protestant states were fixed on each other. Andrew Cogan proposed a scheme to ship arms to Goa to aid the Portuguese against the Dutch in the event the Dutch attempted to attack.⁵⁵ The proposal was never carried out, but it marked a clear shift in the English approach to their Dutch rivals from bickering to armed conflict.

In 1640, the Dutch stopped the English *Supply* and *Francis* returning from the Far East, in which the Dutch violently searched for any Portuguese passengers. The incident forced the Portuguese to appeal to Charles I for aid, and Fremlen had hoped—although ignorant of the tension at home—that Charles would comply.⁵⁶ If Charles agreed to support the Portuguese, they offered several forts in India to the English Company for compensation. It certainly was a lucrative offer, but Charles I was in no position to grant aid at the time. For the next decade the Dutch problem continued to simmer until the two came to blows in 1652.

The real catalyst, however, came in 1642 with the first shots of the English Civil War, which caused a significant disruption to the Company's trade, investments, and in many ways left the Company in a politically awkward circumstance in London.⁵⁷ The latter half of the 1640s until the Company's collapse in 1652, the English in India began a

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f.179v.

⁵⁶ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, IOR/E/3/17, f.229v; Translation of a letter from Viththala Gomti, Rājāpur, 5 February 1639/40, IOR/E/3/17, f.234v.

⁵⁷ See, Ben Coates, *The Impact of the English Civil War on the Economy of London, 1642-50* (Ashgate, 2004), 41; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*; idem, "The Civil War Politics of London's Merchant Community," in *Past and Present*, no. 58, (1973).

series of retrenchment policies that consisted of sending factors home to London and collecting any outstanding investments in India. War at home was not the only problem, and instability in India once again led to open rebellion. The Kulī Rebellion of the 1640s wreaked havoc on commerce but also gave rise to thieving raids making the road between Ahmadābād and Agra incredibly dangerous once again.⁵⁸ Another famine struck northern India, and in 1648 a band of 100 rebels assaulted and ransacked the Dutch House in Ahmadābād.⁵⁹ The roads were no longer safe in India, while simultaneously the Company in London could not muster further investments. In 1652, Oliver Cromwell and Parliament busted the Company's monopoly on the East India trade.

The English in India had opportunities to succeed, especially after the first decade or so of uneasy relations between the Mughals and English. Afterwards, political instability within the Mughal government and its dominions created significant obstacles for commerce, both in a domestic and an international context. The decline of the early Company in India therefore was not merely the consequence of a single problem, such as, the lack of expendable cash. Much of the Company's decline was directly tied to local political, and environmental, crises that created very real obstacles for the English merchants.

The merchants in India created a network of fairly reliable relations, patrons if you will, who helped nurture the Company's trade, and they established a fairly respectable reputation for English merchants and England. It is for these reasons that the

⁵⁸ President Breton to the Company, Surat, 26 March 1644, IOR/E/3/19, f.2v.

⁵⁹ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 20 April 1648, IOR/E/3/21, f.18.

Company was able to pick up the pieces in India in 1657. This, however, is a stark contrast to the factory in Persia, and its rise and fall was based on an entirely different set of circumstances even if it was certainly tied, in part, to the events in India. And to this, we must now turn our attention.

Chapter 1: “Strange and Wonderful News”: from Varthema to Monsieur de Montfort

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the area around St. Paul’s Cathedral was bustling with activity as Londoners—at least those who could afford it—visited print shops located nearby. News from the continent poured into England and London printers published numerous materials relating to domestic and foreign matters, such as war, murder, anti-Catholic tracts, and other fanciful narrations of the world’s events.⁶⁰ Print shops also published plays, classical histories, and luxurious travel narratives that satiated London’s hunger for the world beyond England.

For most Englishmen and women, Persia was a distant land that might as well exist in contemporary fairytales, but it was brought to life in the pages of lengthy travel narratives and historical accounts of Persia’s classical past leaning on figures such as Cyrus II and Darius III. Stephen Wythers’ translation of John Sleidanus’ *A Brief Chronicle of the foure principall Empyres* (1563) retells the rise and fall of the classical empires of Babylon, Persia, Rome, and Greece.⁶¹ Others tracts such as Thomas Orwin’s *A Short view of the Persian Monarchie* (1590) and Edward Lively’s *True Chronologie of the time of the Persian Monarchie* (1597) detail the Persian monarchy during the time of

⁶⁰ David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and early Stuart military news* (London, 2008), 13, 37; Adam Fox, “Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,” in *The Historical Journal*. v. 40, n. 3 (1997), 601. For more on London print culture see, Lisa Parmelee, *Good News from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (University of Rochester Press, 1996); M.A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476-1622* (New York, 1966), 120-122.

⁶¹ Johannes Sleidanus, Stephen Wythers, *A Briefe Chronicle of the foure principall Empyres. To witte, of Babilon, Persia, Grecia, and Rome. Wherein, very compendiously, the whole course of histories are contained. Made by the famous and godly termed man John Sleidan, and Englished by Stephen Wythers.* (Printed at London by Rouland Hall, dwelling in Gutter Lane, at the signe of the halfe Egle and the heye, 1563).

Cyrus the Great; while Lodowick Lloyd presents a critique of the Greek, Roman, and Persian Empires in his *Consent of Time* (1590). Among these are a few plays set in the classical world namely Thomas Preston's *A Lementable Tragedie* (1570), Sir William Alexander's *The Monarchick Tragedies* (1604), and one anonymous play in 1594 titled *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia*. By the middle of the century, the English public had access to a number of works on classical Persia.

The gradual rise in interest in Persia's past coincides with the English merchant community's attempt to establish a direct trade route with Persia in 1558.⁶² These narratives certainly teased the imaginations of Englishmen and women living in London, but Persia changed significantly from its classical heritage especially after the emergence of Islam in the Middle East. As London printers printed these early historical pamphlets, contemporary travelers recorded their respective journeys across the Middle East. At the turn of the century, Sir Robert and Sir Anthony Sherley's embassy to Shah Abbas' Court provided English merchants with a contemporary account of the Persia State and her people. Although few in number these publications provided a vague glimpse into Persian society. When the English East India Company decided to expand into Persia in 1616, those involved in the Company's expansion must have had some knowledge of the Safavīd State and her people.

⁶² Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 21. Brenner also notes that the Muscovy Company was in the hands of the Levant and East India merchants. Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Politics and Transit Rights: The Seventeenth-Century Trade in Silk between Safavid Iran and Muscovy," in *Cahiers du Monde russe*, v.35, n.4 (October-December, 1994). Mildred Wretts-Smith, "The English in Russia during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, v.3 (1920), 80.

A look at these pamphlets allows modern researchers to construct an image of what Englishmen read and perhaps thought of Persia in the latter half of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Merchants read about Persia's terrain, politics, history, people, religion, and most importantly Persia's import and export trade. The information provided English merchants with a foundation of information, but the information was not entirely representative of the conditions the English found in Persia. This chapter will focus on several printed books and pamphlets to construct an idea of what Englishmen and women read on the eve of their entrance into Persia from the Indian Ocean. This depiction was in some ways representative of Persian society, but in others it was a costly misrepresentation of the Safavīd market and marketable goods. While it is almost impossible to determine how much influence these pamphlets had on English trade and thought, the English readership acquired a broad picture of the land and its people.

I. "Thou must not looke for a garden of sweete English Roses": European Travelers to Persia in English print.

The first printed works of contemporary Persia were translated editions of books written by European travelers. They were typically lengthy narratives that retold the tale of the traveler's journey from their home base to the furthest corners of the world, but within their robust travelogues these men reserved at least few pages for their brief journey through Persia. Of these, the most notable piece comes from Richard Hakluyt, the famous editor and translator of various travel books, who wrote his *The Principal*

Navigations, Voyaiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation covering travelers to the East and West Indies, in which he published the first edition in 1589.

One of the first accounts of Persia comes as the result of several decades of work from three different authors. The original author, Pietro Martire D'Anghiera (1457-1526), died well before the material on Persia was added, and the original work focused primarily on the Americas which he published in 1516 as *De Orbe Novo Decades* and later translated into English by Richard Eden as *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India* (1555) with minimal additions.⁶³ Eden was an interesting fellow who was born from a family of East Anglian cloth merchants in 1520, and he eventually became secretary to Sir William Cecil in 1552. In 1553, Eden was in a rather precarious position since his father and uncle played a role in establishing Lady Jane Grey as queen. But Eden pledged his loyalty to Mary I, and nothing was made of his family's early affairs.

Most importantly, Eden won Thomas Percy, earl of Northumberland's favor. Northumberland wanted to challenge Spain's global empire and likely supported Eden's first work *A Treatyse of the Neww India*.⁶⁴ Under Northumberland's patronage, Eden began translating D'Anghiera's work and other travel accounts in what eventually became *The Decades of the Newe Worlde*. Just before his death, Eden translated Lodovico de Varthema's account of his voyage into the east, but the translation never made it into his version of the tome. That translation would not enter the book until Richard Willes took over the project.

⁶³ David Armitage, *Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49; 78.

⁶⁴ David Gwyn, "Richard Eden Cosmographer and Alchemist," in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, v.15, n.1 (Spring, 1984), 23-25.

The third and final contributor to the tome was Richard Willes, a poet and geographer born to a Catholic family in Dorset, who under the patronage of Francis Russell, earl of Bedford, published *The History of Travayle* in 1577. The Willes edition finally included a lengthy account of Asia based on Varthema's voyage.⁶⁵ As David Gwyn has pointed out, Varthema's account is more or less fanciful fiction lined with risqué stories, but it at least found a large readership in the sixteenth century as it went through, Gwyn claimed, forty editions.⁶⁶ Willes died two years later, but his edition appeared in print two decades after the Muscovy Company entered Persia in 1558. Although port gossip likely attributed much to the English understanding of the Middle East and Far East, Willes' version provided one of the earliest printed accounts of travelers in Persia.⁶⁷

Willes' publication of Varthema's voyage gave readers a glimpse of the eastern world, but the dated account of the Gulf region was out of touch with contemporary conditions. Varthema's journey began in 1503, twelve years before the Portuguese sacked Hormuz.⁶⁸ He observed that Hormuz regularly employed "above foure hundred

⁶⁵ Richard Willes, *The History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies, and other countreys lying eyther way, towards the fruitfull and ryche Moluccaes. As Moscovia, Persia, Arabia, Syria, Ægypte, Ethiopia, Guinea, China in Catbayo, and Giapan: With a discourse of the Northwest passage. In the hande of our Lorde be all the corners of the earth. Psal.94. Gathered in parte, and done into Englyshe by Richard Eden. Newly set in order, augmented, and finished by Richard Willes.* (Imprinted at London by Richarde Iugge, 1577).

⁶⁶ Gwyn, "Richard Eden," 33. The *ESTC* does not appear to have any record of Varthema's *Itinerario Ludovico de Varthema Bolognese*, but it appeared in German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Dutch, French, and English. Versions of Varthema's voyage also appear in full or abridged in numerous works including *The History of Travel* but also *Novus Orbis* and *Purchas, his Pilgrimage*.

⁶⁷ Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan*.

⁶⁸ Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Publishers, 2006), 7.

merchauntes and factours” to manage the constant traffic of silk, spices, precious stones, and other commodities.⁶⁹ The Portuguese controlled the island and had since built a fortress. The bustling trade of Hormuz that Varthema may have witnessed in 1503 no longer existed in the same capacity or under the same occupants. Yet a long time had passed between 1515 and the publication of *The History of Travayle* making it less likely that late sixteenth century readers took the account seriously, and particularly the merchant community who were certainly aware of the Portuguese occupation of Hormuz in 1577.

Aside from the significant chronological gap, there were some nuggets of information that English merchants would have found useful. Varthema’s descriptions of the inhabitants, for example, would have given at least some insight into the region. Although after several decades of Portuguese occupation, the local inhabitants’ attitudes were bound to have changed. How their attitudes changed under Portuguese occupation was still an unknown for late century Englishmen. Varthema described the Persians as “very courteous and gentle people, lyberall and gracious one to the other, and favorable to strangers.” He spoke highly of Hormuz claiming the city was second to none, and had “plentie of pearles” but the fort lacked fresh water reserves. This is interesting since contemporaries of the early seventeenth century considered the place a desolate heap, but perhaps in Varthema’s time Hormuz flourished. He was fascinated by the manner in which Persians harvested pearls from the ocean floor. After anchoring themselves to

⁶⁹ Willes, *The History of Trauayle*, 379. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age 1300-1600* (Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1973), 126.

small boats, Varthema claimed that the pearl divers dove overboard with a stone attached to their feet. The divers then scoured the ocean floor for the precious stones.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, Varthema provides very little detail about the divers and their methods once in the water, but he created a lasting image of the divers that seemed exotic, brave, and bold.

The anecdote of the pearl diver was probably of interest to the general public, but one point probably stuck out to London merchants. At the time of Varthema's voyage, the island functioned as a junction for commercial traffic from the entire Indian Ocean region that saw silk, spices, precious stones, and other valuables cross the shores of Hormuz. How much this commercial dynamic changed since 1515 was still somewhat of an unknown for English merchants, but Willes' publication at least (if only partially) illustrated the potential for wealth in the Persian Gulf. Silk in particular was "seene so great aboundaunce" that in a single a merchant can "bye as mucche as may suffice to lade three thousand Camels."⁷¹ Varthema's estimate was an exaggeration, but the illusion of massive silk exports is one myth that carried over into the seventeenth century as well. It is difficult to gauge how London merchants received the book, but the brief relation probably provoked some thought among London merchants during the 1580s.

At the same time travel narratives spread, reports came to London of the Ottoman-Safavīd War. One anonymous author of a French tract from 1579 brought attention to the Ottoman-Safavīd rivalry that, according to him, began since the Ottomans

⁷⁰ Willes, *The History of Trauayle*, f.378-380

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f.380v.

and Safavīd States came into existence. The conflict served as an example of Ottoman brutality, and he cited the fall of Tabriz (presumably between 1534 and 1548) and the Ottoman use of artillery against the Safavīds who at the time did not succumb to the use of gunpowder weaponry. Although the author is unknown, he was certainly a Catholic who thought that Europeans could “recover the Orientall Empire” of Persia and plant the Catholic Church there. His anti-Ottoman position is clear, and the author seems to have realized that Persia was a potential staging point for Ottoman opposition. In spite of their technological disadvantages, he felt the Persian character resonated further than canon fire. The Persians were “more valiant” than the Ottomans and with some 40,000 horsemen overran an Ottoman division.⁷²

In 1584, Franciscus de Billerbeg’s letter to David [Chyrtæns] in Germany began to circulate in London. The letter was translated by an anonymous Englishman and published. Billerbeg was in Constantinople when he wrote the original letter, and unlike the previous tract Billerbeg was sympathetic to the Ottomans. He chastised the Safavīds for the scorched earth policy that left “the Turks...in great distresse” and “plagued with hunger and pestilence, and specially by the plague.”⁷³ Billerbeg seems to refer to events

⁷² Anonymous, *A Discourse of the bloody and cruell Battaile, of late loste by the great Turke Sultan Selim. And Also of the taking of the strong Towne of Seruan, with the number there slaine and taken, and the great store of artillery and munitions of warre lost in the taking of the saide Towne. 1579. Translated out of French into English* (Imprinted at London at the three Cranes in the Vintree by Thomas Dawson, 1579), 347-348; 350-353; Also see, Matthee, *Politics for Trade*, 17.

⁷³ Franciscus de Billerbeg, *Frauncis Billerbeg from Constantinople, written to Dauid Chyrtæns of Germanie* (Imprinted at London: By J. Charlewood for Thomas Hackett, and are to bee solde at his shoppe in Lumberd-streete vnder the Popes heade, 1584), 4.

that transpired during the Ottoman-Safavīd Wars between 1534 and 1548, but similar to the author of the previous tract Billerbeg was chronologically ambiguous.⁷⁴

Both tracts were published at an interesting cross section in English history concerning their overseas project. In 1583, the Volga route into Persia closed with the resumption of the Ottoman-Safavīd conflict in 1580s.⁷⁵ The Muscovy Company sent several voyages down the Volga for Persia in the previous decade, but the danger of the route forced the English to abandon the approach to Persia.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, two English merchants, Sir Edward Osborne and Richard Staper, attempted to revitalize the English Levantine Trade, and in 1581 the Levant Company added to a list of English companies involved in the Mediterranean World. English merchants bought eastern goods through third party merchants in Istanbul and other Mediterranean ports, but the Mediterranean Sea certainly had many difficulties and was dangerous.

The Battle of Lepanto (1571) combined with Barbary corsairs and enemy shipping made the Levantine Trade particularly dangerous. They already saw one route closed due to Ottoman-Safavīd conflict, and the density of traffic in the Mediterranean raised the competition for eastern commodities there. The two latest tracts also alerted London that the Ottoman-Safavīd conflict was brutal and destructive, neither of which was promising for international commerce. One solution was opening direct trade into the

⁷⁴ Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 150.

⁷⁵ Rhodes Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), 3-6; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 81; Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Politics and Transit Rights: The Seventeenth-Century Trade in Silk between Safavid Iran and Muscovy," in *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, v.35, n.4 (October-December, 1994), 744-746; K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: the study of an early joint-stock company, 1600-1640* (Franck Cass, 1965), 7-8.

⁷⁶ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 7-8.

east, especially as Alison Games argued that the English organized their companies on the basis of nonviolence.⁷⁷ Given the context of the Mediterranean world, these two pamphlets gave English merchants reason to consider an alternative route to the East Indies that would bypass the tentative circumstances in the Mediterranean. Especially since the Anghiera-Eden-Willes book of 1577 suggested that the Far East was much more welcoming.

By the end of the 1580s, London print shops began publishing more recent accounts of Persia and the Indian Ocean. In 1587, Cæsar Federici, a Venetian Merchant, returned from the East Indies from Aleppo. During his voyage from Aleppo, he wrote *The Voyages and Trauaile*. In the same year, Thomas Hickock travelled to Tripoli, and there he came by a copy of Federici's book. Hickock was captivated by the short book and decided to translate the book into English. Apparently Hickock was an unconfident writer, and he warned his readers that "thou must not looke for a garden of sweete English Roses, (meaning pleasant English termes), but thou shalt finde bancks full of Sauory." In March 1588, Hickock set out on the *Hercules* for London, and over the course of the voyage he translated Federici's book. In his note to the reader, Hickock urged his audience to accept that he was not "brought up to write fine schoole-termes" and read the small book with an open and eager mind.⁷⁸ In June of 1588, Hickock published Federici's book.

⁷⁷ Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 53.

⁷⁸ Cesare Federici, *The Voyage and Trauaile: Of M. CÆsar Frederick, Merchant of Venice, into the East India, the Indies, and beyond the Indies. Wherein are contained very pleasant and rare matters, with the customes and rites of those Countries. Also, Heerin are Discovered the Merchandises and commodities of*

Federici left Europe in 1563, and spent roughly twenty-eight years in the East Indies. His outgoing route took him overland through Fallujah and into Basra where he took passage for India. Federici was far more interested in Portuguese India and the Orient, after all he spent much of his time there, but he provided an informative description of the Persian Gulf region. Much as Varthema had, Federici described Hormuz as having a central role in the regions interport trade, from which Federici claimed that drugs and spices from Hormuz created an important commodity in Basra's trade. From Basra, Federici "sailed in small Ships made of boards, bound together with small cords or ropes, and in steed of calking they lay betweene everie board certaine strawwe which they have." The majority of maritime traffic between Hormuz and Basra, it would seem, consisted of small shipping, but Federici did not indicate the tonnage of shipping taking the passage. He recorded that Hormuz was between 25 and 30 miles in circumference, and "it is the most barrenest and most drie Iland in all the world, because that in it there is nothing to be had, but salt water, and wood."⁷⁹ This was a stark contrast to Varthema's inflated view of Hormuz, and the island provided little more than a strategic point for European shipping. Having control over the island allowed the Portuguese to control the flow of shipping to and from the Persian Gulf. As Federici hinted at, Basra's market depended on the infusion of commodities shipped from

those Countreyes, aswell the aboundaunce of Goulde and Silver, as Spices, Drugges, Pearles, and other Jewelles. Written at Sea in the Hercules of London: coming from Turkie, the 25 of March 1588. For the profitable instruction of Merchants and all other trauellers for their better direction and knowledge of those Countreyes. Out of Italian, by T.H. (At London, Printed by Richard Jones, and Edward White, 18 Iunij 1588), A4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1-3.

Hormuz, and in 1563 the Portuguese controlled all traffic between the two cities. For English merchants considering tapping into the Gulf, this was dire news indeed.

The Portuguese and local Muslims had provisions shipped in from Gombroon, and at waterside “a verie faire castell” stood where “a good band of Portingales” and the captain resided. Portuguese soldiers and “married men” resided in the city amongst merchants “of every nation.”⁸⁰ Federici’s report suggests that the city was a bustling trading center where drugs, spices, silk, and other commodities from Persia were exchanged. He also notes that horses formed a central role in trade at Hormuz, and merchants from Hormuz shipped Persian horses throughout the East Indies. When Federici arrived, Hormuz seemed to function as a central hub of trade in the region that operated as a gateway to both the Indian Ocean and the Gulf ports. Even if Hormuz was barren, it did have a commercial and strategic importance.

The political structure of Hormuz struck Federici, and its organization was quite remarkable. Supreme authority fell to the Portuguese captain of the castle, and through him the island was administered and protected. He was not the only authority on the island, however. Hormuz had a king who was Persian, but as Federici observed he “is created and made king by the captaine of the castell, in the name of the king of Portingale.” The Portuguese were careful to elect a man who descended from Persian royalty, and during the ceremony the captain “giveth him the Scepter Regall.” Of course the elected king had to swear loyalty and service to the king of Portugal, but the addition of a native figure of authority seems to have kept the peace at Hormuz. Federici also

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

noted that while the captain respected and honored the king, he “cannot ride abroade with his traine, without the consent of the captaine.”⁸¹ This was also terrible news for the English who would likely find no support in Hormuz.

This is all Federici had to say about Hormuz before he departed for Goa. There is a consistent narrative between the Varthema (1503) and Federici (1563) accounts, however, that described Hormuz as a central hub for the spice trade near the Persian Gulf or so Federici and Varthema thought. The consistency between these two narratives, in spite of the lengthy chronological gap, probably created an established picture of Hormuz among Londoners. If Hormuz was barren, it at least emerged as a point where merchants converged from all over the region to buy and sell their marketable goods. From Hormuz, merchants dispersed goods and money deeper into the Persia Gulf and east along the Indian Ocean littoral.

In 1589, Richard Hakluyt published his *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries*.⁸² In regards to Persia and the Safavīd trade, this is perhaps one of the most important works in English in the sixteenth century. David Armitage has argued that Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas were the two “greatest memorialists in the English overseas enterprise,” from which he saw parallels between Protestantism and the ideological

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸² Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, vioages and discoveries of the English nation, made by Sea or over Land, to the most remote and farthest distant Quarters of the earth at any time within the compasse of these 1500 yeeres: Deuided into three seuerall parts, according to the positions of the Regions whereunto they were directed*. (Imprinted at London by George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, Deputies to Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, 1589).

origins of the British Empire.⁸³ Hakluyt's *The Principall Navigations* was therefore one of several important publications of the 1580s, of which *Discourse on Western Planting* (1584) made its mark early on. The material in *The Principall Navigations* pertaining to Persia was taken primarily from Muscovy Company merchants during the 1560s, but the travelogues and letters that make up Hakluyt's book provide important details regarding the trade in Persia, and what future Englishmen could expect to find there.

Hakluyt organized *The Principall Navigations* geographically instead of chronologically, so the first part of the book follows English travelers and merchants through Africa, Iraq, Syria, and Persia. The second part shifts the focus to English travelers and merchants into Muscovy and down into Turkey and Persia. A third part focuses primarily on the West Indies. Instead of reorganizing Hakluyt's work chronologically, this part will follow the book as contemporary Londoners would have read it. Hakluyt's organizational approach was not haphazardly done, and he arranged the routes according to a larger historical context of western European travel. The first travelers and merchants followed several routes via the Mediterranean into North Africa and the Middle East. The first book, for example, begins with Helena Flavia Augusta who in 326-328 A.D. travelled to Jerusalem, and he brought attention to several travelers through the early middle ages until sixteenth century.

The first entry Londoners would have read pertaining to Persia (providing they did not skim through the book) began with the Ottoman-Safavīd War in the 1550s. That

⁸³ Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 64. Also see, G.D. Ramsay, "Clothworkers, Merchant Adventurers and Richard Hakluyt," in *The English Historical Review*, v.92, n.364 (July, 1977); Tom Girtin, "Mr. Hakluyt, Scholar at Oxford," in *The Geographical Journal*, v.119, n.2 (June, 1953).

Hakluyt gave the war any attention at all probably stemmed from Hakluyt's reliance on Anthony Jenkinson's papers for his book. Jenkinson was an English Muscovy Merchant who wrote a couple letters in 1553 in reference to Suleiman the Magnificent's invasion of Persia.⁸⁴ Jenkinson was in Aleppo at the time of Suleiman's arrival with his army, and his letters indicate that Suleiman intended to take his army for Persia. Although in 1589 at the time of Hakluyt's publication, Shah Abbas I agreed to peace with the Ottomans so that he could focus his military strength against the Uzbeks in eastern Persia.⁸⁵

Towards the end of part one, Hakluyt began to touch more directly on Persia. The first of Hakluyt's travelers, John Newberry made his overland journey to Goa in 1583. Newberry carried letters from Dom António to the viceroy of Goa.⁸⁶ His arrival at Hormuz was short of welcoming, and the Portuguese captain of Hormuz arrested Newberry for carrying Dom António's letters. Newberry was imprisoned until a ship arrived for Goa where Newberry was handed over to the viceroy.⁸⁷ Londoners' reading this would have noticed a few details. Small shipping travelled frequently between Basra and Hormuz, but as Newberry complained:

Although we be Englishmen, I know no reason to the contrary, but that we may trade hither and thither as well as other nations, for all nations doe, and may come freely to Ormuz, as Frenchmen, Flemmings, Almains, Hungarians, Italians, Greekes, Armenians, Turkes and Moores, Jewes and Gentiles, Persians,

⁸⁴ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 81-83.

⁸⁵ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 74-75.

⁸⁶ At the time Dom António attempted to bring the English into an alliance to place him on the Portuguese throne. For this event, see Kenneth Andrews, *Drake's Voyages* (Charles Scribner and Sons, 1967), 88; 116; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588* (Princeton University Press, 1981), 273.

⁸⁷ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 210.

Moscouites, and there is no nation that they seek to trouble, except ours: wherefore it were contrary to all justice and reason that they should suffer all nations to trade with the, and to forbid us.⁸⁸

In lieu of earlier claims that Hormuz was a bustling center for trade, Newberry's experience shows that, while trade might have flourished, the English were unwelcomed at Hormuz. About the same time another merchant, Richard Fitch, arrived at Hormuz from Basra and he too was imprisoned.⁸⁹ The signs were ominous indeed for Englishmen in the region, and it did not appear that they could open trade in the Gulf without coming to blows with the Portuguese. How London merchants took the information is difficult to discern, but the negative press pertaining to the Persian Gulf probably had some influence on the English East India's Company's scheme in the east which by 1600 did not include Persia.

William Barrett, an English merchant, returned from the East Indies to Aleppo in 1584. Barrett recorded various rates and measurements of the cities he visited including those at Hormuz. As his predecessors had, Barrett travelled through Basra towards Hormuz before departing for Cochin and the East Indies. From Basra to Hormuz, Barrett noted that barks regularly travelled between ports, and merchants paid both a shipping charge and a fee to the captain of the bark and his mariners.⁹⁰ From Hormuz, the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 210.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 212.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 214. Barrett reported that, "the cariage of 10 cares 180 larines, those of 15 cares 270 larines, those of 20 cares 360 larines, those of 30 cares 540 larines. Note that a cara is 4 quintals of Balsara." Barrett referred to the Persian *lārīn* which equates to half a rupee. One silver rupee was worth about 2s 6d (half of this is 1s 3d), which suggests that for 10 *cares* cost roughly £11 5s.⁹⁰ If one *care* equated to four Basra quintals, than for £11 5s the merchants could ship about 4,480 pounds of goods from Basra to Hormuz. See

Portuguese and native merchants shipped horses into Goa and other India ports.⁹¹ The Persian Gulf bustled with activity, but it would remain unattainable until the English could overthrow the Portuguese who, according to Barrett and others, dominated the maritime traffic.

The route from Aleppo to Basra took most travelers and merchants into the Far East. While these men made their obligatory stop in Hormuz, they departed Hormuz for Goa and then further east. None of the men that Hakluyt relied on for their accounts travelled into the interior of Persia. If the accounts are accurate and there is no reason to dismiss them, the Portuguese were able to acquire silk at Hormuz from merchants importing the stuff. From the north, however, English merchants had entered Persia from the Volga River.

The bulk of Hakluyt's collection on Persia comes from Muscovy Company merchants during the 1560s, most notably from Anthony Jenkinson and Arthur Edwards, but Hakluyt collected a few letters from Thomas Alcock, Richard Johnson, Lawrence Chapman, Thomas Banister, and Geoffrey Ducket. The entire body of letters that Hakluyt published gave his readership an idea of what they could expect to find in Persia, the people, and the commodities typically imported and exported from Persia. The chief of those commodities was silk. Their letters home that ended up in *The Principall Navigations* provided Englishmen with invaluable information of Persia, but these men confined themselves to the silk provinces of Gilan and Shirvan located in north of Iran on

also, Rubi Maloni, *European Merchant Capital and the India Economy: Surat Factory Records, 1630-1668* (Manohar Press, 1992), Appendix B, 450-451.

⁹¹ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 211.

the southern Caspian Sea. While their accounts were invaluable for London merchants, they did not appear to have travelled to the interior to Isfahan, Shīrāz, and Lār, and they certainly did not travel to Gombroon and Jask.

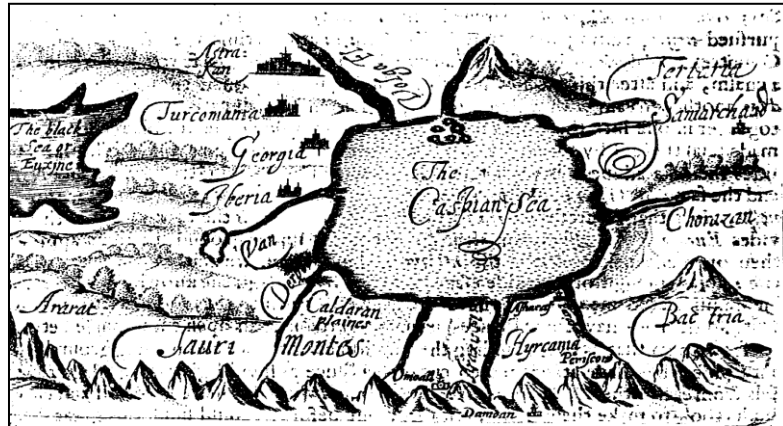


Figure 1: A map of the Caspian Sea from Sir Thomas Herbert's 17th century pamphlet *Some Yeares Travels* (1664).

The Muscovy route opened the back door into Persia, but the route was incredibly tedious. After their arrival in 1555, the Muscovy Company sent barges down the Volga River into the Caspian Sea where merchants began purchasing silk from Persia.⁹² They attempted to push English Kerseys into Persia early on, which became their primary export commodity. The barks used on the Volga were small and rated at 30 tons.⁹³ Once they arrived at the Caspian Sea, shipwrights built small shipping to allow the English

⁹² Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 21. Brenner also notes that the Muscovy Company was in the hands of the Levant and East India merchants. Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Politics and Transit Rights: The Seventeenth-Century Trade in Silk between Safavid Iran and Muscovy," in *Cahiers du Monde russe*, v.35, n.4 (October-December, 1994). Mildred Wretts-Smith, "The English in Russia during the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, v.3 (1920), 80.

⁹³ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 365-366; 376.

merchants to cross over to the coast of Persia.⁹⁴ These ships were “handsomely made after the English fashion,” but the 30 ton bark was too small in Arthur Edwards’ opinion to cross the Caspian Sea.⁹⁵ For that he requested a skilled shipwright “to make one of the burden of 60 tunnes or more.”⁹⁶ After completing their business in Persia, the English then had to return to Muscovy and then overland to the White Sea to laden the English shipping harbored there or returning.

Hakluyt undoubtedly played with his audience’s imagination with tantalizing bits from English encounters with the Safavīd court and nobility. The first encounter began with Anthony Jenkinson’s encounter with the king ‘Abd Allah Khan of the Shirvan Providence in 1561.⁹⁷ Jenkinson attempted to visit the king in the morning after their arrival, but after “banketting with his women, being a hundred and fortie in number, he sleepeth most in the day.”⁹⁸ When ‘Abd Allah Khan eventually emerged from his slumber, he commanded Jenkinson to join him hawking in the countryside. After their foray into the countryside, ‘Abd Allah Khan invited Jenkinson to dine with him later that evening. Jenkinson was an honored guest at the evenings feast, and before he joined the king for dinner:

⁹⁴ Rhodes Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), 3-6; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 81; Matthee, “Anti-Ottoman Politics”, 744-746; K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: the study of an early joint-stock company, 1600-1640* (Franck Cass, 1965), 7-8.

⁹⁵ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 376.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁹⁷ Matthee, *The Politics for Trade*, 31.

⁹⁸ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 368.

Two gentlemen incountred me with two garmentes of that country fashion, side downe to the ground, the one of silke, and the other of silke and golde, sent unto me from the king, and after that they caused me to put off my upper garment, being a gowne of blacke velvet furred with sables, they put the sayd two garments upon my backe.⁹⁹

Following the dinner and extensive conversation, the king provided Jenkinson with a horse and a passage of safe conduct throughout his dominions. What follows is a relatively detailed description of the Shirvan Province on the coast of the Caspian Sea.

At the time of Jenkinson's arrival, the Shirvan Province was subjected to Shah Tahmasp I (r.1524-1576) of Persia, but Jenkinson claimed that in the past the towns and cities of Shirvan once held the power to challenge the "Sophies of Persia." During the conquest, however, Shah Tahmasp "conquered them not many yeeres passed, for theyr diversetie in religion, and caused not onely all the nobillitie and gentlemen of that country to be put to death." From Shirvan, especially the city of Shamakhi, raw silk and other types of cloth including cotton wool sold, but also spices and drugs from the East Indies. Spices arrived in Shirvan from Hormuz according to the Muscovy merchant, Richard Cheney. The journey apparently took six weeks, but Cheney did not provide specific details of the route, but presumably merchants shipped spices up the Persian Gulf and then overland to Gilan. Arthur Edwards thought that with camels one could travel from Qazvin (Casbin) to Hormuz in thirty days, although Edwards probably meant from Qazvin to the Gulf coast where small shipping was available.¹⁰⁰ The original authors and Hakluyt were vague about the distances between Hormuz and the Shirvan Province, and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 368.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 368; 374; 379.

there is no indication that the Muscovy merchants made the journey to Hormuz. It seems likely that they merchants received their information from local merchants and travelers who previously made the journey, but the letters Hakluyt compiled are ambiguous.

Nearby lie the ancient castle at Gullistone that apparently fell siege to Alexander the Great and lately beaten down by the forces of Shah Tahmasp. Jenkinson brought attention to a rather somber “nunnery of sumptuos building, wherein was buried a kinges daughter, named Amalecke-Channa, who slew her selfe with a knife; for that her father would have forced her (the professing chastitie) to have married with a king of Tartary, upon which occasion the maidens of that countrey doe resort thither once every yeere to lament her death.” If the tale of the nunnery failed to move Hakluyt’s readers, Jenkinson’s retelling of the Quiquiffs Hill legend certainly would have caused a few readers to stir. According to local myth:

A great Giant, named Arneoste, hauing upon his head two great hornes, and eares, and eyes likes a horse, and a tayle like a cowe. It is further said, that this monster kept a passage thereby, untill there came an holy man (termed Haucome Hamthe) a kinsman to one of the Sophies, who mounted the said hil, and combatting with the said Giant, did bind not onely him in chaines, but also his woman called Lamisache, with his soun named Aster for which victorie they of that countrey have this holy man in great reputation, and the hill at this day savoureth so ill, that no person may come nigh unto it. But whether it be true or not, I referre it to further knowledge.¹⁰¹

Both tales probably captivated Hakluyt’s audience and sensationalized the eastern world, but Jenkinson seemed to put little trust in the validity of the story and “now to returne to the discourse.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 368-369.

¹⁰² Ibid., 368-369.

On the journey to the castle of Qazvin to meet with Shah Tahmasp I, Jenkinson noted that the people were a pasturing people who “dwell in the Summer season upon mountains, and Winter they remoove into the valleys without resorting to townes or any other habitation.” He described them as a wild group of people whom carried “all their wives, children, baggage upon bullocks.”¹⁰³ Not long after leaving this group, Jenkinson closed in on the city of Tabriz, which in his opinion was the greatest city in all of Persia before the Ottomans destroyed it. It was fruitful and trade flourished, but in the aftermath of Ottoman incursions the city declined. Presumably Jenkinson was referring to Suleiman’s invasion of Persia in the 1550s.¹⁰⁴

In general, Jenkinson described Persia as “great and ample,” and the land was divided into several kingdoms and provinces. The terrain near the Caspian Sea was “plaine and full of pasture” while the interior was “high, ful of mountains, and sharpe.” Jenkinson does not describe the southern provinces, but he most likely had not been there thus the exclusion from his letter. He does go on to describe the shah of Persia and the people whom inhabited the region. Shah Tahmasp “is nothing valiant, although his power bee greate, and his people martiall.” Jenkinson was critical of Shah Tahmasp for hiding in “the mountains for his safeguard” against the Ottoman forces instead of relying on his forces and castles for protection.¹⁰⁵ This was a deplorable sign of weakness.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 369.

¹⁰⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*.

¹⁰⁵ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 372.

The people of Persia, Jenkinson wrote, “are comely and of good complexion, proude and of good courage, and also for all other their fashions. They be martiall delighting in faire horses and good harnesse, soone angrie, craftie and hard people.” How Hakluyt’s audience read the Jenkinson entries is unknown, but they were given two contrasting perspectives. On one hand, Jenkinson was sympathetic and admired the Persian people, but he seemed to chastise Shah Tahmasp for sulking in the mountains while the Ottomans expanded into his dominions. While the people were strong, their leader was not. Arthur Edwards thought the people were friendly despite “being Mahumetans.”¹⁰⁶

In 1563, ‘Abdallah Khan agreed to give Jenkinson and future English merchants “either ready money or raw silkes” for the value of English commodities brought into Shirvan.¹⁰⁷ ‘Abdallah Khan was the *beglerbeg* of the Shirvan province, which the title denoted a high ranking provincial governor.¹⁰⁸ Before wool merchants in London could rejoice, Cheney warned that “your worships must sende such men as are no riotous livers, nor drunkerds” to ship spices from Hormuz to Gilan. The implication is that wool would not exchange for much silk, and of course that raucous Englishmen “will be your dishonour.”¹⁰⁹ As early as 1563, there was some indication that English commodities—especially English broadcloth—may not provide the best currency for Gilan silk.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 373; 417; 419.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 374. Also see, Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ Matthee, *The Politics for Trade*, 30; 247.

¹⁰⁹ Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations*, 375-376.

In 1566, Edwards reiterated Cheney's concern that "your chiefe Agent and Factor should be able to rule and governe himself," because the Russians "given to be drunkards they are much hated of these people." In addition to his studious advice regarding English merchants, Edwards put together a list of goods that would sell in Persia. In his opinion, English kerseys, fine broadcloth, tin, and copper would sell, while the English could purchase spices such as nutmeg, cloves, and pepper. He was convinced that "here is much broad cloth worne" and the locals "talke much of London clothes." Edwards was convinced in 1568 that English cloth would sell well in Persia.¹¹⁰

Hakluyt incorporated a series of letters from Jeffrey Ducket dating from the 1570s. The previous entries generally characterized the Persians as pleasant and welcoming, but Ducket's description was much less jovial and antagonistic. Ducket referred to Shah Tahmasp (r.1524-1576) as "the great beggar" who "to keepe him the more lustie, hee hath foure wives alwayes, and about three hundred concubines." Ducket went on to complain that Shah Tahmasp spent the year scouring the country for "maidens and wives." Ducket was undeniably pro-Ottoman and hints of his admiration for the Sultan's power and empire are clearly present. Aside from the sheer size of the Ottoman Empire, Ducket saw Shah Tahmasp as inferior because he lacked "great Ordinance or gunnes, or harquebusses."¹¹¹

Ducket reserved little in his critique of Persia and her people, especially since "they have fewe bookes, and lesse learning, and are for the most part very brutish." There

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 379-380; 416.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 422-423.

laws and religion were equally as “wicked and detestable,” and the justice system was marred by corruption and brutality. In spite of the draconian system of justice, Duckett complained that Shah Tahmasp I failed to sustain the public’s loyalty, and he cited mutinous rebellions in Tabriz, Shamakhi, and Ardabil as imminent signs of the Shah’s weak leadership. The violence apparently so dense that “I have seene a man coming from fighting, in a brauerie bringingin his hande foure or five mens heads, carrying them by the haire of the head.”¹¹² If Hakluyt’s audience latched onto Duckett’s word, Persia appeared to have few redeemable qualities.

It is possible that Duckett’s account had a lasting impression on Hakluyt’s audience, particularly as it is one of the final accounts that referred to Persia before Hakluyt moved to the third part of the book. The Jenkinson, Newberry, and Barret accounts that Hakluyt included during the 1580s focused on Englishmen travelling through Basra and onto Hormuz. These accounts mentioned very little about the mainland, and the last impression Hakluyt’s readers were left with, was certainly negative.

In 1600 Elizabeth I granted Sir Thomas Smith the English East India Company’s first charter. In the previous century, Englishmen received limited information regarding Persia. Londoners and English merchants would have learned that Hormuz was a central outpost in the southern Persian Gulf where spices, drugs, and silk were attainable, but that the Portuguese controlled the island and most likely put the trade there out of

¹¹² Ibid., 423.

reach.¹¹³ The Englishmen who passed through Hormuz were arrested and shipped to Goa. While the information portrayed Hormuz as a profitable market, it was a market that was most likely off limits to English traders in 1600.

While Englishmen sought after Persian silk in the sixteenth century, the silk producing region of Shirvan was in the north. That meant the English would have had to pass under the watchful eye of Hormuz or cross overland into the northern provinces. Constant warfare between the Ottomans and Safavīds disrupted the Volga route, and by the seventeenth century the raging conflict between the two states complicated any designs for direct trade into Persia. From southern Persia to the Shirvan Province the territory was largely unreported on. The English, if they knew anything at all, knew very little about Jask, Gombroon, Isfahan, and the region between the southern ports and the Safavīd capital. In spite of the news of Persia that circulated throughout London in the sixteenth century, Sir Thomas Smith and his partners sought to bypass Persia altogether in 1600.

¹¹³ Jan van Linshoten, *John Hvighen van Linschoten. His Discours of Voyages unto the Easte & West Indies. Devided into foure Bookes*. (Printed at London by John Wolfe Printer to the Honourable cittie of London, 1598), 1; 14-17. In 1598, John Wolfe published Jan van Linshoten's *Discours of Voyages into the East and West Indies*. Linshoten travelled into the East Indies in 1576 and briefly stopped at Hormuz. Like those before him, Linshoten claimed that merchants could purchase spices, drugs, and cloth at Hormuz. He also wrote that Hormuz was cold in the winter, and in the late 1590s famine and plague seem to have ravaged the island.

II. “In Paradized”: Persia’s topography, climate, and people in English print, 1600-1615

In 1601, Sir John Lancaster departed England with the English East India’s maiden voyage into the east. The small fleet consisting of the *Red Dragon* (600 tons), *Hector* (800 tons), *Ascension* (260 tons), and the *Susan* (240 tons) sailed for the Spice Islands.¹¹⁴ While at this time the Company had no intentions of sending their annual fleets to Persia, print shops in London continued to deliver material on the Safavīd state at the turn of the century. The entrance of the Sherley brothers into Persia as ambassadors changed the nature of the news coming from Persia, and for the first time Londoners began to receive news regarding the interior of Persia.

In 1600 several of Sir Anthony Sherley’s letters containing information of his overland journey from Aleppo to Persia were printed in a short tract.¹¹⁵ Anthony Sherley arrived in the Qazvin Province where he apparently he enjoyed a feast with Shah Abbas I in the city of Qazvin, and afterwards Shah Abbas provided Sherley with tents, camels, and carpets of which Shah Abbas claimed they were not presents but “thinges necessarie for his Journey.”¹¹⁶ The letters suggest the encounter went exceedingly well, and by the end of the first meeting Sherley received permission to trade freely throughout Persia.

William Parry accompanied Sherley to Persia—he may have authored portions of

¹¹⁴ Hugh G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India, 1579-1657: An Account of the early days of the British Factory of Surat* (Clarendon Press, 1920), 37.

¹¹⁵ Sir Anthony Sherley, *A True Report of Sir Anthony Shierlies Journey overland to Venice, fro thence by sea to Antioch, Aleppo, and Babilon, and soe to Casbine in Persia: his entertainment there by the great Sophie: his oration: his Letters of Credence to the Christian Princes: and the Priuiledg obtained of the great Sophie, for the quiet passage and trafique of all Christian Marchants, throughout his whole Dominions* (London, Printed by R. B. for I.I., 1600).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

the first pamphlet as well—and in 1601 published his report of the first meeting. Parry thought the small English party was “in paradized, finding our entertainment so good, and the manner of the people to be so kinde and curteous (farre differing from the Turkes).” The province, in his opinion, contained “no great Townes worthy of noting” until the party reached the city of Qazvin. The governor of the city provided the English with accommodations in “a house of the kings furnisht with such ornaments as befitted a great State.” Sherley and his party waited roughly three weeks in Qazvin before Shah Abbas arrived, but in the interim the party enjoyed the governor’s hospitality. When Shah Abbas arrived, Parry wrote that “he coming in great triumph, having borne before, aduanced upon pikes, one thousand and two hundred heads of the conquered Tartarress.” His entrance into the city was accompanied with “thundering of trumpets, kettle drummes” and other instruments to celebrate his return.¹¹⁷

The English were treated to feasts and dancing that celebrated Shah Abbas’ glorious return from the war with the Ottomans. Parry observed those in attendance “dancing strange kinds of jigges and lauoltaes.” The banquet was a strange affair from Parry’s perspective. The first thing he noticed after the style of dance was the lack of women at the feast, of which Parry told his audience that:

No mans wife comes thereat; neither is it possible (or if it be, very rarely) for a man once to see a woman if shee be once married, and her husband living, no, though it be her owne naturall brother. So jealous are husbands of their wiues

¹¹⁷ William Parry, *A new and large discourse of the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley Knight, by Sea, and ouer Land, to the Persian Empires. Wherein are related many straunge and wonderfull accidents: and also, the Description and conditions of those Countries and People he passed by: with his returne into Christendome. Written by William Parry Gentleman, who accompanied Sir Anthony in his Trauells.* (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Feliz Norton, 1601), 18-19.

loues and chastities, and such cause of suspition is there amongst them in that respect.¹¹⁸

Parry's thoughts lingered only a short time on this local custom, and the attendees primarily consisted of the leading male figures of the governor and Shah Abbas' respective retinues. It certainly was not a drab affair, but Parry thought the environment was a little unusual.

Several local customs stood out to Parry, but he admitted that the "fashion and maner" of Persia "is not unknowne to many of our English nation." Parry expected to see much of what he observed since English reports on Persia disseminated London for several years now, and many have traveled into the Middle East to provide their accounts of the region. But "for the better information of those," Parry decided to incorporate a few aspects of Persia customs for his readers' entertainment and knowledge. While he noticed drastic differences between the Ottomans and Safavīds in dining techniques and religion, he noticed several similarities between Englishmen and Persians such as their enjoyment for hawking and hunting. Parry was quite impressed with the Persian manner of hunting and their hawks as "they use much exercise, as hawking and hunting with very much shooting," and "their hawkes are excellent good, which they beare on their right hand, without hood or veil." Mostly common knowledge in London at this point, silk—

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 22. For a discussion on Safavīd Women, see Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Economic Activities of Safavid Women in the Shrine-City of Ardabil," in *Iranian Studies*, v.31, n.2. (Spring 1998), 247-260.

both raw and finished—in various colors was abundantly available. Spices, drugs, pearls, carpets, and other commodities were “plentifully affoordeth” in Persia.¹¹⁹

Much like Duckett had in the 1570s, Parry considered the people of Persia as “utterly unskilfull in letters or learning.” This, he thought, was clearly presented in the manner of their writing. Their characters “being so irregular, and (as we would thinke) deformed,” and that is best understood as “a wilde kind of scribling that hath therein neither forme nor matter.” He viewed the lack of libraries and books as a stain on Persian society, and they “are no learned nation, but ignorant in all kinde of liberall or learned sciences.” They lacked knowledge in art and other faculties, but Parry did credit them with excellence in “horses furniture and some kindes of carpettings and silk workers.” Accordingly, the Safavīd state resembled their education, which is to say Parry saw both depleted of resources and ignorant. Yet he claimed the people were “very courteous,” and since Shah Abbas’ reign have used “strangers with great kindnesse and civilitie.”¹²⁰

He was, however, fascinated with the custom of circumcision and the manner of urination, or so one would conclude since he stuck around long enough to record it. Parry remarked that Persians:

In making water, the men kowre downe like the women, and when they doe it, they have a spowte or springer, to sprit some parte of their water uppon their privy partes, aswell men as women, which they holde as a kinde of religious duty, and which in no sort must be neglected.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 23-24.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 24-26.

¹²¹ Ibid., 25.

Out of all the information collected over the previous decades, this is one moment where an engraving of his readers' reactions would have made an excellent frontispiece. Sadly, no engraving exists and we can only imagine how his audience responded, but clearly the custom baffled Parry.

Parry seems to have taken an interest in the relationship of women to Persian society, and how women fit into the established social norm. As noted earlier, he found the absence of the officers' and courtiers' wives from the banquet odd, but he expanded his criticism to the custom of buying Persian men and women in the local bazaar. He thought it was disturbing that "if they buy any yoong women there, they feele them every where." Parry claimed that women were as low as dogs were in England, and that "if a man buy a bond woman for his owne carnalitie, and she proove false to him, hee may (by their lawe) kill her."¹²² Parry's characterization of the role of women in Persia demonized their male counterparts, whether they were Persian wives or concubines, Parry described their social standing as cloistered, if not residing in a subhuman state.

Of Islam, Parry had a few things to say, and most notably the difference between the Ottoman and Safavīd practice of Islam. The Persian people "praieth only to Mahomet, and Mortus Ally," whereas the "Turke to these two, and to three other that were Mahomets servants." Parry was repulsed at "theyr conceit of Christ" as a holy man who was in "no way comparable to Mahomet" and who was the final prophet, and more importantly "because God had never wife, therefore Christ cannot possibly be his sonne." Parry noted that men regularly prayed facing south and embarked on pilgrimages to

¹²² Ibid., 25.

Mecca, which Parry thought transformed many men into saints. Parry suggested sardonically that these saintly men carried themselves “loudely” and “never so lewdly.”¹²³

A few years passed before another significant publication touching on Persia came off the press in London. In 1604, Joseph Acosta, a Spanish traveler, wrote *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the World*, but Acosta only briefly mentioned Hormuz; and this was limited to a terse discussion on the terrible heat of the Persian Gulf, particularly at Hormuz. His book is the only printed account until 1607 when John Day wrote his play *The Travailes of the three English Brothers*.¹²⁴ Day set the play in Persia amidst the Ottoman-Safavīd War and focused on two themes throughout the play—love and warfare.¹²⁵ Also in 1607, Anthony Nixon, who apparently contemporaries recognized as a pamphleteer of unorthodox pieces, wrote *The Three English Brothers*.¹²⁶ In a broader historical context, these two published works coincided with Captain William Keeling’s departure and inaugural voyage for India with the *Dragon*, the *Hector*, and the *Consent*.

John Day’s play is set during Sherley’s embassy at Shah Abbas’ court, and he brought the budding alliance between Sherley and the Safavīds or more broadly

¹²³ Ibid., 23-26.

¹²⁴ Joseph Acosta, *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies. Intreating of the remarkeable things of Heaven, of the Elements, Mettalls, Plants and Beasts which are proper to that Country: Together with the Manners, Ceremonies, Lawes, Governements, and Warres of the Indians. Written in Spanish by Joseph Acosta, and translated into English by E.G.* (London: Printed by Val[entine] Sims for Edward Blount and William Aspley, 1604), 111.

¹²⁵ John Day, *The Travailes of The three English Brothers. As it is now play’d by her Maiestirs Seruants.* (Printed at London for John Wright, and are to bee sold at his shoppe neere Christ-Church gate, 1607).

¹²⁶ Lambert Ennis, “Anthony Nixon: Jacobean Plagiarist and Hack,” in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, v.3, n.4 (July, 1940), 381-383.

Christendom with the Safavīd State to the Jacobean stage. Also brought to life in his play was the struggle between two male figures over a female character, creating internal tension at court. In this play the clash occurred between Hallibeck, a leading officer, and Sir Robert Sherley over the Sophy's niece, who apparently was infatuated with the Sherley brothers. This led to one of Day's more vulgar scenes in the play between the niece and her maid, Dalibra:

Neece: Giue me thy bosom? what dost thou thinke of the two English Brothers?
Dalibra: I thinke Madam, if they be as pleasant in tast, as they are fayre to the eye,
they are a dish worth eating.
Neece: A Caniball Dalibra, wouldst eate men.
Dalibra: Why not Madam; fine men cannot choose but bee fine meate.
Neece: I, but they are a filling meat.
Dalibra: Why so are most of your sweet meats, but if a woman have a true
appetite to them they'le venter that.¹²⁷

Day's bawdy humor was, while at the heart was perhaps intended to provoke laughter among the audience, a allegory of Persian beastliness. The maid's provocative suggestion to consume the Sherley's certainly is ripe with sexual innuendo, but it also touches on preconceived ideas about the barbaric nature of the east. A few early pamphlets characterized the Persians as unskilled and unlearned, which began to circulate throughout London. Day borrowed from this literary and social construction by integrating subtle hints that at the heart of these people, they are barbaric even if tied to the royal line. Whether they were deceitful, cowards, or cannibalistic, at their core Persians were barbaric.

¹²⁷ Day, *The Travailes of The three English Brothers*, 18.

As the scene continues, the two women discuss the valor of the Sherley's in their opposition against the Ottomans, while at court the Safavīd courtiers were malicious cowards. These men hoped aid in the Sherley brothers fall, but the Sophy's niece suggested that "You should all loue him, he has spent a Sea/Of English bloud to honor Persia." The Sophy recently learned of her infatuation with Sherley, and he was angered by his niece's love for Sir Robert Sherley. Yet the niece refused to relinquish her position and boasted of Sherley's prestige while reducing the Safavīd court to dishonor and cowardice. She declared to the entire court that "you all disgrace your selves to Enuy him, Whose worth has beene an honour to you all."¹²⁸

Anthony Nixon's pamphlet may lack in accuracy as Lambert Ennis argued, but for Londoners the image they created of Persia reflected the material they received regardless of its accuracy.¹²⁹ Ennis was critical of Nixon's collection of manuscripts and books that he used in his pamphlets. He wrote, "There remains, nevertheless, a strong chance that the rest of the material was derived by hustling about London to seek out, and extract information from, returned members of the Sherley expedition."¹³⁰ But in all fairness to Nixon, port gossip and oral narratives was perhaps the primary vehicle for news.¹³¹ Otherwise, how could Nixon and his colleagues produce these lengthy narratives

¹²⁸ Ibid., 19; 45-47.

¹²⁹ Ennis, "Anthony Nixon".

¹³⁰ Ibid., 382.

¹³¹ David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and early Stuart military news* (London, 2008), 13, 37; Adam Fox, "Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England," in *The Historical Journal*. v. 40, n. 3 (1997), 601.

from the comfort of London? According to Ennis, Nixon was the quintessential hack who may have had to beg, borrow, and steal information to produce his book.¹³²

Suspicious about the creation of Nixon's book are important to historians of print culture and the book trade, but for Londoners eagerly awaiting news of the outside world, Nixon's book quenched their hunger for news, or at the very least, a new story. It is certainly possible that Nixon lifted comments from previously published works, however. In one example, Nixon claimed that Persians "people for the most part unlearned, ignorant in all kind of liberall Sciences, yet they are good warriors, polliticke and walliant, observing order, and dicispline."¹³³ The first part is almost perfectly lifted from Ducket's account from the previous century. He also appears to have lifted material from William Parry as well, which is most evident in his discussion on Persian commodities.¹³⁴ Although Nixon may have altered the word order, the description resembles Parry's pamphlet from 1601. Regardless of Nixon's credibility, this was what Nixon's London audience read in 1607.

Nixon described Persia as "the climate heathfull, the soyle fruitfull, and full of pleasure, the people civill, and very gentles, farre differing from the nature of the Turkes."¹³⁵ Readers familiar with the earlier tracts probably found Nixon's lack of

¹³² Ennis, "Anthony Nixon," 382-83.

¹³³ Anthony Nixon, *The Three English Brothers, Sir Thomas Sherley his Trauels, with his three yeares imprisonment in Turkie: his Inlargement by his Maiesties Letters to the great Turke: and lastly, his safe returne into England this present yeare, 1607. Sir Anthony Sherley his Embassage to the Christian Princes. Master Robert Sherley his wars against the Turkes, with his marriage to the Emperor of Persia his Neece.* (London: Printed, and are to be sold by John Hodges in Paules Church Yard, 1607), 54.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

geographic differentiation somewhat cumbersome. Early writers broke Persia down according to its geographic region, whereas Nixon lumps the entire state under a single description. The description Nixon provides coincides with previous travel accounts of the Qazvin province taken by many late century travelers and merchants.

The following year Robert Johnson's translation of Giovanni Botero's *Relations, of the Most Famous Kingdoms* circulated in London. Botero was an Italian theorist who was influenced by Niccolò Machiavelli. The *Relations* or in the Italian, *Relationi universali* (1591) was published in six editions between 1601 and 1616, with a seventh and final edition published posthumously in 1630.¹³⁶ The edition used here is not the first edition from 1591, but one of the subsequent editions from 1608. Robert Johnson, as Andrew Fitzmaurice argued, was a powerful London merchant who had his hands in several companies including the Virginia Company, the Bermuda Company, the Levant Company, and the East India Company.¹³⁷ He was the son-in-law to the founder of the English East India Company, Sir Thomas Smith, and developed a close relationship with Johnson, whom leaned on Botero's work for the promotion of English colonization.

Botero's *Relations* takes a brief look at Persia beginning in the twelfth century. He argued that "Persian glory hath bin often obscured" by those surrounding the Safavīd state, such as the Arabians and later Tamerlane. Over the next couple of centuries, Botero thought that Persia began to emerge out of the shadows. He claimed that "Tauris [Tabriz]

¹³⁶ Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Commercial Ideology of Colonization in Jacobean England: Robert Johnson, Giovanni Botero, and the Pursuit of Greatness," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, v.64, n.4 (October, 2007), 792; 794-795.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 795.

and Casbin are the most famous Citties” where the “kings of Persia keepe their Courts.” The government, Botero claimed, was “not lyke the gouernment of any other Mahumetan people;” and whereas in other Muslim states the populous despises the nobility, in Persia the “Nobility is honoured.” Botero’s generalization in essence is a direct reference to the Ottomans whom, in his view, were a wretched people. He wrote amiably of the Persians whom he thought “grace gentility” and “delight in Musicke and learning.”¹³⁸

Unlike his predecessors, Botero thought the Persians welcomed education and studied astrology, writing (poetry), and other fields, but they also welcomed foreign merchants and European commodities. The Safavīd military relied on a talented cavalry and “there is litle regard had of the footmans service.” Botero claimed that the Safavīds showed little interest in developing a navy. This interested Botero since “on the one side lyeth the Caspian, and on another the Persian gulfs, yet to this day were they neuer owners of any warlike shipping.” He claimed that if the Persians shipped goods over the Caspian Sea, Persian mariners clung to the shoreline and in the Persia Gulf the Portuguese controlled maritime traffic.¹³⁹

The Persian terrain varied significantly, and Botero’s description provided Londoners with the best overview in print thus far. Persia lacked navigable rivers, and the rivers “are not in use, or else so little, that small case aryseth thereby” and drain into

¹³⁸ Giovanni Botero, *Relations, of the Most Famous Kingdoms and Common-Weales Thorough the World. Discoursing of their Scituations, Manners, Customes, Strengthes and Pollicies. Translated into English and enlarged, with an Additionb of the estates of Saxony, Geneva, Hungary, and the East Indies, in any language never before imprinted.* (London, Printed for John Iaggard, dwelling in Fleetstreet, at the Hand and Starre, betweene the two Temple gates, 1608), 272-276.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 276-277.

either the Caspian Sea or Persian Gulf. Botero's most important observation in regards to the East India Company, however, touched on aspects of the interior of Persia, which he described as "sandy and vtterly destitute of water." He followed with an important question that Londoner merchants should have considered:

How can the forces of that Land make any commodious or speedy randiuou, when halfe the land is dry and barren?, in so wast a tract not one riuer seruing for Nauigable transportation, as doth the Loir in France; Po in Italy; Vistula in Poland; Schield in Flanders, and such like in other kingdomes.¹⁴⁰

He described the land as primarily consisting of deserts and mountains. Botero compared Persia to Spain in that "for want of Nauigable rivers (except towards the Sea coast) traffique is little vsed; and mountaines and prouinces lie vnmanured for scarsity of moisture." However, Botero suggested that camels made it possible to cross Persia despite the harsh environment, and camels could carry large burdens compared to mules and horses. He claimed that a camel could carry "a thousand pound weight, and wil conitue forty daies & upward." Camels, he thought, only required water every fifth day. Although that could perhaps stretch to ten or twelve days, and a camel could subsist on "a little grasse, thornes, or leaues of trees" when they carried nothing.¹⁴¹

In 1611, Reverend John Cartwright published his travels into the Middle East, and, like Botero before him, Cartwright provided his audience with a wider look at Persia. The publication of Cartwright's journal came a year after the Company's

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 277-278.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 277-278. If we consider Varthema's early claim that there was enough silk for 3,000 camels that would suggest that 3,000,000 pounds of silk could be exported. This illustrates how badly Varthema exaggerated points in his narrative.

inaugural voyage into the Red Sea under Captain Henry Middleton's command. The English had already spent three years attempting to break into the Indian trade, and the venture in India proved much more difficult than the English had expected. Cartwright's arrival followed a period of increased activity from the English Company into the region. In Persia, Shah Abbas I was embroiled in conflict with the Ottomans, which Cartwright claims was "stirred vp thereunto by two of our Country-men, Sir Anthonie Sherley, and Master Robert Sherley."¹⁴²

Tabriz, Cartwright argued, was Persia's greatest city situated "at the foote of the hill Orontes eight daies iourney or three aboutes from the Caspian Sea." The weather was often windy and subject to snow fall in colder months. The city itself seemed to attract merchants from the south who brought their goods to Tabriz and shipped out to Europe and Syria. Cartwright estimated that some 200,000 people lived in Tabriz, but without a solid defense the city was "open to the furie of euery armie." The buildings were of burnt clay and short, but a "beautifull and flourishing garden, large and spacious" occupied the southern quarters of the city. The city fascinated Cartwright, and in a sense he mourned the Ottoman destruction of it. It was a plentiful city rich with beauty, but after the Ottoman invasion in the early sixteenth century the city deteriorated.¹⁴³ In a similar tone

¹⁴² Reverend John Cartwright, *The Preachers Travels. Wherin is set downe a true Iournall to the confines of the East Indies, through the great Countreyes of Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Media, Hircania and Parthia . With the Authors returne by the way of Persia, Susuana, Assiria, Chaldza, and Arabia. Containing a full suruew of the Kingdom of Persia: and in what termes the Persian stands with the Great Turke at this day: Also a true relation of Sir Anthonie Sherley's entertainment there: and the estate that his brother, his departure for Christendome. With the description of a Port in the Persian gulf, commodious for our Eat Indian Merchants; and a briefe rehearsall of some grosle absudities in the Turkish Alcoran. Penned by I.C. sometimes student in Magdalen College in Oxford.* (London: Printed for Thomas Thorppe, and are to bee sold by Walter Burre, 1611), a3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

as many of his predecessors, Cartwright was anti-Ottoman, and he saw the destruction of Tabriz as the consequence of Ottoman brutality.

When Cartwright arrived in Persia he looked over the remnants of the city that once flourished, but to his encouragement Shah Abbas I rescued the city in 1603. One of the key components to Shah Abbas' victory, Cartwright thought, was Shah Abbas' decision to incorporate artillery into the Safavīd military. The Safavīds previously abhorred the use of artillery, and Cartwright wrote:

In which siege he for battery vsed the helpe of the Canon, an engine of long time by the Persian skorned, as not beseeming valiant men, vntill that by their owne harmes taught; they are content to vse it, being with the same, as also with skilfull Canoniers furnished by the Portugals from Ormuz. So that after sixe weekes siege this Citie was surrendred vp into the Persians hands to the great reioycing of all Persia, together with the whole countrey of Servan, except a fort or two which still stands out.¹⁴⁴

Cartwright's observation highlights a few points that his London audience would not have missed, and perhaps played a role in the Company's immediate decisions for the region. Shah Abbas modernized the Safavīd military, and he began to push the Ottomans out of the region at the turn of the Century. But most concerning was that the modernization occurred with the aid of the Portuguese.¹⁴⁵ After three years of constant struggle in India between the English and the Portuguese, this was certainly unwelcomed news, even if it was outdated.

From Tabriz, Cartwright travelled to Qazvin ten days outside of Tabriz. The journey was apparently rough as he related "passing the three first daies over many rough

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 45-46.

¹⁴⁵ Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*.

and craggie mountaines, full of a thousand difficulties.” The weather during the journey was apparently treacherous consisting of “great slakes of lightening” with heavy rain and snow “which did annoy our whole caravan.” Qazvin was a “very wealthy” city that housed the “Kings Pallace, & the great concourse of merchants,” and it was situated on a “goodly fertile plaine of three or fourse daies iourney in length, furnished with two thousand villages.” Building materials consisted of bricks dried in the sun instead of fire hardened. The palace gate was built using stones of different colors and “curiously enameled with gold.” The interior was lined with luxurious Persian carpets and other monuments depicting “Persian greatnesse.”¹⁴⁶

The palace in its entire splendor was not the only point of interest as bazaars lined Qazvin’s streets. Here Cartwright found:

Shasses and Tulipants, and Indian cloth of wonderfull finenesse: in others silkes of all sorts, as Veuets, Damasks, cloth of Gold and Silver: in others infinite fures, as Sables and Martine out of Muscovia, and Agiam fures brought from Corassan. In a word euery speech hath a seuerall science or trade, wherein is sold whatsoeuer is fit and necessary for the vse of man.¹⁴⁷

The chief market place, “At-Maidan”, in the city stretched for a mile and served as a meeting place for merchants. All sorts of commodities sold here including:

Horses, mules and cammels; in another place carpets, garments, and felts of all sorts; and in another all kind of fruits, as Muske-mellons, Anguries, Pomegranates, Pistaches, Adams apples, Dates, Grapes, and Raisons dried in the sun. In this place do sit daily twelue Sheraffes, that is, men to buy & sell Pearle, Diamonds, and other pretious stones, and to exchange gold & silver to turne Spanish dollars to great aduantage into Persian soyne; and to change the great peeces of the Persian coyne, as Abbasses, Larines, and such like into certain

¹⁴⁶ Cartwright, *The Preachers Travels*, 46-50.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

brasse monies for the poore. They will also lend vpon any pawne, & that with as great interst as our diuellish Brokers and Scriueners take in London.¹⁴⁸

For Cartwright's readers, the information was positive, especially for London merchants, but the city lie far into the northern region of Persia. By now it probably occurred to Londoners, particularly merchants, that the Persia trade was potentially rich if you could enter from the north. Most traveler's and merchants wrote at length in regards to the rich markets of the Shirvan and Qazvin Provinces, but nothing of the southern provinces where Gombroon and Jask were located; and Hormuz was firmly under the thumb of the Portuguese. Since the early 1580s, the Volga route ceased, and the continuance of the Safavīd-Ottoman Wars made it unlikely that trade through the Volga would reopen soon.

Cartwright traveled south to Kashan, a place "seated in a goodly plaine, and because it hath no mountaines neere it, but within a daies iourney the heate is verie fastidious, as great almost as it in in Ormuz." The city and its surrounding area he described as dry and lacked fountains, springs, and gardens. Similar to the north, various types of cloths were available for purchse along with drugs and various spices. He lingered for only a short time in Kashan before traveling south to Isfahan, which Cartwright suggested took three days. Aside from Tabriz, Isfahan was "the greatest Citie in all of the Persian dominions." A wall encompassed the city and on the north side a strong castle enclosed by another wall protected the city from the north. Several palaces stood on the west side of the city including two *seraglios* for the Shah and his women. Cartwright wrote that "the walles glister with red marble and pargeting of diuers colous,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

yea all the Pallace is paued with checher and tesseled worke, and on the same is spread carpets wrought with silke and Gold.”¹⁴⁹ The construction and luxurious interior fascinated Cartwright, especially the spacious garden that sat near the palace.

While Cartwright seemed to admire the city, he found the people much less remarkable. Of them he said “the nature of this people is arrogant, seditious, deceitful, and very vnquiet.” The Persia people according to Cartwright were inclined towards sensuality, and:

Having three sorts of women, as they term them, viz. honest women, halfe honest women and courtezans; and yet they chastice no offence with like extremity as adultery, and that as well in the halfe honest woman, as in the honest. Last of all they are full of craftie stratagems, and are breakers of their promise (a vice that is very inbred in all Barbarians) Not content with any mans gouernement long and lovers of nouelties.¹⁵⁰

Still, he credited the Persians with breeding excellent horses and military skill and prowess, which “being compared with the Turkish people (who for the most part are a very rescall, of vile race) are by good right very highly to be esteemed.” The Persians were much more skilled on horseback than the Ottomans were, and he found that Persian smiths crafted exceptional pieces of armor in Shīrāz.¹⁵¹

Although Cartwright held some reservations towards the people of Persia, he preferred the Safavīds to the Ottomans. The union between the Sherley’s and Shah Abbas was a good thing Cartwright argued, and Shah Abbas hoped the English fleet would enter the Persian Gulf and safeguard it from the Portuguese. Cartwright claimed that Shah

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 58-61.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 63; 72; 85.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 63; 72; 85.

Abbas opened the Gulf to the English, and “if the Portugals in Ormuz should offer violence to our shipping, that then hee would become their professedemie.” Cartwright understood the alliance stood to cut off the silk and indigo trade to Constantinople and redirect it to Company ships.¹⁵²

It is hard to know if merchants in London began salivating over the potential of redirecting the silk trade, but this did provide one of the cornerstones for Richard Steel’s arguments in favor of the trade three years later. By the end of 1611, the English Company began preparations for Thomas Best’s fleet to Surat, which departed in February of 1612. The English Company’s monopoly over trade into the East Indies made it difficult for independent merchants to entertain a direct silk trade, and in 1611 the English Company was embroiled in a rather difficult situation in Surat. While the numerous publications all lean on the lavish arena of the Persian market place, the Company had to contend with the Portuguese at sea which proved costly and dangerous off the coast of India.

In 1612, Thomas Aldworth and Thomas Kerridge among other English merchants prepared for India in Best’s fleet. Kerridge and Aldworth probably heard some of what Cartwright and his predecessors wrote, and perhaps these tracts played a role in their decisions from 1614 onward. Yet when they arrived in India, Aldworth and Kerridge were preoccupied with the establishment of the Indian trade, and if they held any inclination towards Persia, they betrayed no sign of it. It was not until Robert Sherley began promoting the Persian trade to Aldworth and Kerridge that the two men began to

¹⁵² Ibid., 85-86.

show interest. In 1613, the English finally established a house in Surat, and in London print shops began publishing Sir Anthony's Sherley's account of Persia. The following year in 1614, Sir Robert Sherley arrived in India.

Sir Anthony Sherley's account of Persia relates significant portions of the conversations between the Sherley's and Shah Abbas. Sherley thought highly of Shah Abbas even if he thought of the others as "ill people in themselves."¹⁵³ Of Shah Abbas, Sherley wrote:

His person then is such, as a well-vnderstanding Nature would fit for the end proposed for his being, excellently well shaped, of a most well proportioned stature, strong, and actiue; his colour somewhat inclined to a man-like blacknesse, is also more blacke by the sunnes burning; his furniture of his mind infinitely royall, wise, valiant, liberall, temperate, mercifull, and an exceeding loue of Iustice, embracing royally others vertues, as farre from pride and vanity, as from all vnprincely signes, or acts; knowing his power iustly what it is; and the like acknowledgement will also have from others, without any gentilitious adoration; but with those respects, which are fit for the maiesty of Prince; which foundeth it selfe vpon the power of his state, general loue, and awfull terror.¹⁵⁴

To show his affection towards the king, Sherley offered Shah Abbas a gift of "sixe paire of Pendants of exceeding faire Emerauldes, and meruailous artificially cut; and two other Jewels of Topasses, excellent well cut also; one cup of three peeces, set together with gold inameled; the other a Salte, and a very faire Ewer of Christall, couered with a kind

¹⁵³ Sir Anthony Sherley, *Sir Anthony Sherley his Relation of his Travels into Persia. The Dangers, and Distresses, which befell him in his passage, both by sea and land, and his strange and unexpected deliverances. His Magnificent Entertainement in Persia, his Honourable employment there-hence, as Embassadour to the Princes of Christendome, the cause of his disapointment therein, with his aduice to his brother, Sir Robert Sherley, Also, A Tvue Relation of the great Magnificence, Valour, Prudence, Iustice, Temperance, and other manifold Vertues of Abas, now King of PERSIA, with his great Conquests, whereby he hath in larged his Dominions. Penned by Sr. Anthony Sherley, and recommended brother, Sr. Robert Sherley, being now in prosecution of the like Honourable Employment* (London: Printed for Nathaniell Butter, and Ioseph Bagfet, 1613), 29.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

of cutworke of siluer and gilt.” In return Shah Abbas provided Sherley with a forty horses lavishly decorated saddled and 1,000 *tumans*.¹⁵⁵

What Londoners received was a panegyric of Persia and Shah Abbas. Certainly some of what Sherley reported was accurately depicted, and Company merchants later noted Shah Abbas’ temperate and virtuous nature, but the audience consumed a piece of literature that burst with praise of Persia and reduced the Ottomans to vile oppressors. For English merchants, this may have had an enticing affect on their mercantile decisions, luring some into the Company’s service. For the average reader, Shah Abbas was the symbol of grandeur, while the Ottomans were the black sheep of the east. This is not terribly unusual, however, and anti-Ottoman tracts were published since the sixteenth century. The broader London audience may have shared reservations regarding Persia, but the Ottomans, according to the material they consumed, were much more hostile and aggressive. Persia, particularly under the rule of Shah Abbas, provided a significant check to Ottoman supremacy, but more importantly the Indian Ocean provided a front door into the East Indies trade including Persian silk. Sherley’s narrative presented Shah Abbas as regal and welcoming of English trade.

In 1613, the English in Surat began discussions for the potential for moving a portion of the Company’s estate to Persia, and in 1614 Sir Robert Sherley traveled to India. Conversations between the two parties focused on the potential of redirecting the entire silk trade, and infusing the Persian markets with English broadcloth. Early reports on the Shirvan and Qazvin provinces suggested that cold, wet weather provided a

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 29-30; 65-72.

marketable niche for English woolen cloths. In 1614, Aldworth sent Richard Steel to Persia to test the validity of several claims that English wool could sell well there.¹⁵⁶ In 1615, the English got their hands on Monsieur de Montfort's tract before the Company plunged into Persia in 1616.¹⁵⁷

Monsieur de Montfort was probably not read by the first wave of Englishmen into Persia in 1616, but his survey of Persia offered the Company additional insight before letters from the east arrived. It is not certain that members of the Company read Montfort, but it seems that word of his travels would have reached the Company especially after news arrived that Richard Steele spent 1614 scouting Persia. He spent only a short time in Persia, but his trek through central Persia and to the southern ports brought additional light to a rather vague knowledge of the region.

Montfort's journey crossed through Iraq to Isfahan before turning north to the Shirvan Province and then south for the port of Gombroon where he departed for Portuguese India. His journey took him through Isfahan, Qazvin, Tabriz, Shīrāz, Lār, Gombroon, and Hormuz. Montfort praised Isfahan as the "most gallant Cittie" in Persia, but:

The way is troublesome and discomodious enough, beeing of fifteene long dayes trauile, through wast desarts, voyde of al townes and houses, or any other succour, partly by nature, partly so wasted of purpose to impeach th'approches of the Turke.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 2.

¹⁵⁷ Monsieur de Montfort, *An Exact and Curious Survey of all the East Indies, even to Canton, the chiefe cittie of China: All duly preformed by land, by Monsieur de Monfart, the like whereof was never hetherto, brought to an end. Newly translated out of the travillers Manuscript* (London: Printed by Thomas Dawson, for William Arondell, in Pauls Church-yard, at the Angell, 1615).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

The route did consist of several caravansaries along the way that provided accommodations. The lodgings were “exceedingly comely with faire shops belonging thereton.” After arriving in Isfahan, Montfort noted that it was half the size of Paris, but it was “very populous & wonderfull frequented.” Although it was small in Montfort’s view, the city did not lack in splendor and it is “unpossible to relate the pleasures” travelers could encounter throughout the city. From stately buildings to lush gardens, Montfort was fascinated by the city. Fruit stores were plentiful as well as silk, bezoars stones, and turquoise, although he mentions very little about the bazaars in the city. Of the people, he observed that they “are reasonable handsome, for their minds, reasonable tractable and civill.”¹⁵⁹

From Isfahan it took Montfort twelve days to reach Qazvin a “populous and rich Citty, & of great Traffick, about the bignes of Orleans.”¹⁶⁰ But in terms of commodities, Montfort claimed that very little changed from Isfahan. Seemingly unimpressed with Qazvin, Montfort departed for Tabriz some fifteenth days away over “very faire and well manured countreys.”¹⁶¹ The city, he thought, was bigger than Toulouse, but much of its former beauty lay in ruins after the Ottoman invasions. Whether Montfort intended to spare his readers the minute details or for some other reason is unclear, but he suddenly departed south towards Shīrāz, which he claimed was roughly sixteen days from Tabriz.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 12.

The city of Shīrāz was “still a braue place for trade, but chiefly for armour,” but in the city was the seat of Shah Abbas Lieutenant General and his “Ianizaries to the number of 50,000 horsmen.” Montfort thought the city was larger than Avignon and “the fairest remnants of greatnes, & of Stately buildings, the finest Gardens, Brookes and Fountaines.” For pleasure and perhaps protection from the heat, Montfort recalled that several kinds of “causeys in those parts” stretched for twelve leagues and were lined with trees for shade.¹⁶² Springs “of cleere running water” flowed along the causeway and fountains stood every fifteenth feet.¹⁶³ His next stop on the route took him through Lār about eight days away.

The most prominent feature of the city was the castle, which Montfort suggested was the “strongest and best stored Castle” in Persia. In Lār merchants could find the finest bezoars stones available as Montfort claimed. Again, he stayed for only a short period before moving onto Gombroon. The town, according to Montfort, was little more than “a small fort which the Portugals hold in Persia, to supply Ormus with water and victuall, which hath but verie litle or none at all.” Montfort stayed at Hormuz until he could take passage on any Portuguese ship outbound for India. The island, Montfort noted, provided little more than a commercial-military strategic point, and the only resource that Hormuz was plentiful in was brimstone and salt. The “Moorish king hath not abandoned his possession, but live in some reasonable peace” with the Portuguese

¹⁶² Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 13.

governor of Hormuz.¹⁶⁴ Montfort's description of Hormuz is noticeably different than those writing in the sixteenth century, and who boasted of a flourishing island bustling with trade; instead he found a dry, desolate island controlled by the Portuguese.

Montfort's journey through Persia touched on similar observations early travelers and merchants previously made. Londoners would have had some familiarity with cities in the north, the commodities, and the people. There is one aspect, however, that probably stood out, and, aside from the Shirvan and Qazvin provinces, the region south of Isfahan was little more than a desolate heap of small, barren towns. The luxuries of Persia were from the north, and Montfort's narrative suggests that there was little in the south that was worth acquiring.

Conclusion

From the first pamphlets and books of the mid-fifteenth century, much of the narrative focused on the northern provinces of Shirvan and Qazvin. Fewer still informed the English public about Hormuz, and until the turn of the century the southern provinces were still somewhat of a mystery—at least in print. It is likely that English and European merchants, travelers, and others exchanged information orally, but what was said and how much is difficult to know without scouring material left behind from independent merchants and other travelers.

Judging the body of information purely from a perspective of London print culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there are some broad themes that the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 13-14.

public in London probably associated with Persia. First, silk was the primary commodity that Persia offered, and the silk producing regions were located in the northern provinces, particularly at Gilan. Second, to the south, the terrain was difficult and transporting goods overland was unwise. The provinces bordering the Caspian Sea were divided from the interior by sharp, mountainous regions. While shipping could sail deep into the Persian Gulf, the Portuguese hold on Hormuz essentially cut the Gulf off from the English.

Lastly, spices were available in most Persian markets and Hormuz apparently took in shipments from the east, but to reach these markets the English would have to engage with the Portuguese at Hormuz, or they would have to travel overland from the southern provinces to the north (at this point the printed material has left Jask, Gombroon, and the other southern cities in somewhat of a mysterious light) for spice acquisitions. The northern route via the Volga was closed. Hormuz was the key to accessing the Persian Gulf, and unless the English could dislodge the Portuguese the Gulf virtually inaccessible.

From a commercial perspective, Persian silk and carpets were luxury goods worth acquiring, but with the route from the north cut off the English would have to rely on the Levant Company to acquire what they could. For Londoners, it probably made little sense to bypass the Levantine trade for a direct trade in spices, only to purchase spices from the Portuguese in Hormuz or from Persian merchants in the interior. That combined with the apparent endemic warfare between the Ottomans and Safavids, Persia was probably a market better left alone, at least for the time. When the Company launched its inaugural voyage in 1601, it is hardly surprising that Persia was not included in their East Indies

venture, and neither was India. Even as the Company looked to press into India in the first decade, the idea of establishing a presence in Persia was still a long way off. If anything, the printed material did more to repel the English Company than attract it, and it was not until Sherley began advertising the silk trade did the English begin think about expanding there. That combined with the dismal failure of English broadcloth in India and the promising data that suggested that English cloth would sell, especially in the northern provinces of Persia. So for Londoners, Persia was culturally exotic and lavish, but commercially Persia appeared to be a financial trap.

Chapter 2

“You must resolve to follow that Trade; or Absolutly to give it over”: the beginnings of the English factory in Persia, 1613-1634

The English imagination fluttered with several versions of Persia, her people, and her trade. Yet the primary impulse that caused the English to expand into Persia came from their failures in India, especially in selling English woolen cloth. The English, as Sir William Foster wrote, expected large quantities of broadcloth to sell in Mughal India, but broadcloth was a novelty that lost its luster leaving the English factors with a surplus of cloth that would not sell in India.¹ The primary motivation that drove the Persian trade was the prospect of selling the surplus of cloth in Persia. Ben Coates argued that the English shift to Persia on the disintegration of Anglo-Dutch relations in the Spice Islands during the 1620s, but this view has a limited following.² Sir Robert Sherley’s promise of inexhaustible wealth in the silk trade and the potential to redirect the entire trade seemed to entice enough Englishmen to seriously consider the venture. The trade in India struggled, and if the English could obtain the entire silk trade the rewards would potentially exceed their failures in India.

¹ Sir William Foster, “Introduction,” *The English Factories in India, 1613-1615*, xx; Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1616*, xxxiv.

² Ben Coates, *The Impact of the English Civil War on the Economy of London, 1642-50* (Ashgate, 2004), 10-11. The English turned to Persia as a direct consequence of problems in India. The failure of English woolen cloth in India and Sir Robert Shirley’s confidence in the Persian silk trade ultimately brought the English to Persia, not as a result of Amboyna in 1623. Also see, Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 240-241. Wright is more subtle about linking the two occasions. Foster, “Introduction,” in *Letters Received*, v.4, xi. Foster carefully avoids making a direct cause and effect statement, but he does hint that the English failure in the Spice Islands led to the English reforming their plan in India, which meant moving to Persia. Hugh Rawlinson generally ignores the pre-1620s advance into Persia, but he does make the connection between the Spice Islands and Persian trade; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*.

The English trade in Persia began as a promising venture that officially began in 1616. This chapter will trace the course of developing relations—based wholly on the mutual distaste of a common enemy—and the rather rapid decline of those relations. As Edward Pettus wrote in 1617, “they [Portuguese] are generally hated here; the reason they have been so perfidious and base lying people.”³ The Persian trade was a mutually beneficial relationship; the English needed Persian silk, and the Safavīds needed English ships.⁴ The Safavīds hoped to regain control of the Persian Gulf, but they did not have the naval capabilities to overthrow the Portuguese at Muscat, Qishm, and Hormuz. Similarly, the English required a new outlet for English cloth after it failed to garner interest in India.

The potentially lucrative silk trade provided a boost to English commercial activity as the Indian trade appeared unstable.⁵ Robert Brenner has argued that the silk market in England was lively and exploded in the 1560s. He estimated that the English imported 12,000 pounds of raw silk in the 1560s—mostly from northern Europe—and by

³ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton in London, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:288.

⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 105-106; R.W. Ferrier, “The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, v.49, n.1 (1986), 54-55; Abdul Aziz M. Awad, “The Gulf in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Bulletin* (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies), v.12, n.2 (1985)125-126.

⁵ Rupali Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court,” in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 53 (2014), 20-21; Rudolph Matthee, *The politics of trade in Safavid Iran: silk for silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 96-97; Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Publishers, 2006), 227; Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 113; R.W. Ferrier, “An English View of Persian Trade in 1618: Reports from the Merchants Edward Pettus and Thomas Barker,” in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1976, 182; Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 53-54.

the 1640s over 200,000 pounds of raw silk entered England.⁶ The explosion in silk imports directly correlated to the emergence of the Levant and East India Companies, but most importantly Brenner argued that the English taste for silk was growing exponentially, particularly in the middle and lower classes.⁷ He does not provide figures for the cost of silk, but it is clear that in England the desire for the raw and finished product increased significantly. Murat Cizakca suggests that the English Levant merchants sold raw silk “at monopolistic prices in England,” which on the whole meant the English Levantine Company sold for “huge profits”.⁸ Çizakca argued that this was possible because the English purchased broadcloth in London at very low prices. In turn, the Levantine merchants could afford to keep the cloth prices low when they sold it in the Ottoman Empire. The direct exchange of broadcloth for silk was the method that Levantine merchants relied on.⁹ This was incredibly important for the East India Company. If they could achieve a similar rate of exchange with the Persians, they could unload their broadcloth and enter into a profitable trade silk.

⁶ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 25.

⁷ Ibid., 45; See also, Murat Cizakca, “Price History and the Bursa Silk Industry: A Study in Ottoman Industrial Decline, 1550-1650,” in *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1980, 540.

⁸ Cizakca, “Price History”, 545-546.

⁹ Ibid., 546.



Figure 2: Mulberry tree from Olivier de Serres' *A Discourse of his Owne* (1607).

The production of silk is worth a brief look since the commodity was the most important for the English commercial scheme in Persia. Silk production depended on several components: the worm (see figure 3), the mulberry bush or tree (see figure 2), and skilled workers who could turn the byproduct into a useful commodity. In 1607, Olivier de Serres wrote a small pamphlet on silk production in France, from which he described the worms as sensitive to their environments. De Serres urged the governor, or worm farmer, to “drinke a little wine earlie in the morning” before work, because “these admirable beasts feare” their keepers foul or “naughtie breath.”¹⁰ A little sympathy for the worm perhaps, but the point is clear that worm keepers should protect and diligently

¹⁰ Olivier de Serres, *The perfect vse of silk-wormes and their benefit With exact planting, and artificiall handling of mulberrie trees whereby to nourish them, and the figures to know how to feede the wormes, and to winde off the silke. And the fit maner to prepare the barke of the white mulberrie to make fine linen and other workes thereof. Done out of French originall of D'Oliuier de Serres Lord of Pradel into English, by Nicholas Geffe Esquier. With an annexed discourse of his owne, of the meanes and sufficiencie of England for to haue abundance of fine silke by feeding of silke-wormes within the same; as by apparent proofes by him made and continued appeareth. For the generall vse and vniversall benefit of all those his countrey men which embrace them. Neuer the like yet here discovered by any* (At London: Imprinted by Felix Kyngston, and are to be sold by Richard Sergier and Christopher Purset, with the assignment of William Stallenge, 1607), f.60.

care for their worms. Taking particularly good care of the silk worms was paramount in the production of silk, because disease or death meant little or no silk. Prices shot up, and in many cases the commodity was unavailable.¹¹ Silk was tedious, and the industry required a healthy population of both silk worms and mulberry trees. At first silk worm eggs were hatched—a process that Adam Olearius described as carrying a small satchel under one’s armpit for a week or so—and then placed in a small bowl to feed on mulberry leaves. After this “priming” stage, the worms slept for three days before the cultivators transferred the worms to a barn, or room, “kept very lean and prepared for that purpose” to feed on previously prepared branches of mulberry branches.¹² Seven weeks later, the worms, according to Olearius, began spinning silk. This process began sometime in spring, and around early or mid summer the silk farmers collected the strands on spools or silk sticks. After the silk farmers harvested the silk, merchants purchased either raw or finished silk from the Shah’s royal merchant in Isfahan.

¹¹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 125. In the early 1630s, a drought killed many of the silk worms causing a dip in silk production. See page 172 below.

¹² Adam Olearius, *The Voyages and Travells of the Ambassadors sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein, to the great Duke of Muscovy, and the King of Persia. Begun in the year M. DC. XXXIII and finsih’d in M. DC. XXXIX Containing a Compleat History of Muscovy, Tartary, Persia. And other adjacent Countries. With several Publick Transactions reaching near the Present Times; In VII Books* (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Thomas Basset, at the Mitre near Temple-Barr, and at the George near St. Dunstans Church in Fleet-street, 1669), f.233.

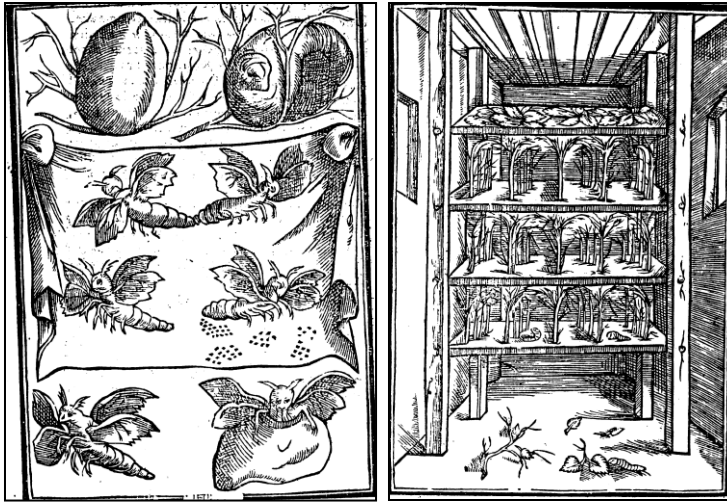


Figure 3: The stages of a silk worm's life (left) as depicted in Jean Baptiste Lettellier's *Instructions for Increasing of Mulberie trees* (1609). Silk farmers used a wooden room (right) to stimulate the production of silk.

I. Silk for Ships: the founding of the Persian agency and the Anglo assault on the Gulf, 1613-1622

The Ottoman-Safavīd War effectively closed the road into Ottoman territories from Persia and ended commercial operations.¹³ Since the turn of the century, Shah Abbas attempted to establish an alliance with the west, more specifically with Spain, in an attempt to redirect the silk trade and simultaneously land a blow to the Ottoman economy.¹⁴ But by 1610, Shah Abbas extended a peace treaty to the Ottomans and concluded talks in 1612, thus disrupting Spanish plans for the redirection of the silk trade.

¹³ Consultation aboard the Charles, 2 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:192. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 76-83.

¹⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 78-84; Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: a political and economic history of five port cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Press, 2006), 193; Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1616*, xxxiv.

However, war resumed between the two states in 1615.¹⁵ In 1616, the English arrived in Persia, and as Matthee argued Shah Abbas suddenly found a new window of opportunity.¹⁶



Figure 4: An engraving of Shah Abbas I (r.1587-1629) from Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels*

In 1616, Thomas Kerridge made one of the more controversial decisions of the early period by sending a contingent of factors to Persia against Sir Thomas Roe's advice. Conversations over allocating a portion of the Company's resources for Persia began in 1613 and long before Roe's arrival in India.¹⁷ Sir Robert Sherley and his brother Anthony established relations with Shah Abbas I in the previous decade, and the fruits of their relations culminated in Sherley's attempt to entice the English Company to come to Persia.¹⁸ He was probably aware of the Company's struggle to unload English cloth, and he offered the factors in Surat an opportunity to unload the cloth and tap into the lucrative silk industry. If the economic gains were not enough to sway the English factors, Sherley

¹⁵ Ibid., 82-83.

¹⁶ Ibid., 83-84.

¹⁷ R.W. Ferrier, "An English view of Persian Trade in 1618: Reports from the Merchants Edward Pettus and Thomas Barker," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, v.19, n.2 (1976), 182.

¹⁸ Roger Stevens, "Robert Sherley: The Unanswered Questions," in *Iran*, vol. 17, (1979), 117.

depended on commercial rivalries to pique their interest; especially, as Thomas Aldworth informed the Company, he threatened “that if the English come not shortly into Persia, as he hath advised, that then he will bring the Dutch into the trade, who (as he saith) have been very importunate on him for it.”¹⁹ Allowing the Dutch to move into Persia uncontested was anathema, but Aldworth proceeded cautiously and began inquiring into the viability of the Persian trade. He sent Richard Steele to investigate.

Richard Steele came to Surat by accident. He was in pursuit of the English Levant debtor, John Midnall, who stole from the Levant Company and fled from Turkey towards Persia. After his arrival at Surat, Thomas Aldworth detained Steele there under the pretence of “employing him in the discovery of the said trade of Pearsia, further to strengthen himself in the understanding and knowledge of those countires.”²⁰ Steele seemed pleased with the prospect—and probably tired of the wild goose chase—he agreed to depart for Persia to observe the potential for buying Persian silk and selling English cloth. He had experience in Persia, and the English were not entirely convinced that Sherley was trustworthy according to one historian.²¹ Steele anticipated that the Persian trade would benefit the Company, but he set out with John Crowther to thoroughly test its potential. John Crowther was a factor in Surat at the time when Kerridge instructed him to accompany Steele to Persia.

¹⁹ Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Surat, 19 August 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:99.

²⁰ William Edwards to the Company, aboard the *Hope*, 2 December 1615, *Letters Received*, 2:153.

²¹ Ralph Preston to the Company, Ahmadābād, 1 January 1614/15, *Letters Received*, 2:262. See also, Stevens, “Robert Sherley”, 120-121.

Roger Stevens argued that the English distrusted Sherley, and Sir Thomas Roe and the English factors were hesitant to reach out to Sherley. Stevens is correct in suggesting that Roe was uneasy with Sherley, but the English in Surat were not quite as hostile. Kerridge respected Sir Robert Sherley's influence at the Safavīd Court, and he had Steel pass his letters onto the ambassador. Kerridge hoped Sherley would speak with Shah Abbas I on behalf of the Company, and he appeared to trust the ambassador enough with the Company's letters of credit.²²

Steele's mission revealed a potential outlet for English broadcloth "for the Percian country is so cold that for six months in the year they wear cloth; and also there is divers commodities of India will give great profit there."²³ The colder northern region evidently revealed a need for hardier cloth. Having settled this, Steele created a sketch of potential goods to sell, weights, measurements, and the currency of the region.²⁴ He wrote confidently that "our English commodities, I think that yearly the country of Persia will vent five or six hundred broadcloths and a thousand kerseys."²⁵ The quantity is a little ambiguous and it is unclear if Steele referred to pieces or pounds, but Steele's general perception is that English cloth would sell in Persia, particularly the lighter colored

²² Captain Downton to the Company, Swally Road, 20 November 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:171; Commission for Richard Steel and John Crowther, Ahmadābād, 2 January 1614/15, *Letters Received*, 2:267.

²³ Thomas Mitford to Sir Thomas Smith, 26 December 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:237. Ferrier, "An English view of Persian Trade", 183-184; Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavid* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 113.

²⁴ "A Description of the moneys, weights and measures which are current in the kingdom of Persia and especially Spahan", Persia, 1615, *Letters Received*, 3:176-178.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:177.

cloths. He also found that they could supplement cloth imports with a combination of English and foreign commodities including tin, lead, steel, iron, cooper, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and sugar.²⁶

Although limited, the expedition revealed the potential for favorable outlet for English cloth, and Sherley's promise of silk was too much of an opportunity for Aldworth and Kerridge to ignore. Aldworth instructed Steele to settle an agreement with Shah Abbas as quickly as possible, especially in light of their recent experience in India where the local governor resisted the English. The last thing Aldworth wanted was to engage in another lengthy, yet fruitless, negotiation for trade. Aldworth instructed Steele to maintain two journals; one Crowther would deliver overland to the Company while the second Steele delivered to Aldworth in Surat.²⁷ Despite Aldworth's desire to open trade with Persia, he cautiously sought the Company's approval. He was also determined to gather as much information as possible before rushing headlong into the trade. Thomas Kerridge, on the other hand, was much less cautious in light of their struggle with the local governor in India and the sense of urgency to unload their cloth.²⁸ By 1616, Kerridge proceeded with the plan to establish the Company in Persia.

²⁶ Ibid., 3:178. See also, Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 4-5.

²⁷ Commission for Richard Steele and John Crowther, Ahmadābād, 2 January 1614/15, *Letters Received*, 2:267.

²⁸ Thomas Kerridge to the Company, Ajmer, 20 March 1614/15, *Letters Received*, 3:70.

Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Roe arrived in India 18 September 1615 on the *Lion*.²⁹ After consecutive years of misfortune at the Mughal Court, the Company sent Roe to India to establish trading terms with their merchants. The terms of his arrival were rather unusual, and Roe, as Professor Mishra argues, arrived in India to satisfy two separate interests. On one hand, he intended to bridge the gap between the English merchants and Jahāngīr, but he was also there to represent James I and the English nation. Professor Mishra argued that Roe's mission was as much about commercial matters as it was about inspiring an image of English greatness in the minds of those in the Mughal Court, especially Jahāngīr.³⁰ Initially, Roe's authority extended only to matters of diplomacy, but he felt obliged to offer his objections to Kerridge's plan to move the Company's estate to Persia.

Roe opposed the scheme because he saw the Persian trade as a potential pitfall, and the strength of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf would disrupt the Company's trade there. He believed that once the Safavīd and Ottomans agreed to peace "this trade will be again diverted" back through the Ottoman Empire "with the liberty of free and ancient intercourse of trade."³¹ The Safavīd royal monopoly on trade forced the English to buy directly from Isfahan, and Roe argued that the costly endeavor, in both money and human life, far outweighed its benefits. The silk trade, albeit lucrative, would not produce the wealth Kerridge's faction dreamt of, and instead if the English persisted in the trade the

²⁹ Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619: As Narrated in his journal and correspondence*, v.1. ed. Sir William Foster (London:1899 reprint), 41.

³⁰ Mishra, "Diplomacy on Edge," 10-11.

³¹ Sir Thomas Roe to Sir Thomas Smythe, Ajmer, 27 November 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:246.

potential for disaster outweighed any positive gains Roe could envision. Roe did, however, make one important suggestion to reduce any significant drawbacks. He recommended that the English avoid travelling to Isfahan altogether and have local merchants ship the silk to port, whether it was Jask or another feasible port within Persia.³² If the Safavids were unwilling, Roe thought the English should abandon the scheme.

The English merchants divided into two factions, those who supported Roe and those who supported Kerridge. Francis Fettiplace, John Crowther, and Joseph Salbank supported Roe's cautious approach, while the majority of the factors opposed Roe including William Biddulph, Kerridge, Edward Connock, Thomas Barker, and numerous other factors. One of Roe's supporters boldly declared "the contradiction of such novices as do so bodily presume to infringe his verdict" have ignored Roe's advice to "the hazard of their lives and to the ruin of the goods they carry with them."³³ Francis Fettiplace vehemently opposed the scheme on grounds that the amount of gold specie necessary to maintain the trade would be too great for the Company to accommodate.³⁴ John Crowther's take on the operation was much less hostile, but still echoed the basic premise of the opposition mostly from the view that "the Persian should have been talked with

³² Sir Thomas Roe to Sir Thomas Smythe, Ajmer, 27 November 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:246; Sir Thomas Roe to the Company, Ajmer, 1 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:251; William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 15 October 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.21. Bell as late as 1623 plied for the king's silk to be sent to port, but Shah Abbas I refused to ship his silk until he received satisfaction.

³³ Joseph Salbank to the Company, Agra, November 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:235-236.

³⁴ Francis Fettiplace to the Company, Ajmer, 1 September 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:244.

afar off and not to have run ourselves rashly into his hands.”³⁵ Unlike the former critics, Crowther supported the Persia trade but wished to see it undertaken with considerably more patience.

Roe’s critics, on the other hand, were convinced the silk trade would generate a substantial amount of income while providing an outlet for English cloth, and the hazards of the trade were minimal by comparison.³⁶ The opposition failed to dissuade Kerridge, and he prepared to implement his scheme in the face of Roe’s opposition. Rupali Mishra recently argued that the division between Kerridge and Roe developed from a rather ambiguous line of authority. If the two sides had worked together the scheme may have ended more favorably and the problems between the two men in India would not have come to pass.³⁷ Mishra is not wrong in her conclusions, but the driving force behind the division rested on practical problems that Roe had perhaps not fully appreciated. The trade in India struggled to move, and there were few signs that the Mughal governors were prepared to assist the English. There is also an issue of perspective, and Roe who recently arrived in India perhaps underestimated the factors’ sense of urgency in making the venture work. At this point, Roe experienced only a small taste of the ongoing struggle the English factors endured since their arrival in 1608, and for Kerridge and his supporters Persia presented a valuable opportunity.

³⁵John Crowther to the Company, Surat, 1 March 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:132.

³⁶ Consultation aboard the Charles, Swally Road, 2 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4: 190-192.

³⁷ Mishra, “Diplomacy on Edge”, 21.

On 2 October 1616, Thomas Kerridge called his council together with the Henry Pepwell, commander of the *Charles* (900/1000 tons), and his council—including his chief merchant William Methwold—to discuss the details of the first Persian voyage and whether or not they should postpone it. Also present were the merchants Thomas Barker, Thomas Mitford, and Edward Connock who were expected to organize trade in Persia once the venture began. The *Charles*, the *Unicorn* (700 tons), the *James* (600 tons), and the *Globe* (350/527 tons) had recently arrived from London, and Kerridge determined that much of the cargo, by this time, would not sell in India. The council ultimately decided that Roe's opinion was erroneous and resolved to dismiss it in favor of the expedition. Mishra claimed that the meeting took place in secret as the factors and fleet commander hoped to depart before Roe could intervene and put a stop to the expedition.³⁸

From Kerridge's perspective, the Persian trade was ripe with opportunity, and given that the present state of India was unlikely to improve the appeal of the venture increased. The factors present at the consultation voted in favor of sending the English goods that recently arrived with the fleet to Persia, which included 64 bales of broadcloth, a single bale of Devonshire kerseys, roughly £6,333 sterling, and the entire quantity of lead onboard.³⁹ In addition to the cloth, Kerridge ordered his factors to land quantities of elephant teeth, various bottles of liquor, drinking glasses, knives, vermilion and a number of small trinkets such as looking glasses and spectacles. According to one of the

³⁸ Mishra, "Diplomacy on Edge", 22.

³⁹ Consultation at Surat, 6 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:194.

English merchants assigned to Persia, George Pley, the Safavīd soldiers, unlike those in India, regularly wore upper garments crafted from English cloth, which in previous years came into Persia via Istanbul and other Ottoman territories.⁴⁰ It does not appear that Pley visited Persia before 1616, and it is likely that Pley expressed this opinion based on previous reports from Persia.

In November 1616, the *James* departed Surat and after a month long journey, Edward Connock and his subordinates arrived in Jask in December. Immediately after arriving at Jask a messenger from the governor of Jask, Meere Tasside, brought news from Mogustan (Mínáb) that a Portuguese squadron of 12 frigates intended to assault the *James* outside of Jask.⁴¹ Edward Connock doubted the accuracy of the messenger's reports, but he decided to proceed with caution and warn Alexander Childe, master of the *James*, of a potential attack. The following day Connock decided the warning was genuine, and immediately considered whether or not to send the *James* to Gombroon where the ship could ride under the protection of the fort there.⁴² If the Portuguese arrived the records made no note of it, and the *James* returned to Surat on 20 January 1617.⁴³

Meere Tasside accompanied the small English party to Mogustan where they met with the governor of the province of Hormuz, Zulfikār Sultan.⁴⁴ Zulfikār Sultan sent horses to the English for their journey up to his castle where he provided lodging for the

⁴⁰ George Pley to Robert Middleton, Mogustan, 30 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:284. See chapter 1.

⁴¹ Edward Connock to Alexander Child at Jask, 17 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:262.

⁴² Consultation at Jask, 17 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:263-264.

⁴³ Foster, *The English Factories in India, 1617*, xlii.

⁴⁴ Not to be confused with Zulfikār Khān of Surat.

English merchants in a house adjacent to the fort.⁴⁵ After presenting Shah Abbas' *farmân*, the governor provided "sufficient camels to bring up our goods, and sent at his own charge ten horse well armed for convoy thereof, with express command to all governors of forts in the way that they do likewise aid and assist us if the Portingall should attempts anything against us."⁴⁶ Connock was certainly optimistic about the proceedings, and sent reports to Master Childe that he settled the Persian trade. The small English party returned to Jask to collect their goods and prepare the shipment for Isfahan.⁴⁷

The initial contact between the Company and the Safavīds showed positive signs, and Connock was optimistic about their chances in Persia:

Further I am to entreat that you deliver the Governor of Jasques by this bearer forty pounds English of your best powder, and seventy or eighty pounds or a hundredweight of lead, for which though this Sultaun and Governor hath requested and promised to payments, yet we expect nothing, since his many respects and daily invitation by presents may from us challenge a better requital.⁴⁸

It is easy to see how Connock was moved by the local demonstration of generosity, particularly from Meere Tasside, in spite of very real challenges that would make the trade both difficult and expensive. Connock made an important oversight when judging their arrangement, however. He never considered that the goodwill shown from Shah Abbas' southern governors existed because they were under constant duress from the

⁴⁵ George Pley to Robert Middleton in Mogustan, 30 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:283.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:283.

⁴⁷ Edward Connock to Alexander Childe, 26 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:273-274.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:274.

Portuguese at Hormuz and elsewhere.⁴⁹ Willem Floor argued that beginning in the 1580s, Catholic Militancy at Hormuz saw the wholesale destruction of synagogues and mosques. When Connock and his men arrived, they provided the governors with an alternative and potential ally at sea.

Connock's overconfidence began to discourage some of his colleagues in Persia. Thomas Doughty wrote to London that "Mr. Connocke was very forward, and in my conscience had rather hazard your ship, goods, and men than be disappointed of his employment."⁵⁰ Connock immediately disregarded Thomas Kerridge's instructions and decided to organize the English branch according to his own predilection. He disregarded Kerridge's instructions to obtain trading capitulations before landing the Company's investments. Connock's rather euphoric opinion of the trade in Persia gave him a sense of security that probably led him to dismiss Kerridge's instructions altogether. His reasoning was not entirely unwarranted, and coming from the perspective of the India trade, Connock reasoned that the governor was not at liberty to issue trading capitulations. That power was solely in the hands of Shah of Persia. Nevertheless, he spoke highly of Meere Tasside in "his many respects, daily presents, joyful words and fair performances by his people's carriage and guard of our goods have been sufficient testimonies of good intendments."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Floor, *The Persian Gulf*, 193. Beginning around the 1580s, Floor argued that the Portuguese clergy became aggressive at Ormuz and tore down synagogues and mosques.

⁵⁰ Thomas Doughty to the Company, Surat, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:102.

⁵¹ Edward Connock to the Company, Jask, 19 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:59. The governor, however, died in February 1617.

Thomas Doughty, however, was far less certain of the venture's potential. The desolate coastline of Persia worried the factor, and Jask and the neighboring towns were not quite as safe as Connock thought. The town of Jask was in a deteriorated state, and the fort could do little to withstand an assault of any form. Shah Abbas' recent acquisition of the southern territories brought them under control of, what Doughty understood as, a tyrannical Safavīd authority leaving the region with poorly established leadership.⁵² Connock was not necessarily naïve to the state of Jask and the surrounding territory, but his determination to succeed in Persia certainly seemed to outweigh the risks. George Pley complained that "Jasques being so far remote from places of trade, we cannot but be at some extraordinary charge this year before we come with our goods to Sirash [Shīrāz]." ⁵³ Pley was convinced that they would settle closer to Isfahan at some point over the next year, but that would not rectify the problem of transporting goods over a very long distance. William Biddulph supported the Persian trade, but he admitted that they could gain little from Jask since it was "a poor fishing town" and that they needed to ship their goods to Isfahan.⁵⁴ He reasoned that unless the English could take the entire silk trade on, the English would find very little profit in Persia. Matthee has suggested that somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 bales of silk were produce annually, but the

⁵² Thomas Doughty to the Company, Surat, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:101-102.

⁵³ George Pley to Robert Middleton, Mogustan, 30 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:283.

⁵⁴ William Biddulph to the Company, 31 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:288. See also, Foster, "Introduction," in *The English Factories in India, 1616*.

lack of reliable figures, he argued, makes it difficult to pin down with any precision the amount of silk was produced annually.⁵⁵

Edward Connock conceded that the trade would cost “some extraordinary charge” travelling from Isfahan to port, but the factor was eager and ambitious to proceed instead of withdraw.⁵⁶ Merchants relied on mules in mountainous regions, but the English seemed to prefer camels for their heavier weight capacity when travelling from the south to Isfahan; although they did incorporate mules into their caravans from the south. Merchants typically burdened camels with no more than two bales although, as Matthee pointed out, the camel is physically capable of carrying heavier loads. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier described two types of camels: one that is “proper for hot Countries, the other for cold Countries.” Those more tempered to hotter climates were “small Camels that carry not above five or six hundred Pound weight.”⁵⁷

In an attempt to relieve Roe’s trepidation regarding the enormous sums allocated for transportation, Connock thought that he could purchase camels for little more than 3 royals, and each camel could carry “two bales containing 8 cloths.”⁵⁸ Mules typically carried between 100 and 180 kg.⁵⁹ Edward Pettus tells a slightly different story that suggests the English paid much more for the camels, although he does not provide a sum,

⁵⁵ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 39-43.

⁵⁶ Edward Connock to Captain Alexander Childe, 26 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:273-274.

⁵⁷ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia, and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1684), 49-50.

⁵⁸ Edward Connock to the Company, Jask, 19 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:58.

⁵⁹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 49-50.

the inflated costs were due because “we were strangers and knew not their customs.”⁶⁰ Not everything proceeded quite as smoothly as Connock’s letters suggest, and in April 1617 George Pley complained to Edward Pettus that “we are abused in the matter of camels,” in which case it appears the party was forced to walk from Mogustan to Shīrāz.⁶¹ Once they arrived in Shīrāz on 2 April Thomas Barker’s company was stranded without camels, which sprouted into a nasty dispute between Barker and Connock.⁶² Already in the first few months, the English party felt the mounting burden of acquiring sufficient transportation.

Meanwhile, George Pley notified Thomas Kerridge, that “after both he [Meere Tasside] and the Chan’s receiver had drawn from us what gifts and presents they could, and being by the Portugals with greater gifts bribed” feared the Persians would detain the English at Jask.⁶³ Meere Tasside was not about to acquiesce to the Portuguese request, but the Portuguese bribes caused enough anxiety among the English merchants. Edward Connock departed for Shīrāz to demand a *farmān* from the Khān there. Pley claimed that the governor of Jask required the English to open their goods for perusal after hearing of Connock’s plan, but this incident seems to reflect English anxiety over abuses at the

⁶⁰ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton in London, Isfahan, 3 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:287.

⁶¹ George Pley to Edward Pettus, 28 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:210.

⁶² This rather minor incident fueled a nasty debate between Thomas Barker and Edward Connock, which split the Persian agency in half. Camels were an elusive asset for the English, and, as one observer complained, the Shah’s wars depleted the availability. A discussion on this will pick up in chapter five. See, William Bell to H[?] (copy), 13 February 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.84v; William Bell to the Company, 27 March 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.90v.; Foster, “Introduction”, *The English Factories in India, 1616*, xiv.

⁶³ George Pley to Thomas Kerridge, Isfahan, 15 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:247. Pley apparently wrote an earlier letter, but it no longer exists. The events Pley mentioned likely took place at the beginning of the year, probably February. Pley mentions in the letter that they arrived at Lār the 11 March.

customs house that frequently occurred in Surat, especially under Mukarrab Khān and Zulfikār Khān’s governorship. There is nothing to suggest that Meere Tasside intended to pilfer the English stockpile. Their fears came to naught, and George Pley departed for Shīrāz with the entire store of goods except two bales of broadcloth that he left behind presumably as a gift for Meere Tasside. George Pley arrived in Shīrāz on 2 April 1617 where the *dūrōgha* (governor) greeted them warmly and provided Pley and his company with “wine and other provisions.”⁶⁴

While the factors continued their long, arduous journey to Isfahan, in India Sir Thomas Roe received the Company’s letters that raised the ambassador to a position of principal authority over the English in diplomatic and commercial matters. The Company’s decision created an immense amount tension between Roe and Kerridge, predominantly from Kerridge’s end, who thought the factors were unjustly subjected to Roe.⁶⁵ Roe, however, in a show of diplomatic acuteness, responded to Kerridge’s temper tantrum with grace and resolute kindness by extending to Kerridge an olive branch of sorts. Roe wrote: “You cannot find in all my letters that I ever touched your loyalty to the Company’s service; somewhat your affection to cross me; it is past and let it die and vanish in air. I esteem you all as my friends.”⁶⁶ Kerridge eventually came to his senses, and the two worked together until Roe’s departure in 1619.

⁶⁴ George Pley to Edward Connock, Shīrāz, 4 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:194.

⁶⁵ Rupali Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court,” in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 53 (2014), 20-26.

⁶⁶ Sir Thomas Roe to the factors in Surat, Ajmer, 15 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:206.

In an attempt to curb the poorly considered effort, Roe reached out to fellow Englishmen and jeweler in Isfahan, William Robbins, whom he entrusted to meet with Shah Abbas and clarify the Company's commercial goals whilst apologizing for Connock's failure in hopes that "the Prince will be pleased not to judge us by this attempt."⁶⁷ Robbins, at the time, was not a member of the Company, and it is unclear when he first arrived in Persia as a jeweler. Roe referred to the deliverance of "commodities be not in quantity nor quality such as may give the King any great encouragement."⁶⁸ The quantity of English cloth that arrived in Surat was apparently tattered and unsuitable for the Shah's court. Roe was deeply concerned about the feasibility of establishing trade in Persia in context of the costs and danger to the Company's men, but he was unwilling to allow Sir Robert Sherley to bring the Spanish into Persia "knowing their ambitions and covetous practice to usurp all to themselves."⁶⁹ In November of the previous year, Roe wrote to the Secretary of State, Sir Ralph Winwood, that "I will in the meane tyme amuse the Persian with as many doubts as I can infuse into him of the Spaniard, and hopes of us."⁷⁰ Professor Mishra argued that Roe was fond of Sherley, but it seems that the English ambassador's fondness of Sherley was limited towards "him whom you know in religion is opposite to us and in his practice but

⁶⁷ Sir Thomas Roe to William Robbins, Mandū, 21 August 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:76. A variation of this letter was printed in volume two of Roe's journal edited by William Foster.

⁶⁸ Sir Thomas Roe to William Robbins, 17 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:51.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5:50.

⁷⁰ Sir William Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mughal, 1615-1619*, vol. 2 (London, 1899 reprint), 357.

lukewarm. He may deceive you, when a Company will not.”⁷¹ He did, however, warn William Robbins that Sherley was not a “well-wisher to his country [England],” and he hoped to “procure for them [Portuguese] the whole traffic, and to that end is he employed.”⁷² Roe’s strong opinion against Sherley is clear, and “I would persuade you out of this error” and urged Robbins to trust only the Company “and our honest ways.”⁷³ Whether for commercial reasons or an attempt to block the Spanish, Roe moved forward with the plans for a Persian factory.

After arriving in Isfahan, Connock described Shah Abbas as a tyrant who “cuts off heads every hour,” but Connock’s distorted view of the Shah probably stemmed from the frustration of having to wait for an audience with the shah.⁷⁴ After the long journey from Jask to Isfahan, Connock wanted to settle the Company’s business as quickly as possible. During the brief delay, Connock met with William Robbins whom Roe had been in contact with, but he also met with the Safavīd royal factor who made Connock’s initial bid to sell their cloth difficult.⁷⁵

Connock discussed turning over their broadcloth to Lalah Beg the royal treasurer, or royal silk factor, in Isfahan. At first, Lalah Beg (Muhibb ‘Ali Beg) thwarted Connock’s attempt to sell their entire store of English cloth and other goods. Lalah Beg was one of two elite officials—the other being Mulayim Beg—whom controlled the silk

⁷¹ Sir Thomas Roe to William Robbins, 17 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:52.

⁷² Sir Thomas Roe to William Robbins, Mandū, 21 August 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:76

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 6:76-77.

⁷⁴ Edward Connock to George Pley, Isfahan, 10 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:198.

⁷⁵ Foster, “Introduction,” *The English Factories in India, 1617*, vol. 5, xlii. 23.

exports and other cloth purchases in Isfahan. Pettus' initial experience with Lalah Beg did not proceed as smoothly as he had hoped, but he eventually promised to give the English in exchange for their cloth a quarter of the payment in money and three quarters silk. Lalah Beg delayed the English for twenty days, however. Meanwhile, a caravan arrived from Aleppo carrying woolen cloth, which drove the cost of the English cloth down to 36 *shahis* (12s) per *covad* (35 inches). Connock and his subordinates refused to accept anything lower than 45 *shahis* (15s), and they decided to hold out for the king's *farmân*.⁷⁶ Lalah Beg countered the original offer with one that put one or two thousand bales of silk in English hands before the end of the year. Sir William Foster claimed that Lalah Beg offered to charge 3,000 bales to their account, but both figures were flawed.⁷⁷ On these terms, Edward Connock's temper was mollified and he accepted the contract.⁷⁸ Much like the early years in India, Connock failed to acknowledge the importance of gift giving, and this was central to Roe's critiques of Connock's mission to Isfahan.⁷⁹

Even Connock knew that his attempt to seduce Shah with poor quality broadcloth and trinkets from the ship's dining ware was largely ineffectual. Although Connock blamed Thomas Barker for the mishap by suggesting that Barker detained their best

⁷⁶ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton in London, Isfahan, 3 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:288. According to William Foster, 13 *shahis* make a single rial of eight, see 2n. Rudolph Mathee puts the 200 *shahi* at roughly 1 *tūmān*, which is £6 6s 8d. Also 2 silver *shahis* equated to a single *mahmudi*. See, appendix and glossary in *The Politics of Trade*. Rudolph Mathee suggests that the *tūmān* was a form of ghost money in the Persian currency system, and there was not an actual coin minted to represent a *tūmān*.

⁷⁷ Foster, "Introduction," *The English Factories in India, 1617*, vol. 5, xiv.

⁷⁸ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton in London, Isfahan, 3 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:289.

⁷⁹ Edward Connock to the Company, Jask, 19 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:64.

quicksilver and kerseys in Shīrāz.⁸⁰ If it were not for Shah Abbas' immeasurable hatred of the Portuguese, Connock's mission quite possibly would have failed.⁸¹

Connock's vision had Persia, instead of Surat, at the center of all East India trade, and the greatest of the Company's estates in the east.⁸² Although Connock later admitted that he made a mistake, he managed to acquire a treaty in 1617 that allowed the English to settle at port, rights to a private graveyard, establish a consul, and most importantly trading rights.⁸³ Connock firmly believed the English could redirect the silk trade from the Mediterranean while at the same time force the Portuguese from the shores of Persia, beginning with Hormuz.⁸⁴ Hindsight tells us that Connock was terribly wrong, but in 1617 the Persia trade presented the perfect alternative to the struggling Indian trade. He thought the English could purchase silk primarily with a combination of English goods—tin and broadcloth—and spices supplemented with roughly one quarter in bullion. He requested the Company send merchants to Bantam immediately to purchase spices,

⁸⁰ See chapter 5. Interestingly, the early twentieth-century scholar, Arnold Wright, glanced over this miscue and declared Connock's mission to Isfahan a resounding success. Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 244-245.

⁸¹ Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 245.

⁸² Edward Connock to George Pley, Isfahan, 10 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:197.

⁸³ Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 98; R.W. Ferrier, "The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (1986), 53. William Foster, "Introduction," in *Letters Received*, v.6, xi-xii.

⁸⁴ Ferrier, "An English view of Persian Trade", 188.

especially pepper, to ship for Persia.⁸⁵ Connock figured the Company could supplement tin and broadcloth with pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and other spices.

As Connock achieved a negligible victory at court, the Shah was prepared to negotiate terms with Spain over transferring large quantities of silk to the Iberian power. In the wake of Sir Robert Sherley's departure for Spain in 1615 where he hoped to bring the Spanish into the Indian Ocean, Connock was prepared to publically smear the Spanish reputation in front of Shah Abbas to protect English interests.⁸⁶ In his first visit to court in 1617, Connock declared that, "if once the Spaniard hath but footing on his shore; how insolent he will use, or rather abuse his prince and people, having gotten possession, which as I well cal instance so may I boldly assure this King 'twill be too dishonourable and not befitting a monarch endure."⁸⁷ The Spanish Ambassador, Don Garza de Silva y Figueroa, arrived shortly after bearing "great and rich presents purposely to our supplantation" which unnerved Connock and his men who recalled similar circumstances in India.⁸⁸

Figueroa was Castilian gentleman of whom Foster described as an elite member of Spanish society who, having spent a numbers of years in service of the Spanish crown,

⁸⁵ Edward Connock to the Company, Jask, 19 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:57. Ferrier, "An English view of Persian Trade", 189. See also, Jan de Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134-135.

⁸⁶ Stevens, "Robert Sherley", 117-118.

⁸⁷ Edward Connock to the Company, Isfahan, 2 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:190. Connock's disillusionment did not stop there as he inflated the English navy's power far above what it was capable of.

⁸⁸ Edward Connock to the Company, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:280.

had showed remarkable abilities as an envoy.⁸⁹ He first arrived in Goa in 1614, but the Portuguese were unwilling to aid Figueroa due to their own jealousy over Madrid's interference in their half of the world. He stayed in Goa for two years before finally arriving in Hormuz in 1617, but he was delayed further and would not reach Shah Abbas until 1618, long after Connock received concession from Shah Abbas.⁹⁰ The Safavīds, unlike the Mughals, were not fond of the Portuguese, and if one report is true, "the King hath spake publicly that they [Portuguese] never yet told him a true tale."⁹¹ Edward Pettus told London that the Safavīds openly welcomed the English because they "have more courteous use of the common people than they [Portuguese] ever had, and more respect of the great ones."⁹² In December 1617, Connock died of the flux, and he would never see the Spanish embassy come to pass. The English, however, had very little to fear from the Spanish embassy, but to the south Connock received news from Thomas Barker that the Portuguese were prepared to assault English shipping in the region.⁹³

Edward Connock warned the incoming fleet from England that ships could arrive at Hormuz from Goa, Diu, and other Portuguese ports along the India coastline, and the Portuguese frigates that scouted the area waiting for English vessels to pass by unarmed

⁸⁹ Foster, "Introduction," *The English Factories in India, 1617*, vol. 5, xvi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁹¹ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton in London, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:288. Pettus is merely restating something passed onto him, but from whom it is unclear.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 5:288.

⁹³ Thomas Barker to Edward Connock, Shīrāz, 8 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:221.

or guarded was “a thing we much feared this past year.”⁹⁴ Connock requested the entire fleet to ride at Jask for protection; otherwise he feared the Portuguese would sack the one or two ships that came to port.⁹⁵ Connock does not specify which ships were available at Surat, but there was probably between two and four ships not including their adjoining barks and smaller boats; which was the typical size of the annual fleet. The Portuguese historian, Glenn Ames, recorded that between 1615 and 1620, the English sent a single ship for London annually while the remainder of the fleet moved between the Company’s overseas ports.⁹⁶ The venture into Persia left the annual fleet spread dangerously thin, and the bubbling conflict between the English and Portuguese fleets at sea created a dangerous problem from the English.

As the crisis loomed large, Edward Connock died on Christmas Eve, and the factory’s chief position was now vacant. Professor Mishra argues that Roe was generally uncomfortable with the Company’s decision to elevate him to supreme leader over English trade, and after settling matters in Persia, he turned the factory over to Thomas Barker.⁹⁷ Roe empowered the English factors in Persia to treat with Shah Abbas on behalf of James I under the guidance of a set of strict orders.⁹⁸ He delivered a copy of his

⁹⁴ Edward Connock to the fleet, Isfahan, 15 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:242. It seems that this is a general letter to whomever came out from England, and since Connock likely did not know who would command the annual fleet, he composed a general letter or warning regarding the Portuguese navy.

⁹⁵ Edward Connock to the Company, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:280.

⁹⁶ Glenn J. Ames, *The Globe Encompassed: The Age of European Discovery, 1500-1700* (Pearson Press, 2008), 147.

⁹⁷ Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge”, 25. See also, Foster, “Introduction,” *The English Factories in India, 1617*, vol. 6, xxlv.

⁹⁸ Sir Thomas Roe to the factors in Persia, Mandū, 6 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:107.

orders to President Kerridge to pass onto the men in Persia, and he fully expected Shah Abbas to agree to his terms if the English were to continue to trade in Persia.⁹⁹ From India, Roe could not assert his authority over Persia, let alone the factors in India, and at the time it made sense to allow the factors to supervise the trade there.¹⁰⁰ Roe expected the English to establish a house midway between Jask and Isfahan, preferably at Shīrāz. His instruction mostly called for keeping prices low and securing from the governors of the various port cities protection for the English fleet. He expected the English residing there to content themselves with a modest house, living expenses, and most importantly maintain sobriety.¹⁰¹ Yet on the eve of Roe's departure in 1619, Shah Abbas had a different plan for the English in mind.

In 1619, Shah Abbas I and his court hosted a lavish banquet in Isfahan. He had spent the previous years in the field against Ottoman forces in the north, and the banquet was held in his honor. A year earlier, Thomas Barker and Edward Monox attempted to press the Shah to improve their trade, but, as it often happened, the merchants stood before the Shah offering gifts of little value and “our business tooke no better effect.”¹⁰² In 1619, they would get another chance to impress Shah Abbas, but instead of gifts, the Shah desired the English fleet. It was a stately banquet that saw dignitaries from Europe and the Muslim world in attendance and, in stark contrast to India, Shah Abbas extended

⁹⁹ Instructions given to our loving friends in Persia, Mandū, 6 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:108-113.

¹⁰⁰ Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge”, 25.

¹⁰¹ Instructions given to our loving friends in Persia, Mandū, 6 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:108-113.

¹⁰² Consultation at Isfahan, 1 July 1619, IOR/E/3/6, f.153v.

an invitation to Thomas Barker and his companions. Barker fondly recalled the “daye being spent in Royall entertainments intermixt with divers extravagant and pleasant discourses.”¹⁰³ Barker and his colleagues, however, were not interested in indulging in the lavish festivities.

Instead Barker took the opportunity to confront the Shah regarding “the injurys we had suffered and the losses we had sustained” after the English seized two Portuguese ships. The Safavīd officials in Gombroon “were not acquainted with his [Shah Abbas] princlye pleasure,” and they confiscated the English spoils. The minor scuffle was soon put to rest and Shah Abbas instructed Imām-qulī Khān, governor of Shīrāz, to resolve the issue, which presumably meant returning the Portuguese goods to the English. After Imām-qulī Khān returned the goods, the English sold them for roughly £1800. The decision was sort of a peace offering unto the English who Shah Abbas had hoped would join in a larger, more important matter of the state that, if successfully completed, would mutually benefit both the English and Safavīds. Shah Abbas promised that “he would have nothing to doe” with any clashes between the English and Portuguese in his ports, but if anything was taken from the English “he would make a tewe fould restitution.”¹⁰⁴

Shah Abbas proposed an alliance to overthrow the Portuguese from Hormuz, giving the English full access and control over the island in exchange for their fleet’s assistance.¹⁰⁵ The alliance, as Shah Abbas instructed, would proceed in secrecy until both

¹⁰³ Thomas Barker to the Company, Isfahan, 16 October 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.44.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., f.44v; 48.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., f.44v.

sides were prepared to attack. The English certainly benefitted from the alliance and were free to purchase silk from any of the Shah's subjects, but in the current circumstances he refused to ship his silk from the Gulf while the Portuguese still held sway over the Persian Gulf. Overthrowing the Portuguese at Hormuz meant the English could seriously consider settling a factory in Gombroon, which was better suited for English shipping than Jask. The idea was not new as Edward Connock proposed a move there early on, but the English were not in a position in 1616 or 1617 to settle a factory there as he had hoped. In order to entice the English to join the fight, Shah Abbas offered the merchants immunity from certain customs along their route. Shah Abbas sent writs to the governors throughout Persia, especially in the "marine parts," strictly forbidding his chief officers from impeding the English caravans passing through; this included any attempts to extort bribes from the English.¹⁰⁶ While the English began to establish their presence in Persia, the Portuguese continued to pose a threat to the southern coastline.

The English presidency's instructions to sack Portuguese stragglers only heightened the intensity. Aside from the early clashes outside Swally Hole in the first couple of years, the naval clashes primarily consisted of the English jumping on straggling Portuguese vessels. With the English advance into Persia, however, the Portuguese prepared to increase the pressure on English shipping. In 1619, Thomas Barker sent word to London of reports, however true, regarding the Portuguese viceroy's preparations at Goa to launch an attack against Surat and Persia; the plan apparently

¹⁰⁶ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7,f.108v. Also see, Linda Darling, "Capitulations," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 257-60.

called for the construction of four sizeable ships of 200 guns.¹⁰⁷ In the same year, Ruy Freire de Andrade arrived in the Gulf intent on destroying their competition.¹⁰⁸ About the same time, the Safavīds began to assault Portuguese possessions, in which case the Portuguese fortification at Julfar, a small island near Hormuz, came under siege. The siege was a response to the Portuguese who burned three small port towns (unnamed) in the Gulf. One report sent from Isfahan in March 1620 reported that Julfar had fallen.¹⁰⁹ William Bell reported that the Safavīds sunk some 200 Portuguese boats, but without English ships the Safavīds could hope to accomplish very little.¹¹⁰ It is not clear what types of boats Bell referred to, and there does not seem to be additional letters to support his report. Without English shipping, however, the Safavīds did not possess a navy of any form that could retake Hormuz without assistance. The Safavīds attempted to re-take the city of Hormuz on a couple occasions, but failed both times.¹¹¹

The tension in the Gulf region increased spectacularly, and the English *Hart* and *Eagle*, recently dispatched from Surat, were due to arrive in Jask just as Ruy Freire began his assault on the region. Meanwhile, Captain Andrew Shilling with the *London* and the 300 ton *Roebuck* captured a Portuguese vessel, the 200 ton *Nuestra Señora de Mercedes*, off the coast of India near Swally Hole, and the English discovered Freire's plans to

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Barker to the Company, 16 October 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.48v.

¹⁰⁸ Ames, *The Globe Encompassed*, 147; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 63.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Isfahan, 18 March 1620, Egerton 2123, f.5.

¹¹⁰ William Bell to the Company, Kūhestān, 24 January 1621/22, Egerton 2086, f.5-7.

¹¹¹ Thomas Barker to the Company, 15 February 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.65.

attack the English at Jask.¹¹² The English presidency instructed Captain Andrew Shilling to sail immediately for Jask in the 800 ton *London*, and Shilling arrived just in time.¹¹³ In early 1620, the tension boiled over into all out war, and Shilling's fleet of three clashed at Jask Road with Ruy Freire.¹¹⁴ Freire's fleet consisted of two galleons, ten frigates, two Flemish ships, and two galliats.¹¹⁵ Richard Swan, captain of the *Roebuck*, reported that on the 10 December 1620, the members of the English fleet took the sacrament, and on the 17 December, the two sides engaged in battle. Robert Jeffries, a merchant under Shilling's custody, watched the entire battle unfold from aboard the *London*.

The night before the attack Robert Jeffries peered at "our shippes in battle array" in the Road of Jask. On Sunday "about nyne in the morning both fleets encountered under saile." The English fleet "being bountifull with bullets" easily withstood the first attack and forced the Portuguese to retreat by nightfall.¹¹⁶ Two days later "Ruy Feire appearing againe to come into the Road" alarmed the English and those merchants onboard retreated to shore; except for Jeffries who remained imprisoned onboard the *London*. The battle lasted just a few days, and the English were able to defeat Ruy Feire handedly, but

¹¹² William Foster, ed., "Richard Swanley's account," in *English Factories in India, 1618-1621* (Clarendon Press, 1906), 220. See also, Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 105.

¹¹³ Consultation at Isfahan, 24 September 1619, IOR/E/3/6, f.154v; Consultation aboard London, Swally Road, 10 November 1620, IOR/G/36/1, f.7. See also, Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 63; Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 246; William Foster, "Introduction," in *The English Factories in India, 1618-1621* (Clarendon Press, 1906), xxviii.

¹¹⁴ William [Bell?] to [Surat], Isfahan, 18 March 1620, Egerton 2123, f. 25-26; Apparently the English fleet "struck such terror" into the local inhabitants of Jask. See, IOR/E/3/7, f.107v.

¹¹⁵ Foster, *English Factories in India, 1618-1621*, 220.

¹¹⁶ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.342.

in the course of the battle Captain Andrew Shilling “in the midst of the conflict, while we were wrapped in smoake, and sweating in blood” was shot and perished soon after.¹¹⁷

The *London* and *Hart* overpowered the Portuguese, and Ruy Feire had to retreat.

Historians like Arnold Wright saw the sea fight as clear evidence of the Portuguese decline in the east, while Rawlinson argued that the decisive victory opened the door for the English in the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁸ Until the English could drive the Portuguese out of Hormuz, they were essentially caught between two Portuguese ports at Hormuz and Diu. Damān, just south of Surat, was strategically nearby as well. Even with Rawlinson’s hopeful conclusion, the English were still dangerously trapped between a series of Portuguese strongholds.

The sea fight became somewhat of a national sensation, at least in the context of English print culture. In July 1622, a concise version of the events circulated London in, and later Samuel Purchas published incomplete pieces of the narrative in his *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1626).¹¹⁹ Some of the issues that David Randall touched on in his recent work on the level of credibility in English military news holds true here, but there must have been something quite sensational for London readers to pick up a copy of this tract and confront the very notion that their merchants vessels landed a crushing blow to the

¹¹⁷ *The Trve Relation of that Worthy Sea Fight, Which two of the East India Shippes, had with 4 Portingals, of great force and burthen, in the Persian Gulph. With the lamentable death of Captaine Andrew Shilling. With Other memorable accidents, in that Voiage. Printed this 2 July* (London: Printed by I.D. for Nathaniel Newbery and William Sheffard, and are to be sold in Popes-head Alley, 1622), 19; Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.342.

¹¹⁸ Wright, *Early English Adventurers*; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 65.

¹¹⁹ *A Trve Relation of that Worthy Sea Fight*.

Iberian hegemony in the Indian Ocean.¹²⁰ There were some embellishments in the tract, and as was most often the case the English were severely outnumbered yet still achieved a resounding victory. The fact that this singular event received press transforms it from a minor scuffle on the fringes of the English imagination to something that was both real and significant in the larger scheme of English expansion. It was a reflection of the English navy's strength against the looming power of the Portuguese. It also marked a point of no return for the Company that soon spiraled out of control.



Figure 5: An engraving of a Persian Qezelbaş in Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels* (1664)

In January 1620, Monox continued to focus on the Company's trade in Persia. In the beginning of the year, Monox was in Jask where Makran rebels threatened the Company's stores there, and the factor decided to put together an "extraordinary camel hire from thence to Mogustan" to transport the entire store of Company goods there.¹²¹

¹²⁰ David Randall, *Credibility in Elizabethan and early Stuart military news* (London, 2008).

¹²¹ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.107v.

Shortly after arriving at Mogustan, Monox learned that Thomas Barker had died the November making Monox the new chief of Persia. His first task was getting the English caravan safely out of the south. The English party provided a gratuity of 15 *tūmān* (£94 10s) to the governor of Jask for the protection of Qezelbāš (see figure 5) on their journey.¹²² Monox sought to “dissolve a former bargayne made by Mr. Jeffries, Mr. Bell, and Thomas Barker with the governor of Myna [Mínáb or Mogustan]” for camels to Lār from 18 *lari* (1£ 2s 6d) per 100 maund to 12 *lari* (15s).¹²³ After which, Monox ordered William Bell, John Percy, and John Benthall to bring the caravan up to Isfahan when ready, and then Monox departed for Isfahan to rendezvous with Robert Jeffries and Thomas Barker, the younger, to gain access to the former chief’s chambers.¹²⁴ After his arrival, Monox requested a *farmān* from Shah Abbas for establishing a residence in Gombroon.¹²⁵

In lieu of the progress at court, the English merchants continued to grapple with problems with transportation. For the second time in four years, the English factors found themselves involved in another disagreement over shipping expenses. At some point Robert Jeffries discovered that Monox brokered a new shipping rate and wrote to Surat

¹²² Consultation at Mínáb, 15 January 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.104. The Qezelbāš were Turcoman tribesmen who formed the basis of the Safavīd army.

¹²³ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.107v. A single *Larin* is worth ½ rupee. 1 rupee is 2s 6d, which means the *larin* is about 1s 3d. A maund, or *man*, varied by region.

¹²⁴ Monox gave Thomas Barker the title of younger, but it is not clear if Thomas Barker had been related to the late Thomas Barker, chief of Persia. It was common for the local governor to seal the residence after a factor died to contain the goods and various items inside.

¹²⁵ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.109; Edward Monox to Surat, Jask, 11 January 1620/21, Egerton 2123, f.8.

“that eyther wee were notable Idiotts, or he possessed with an extraordinary guift in camel hires.”¹²⁶ His version suggests that Monox made the agreement with a Banyan, who fooled Monox into thinking the camels were attainable at a cheaper rate in Gombroon. Monox does not mention a Banyan in the agreement, but, in May of that year, William Bell wrote to Monox informing the chief that camels were almost unattainable since most of the Persian merchants had left for Hormuz.¹²⁷ By the end of the month, Bell wrote to Monox that he acquired 120 camels that had arrived from Lār for 36 *shahi* (12s) per 200 *mann-i Tabriz* (580kg), which Bell would bring to Isfahan.¹²⁸ Bell had to leave a portion of the goods behind at Shiraz, but the English caravan finally began its long journey to north.

Having settled the transportation issue in 1620, another problem developed abroad. One of the difficulties the early Company had to contend with was managing local affairs in context of an external crisis. In this particular moment, the problem emerged in India. Monox hoped to increase profit for the Company but he needed President Kerridge to ship Indian goods to Persia. Monox complained that they had not received shipments for quite awhile.¹²⁹ In early 1620, Monox was probably unaware that the Agra *qāfilah* has been sacked and he certainly had no idea that northern India was on

¹²⁶ An apology by Robert Jeffries to Surat, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.111.

¹²⁷ William Bell to Edward Monox, Shīrāz, 8 May 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.191.

¹²⁸ William Bell to Edward Monox, Shīrāz, 27 May 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.203. The *mann-i Tabriz* was roughly 2.9kg according to Matthee; see, *The Politics of Trade*, 249. Ruby Maloni recorded that 1 *shahi* was 4d.

¹²⁹ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.107.

the cusp of a rebellion. Monox relied on eastern commodities—pepper, cloth, spices—to supplement bullion, and without it the silk trade would fade away.

While the English continued to establish their presence in Persia, the Portuguese retaliated by harassing native shipping and threatening small coastal towns in the south and in the Persian Gulf. This recent round of attacks caused concern among the English and Safavīd governors in the south, and Shah Abbas began to press the English for aid. Fortunately for the Safavīds they enjoyed a rather considerable amount of leverage, and it was not long before Shah Abbas recognized that he could use potential silk transactions as leverage. In fact, he threatened to dissolve the English silk trade if they refused to lend naval support in his campaign against the Portuguese. As one historian wrote, “the attack upon Hormuz was perhaps unavoidable, unless our countrymen were prepared to relinquish all attempts to open trade with Persia.”¹³⁰

The English factors deferred the decision to Surat for consultation. The English merchants were in a difficult position, because, as much as they wanted to press the Persian trade, they were after all a trading Company and not an arm of the English military. It was one thing to defend the fleet against the Portuguese, as Thomas Best had done several years earlier and Andrew Shilling more recently, but it was an entirely different thing to take part in a larger naval operation. This is especially the case since the English were technically at peace with the Iberian states.¹³¹ The timing for such an operation was terrible, since President Kerridge was deeply embroiled in the dispute over

¹³⁰ Foster, “Introduction,” *English Factories in India, 1624-1629*, vol. 9, v.

¹³¹ Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598-1648* (Fontana Press, 1979), 151.

the Agra *qāfilah* and caught in the middle of a dynastic struggle in India. Taking Hormuz certainly would free up the Persian Gulf and, perhaps most importantly, remove one of the Portuguese strongholds where—even as contemporary observers noted its deteriorated state—still functioned as a strategic base for Portuguese shipping and troops. Shah Abbas expected aid from Monox and the English fleet if they hoped to continue trading in Persia, and especially after the Portuguese fortified Qishm “to make them selves lords of thatt island,” principally for the fresh water reserve there.¹³² Over the next few months the English and Safavīds laid the groundwork for a multi-national amphibious assault on Hormuz.

In January 1622, the English agreed to terms with the Imām-qulī Khān which divided the spoils and the fort between the two sides.¹³³ Kerridge’s version (translated from the original Persian) of the agreement reads: “the duties and bennifitt of the Custome house and shipping in like manner shall bee equally divided provided the English doe without default ayde and assist in the takeing of the Citties Townes and Catles.”¹³⁴ The Safavīd deputies involved in the draft (unnamed) agreed with the English to cooperate over the administration of the island and fortress. It certainly is possible that in the act of translating the piece, the version in English differed from the version in

¹³² Edward Monox to Surat, 7 January 1621/22, IOR/G/36/102, f.251-252. President Kerridge received the letter in January, but the letter was probably sent in mid-December.

¹³³ “Trade Agreement with Khān of Shīrāz” (copy), IOR/G/29/1, f.79v-80. Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 250.

¹³⁴ CO 77/1, f.95.

Persian. Regardless, the English expected certain perks from the alliance and as the author wrote:

If God soe please that Jeroone [Ormuz] be Conquered a Governor of ours and one of the English shall reside in the Castle, and by joint advice shall further one another in all accurrances and accidents small and greate and nothing to bee attempted without joint consent and a probation. Now for the Castle, I for the Englishes sake will make earnest request to his highnesse to lett them have it to themselves which if his Maiestie doe gratiousely grannt the Castle to the English by his Fermaen it shall bee accordingly deliuered unto them, Otherwise not.¹³⁵

It was clear to Kerridge and others that the English would enjoy an equal role in the administration of Hormuz. Shah Abbas granted the English customs-free shipping for goods shipped on English ships. For all other shipping, the agreement equally divided customs collected in Hormuz between the English factors and the Safavīds. The plan also laid out a formal scheme for disposing, or repurposing, the captives on the island. It was quite simple and divided the individuals along confessional lines so that “the English shall not meddle about them [Muslims] but leave them to us. But if Xpian [Christian] captives the English shall have them.”¹³⁶

The agreement was reasonably straightforward; although it appears that some of these points were more ambiguous than they appeared. Hormuz was not necessarily the endpoint, and the Safavīds planned to clear the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf altogether, which was made abundantly clear in the printed literature surrounding the Sherley brothers’ embassy to Persia.¹³⁷ After successfully sacking Hormuz, the Safavīds

¹³⁵ Ibid., f.95. See also Foster, “Introduction,” *The English Factories in India, 1622-1623*, vol. 8, ix.

¹³⁶ Ibid., f.96.

¹³⁷ See chapter 1.

expected that Muscat “shall hereafter bee conquered by us and the English together shallbee equally converted to the use and behoofe of both.”¹³⁸ Shah Abbas’ intentions are not all that clear, but one could surmise that he envisioned a lasting military-commercial alliance that hinted at two important functions. The first component focused on removing the Portuguese from Persian coast and more broadly the Persian Gulf. A second component appears to bring the English into the Safavīd-Mughal War, at least subtly. Roger Stevens hinted at a similar development that began in Sherley’s conversation with Shah Abbas.¹³⁹ This is revealed in the terms of their alliance, and it clearly noted that if the English expressed any “intent to take any place or castle in India giving notice thereof to our Deputies, what ayde they shall desire of men and other assistance they shall bee supplied by Gods pmission to accomplish the Victory.”¹⁴⁰ The treaty placed a great amount of pressure on the English to aid the Safavīds in ousting the Portuguese from the Gulf, but their naval capabilities provided Shah Abbas with an additional advantage towards his Indian campaigns. The English accepted the terms, and by 5 February 1622, Safavīd and English colors flew above the ramparts of Fort Qishm— Hormuz would fall next.¹⁴¹

The siege of Hormuz began on the 10 February 1622. There was a tremendous amount at stake for both sides. Hormuz’s strategic importance was the greatest asset of

¹³⁸ CO 77/1, f.96.

¹³⁹ Stevens, “Robert Sherley”, 118.

¹⁴⁰ CO 77/1, f.96.

¹⁴¹ Henry Darrell to Gombroon, 5 February 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.81v-82. William Baffin took some men ashore to press against the fort, but the famous Arctic explorer took a mortal wound to the belly.

the island. Sitting at the mouth of the Persian Gulf meant that those who controlled the island also controlled maritime traffic into the Persian Gulf. This was important given that early European travelers characterized Hormuz as a central bazaar linking the port of Basra, and by extension the Middle East and Europe, to the Indian Ocean ports of Surat and the Spice Islands. Controlling access to and from the Persian Gulf provided significant advantages, particularly in terms of customs and access to goods. From a Safavīd perspective, it also meant the Portuguese had unchecked access to the Gulf and Persian Coastline where they could harass Persian port cities. Edward Monox and his subordinates in Persia in conjunction with the presidency of Surat understood the commercial ramifications, but there was also a practical element involved in taking Hormuz.

The Portuguese held Qishm (recently lost), Muscat, and Hormuz allowing them to control the Gulf. They also held several forts along the Indian littoral, which from a strategic perspective pinched the English at Jask and Surat. The clash outside of Jask in 1620 provided the central impetus behind the factors and fleet commanders' decision to push the Portuguese off Hormuz. For Monox and the English, wresting Hormuz away from the Portuguese meant that they could begin to open the Gulf and relieve some of the pressure on the English factory in both Jask and Surat. The alliance with Shah Abbas ostensibly gave the English better access to Persian silk, but by taking Hormuz the English could protect their entire network of factories and shipping but also obtain a

fortification to protect their investments from local administrators and rebels.¹⁴² Taking Hormuz meant the English could avoid the similar circumstances that Captain Shilling faced in late 1620; at least they could loosen the Portuguese grasp on the region.

The siege of Hormuz was a combined effort from the English and the Safavīds that consisted of a straightforward plan of attack. The English agreed to bombard the fort from the sea and protect against any Portuguese vessels in the area while Safavīd troops attempted to breach the fortification from the town below. On the 10 February, the English landed to “the number of 3000” Safavīd troops about two miles from the town.¹⁴³ In Thomas Herbert’s *Some Yeares Travels* (1664), he claimed that the English transported Safavīd troops in “two Frigots which they had lately taken and two hundred Persian boats which were good for little other service.”¹⁴⁴ The Safavīd force marched unchecked onto the town where they found the place emptied of its residents. The Portuguese had moved the inhabitants to safety “as well moores as christians,” especially the “weathier sorte with all their substance.”¹⁴⁵ Having taken the town, the English landed “8 peeces of Ordnance which we brought against their shippes and castle.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² See also, Bruce I. Watson, “Fortifications and the “Idea” of Force in Early English East India Company Relations with India” in *Past & Present*, No. 88, (1980).

¹⁴³ Edward Monox to Surat, Ormuz, 27 April 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.42.

¹⁴⁴ Sir Thomas Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels into divers parts of Africa and Asia the Great*. 3rd ed. (London, Printed by J. Best for Andrew Crook, at the Green-Dragon at St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1664), f.115. See chapter 5 for more on Herbert.

¹⁴⁵ Edward Monox to Surat, Ormuz, 27 April 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.42.

¹⁴⁶ Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.23.

Monox reported in a letter dated the 5 May 1622 that the English stayed aboard the fleet, and the Safavīds were the only force on the ground.¹⁴⁷

On the 17 March 1622, after several weeks of bombardment, the Safavīds breached the castle walls, but the breach was “bad to enter.”¹⁴⁸ The breach was minimal, and the Portuguese defended the castle well enough to forestall the Safavīd forces from crossing the breach.¹⁴⁹ The Safavīds attempted to mine underneath the wall to bring it down, which Monox claimed that Safavīd troops opened the wall in “three or six different places.”¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile outside the castle on 4 March, Safavīd troops placed twenty-two barrels of English powder in the caves they mined out, and the explosion took out a chunk of the wall.¹⁵¹ After the breach, Weddell estimated that some 200 or 300 Safavīd soldiers attempted to clear the breach, but the Portuguese dropped powder pots killing twenty and badly injuring sixty men.¹⁵² The Portuguese defense forced the Safavīds to retreat, but at sea the English landed a crushing blow to the Portuguese fleet.

At sea, the English fleet bombarded the castle, but the “ruyne of 5 Galliones and soe many fryggotts” ended the marine battle.¹⁵³ According to Captain John Weddell,

¹⁴⁷ Edward Monox to the Company, Ormuz, 5 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.44.

¹⁴⁸ Edward Monox to Surat, Ormuz, 27 April 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.42.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Copy of a letter from Edward Monox, Ormuz, 12 March 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.20; Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.25.

¹⁵¹ Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.24.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, f.24.

¹⁵³ Edward Monox to Surat, Ormuz, 27 April 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.42.

commander of the English fleet, the English ships involved in the maritime assault combined to make a fairly sizeable fleet consisting of the *London* (800t), the *Dolphin* (500t), the *Jonas* (700t), the *Whale* (700t), the *Star* (300t), and at least four barges and a single pinnace.¹⁵⁴ One of the momentous points in the naval fight came on the 3 March when the Portuguese admiral, the *Saint Pedro* of 1,500 tons, received a fresh supply of “4 or 500 shott.” The English fleet swarmed the admiral raking “into her sydes” with “fire pykes and balls of fyer,” but in the process the *Jonas*’ barge caught fire. The barge retreated out to sea where “one of them [mariner] was drowned; and another so burnt, that he fyed the next daye,” but the crew managed to save the barge in spite of her loss. On the 4 March, the Portuguese Admiral was forced near shore near Gombroon where the ship continued to burn, and “when the flud came, she sanke ... with her topps in the water.”¹⁵⁵ In Herbert’s account, he noted that the English were unable to board the *Saint Pedro* safely, but “a rabble of Arabians and Persians boarding her, and like Jackalls with hunger-starved fury and avarice tearing her asunder.”¹⁵⁶

The English fleet continued firing remaining vessels of the Portuguese fleet. At night on 5 March, Weddell and his captains “chayned a rafte of boats and set them on fyer” but the wind and tide brought them out to sea. It was not entirely a failure as some of the boats “stumblinge aboard theyre Rear Admyrall, being a fly boate of some 22 peeces of Ordnance and set her on fyer.” Herbert later reported that ordnance fire from

¹⁵⁴ Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.23-24. Anthony Farrington, *Catalogue of East India Company Ships’ Journals and Logs, 1600-1834* (The British Library, 1999). The *Star* was formerly called the *William and Ralph*; see page 619 in Farrington.

¹⁵⁵ Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.23-24

¹⁵⁶ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travel*, f.115.

the English camp on Hormuz assisted in bringing the Portuguese Rear Admiral down.¹⁵⁷ In the *Whale*, one man took a “shott throw both his knees” during the maneuver, but two additional galleons succumbed to the flames along with the Portuguese Rear Admiral. The Rear Admiral eventually sunk outside the castle walls of Hormuz after failed attempts from her crew to quench the fire. The Portuguese Admiral (different from *Saint Pedro*) was recently constructed in Goa and had arrived shortly before the fight, and Weddell rated the ship between 1,200 and 1,400 tons and carried “45 peeces.” The Admiral and several other ships of Ruy Ferreira’s fleet lay outside the castle walls, and a storm picked up sinking the remainder of the fleet and “all lye now with ther topps in the water and not one of them remayninge.” Weddell recorded that the *Tota Las Sanctos* (Admiral), *Nostris Simora de Victoria* (Vice Admiral), the *Pedro*, the *St. Martin*, the *St. Ansemis*, and the *St. Francis* were either burnt or sunk by his men.¹⁵⁸

Once the siege was obviously lost, the Portuguese offered terms of surrender to Edward Monox and the naval captains. Fearing Safavīd retribution, the Portuguese requested shipping to transfer their people to either Muscat or India, “which wee out of a Christian feelinge & comisseracon of their present miserie & immynent danger they were in, to fall in the hands of their mercilesse Enemy to your cost wee have furnished & given them.”¹⁵⁹ During the siege roughly twelve frigates escaped carrying “women and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., f.115-116.

¹⁵⁸ Copy of a letter from Captain John Weddell, Ormuz, 6 April 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.24-25.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Monox to the Company, Ormuz, 5 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.44.

important people,” but there was still a significant number of people left behind.¹⁶⁰

Monox claimed the English provided shipping for almost 2,000 men, women, and children, while 200 were left behind because the bombardment left them maimed or severely injured.

Of the victory Arnold Wright wrote “all credit , therefore, to the gallant Blyth and his excellent colleague Weddell, who in the true spirit of patriotic enterprise went into this difficult venture on their own initiative, and who, by their energy and skill, carried it to a successful conclusion at a loss of no more than twenty English lives.”¹⁶¹ For Wright, this was a transitional moment in the history of British Imperialism or English influence in the east. The problem with Wright’s conclusion is that he overlooked several aspects of the attack on Hormuz and presents the assault as a moment of British exceptionalism. The English did land a severe blow to Portuguese hegemony in the region as William Foster claimed, and Richard Boothby—an English merchant in India in 1628—estimated that the Portuguese lost a staggering £260,000 annually from customs collection.¹⁶² But the siege of Hormuz was a collective effort and one the English were uncomfortable contributing to regardless of the outcome.¹⁶³ The English contribution at Hormuz was undeniably important, but Wright neglects to address that Shah Abbas held the silk trade ransom; it truly was silk for ships. Safavīd forces also made up the bulk of landed troops,

¹⁶⁰ Copy of a letter from Edward Monox, Ormuz, 12 March 1621/22, IOR/G/29/1, f.20.

¹⁶¹ Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 255.

¹⁶² Richard Boothby, *A Briefe Discovery or Description of the most Famous Island of Madagascar or St. Lavrence in Asia neare unto East-India* (London: Printed by E.G. for John Hardesty at the Signe of the Black-Spread Eagle in Duck-Lane, 1646), f.35.

¹⁶³ Foster, “Introduction,” *The English Factories in India, 1622-23*, vol. 8, xiv.

though a few Englishmen landed. The English had an impact on the region, if only temporarily, but as Professor Matthee rightly declared the prestige of Hormuz wore off by 1630.¹⁶⁴

The Dutch were more than willing to aid in the event the English captains voted against the attack, and in the aftermath James I was not prepared to extend his hand in gratitude, instead the Duke of Buckingham, Chaudhuri argued, slapped a £20,000 fine on the Company for breaking the Anglo-Iberian truce.¹⁶⁵ Although a quick glance at the Court of Admiralty records suggests that the £20,000 fine had little to do with the truce, and it had more to do with James I's annoyance that the Company "hath taken in value £100,000 in severall partes of the Indies" from the Portuguese without sharing the spoils with the English crown. This became an issue after the Company failed to follow through on a promise from the governor of the Company to pay James I £10,000. The Company's deputy-Governor, Christopher Clitherowe, denied that such a promise was made, and James "called the Company piratts." On the 22 March 1623, James demanded "£10,000 for himself and as much for my Lord Admirall [George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham]." By June, the Company conceded to paying £20,000 after several failed attempts to submit to the original £10,000.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 135. Rawlinson expressed this view early on as well. Also see, C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (Alfred Knopf, 1969). Boxer argued that the loss of Ormuz sent the Portuguese eastern empire into a decline.

¹⁶⁵ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 64.

¹⁶⁶ Notes of the Proceedings of the Court of Admiralty, 18 March 1623/24, in S.R. Gardiner, *Documents Illustrating the Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham in 1626* (Forgotten Books, 2015 Reprint), 115-117.

Early on the Company's trade in silk was promising, but it was clear that the Company's silk trade was strictly tied to the English naval alliance with the Safavids. The English may not have found as willing a market for their wares as they had hoped for—particularly as their cloth often arrived rotted—but they did not face resistance from local governors as their fellow Englishmen in India had. The scenario was not perfect, but by comparison their first years in Persia gave the merchants plenty to hope for. From their arrival in 1616 until 1622, the English exported roughly 1,366 bales of silk with the vast majority of the total coming in 1620 and 1621.¹⁶⁷ In the first two years the English only managed 71 bales of silk. Professor Matthee has described the first years as rather disappointing since prices were higher than the Company desired. They were uncomfortable with the trade to begin with, and they were unsure if the demand in England would coincide with the volume of silk Connock envisioned importing.¹⁶⁸ From a relational perspective the English were still at the mercy of Shah Abbas, but the first four years were promising in comparison to India.

¹⁶⁷ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 243.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

II. “We were wrapped in smoake, and sweating in blood”: Portuguese retaliation and the Dutch intrusion, 1622-1628

In the aftermath of the Hormuz, the English had high expectations for their stake in the Persian silk industry. The English trade in silk seemed to settle favorably according to William Bell, and on the eve of the siege Bell had good reason to feel optimistic. Shah Abbas promised to provide about 8,000 bales of silk per annum, which by 27 March 1622 the factor claimed to have collected 6,000 bales of silk.¹⁶⁹ Yet these were merely promises and the actual number of exported bales paled in comparison to the initial pledge. This was a terrible exaggeration, and the English exported just 820 bales in 1622. In contrast, one year earlier 523 bales of silk arrived at Surat on the *Hart*, and the English managed to collect 772 bales on the year.¹⁷⁰ The export trade in silk certainly moved in the right direction on the eve of the siege, especially considering that in 1619 the English exported none and in 1620 they pulled 523.¹⁷¹ So after 1623, the English probably expected a significant turn in their favor, but the numbers provided by Professor Matthee suggest otherwise.

English correspondence seemed to suggest that an annual flow of *qāfilahs* showed positive signs of English commercial interests in Persia. This was an overstatement, and Rudolph Matthee estimates that from 1618 to 1652 the English exported a meager 7,465 bales (731,530 kg) of silk; most of the exported silk came during the mid-1620s and

¹⁶⁹ William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 27 March 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.89v-92.. See, Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243-245.

¹⁷⁰ Consultation at Surat, 10 February 1620/21, IOR/G/36/1, f.15.

¹⁷¹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

1630s. In fact, the EIC exported its last bale of silk in 1640, which was a dismal 43 bales of silk. From 1641 until 1714, the EIC failed to export a single bale of silk. By contrast, the Dutch exported 9,684 bales of silk over the same period, but the Dutch were also late arrivals in the Persian silk trade arriving in the 1620s.¹⁷² After the siege of Hormuz, the English did not export a single bale in 1623, and over the next three years they exported 160, 105, and 60 bales respectively. In 1627, the English finally achieved a large shipment of 938 bales, but the number dropped significantly to 93 in 1628. For the remainder of the period covered in this chapter, the English struggled to purchase silk except for 1629 when they shipped 582 bales. But from 1630 until 1634, the English silk exports dropped significantly only surpassing 300 bales twice in 1631 (350) and 1634 (371).¹⁷³

Professor Matthee's data illustrates that the English struggled to acquire silk even when taking into account the few years where the English enjoyed higher volumes of silk exports. The most revealing point is the significant gap between what the English expected to export and what they actually exported. These early English factors dreamed of exporting several thousand bales a year, and it remained little more than a dream. Economic historians and Safavīd historians explain this failure as a direct consequence of the English lack of purchasing power.¹⁷⁴ The lack of purchasing power caused a significant obstacle for the English, but there is also another explanation that ties into the

¹⁷² Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*, 75.

¹⁷³ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

¹⁷⁴ See, Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*; Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*; Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*.

changing international arena. The first signs of trouble began in the immediate aftermath of Hormuz.

After the battle ended, the English hoped to find a huge store of wealth, which, according to the terms between the English and Safavīds, the English were to receive half of the spoils. The city yielded some £12,000 worth of goods, but the English expected to find most of the wealth stored in the castle.¹⁷⁵ The castle, however, was depleted, and before their surrender the Portuguese secretly shipped their store of jewels, precious metals, and other valuables before the fort fell.¹⁷⁶ Captain Weddell reported to the Court of Admiralty in December 1623 that the English collected £25,000 worth of diamonds, gold chains, and various Indian goods after taking the fort.¹⁷⁷ The Portuguese were unable to laden everything and left 200 brass pieces behind, but Imām-qulī Beg denied the English access to the pieces and instructed the pieces to remain in the castle.¹⁷⁸ He eventually allowed the English to take half of the ordnance, however. Almost immediately, Monox and his subordinates were concerned the Safavīds would fail to deliver on their promises:

Wherein they say wee have our part, but their actions are such that giveth us no small cause of suspicion they intend noe thinge [...] but when wee have gott on the

¹⁷⁵ Edward Monox to Thomas Rastell, Ormuz, 27 April 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.37; 43.

¹⁷⁶ Edward Monox to the Company, Ormuz, 5 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.44.

¹⁷⁷ Examinations in the Court of Admiralty about the taking of a Portuguese Ship, 11 December 1623, in S.R. Gardiner, *Documents Illustrating the Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham in 1626* (Forgotten Books, 2015 Reprint), 75.

¹⁷⁸ It is unclear who Imām-qulī Beg's was, but it seems that he was a governor or high ranking official in south of Iran. He was in charge of dispersing the spoils at Hormuz.

spoyle of the castle into our owne possessions, wee resolve then to knowe their purposes more directly, wch wee hould now pollecy yet to doe.¹⁷⁹

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier wrote several years later that the ordnance “brought from Ormus by the Great Sha-Abas, of which the English ought to have had their share; for without their assistance he never could have tak’n the Town.”¹⁸⁰ He claimed that Shah Abbas had the cannon arranged on the western side near Ali-Gate. Jean Albert de Mandelslo reported that Shah Abbas instructed that “six hundred great guns, some iron, some brass” were transported to Lār and Isfahan.¹⁸¹

Much as Aldworth had in India several years earlier, Monox requested the Company to “send in some emynent fashion for ambassador, for howsoever this perfidious people doe dele with us.”¹⁸² Monox was concerned that the English would lose their share of the spoils. Unless the Company sent an esteemed individual to deal with Shah Abbas, Monox was convinced the Safavīd officers would disregard the agreement altogether. Three years later, the English recorded a substantial difference in the distribution of the spoils of Hormuz:

¹⁷⁹ Edward Monox to the Company, Ormuz, 5 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.44.

¹⁸⁰ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia, and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1684), book iv, f.152.

¹⁸¹ John Albert de Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo, (a Gentleman to the Embassy) from Persia, into the East-Indies. Containing A particular Description of Indosthan, the Moguls Empire, the Oriental Ilands, Japan, China, and the Revolutions which happened in those Countries, within these few years. In III Books. Written originally by Adam Olearius, Secretary to the Embassy. Faithfully rendered into English by John Davies of Kidwelly. The Second Edition Corrected.* (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Thomas Basset, at the Mitre near Temple-Barr, and at the George near St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-street, 1669), f.10.

¹⁸² Edward Monox to the Company, Ormuz, 5 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.44-45.

Perticularizing the unjust deviation made in Ormus, Mr. Barker alleaging the Chan of Xeras had accompted unto the king 600[00] tomanes [£378,000] for his moyetie of the spoiles: Whereas our Masters have little more then 60[00] tomanes [£37,800].¹⁸³

The significant gap in the distribution of the spoils angered the English, and it would create a point of contention between both sides from this point onwards.

The Safavīds did, however, honor one proviso in the agreement which gave the English a percentage of the customs collected from incoming ships. This also included natives using cargo space on English ships for transport, which occurred often between Gombroon and Surat.¹⁸⁴ As part of Captain Weddell's agreement with Imām-qulī Khān, the English collected 225 *tūmāns* (£1,417 10s) in customs between Hormuz and Gombroon for 1623.¹⁸⁵ In 1623, the English obtained a residence in Gombroon, and at first they hoped to build a house but Imām-qulī Khān feared the English would fortify the dwelling and he rejected the permit. Shortly after the sack of Hormuz, Imām-qulī Khān expected aid from the English in expanding their military operations against the Portuguese at Muscat; the English refused.

After a resounding defeat of the Portuguese at Qishm and Hormuz, the English were in an awkward position. It appeared to Monox that the Safavīds were unwilling to work with the English now that they controlled the Gulf. Imām-qulī Beg had brought his

¹⁸³ Consultation at Gombroon, 15 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.193v; Directions for Thomas Barker, [?] February 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.199.

¹⁸⁴ Instructions for Captain Richard Swanley, Swally Hole, 12 December 1628, IOR/E/3/12, f.51. Edward Heynes reported that Persian and Moor passengers transported goods worth roughly 64139 ½ *mahmudi* (£267 4s 11d) on the fleet from Gombroon to Surat in 1630.

¹⁸⁵ President Kerridge to the Company, Swally Hole, 15 November 1624, IOR/E/3/10, f.182.

army to Lār where he began lining the coast with artillery. Henry Darrell was convinced that Imām-qulī Beg feared some form of English reprisal, perhaps for Hormuz, and that the wall of artillery was positioned against the English.¹⁸⁶ To the merchants' relief, Imam-quli Beg's army was intended for Muscat, and this was simply Henry Darrell overreacting in a tense moment. The tension dissipated if only temporarily. Shah Abbas sent a letter to James I, but more importantly Shah Abbas sent an ambassador to the English court.¹⁸⁷ For the English factors in Persia, this was taken as a positive sign. Under Shah Abbas' authority his ministers continued to protect the English and their estates, but the English began to test the Shah's patience with far too many complaints.¹⁸⁸ The sultan of Lār had frequently abused the English according to William Bell, but he does not detail the causes of the abuse. It probably had something to do with collecting the *jizya* (poll tax) or forced bribes from the English passing through Lār.¹⁸⁹ When Bell complained to their ally and friend Imām-qulī Khān, he suggested that from the first complaint "he [Imām-qulī Khān] should have cut off the governors head for example to others."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Henry Darrell to [Monox?] (copy), Gombroon, 10 December 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.45v. Darrell was convinced that the move would severely disrupt English trade.

¹⁸⁷ R. W. Ferrier, "The European Diplomacy of Shah 'Abbas and the First Persian Embassy to England," in *Iran*, v.11 (1973). The letter apparently was covered in a gold bag displaying the magnificence of the Persian Court. William Bell to Henry Darrell, Isfahan, 26 October 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.47v.

¹⁸⁸ Henry Darrell to John Percy (copy), Isfahan, 15 May 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.97; William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 15 October 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.20-20v.

¹⁸⁹ William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 15 October 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.20-20v. The *jizya* was a poll tax levied on non-Muslim travelers.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, f.21.

There was a problem, however, that began to develop underneath the surface. When the factors lacked money and goods for trade, they often turned to native creditors for loans; and the Company allowed the practice providing the interest was minimal.¹⁹¹ The English relied heavily on credit to purchase silk, and one of their creditors, Mulayim Beg, who was also a chief merchant directly under Shah Abbas and in charge of the silk monopoly—along with Lalah Beg—was apprehensive about extending further credit to the English.¹⁹² Initially, the English hoped to purchase silk for a combination of broadcloth, money, and spices, but recent shipments of lesser quality cloth left the Safavīd officers cautiously opposed to extending further credit to the English. The plan would have been sound if it had worked, but it started to become clear that the strategy would fail. The circumstance grew even more dire when Shah Abbas denied approving an exchange of 1/3 specie and 2/3 commodity for silk. Shah Abbas was willing to sell the English silk, but for ready money not pepper and English cloth. The cloth the English hoped to sell was simply undesirable, and Professor Matthee argued the Shah paid his soldiers in cloth “saturating the markets” and greatly reducing Shah Abbas’ desire for English cloth.¹⁹³ Imām-qulī Khān respectfully declined trade until the English fleet from Europe arrived after the previous year’s shipment consisted of 53 bales of unsellable cloth.¹⁹⁴ He did, however, provide the English with an additional *farmān* for their free

¹⁹¹ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 123.

¹⁹² Henry Darrell to [Monox?] (copy), Lār, 15 October 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.45v.

¹⁹³ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 136.

¹⁹⁴ William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 15 October 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.20.

passage throughout his territories, but this meant very little without the potential for silk acquisitions. The relationships with the Safavīd elite were valuable, but what the English desperately lacked was the means to purchase silk.¹⁹⁵ There was only so much their Safavīd friends could do, and even Imām-qulī Khān could not accept bad cloth.

Meanwhile, in 27 February 1623 the Dutch massacre at Amboyna or as Wright coined it the “Black Tragedy” left several Englishmen dead; which led to the temporary closure of factories in the East Indies.¹⁹⁶ The period of retrenchment that followed the massacre reflected the over extension of the Company’s resources, and this is important considering the English depended on spices—primarily pepper—as a partial payment in the silk trade.¹⁹⁷ Pepper and other spices were available on the Malabar Coast, but the Portuguese had several ports along the coast, chief amongst them being Goa and Cochin. Combined with the crisis in India, there were murmurs amongst the English merchants whether or not the Persian trade should continue or not; and by October of 1623, William Bell and his subordinates wanted confirmation from the Company regarding their Persian trade, and whether or not to continue there.¹⁹⁸

The English relied on sugar and pepper from the Far East, and bullion imports from Europe and elsewhere otherwise the silk trade would crumble given that English goods were much less desired than the English anticipated. In one example in 1624,

¹⁹⁵ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 122-123. Also see Prakash, *Bullion for goods*.

¹⁹⁶ Wright, *Early English Adventurers*, 209-225. For Wright, the “cruelties at Amboina carried with them a sense of indelible infamy.”

¹⁹⁷ See also, Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*; Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*.

¹⁹⁸ William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 15 October 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.19; See also, Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*.

Thomas Barker sold 41 bales of sugar-candy for 1400 *tūmāns* (£8,820). He received the sum in Gilan silk rated at 50 *tūmāns* (£350) per load (2 bales/10.16kg). In this exchange the English received roughly 25 loads (50 bales) of silk.¹⁹⁹ President Kerridge reported the following year that English cloth would sell at 34 *shahis* (11s 4d) per Persian *covad* (35 inches), and tin would get 32 *shahis* (10s 8d) per *mann-i shah* (5.8kg). After they sold their goods, the English received silk worth the amount of English goods sold. The amount of silk the English would receive was based on the market rate for silk at the time. The English seemed incapable of shipping quality cloth to Persia which forced them to sell low while buying silk at a higher price. If the English could not provide quality cloth, the English had to rely on bullion to purchase silk. In 1625, for example, the Persians priced Gilan silk at 49 *tūmāns* (£308 14s) per load.²⁰⁰ If the English were to receive the 8,000 bales of silk per annum, it would cost over £1.2 million in goods and raw cash in 1625. It was an impossible feat for the early Company, especially as the price on English goods was dreadfully low in Persia and London restricted the export of bullion.²⁰¹ In 1625, the English exported 105 bales of silk, which cost them around £23,000 according to the rates mentioned above. President Kerridge informed his superiors in London that “eyther you must resolve to follow that Trade; or Absolutly to

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Baker to the Company, Isfahan, 30 May 1624, IOR/E/3/10, f.121v. A marginal note states the factors paid 50 *tūmāns* instead of 45 ½. A load is equal to 2 bales or 36 *mann-i shah* (5.8kg). See, Matthee, *The Politics of Trade* and Maloni, *European Merchant Capital* for conversion tables.

²⁰⁰ Consultation at Gombroon, 1 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.195. Rubi Maloni records that a *covad* is 26 inches of cotton cloth or 35 inches of woolen cloth, but it is not clear if the measurements are the same for Persia. See, *European Merchant Capital*, 451.

²⁰¹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 106.

give it over.”²⁰² This was especially important as the Dutch began their push into Persia, which, unknown to Kerridge at the time, the Dutch emerged as a significant threat to the English silk trade.

In January 1625, President Kerridge convened a consultation to discuss the defense of the Persian Gulf and Muscat. According to the articles, the English were responsible for keeping the Persian Gulf free of Portuguese vessels, which the Safavīds took to mean further assistance elsewhere, such as Muscat. The English merchants and fleet commanders were unwilling to put the fleet at risk again, but Thomas Kerridge learned that the Dutch hoped to convince the Safavīds to hand Hormuz over to them. If the English were unwilling to clear the Persian Gulf, the Dutch fleet commanders were more than willing to fill the void, which forced the English to comply with the articles. The move certainly was not favorable, but if there was a consolation, Imām-qulī Khān’s forces laid siege to Basrā and plans for Muscat were placed on hold.²⁰³ President Kerridge hesitantly decided to support the Safavīds in fear of losing their Anglo- Safavīd friendship to the Dutch who were more than willing to overthrow the Portuguese.²⁰⁴

With the Safavīd’s attention drawn away to Basra, the English were able to temporarily avoid the uncomfortable question of sending the fleet to Muscat. The news came as a relief to Kerridge and Captain Weddell who were clearly not willing to participate in any further naval actions against the Portuguese or any enemy for that

²⁰² President Kerridge to the Company, Swally Hole, 15 November 1624, IOR/E/3/10, f.181v.

²⁰³ Consultation at Gombroon, 1 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.191v.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, f.191v.

matter. Safavīd officials, especially Imām-qulī Khān, respected the English navy and the English, but they depended on the English for assistance.²⁰⁵ In the trade agreement, it was clear that the alliance was something more than a commercial union. In the mid-1620s some of those ambiguous provisos began to become uncomfortable. Imām-qulī Khān fully expected the English to assist in the siege of Basra, but this time the English commanders, primarily Captain Weddell and President Kerridge, refused to lend assistance. Their refusal was rooted in the articles of the alliance which placed Basra outside the English sphere of concern.²⁰⁶ The circumstances in the gulf became uncomfortable for the English, especially as they realized that the Safavīds expected much more than aid at Hormuz. The English understood the articles as an explicit trade agreement with the caveat that the English fleet would defend the Persian Gulf and coastline against the Portuguese. The Safavīds seemed to consider the agreement a formal military alliance, denoting a sense of profound confusion on both sides. The Sultan of Gombroon claimed that “the ayde should not be against the Turks, But against certaine friggotts of the Portingalls, which kept nere about Ballsora [Basra].”²⁰⁷ Again Weddell and Kerridge refused.

By 10 January 1625, Captain Weddell and Thomas Kerridge prepared the *James* and *Jonas* for its voyage to Surat. What took shape in the northern Gulf and Basra was none of their concern, and the factors were still agitated over Hormuz. The Sultan of

²⁰⁵ Copies of letters received at Gombroon, 27 April 1625, IOR/E/3/10, f.187-187v.

²⁰⁶ Consultation at Gombroon, 4 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10 f.191rv-192.

²⁰⁷ Consultation aboard the *Jonah*, Gombroon Road, 7 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.192v.

Gombroon, however, prohibited Weddell to depart with the fleet. His intentions were not entirely malicious, and he genuinely feared the Portuguese. The Portuguese recently scoured the coast with “20 sayle of friggatts” and burnt any local shipping they came in contact with.²⁰⁸ He insisted that Weddell ride off the coast of Persia to defend it against the Portuguese who were nearby. The absence of the English fleet left Hormuz defenseless, and the prospect obviously made the Sultan anxious. An imminent Portuguese attack gave the local ruler enough cause for concern, but the English were unwilling to lend aid so eagerly after the Safavīds divided the spoils of Hormuz unfavorably.

The English, however, acknowledged that the Sultan did not have the power to resolve the matter. Kerridge was sympathetic to the Sultan’s position, and he considered leaving a few ships behind to protect the coast if the Sultan could commit to providing a sufficient allowance.²⁰⁹ The English understood that, despite the certain points of contention, dismissing Sultan’s concerns would have caused unnecessary tension between Safavīd officials and the English. If they hoped to advance the Persian trade, the English needed to demonstrate some level of flexibility. The Sultan offered to defray half of the charges in victuals if the fleet remained behind. Kerridge was not convinced that the Sultan acted sincerely—his time in India must have tested his patience with the

²⁰⁸ Consultation at Gombroon, 4 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10 f.191v.

²⁰⁹ Consultation at Gombroon, 15 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.193v.

locals—but he proposed Captain Weddell consider whether or not the fleet (except the *Star* and a Portuguese frigate) could ride safely near Gombroon.²¹⁰

In the next few days the English had to decide whether or not to leave the fleet at Gombroon. Kerridge was concerned that the fleet could ride safely outside of Hormuz, but also that they could return to Surat by 1 September 1625. Those in favor of staying behind were: Captain Andrew Evans, Captain John Phelps, Captain Richard Swanley, John Rowe, and Captain John Weddell while John Johnson and Captain Charles Clevenger opposed the plan.²¹¹ Johnson and Clevenger distrusted the Safavīds because of their failure to hand over Hormuz, and they countered that placing the fleet, men, and Company's capital in danger was folly “considering the perfidious dealing of the Persians.”²¹² Although the majority of the fleet commanders supported the scheme, the arrival of the Dutch seemed to have prompted additional support for the plan. Their arrival made any English maneuvers vastly more complicated. In the event that the English opted out, the Dutch were willingly to leave ships behind for the protection of Hormuz and Gombroon. The presence of the Dutch Company forced the English to play along, and, in fear of losing the Persian trade, the English agreed to aid the Sultan. They already suffered cutbacks in the East Indies, and the India trade in Gujarat slowed

²¹⁰ Consultation at Gombroon, 22 January 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.194.

²¹¹ Sea Commission, undated, IOR/E/3/10, f.194v-195. The sea commission happened sometime between the 22 and 26 of January. It was a 5 to 2 majority vote.

²¹² *Ibid.*, f.194v.

tremendously due to the outbreak of civil war, leaving the English with little choice in the matter.²¹³

On 31 January 1625, the Portuguese arrived and the English were forced to engage. Sometime in the afternoon, 8 Portuguese galleons accompanied by 80 frigates anchored off the coast of the Island of Larak.²¹⁴ Although a pamphlet printed in 1627 claimed that the Portuguese arrived with 8 galleons and only three frigates, which is considerably more reasonable than the eighty frigates early reports claimed.²¹⁵ The Portuguese galleons involved were the *Saint Francisco Sinner* (48 pieces and 350 men), the *Saint Francisco* (32 pieces and 250 men), the *Saint Sebastian* (40 pieces and 400 men), the *Saint Salvador* (24 pieces and 250 men), the *Saint Iago* (22 pieces and 200 men), the *Trinidad* (22 pieces and 250 men), the *Saint Antonio* (22 pieces and 200 men), and the *Miserere-Cordium* (22 pieces and 200 men).²¹⁶ In the road of Gombroon, the English “discried 7 saile which we supposed to have bin Portugall frigats, but with in one heure after we discried one sayle more.”²¹⁷ A combined force of eight English and Dutch ships confronted the Portuguese on the 1 February which commenced several days of heavy fighting in the Persian Gulf. The English ships involved in the fight included the

²¹³ See also, Richards, *The Mughal Empire*.

²¹⁴ SP 14/183, f.91.

²¹⁵ *A Famous Fight at Sea. Where Foure English Ships vnder the command of Captaine Iohn Weddell, and foure Dutch Ships fought three dayes in the Gulfe of Persia neere Ormus, against 8 Portugall Gallions, and 3 Friggots. As Also the Memorable fight and losse of the good ship called the Lion, with the barbarous crueltie of the Enemie truly declared* (London: Printed by John Haviland for Henry Gosson, 1627).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f.16-18.

²¹⁷ SP 14/183, f.91.

Royal James, the *Jonas*, the *Star*, and the *Eagle*, and for the Dutch Albert Becker commanded the *Zuid Holland*, the *Bantam*, the *Maagd van Dort*, and the *Wesp*.

The English and Dutch fleets successfully defeated and drove the Portuguese to Muscat. English sources claim that the combined casualties for the English and Dutch were between 58 and 60 men, while the Portuguese naturally lost an exponentially higher proportion of men estimated at 481. The English captured one of the Portuguese ships (unnamed), and the goods were transferred to the *Star* and the *Eagle*. The Portuguese and Muslims onboard were taken as prisoners, but the English, under President Kerridge's orders, released the prisoners and provided "two ryalls of 8" for their "journey homewards to Damon."²¹⁸

Violence between the English and Portuguese escalated from naval clashes to the brutal execution of prisoners. The *Lion* rode becalmed outside of Hormuz the 8 November 1625, and Ruy Freire "with his Frigots came rowing towards the ship [*Lion*]" and surrounded her; the ensuing fight ended with the *Lion* torn to shreds.²¹⁹ Several Englishmen jumped overboard, but the Portuguese captured those who did not drown and landed them at Gombroon. On the 9 November, Ruy Freire "gave order to cut off all their heads but one, namely, Thomas Winterborne, whome he sent with a letter to the Merchants at Gombroone, the rest being 26 persons were immediatly beheaded."²²⁰ This was the first reported incident where the Portuguese executed English mariners, and in

²¹⁸ Consultation aboard the *Royal James*, Swally Hole, 13 March 1624/25, IOR/G/36/1, f.87.

²¹⁹ *A Famous Fight at Sea. Where Foure English Ships vnder the command of Captaine Iohn Weddell*, D3.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, D4.

previous years the hostages were either traded or released.²²¹ While the English were not prepared to engage in prolonged warfare against the Portuguese and Ottomans in the Gulf, Kerridge was at least sympathetic to the Sultan's plight.

At the end of the conflict, it was time for Thomas Kerridge to take his seat at Surat. Kerridge left specific instructions for Thomas Barker before finally making his way to Surat to reclaim the presidency there. He appointed Barker as chief of Persia, followed by John Percy, John Benthall, and Robert Loftus. Aside from establishing the hierarchy of authority in Persia, Kerridge left specific instructions for the factors there to spend modestly, and not to "entertayne into your houses any straingers whatsoever to lodge, who besids the charges they draw on you, doe discover your businesse, and upon occasion of discontent are apt enough to adhere unto your Enemyes."²²² This specifically included the reduction of unnecessary servants, horses, and cattle, and perhaps most important, Kerridge instructed Barker to be vigilant against private trade.²²³ Thomas Barker was to take up residence in Isfahan, and John Benthall, his third, would stay behind as chief in Gombroon. Any new factors would stay in Gombroon as Benthall's subordinates. Kerridge instructed Benthall to move their goods and men to Shīrāz if the Sultan of Gombroon did not provide soldiers for their protection against the

²²¹ Consultation aboard the Royal James, Swally Hole, 13 March 1624/25, IOR/G/36/1, f.87.

²²² Directions for Thomas Barker, [?] February 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.198v.

²²³ See chapters 5 and 6 for more detail.

Portuguese.²²⁴ Before Kerridge bid Persia farewell, he informed the factors there to continue applying pressure on Shah Abbas for the transfer of Fort Hormuz.

John Benthall reported later that year that the Portuguese raided and ransacked the Persian coast where “they tooke many of the poore people with their cattle.”²²⁵ Willem Floor argued that the English failure to protect the Persia coastline and Gulf deeply strained Anglo-Safavīd relations by the end of the 1620s.²²⁶ Benthall warned the factors in Lār against sending any goods down to Gombroon. In July 1626, Benthall wrote to Barker about suspicions of a substantial Portuguese fleet amassing at Muscat.²²⁷ In August news arrived in Gombroon that the Portuguese planned another attack in the Gulf, and Benthall ordered the *Star* to remain at Gombroon. The Portuguese fleet never came, but in President Kerridge’s general letter home that year he noted that the Portuguese fleet arrived in India in November where they attempted to lure a Dutch ship into a fight. From there, the Portuguese fleet set their course for Damān.²²⁸ Before the end of 1626, however, the English avenged the crew of the *Lion*. Several English ships cornered a Portuguese ship and Captain Anthony de Sera was taken prisoner “and cut of his [head]

²²⁴ Directions for Thomas Barker, [?] February 1624/25, IOR/e/3/10, f.198v.

²²⁵ John Benthall to Thomas Barker (copy), Gombroon, 4 October 1625, IOR/G/29/1, f.165. See also, Foster, “Introduction,” *English Factories in India, 1624-1629*, vol. 9, ix.

²²⁶ Floor, *The Persian Gulf*, 313.

²²⁷ John Benthall to Thomas Barker (copy), Gombroon, 26 July 1626, IOR/G/29/1, f.127; Thomas Barker to the Company, Isfahan, 1 August 1626, IOR/E/3/11, f.116v.

²²⁸ President Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 29 November 1626, IOR/E/3/11, f.148.

with the rest of the portugalls heads and sent them to Ruy Ferera for a present at Muscatt.”²²⁹

After Hormuz, the waters off the coast of Persia became an intense battleground between a loose alliance of the English and Dutch against the Portuguese. In the midst of conflict, the Company at home expected annual shipments, which naturally spread English shipping out across the Indian Ocean. This created a difficult set of circumstances for the English. On one hand they had to maintain their commercial links and continue purchasing goods for Europe. At the same time, the Shah expected some level of protection against the Portuguese at sea. The English could not satisfy both parties, and they faced a rather difficult decision. They did not have the manpower or the shipping to ride off the coast of Persia indefinitely, but the English naval commanders did their part when the opportunity presented itself. In the end, both parties were at fault. Shah Abbas expected far too much from the English, and the English merchants were too impatient in their acceptance of the silk agreement. Even with that, the English might have come away clear had the Dutch not arrived. While the Dutch bolstered the defense against the Portuguese, their arrival in 1623 also gave the Shah of Persia an alternative. The Dutch had money, and they were more than willing to assault the Portuguese; a terrible combination for the future of English trade in Persia.

In August 1626 the Dutch concluded an agreement for trade that featured fixed prices that had silk at 48 *tumans* (£302 8s) per load when exchanged for commodities,

²²⁹ John Percy to [?] (copy), Lār, 10 March 1625/26, IOR/G/29/1, f.119v. The Portuguese still had a residence in Basra.

and 45 *tumans* (£283 10s) per load when bought with ready money.²³⁰ Thomas Barker was disgusted at the ease in which the Dutch poured into the Persian trade: “they [Dutch] have builded uppon our foundations, and reaped where we had plowne, whoe caused the silke to be brought to Spahan, whoe caused first the abatement of silk or to procure a sett rate for commodities.”²³¹ Consider that for Gilan silk the English paid between 48 and 49 *tumans* (£308 14s) in 1624 and 1625, and they did not receive an alternative rate if they purchased silk with ready money. The Dutch were newcomers to the Persian trade, and Thomas Barker clearly felt they should pay a higher rate, perhaps an equal rate, but not lower. Of course Barker was irritated; the Dutch were capable of supplying the Shah with lavish gifts.²³² While English credit diminished, the Dutch “incroachinge insinuation and partley promising much more then wee have performed.”²³³ While the Dutch seemed to hit the ground running, the English struggled to hold their tattered trade together.

After provoking the Portuguese and still not acquiring Fort Hormuz, the English investments in Gombroon were vulnerable. The attack on Amboyna in 1623 probably gave the English a heightened sense of apprehension towards the Dutch as well, although the factors in Persia and India show few signs of it. It is no surprise then in 1627, the English continued to press for a *farmân* that would grant them leave to build a fortified factory in Gombroon, but Shah Abbas “with such farther addiction of distrust” continued

²³⁰ Thomas Barker to the Company, Isfahan, 1 August 1626, IOR/E/3/11, f.117.

²³¹ Ibid., f.118; President Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 4 January 1627/28, IOR/E/3/11/, f.263.

²³² Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*.

²³³ Thomas Barker to the Company, 1 August 1626, IOR/E/3/11, f.119.

to deny the English.²³⁴ This was not the first attempt, though, and the English had considered the idea earlier but to no avail. Shah Abbas' refusal added to a growing list of complaints against the Safavids, which included the disproportionate partition of the spoils after Hormuz, and so Kerridge saw no legitimate reason for the English to risk their fleet and men in taking Muscat.²³⁵

In October 1628, William Burt, merchant in Persia, reported that the Dutch initially appeared unenthusiastic with the Persian trade, and the tardy dispatch of silk from Isfahan to Gombroon forced two Dutch ships to depart empty handed.²³⁶ The Dutch commanders apparently tossed the idea around about a possible alliance that unified the English and Dutch fleets in the Persian Gulf. The combined force of English and Dutch ships would then endeavor to purge the Gulf of all competition both at sea and land. William Burt trusted the Dutch very little, and it was his opinion to remain friendly with the Muslims and push the Dutch out of Persia altogether.²³⁷ In fact, it seems that the English, for the time, worked alongside the Dutch out of necessity rather than friendship, or as one observer characterized the Dutch as "our untrustie friends."²³⁸ Although still very subtle, the Dutch began to replace the Portuguese as the preeminent threat to English

²³⁴ President Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 4 January 1627/28, IOR/E/3/11, f.255. William Gibson, John Antil, George Turner, William Burt, Malachi Martin, and the silk specialist John Strethay arrived at Gombroon in 1627. See also, I. Bruce Watson, "Fortifications and the "idea" of Force in Early English East India Company Relations with India," in *Past and Present*, n.88 (August 1980).

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, f.255.

²³⁶ William Burt to the Company, Gombroon, 22 October 1628, IOR/E/3/12, f.40v.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, f.40v.

²³⁸ Consultation at Gombroon, 4 February 1628/29, IOR/E/3/12, f.60.

commercial interests in the region. The Dutch officially exported their first bale in 1624, and from that point through 1628 the Dutch exported approximately 2,314 bales of silk to the 1,360 bales the English exported.²³⁹

III. “Our ancient Merchant is quite overthrowne”: Dutch competition and the fall of English patrons, 1629-1634

In February of 1629, Shah Abbas I died. After Abbas I’s death, the mood in Persia was stressful. One of the most influential leaders in Persian history had died and arguably the most important ruler in Safavīd history. The English feared that a rebellion that followed Shah Jahāngīr’s death in India would also occur in Persia.²⁴⁰ The English needed to develop new relationships at court, but not “without great presents, both to this now king and officers, as alsoe to the Caun and his.”²⁴¹ At first the relationship between the new Shah and the English was reasonably stable, but that sentiment was short-lived after that the English merchants realized that Shah Safi was not their friend and Anglo-Safavīd relations began to decline steadily until the eventual collapse of the Persian trade in the 1640s. This was an important transitional period for the Company in Persia, and the English relied heavily on their friends at court to weather the storm.

²³⁹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 124; 133. For a similar event in India, also see, Richards, *Mughal India*.

²⁴¹ Consultation at Gombroon, 4 February 1628/29, IOR/E/3/12, f.60.



Figure 6: Engraving of Shah Safi I (r.1629-1642) contained in Mandelslo's travels (1669).

In the beginning it seemed that Shah Safi I was willing to work peacefully with the English merchants. He sent a letter to Charles I expressing a willingness to “foster and further in all matters the true tokens of conjunction and friendship.”²⁴² The young Shah, who was fresh out of prison according to Edward Heynes, honored his grandfather’s contract with the English, and allowed the English to trade without restrictions throughout the kingdom of Persia.²⁴³ There is also evidence that Shah Safi issued *farmâns* when his officers failed to honor the capitulations issued in his grandfather’s reign, which included the collection of customs at Hormuz and Gombroon. Mandelslo commented that the English “should by right receive half of the Customs...but they have hardly the tenth part allowed them.”²⁴⁴ Willem Floor remarked that the English

²⁴² Shah Safi I’s letter to Charles I, IOR/E/3/12, f.258. This is a duplicate of the original kept in the State Papers.

²⁴³ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/12, f.70v.

²⁴⁴ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.9.

never received the customs dues the original *farmân* called for, and after Shah Abbas' death this formed the central element of English discontent at this time.²⁴⁵ A mischievous customer could, and often did, undercut the English percentage of the customs at port.²⁴⁶ Floor claimed the English received 10% or less of the customs instead of the 50% they were due to receive.²⁴⁷ On one occasion, the English petitioned Shah Safi over customs, and he issued a *farmân* that openly declared that men not belonging to the royal merchants had to "pay the ordinary customes and duties unto the Chan and Captaine William Burte."²⁴⁸ Initially the English were cautiously optimistic that Shah Safi would support the English as his grandfather had, but that sentiment quickly turned sour. So what went wrong? Economic historians have beaten the argument over purchasing power into the ground, but the problem is more complicated and evolved slowly in the direct aftermath of Hormuz.²⁴⁹

The first signs of trouble began in 1630 when the previous year's contract came under scrutiny after Shah Safi executed Zayna Khân, drove Coson Beg into hiding, and Shah Safi reassigned Muhammad 'Ali Beg. Muhammad 'Ali Beg was one of Shah Abbas' favorites, and the newly minted ruler reassigned him to a post in India as Persia's ambassador. William Burt credits the trio, among others, for the previous trade agreement

²⁴⁵ Floor, *The Persian Gulf*, 312.

²⁴⁶ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, September 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.137v.

²⁴⁷ See, Floor, *The Persia Gulf*, 312.

²⁴⁸ Translated *farmân* granted by Shah Safi, 10 August 1629, IOR/E/3/12, f.84.

²⁴⁹ See Om Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*; K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*.

with the English, but with the men disposed their trade agreement hung in the balance.²⁵⁰ Burt was a little ambiguous regarding the nature of their offenses, but after “extreme torture” the men confessed to a number of actions including lending assistance to the English merchants.²⁵¹ The English were a little edgy and feared Shah Safi would overturn the recent agreement for silk, but Burt was convinced that between their friends at court and a series of bribes they could alleviate the tension and resolve the problem.

Imām-qulī Khān and the governor of Khurasan, Chirag Khān, appealed to Mulayim Beg for silk on behalf of the English.²⁵² Soon after, Imām-qulī Khān sent a *farmān* to the vizier of Gilan, Mīrzā Taqī, instructing him to send all the silk he had to Isfahan. A second *farmān* was sent to Shirvan for 400 loads (800 bales) of silk.²⁵³ Out of these shipments, Imām-qulī Khān was prepared to deliver a portion to the English. Even as the instructions were sent out Edward Heynes, who was in Isfahan, complained that, notwithstanding their friends’ efforts, they could not export silk until Shah Safi returned from Baghdad.²⁵⁴ While they awaited Shah Safi’s return, Mulayim Beg provided the English with a meager 17 1/2 loads (35 bales) of Gilan silk.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ William Burt to Edward Heynes, Gombroon, 17 August 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.133.

²⁵¹ Ibid., f.133.

²⁵² Ibid., f.133v.

²⁵³ Ibid., f.133v.

²⁵⁴ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 30 September 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.148; Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 October 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.139.

²⁵⁵ A *farmān* supplying the English with 17 ½ loads of silk (translated), Isfahan, September 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.149.

Meanwhile, the Dutch continued to disrupt English operations by continuously outbidding the English for silk. They seemed to enjoy, according to the English, an infinite pool of resources that made it nearly impossible for the English to contend with.²⁵⁶ One observer warned his fellow merchants against letting “them not out bid you.”²⁵⁷ Edward Heynes alerted his men in Gombroon that 29 bales of silk Gombroon, and he feared the Dutch might seek to pilfer the shipment.²⁵⁸ The Dutch, in contrast, had purchased 50 bales of silk, which Heynes believed amounted to all the silk they received for the year. Later in 1630, William Burt claimed the Dutch received about 200 bales of silk and a contract for the next two years. He was not overly concerned with the Dutch silk acquisition at the time, because he was convinced the English would receive 1000 bales of silk.²⁵⁹ This was an overly optimistic assessment; and while President Rastell claimed the English spend £30,000 for just 600 bales of silk, Matthee shows the only having received 350 bales.²⁶⁰ The Dutch did not export a single bale in 1631, but they exported 410 bales the following year while the English decreased their exports to 224.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Prakash, *Bullion for Goods*, 327-330.

²⁵⁷ Fragmented letter to Gombroon, Isfahan, 1629/30, IOR/E/3/12, f.106v. It is not clear when the letter was written, or by whom. Edward Heynes is most likely the author since he resided in Isfahan at the time, but the author of the index suggests the document was written in 1629, but situated the letter after the turn of the year but before the English began recording 1630.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, f.106v.

²⁵⁹ William Burt to Edward Heynes, 3 October 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.150-150v.

²⁶⁰ President Rastell to the Company, Surat, 8 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.45v; Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

²⁶¹ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

By 1631, Heynes complained that the high rates could have been fixed if Shah Safi followed his grandfather's example and restricted the purchase of silk.²⁶² His complaints over silk acquisition were related to Shah Safi's new policy of opening the silk trade up to privatization and breaking state monopoly on silk.²⁶³ Heynes may not have realized at the time, but the silk worm population in Gilan and Shirvan had been decimated due to disease.²⁶⁴ The lack of available silk drove the prices up, and forced the English to rely considerably more on customs and imports to defray the costs of the Persian trade. Customs were an important revenue source for the English merchants, which helped defray the costs of the Persian trade including house expenses, wages, bribe payments, and, not least of all, commodity acquisition. Unfortunately, the records are incomplete and make it difficult to reconstruct an accurate assessment of expenses throughout the period. In 1631, Heynes claimed that the English needed roughly 1,860 *tumans* (£11,718) per annum for house expenses—including transportation and bribes—but not including silk acquisitions. Heynes estimated that they collected between £3,166.3 and £6,333.6 in customs at Gombroon, presumably cutting their annual expenses between 27-54%.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.70v. See also, Ferrier, "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (1973), 45-46.

²⁶³ Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 119-121.

²⁶⁴ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.71.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, f.73v. Heynes recorded the above figures in *tumans*, which follow as: 500*t* for what appears to be bribe payments, 1,000*t* for transportation, and 360*t* for houses expenses for a total of 1,860*t* per annum. In 1631, Shah Safi attempted to charge the English 2,000*t* for transportation from Gilan to Isfahan, but Heynes cleared the matter.

In 1632, a *farmân* reinforced the English claim on customs at Gombroon, which saw the factors “this yeare more Curteous usage and plainer dealing therin then ever in former times.”²⁶⁶ William Gibson—who now assumed control over Persia due to Edward Heynes’ deteriorated physical state—scribed the previous shāhbandar’s removal as the result of numerous petitions against his person in regards to various customs abuses. The previous years of abuse coupled with the “scarcity of goods from India” meant the factors could only expect a small sum from customs. Then in 1633, President Hopkinson issued an order to Captain Weddell confronting the problem of customs evasion:

If any man shall [...] Christians, Banyans, Moores or other strangers goods under his name or marks thereby to defraud the Company of their frieght and customes and hazard their prosperity of the latter at Gombroone we shall not onely seize his estate, but stop his wages and dismiss him their service for his offence and infidelity.²⁶⁷

At the tail end of the famine, both the president and chief of Persia understood the importance of squeezing the most from their customs allowance in Gombroon. Still, this did not resolve the issue concerning the Dutch failure to observe the English customs rights, which they continued to ignore in 1633.

In addition to the customs dilemma, a series of regional issues began to cripple the English silk trade. Rastell reported that the value of pepper dropped significantly in Surat and Persia rendering it useless as a means to defray the need for gold and silver specie. In Persia the Shah’s warehouses overflowed with pepper, and in India a famine

²⁶⁶ William Gibson to the Company, Gombroon, 22 March 1632, IOR/E/3/13, f.183v.

²⁶⁷ Instructions to Captain John Weddell, Swally Hole, 24 January 1633, IOR/G/36/1, f.198.

destroyed the marketability of luxurious commodities.²⁶⁸ The Gujarati famine crippled the Indian market and created an impossible situation for the English Company's inter-port scheme. These local disasters had a profound effect on the entire English commercial network. When Joseph Hopkinson appealed for Persian silk in 1632, the factors in Persia could not satisfy his request.²⁶⁹

Broadcloth continued to arrive in Persia in bad shape, and Mulayim Beg was forced to inform the governors of the Company that "your cloth both of the last yeare and this now come is so course and bad" and if not fixed "you [will] be forced to keepe itt, or sell itt att some base rates."²⁷⁰ Shah Safi notified Heynes that his merchants refused to take English cloth as payment because it was far too coarse and undesirable. Heynes complained to London that the cloth arrived "so meane in goodnes and so bad in collour."²⁷¹ One of the chief reasons for Hopkinson's ill fated decision to make Gombroon the first port was an attempt to protect English goods from rot by unloading them in Persia as quickly as possible.²⁷² The entire move to Persia was based on Richard Steel's presumption that the Company would find a stable market for English woolen cloth, and now that foundation had began to disintegrate. The factors, however, refused to

²⁶⁸ President Rastell to the Company, Surat, 8 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.46v.

²⁶⁹ President Hopkinson to Edward Heynes, Surat, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/E/3/13, f.159.

²⁷⁰ Mulayim Beg to the Company, September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.67-67v.

²⁷¹ Edward Heynes to the Company, 17-30 September 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.138v.

²⁷² Edward Kirkham to the Company, Gombroon, 21 October 1632, IOR/E/3/14, f.62. Sugar candy also arrived in a foul condition. William Gibson to the Company, 6 March 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.142.

walk away from Persia, and they expected Shah Safi to deliver the silk. The English turned to their old friend, Imām-qulī Khan for aid.

Imām-qulī Khan wrote to the shah on behalf of the English, and Shah Safi I summoned Edward Heynes and his companions to Court to petition against certain abuses. There Heynes reported “after some disputes, our bussnes was referred unto, Cortcha Bashaw, the Emperors father in lawe, and his high Chancelor Ettomon Dowlett [Mīrzā Taqī].”²⁷³ From the beginning the English were engrossed in a vision for the silk trade that was not compatible with local merchants and their longstanding business associates in the region. The English, like the Portuguese before them, attempted to acquire the entire production of silk from the Safavīd State, and their annual fleets would ship the silk to London where the Company dispersed it throughout Western Europe and into the Levant.²⁷⁴ This was a huge undertaking and the English did not anticipate the gravity of local opposition, especially from the Armenian merchants, among others, whose business relied on the acquisition of Persian silk. Armenians merchants were the largest importers of Persian silk into Aleppo, and as Professor Matthee claimed the Armenians provided bullion, commodities, and information in exchange for silk and a favored status.²⁷⁵ Heynes and his subordinates were not troubled with “any mans

²⁷³ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.71v. In Persia, English merchants often referred to one individual as “Ettomon Dowlett”, and it is clear this was a title. In the letter, Heynes mentioned that he was high chancellor, or Grand Vizier. As with most cases, the English misspelling is often very different from the actual spelling of the individuals name or title, which can be significantly distorted. In India, the title I’timad al-Dawla, or Pillar of State, signified someone of great esteem (i.e. Mirza Goyath Beg who was Shāh Jahāngīr’s minister of finance).

²⁷⁴ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*.

²⁷⁵ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 73, 92; See also, Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company”; Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 179-207.

particular benefit” and readily dismissed their competition, but they could not compete for silk regardless of their inflated opinions.²⁷⁶ The English factors were in a terrible position to vie for commercial supremacy over the silk trade, especially with the lack of quality goods to sell and the underwhelming levy of gifts that by this time persisted as cash payments. To say the scheme was impossible is an understatement.

The English continued to fail at providing gifts of value in Persia and India. Edward Heynes admitted to their failures pointing to the extensive bribe payments the Armenian and Dutch merchants gifted the Shah, both gifting 1,000 *tumans* (£6,300) each, while the English provided Shah Safi with gifts “to the valew of 40 or 50 Tomandes [£252-£315], hath scornefully bin returned and our busines stoppt.”²⁷⁷ The English simply did not have the ability to levy large sums of cash for bribes. Despite their ineffectiveness in this, Shah Safi provided the English with a three year contract for silk that initiated in 1632 comprising of 800 bales of silk worth 32,000 *tumans* (£201,600). The contract allowed for 1/3 of the payment in cash with the final 2/3 in commodities, which is roughly 10,666 *tumans* (£67,555) in ready money. That meant the factors needed to import roughly 21,334 *tumans* (£135,111) worth of pepper, English cloth, tin, and other vendible goods such as vermillion and tobacco.²⁷⁸ The deal spanned three years providing the English consecutively with 250 bales for each of the first two years and 300

²⁷⁶ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.72v

²⁷⁷ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1631, IOR/E/3/13, f.73v.

²⁷⁸ Contract for Silk for 1631, 1632, and 1633, September 1631 (1041 Safar), IOR/E/3/13, f.77.

in the final year. Shah Safi handed the contract over to his vizier in Gilan, Mīrzā Muhammad “Saru” Taqi, to oversee the silk shipments.

Frustration over the course of the Persian trade began to boil over at home. Mulayim Beg was a close associate, if not an ally, to the English merchants since their arrival at court, but the governors of the Company placed a great deal of blame on the Safavīd official for the state of their trade in Persia. The Company began to notice a discrepancy in the books pertaining to the cost of silk against the registered weight. It was soon discovered that the Persian weigh master weighed the bales of silk before they dried completely, increasing the overall weight thus the price; this consequently left the English paying more for less.²⁷⁹ It is hard to say what caused the Company to distrust Mulayim Beg, but considering he had control of the silk exports the governors probably held him responsible for the lack of silk and abuses concerning the weight of the silk. The factors in Persia, however, felt differently about the royal minister, and many of them respected Mulayim Beg. Edward Kirkham reproached the governors for their ill conceived notions of the royal factor, and it was his opinion that “he [Mulayim Beg] is now the greatest friend wee have in Courte, and one that wee must cherish by all meanes possible...And it is hee that hath retained all the silke in readynes for us, and will not permit the Dutch to have it.”²⁸⁰ It was a sentiment the Company would soon take to heart, but at the moment the terrible output meant someone had to take responsibility.

²⁷⁹ Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 48.

²⁸⁰ Edward Kirkham to the Company, Gombroon, 21 October 1632, IOR/E/3/14, 59v.

Shah Safi disposed of Mulayim Beg in 1632, which paved the way for one of the Company's greatest opponents in Persia, Mīrzā Muhammad "Saru" Taqi. Mulayim Beg disappears suddenly from Company records until September 1633, and it is clear that he had fallen from the graces of the court as one observer wrote: "Our ancient Merchant Mullaym Beage is quite overthrowne and very little hopes of ever rysinge againe."²⁸¹ The sources are vague regarding the former royal silk merchant's fate, but the English were convinced that Shah Safi had Mulayim Beg killed.²⁸² English sources make it tremendously difficult to determine how these relationships formed and matured. They simply did not record those details, and whether or not their relationships were fundamentally economic or genuine or both. In the case of Mulayim Beg, it seems that a level of genuine friendship characterized their interactions. The factors defended him against the Company's erroneous claims, and after his fall his brother willingly came forward on behalf of the English. Mulayim Beg's brother attempted to help clear their accounts at court. The English were grateful for his aid, but they also realized that they were losing allies quickly and needed to clear their books before they lost everyone at court. That time closed in on the English quicker than they perhaps expected. From 1630 until 1634, Mīrzā Taqi presided over Gilan as vizier, but in 1634 Shah Safi promoted Mīrzā Taqi to Grand Vizier of Isfahan. The ascendancy of Mīrzā Taqi also began a swift downward slide for the English in Persia.

²⁸¹ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 28 September 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.197v.

²⁸² Rudolph Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 129.

The new year brought further conflict and more commercial woes for the English. Already struggling to amass vendible commodities for Persia, in March the factors received a shipment of Indian goods at Gombroon. The factors complained that the sugar-candy was in “so foule of condicion” that it would not sell, and the rest of the shipment, albeit in good shape, would not sell for the price paid in India.²⁸³ They had two options: they could send the goods home on the *Mary*, or sell the load at the best possible rate in Persia and put the credit towards silk. The factors decided to keep the Indian shipment since the agency was pressed for money, even if it meant selling under the Indian market value. This was a direct consequence of the Gujarati famine which saw prices rise on most commodities in India. In Persia the prices stayed low, and this was one of the negative consequences of interport trade, especially as English goods were generally considered worthless. William Methwold was furious with this practice, and he instructed the factors in Gombroon to return the goods to Surat for distribution elsewhere.²⁸⁴ This translated in Persia to very low silk acquisitions and in 1633 the English exported just 110 bales.²⁸⁵ In addition the silk worm population suffered a severe blow when another drought killed many of the worms. The English factors did not provide much detail the extent of the damage, but clearly silk production suffered.²⁸⁶ The early 1630s was brutal

²⁸³ William Gibson to Surat, Gombroon, 6 March 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.143; William Gibson to the Company, Gombroon, 23 March 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.155.

²⁸⁴ President Methwold to Persia, Swally Hole, 4 February 1635/36, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.69-70; President Methwold to Benjamin Robinson, Surat, 27 February 1635/36, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.83. Robinson was the factor at Ahmadābād, and was forced to pay higher rates for the commodities less the fleet go unladen.

²⁸⁵ Rudolph Matthee, *Politics of Trade*.

²⁸⁶ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 26 June 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.156.

on English commerce as several contemporaries noted as regions were left severely hampered by climate conditions. This was certainly one of the risks imbedded in inter-port trade, and it bit the Company in 1633.

The issue of Muscat ostensibly went away after the mid-1620s but reemerged once again in late 1632. Imām-qulī Khān successfully lifted the Ottoman siege at Baghdad, and now refocused his efforts on raising an army to take Muscat from the Portuguese. In the mid-1620s the English were in a position to decline the Khān's request, but by 1632 the expanding Dutch interests in the region made it more difficult for the English to wiggle free; especially since the Dutch were more than willing to join the fight.²⁸⁷ Edward Kirkham was in favor of taking Muscat because the port presented another venue for the English to collect customs. His aggressive position tied to the belief that the Portuguese would not find assistance from the local Arabs, and he hoped that successfully taking Muscat would accelerate the end of the Portuguese Empire.²⁸⁸ In January 1633, President Hopkinson considered the plan to take Muscat, but he ultimately left the decision to Captain Weddell's discretion. Hopkinson instructed Weddell to sail for Gombroon to consult with the factors there. If the scheme against Muscat benefitted the Company, Hopkinson instructed Weddell to proceed with the attack.²⁸⁹

The Safavīd plan to attack Muscat was postponed again, but the obstacle this time came from home at court. In a grisly scene another English ally had fallen. Early in 1633,

²⁸⁷ Edward Kirkham to the Company, Gombroon, 21 October 1632, IOR/E/3/14, f.61.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, f.61v.

²⁸⁹ Instructions for Captain John Weddell, Swally Hole, 24 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.197.

Shah Safi had Imām-qulī Khān executed, but his sons were able to escape into Arab territories.²⁹⁰ The English immediately felt the weight of his loss, since Imām-qulī Khān was the primary mediator, if not enforcer, on behalf of the English in customs disputes.

With Mulayim Beg and Imām-qulī Khān gone, the safety net that shrouded the English was gone. The Dutch refused to pay the English their due customs. With the court facing the Ottomans at Baghdad once again, the English factors had little hope of gaining recourse.²⁹¹ Gibson recorded that their customs accrued as little as 242 *tūmāns* (£1524 12s) in 1633.²⁹² By comparison, the English paid between 600 and 700 *tūmāns* (£3,800-£4433 8d) in bribes that included 100 *tūmāns* (£630) for trade maintenance. The customs collection was significantly lower than the figures provided in 1631 (£3,166). The decrease was in part attributed to the dismal markets of India, but the Dutch also played a role. In 1634, the customs increased slightly to 341 *tūmāns* (£2,148 6s), a slight improvement from recent years. Meanwhile, Captain Weddell abandoned any attempt on Muscat after the news regarding Imām-qulī Khān, and he determined to sail for London instead. At the same time, the Ottomans launched another assault on Baghdad, and Weddell reported that Persia was in grave danger.

By 1634 the English began to seriously consider discontinuing the Persia trade altogether. The factors in Gombroon contemplated purchasing a house there for 400 *tūmāns* (£2,520) instead of paying the annual rent of 25 *tūmāns* (£157 10s), but President Methwold ruled against authorizing the purchase due to the condition of English trade.

²⁹⁰ Captain Weddell to the Company, aboard the *Jonah*, 24 March 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.157.

²⁹¹ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 26 June 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.187v.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, f.188.

Methwold's reluctance probably came from his brief stay in Gombroon on his way out to Surat combined with reports about the struggling factory. After grim news arrived that five of the seven men that Methwold left in Gombroon were dead, Methwold and his council were cautious over Persia. Francis Honywood and Thomas Griffith were the lone survivors of the party, but both men were critically ill.²⁹³ Profits from the annual silk shipments were questionable at best, and the president was unconvinced that the Persian trade would continue for much longer.²⁹⁴ Purchasing a residence was simply out of the question when resources were all ready stressed. The factory in Persia was in trouble, and by 1634 relations between the English and the court were severely strained.

Signs of tension between the factors and Shah Safi began to slowly appear notably in the delivery of silk. The previous year's shipment of silk was in such a poor state, that William Gibson blamed the Shah for dispatching the shipment late and during the terrible summer heat.²⁹⁵ But that was, it seemed, the least of Gibson's problems as he berated the Safavīd Shah and went to the extent of labeling Persia as an unpleasant place:

Would wish your worships as we have written the formerly no to be too forward in sending your estates helper amongst a company of such villainous people, yet it is noe great mstree that wee are thus used, for that ther owne people those which have bessines at Court are as badd a passe as we for any redresse they have, in that the king himself, lookes, very little after any thinge, for he is soe besoted with his weomen, and other his damnable preasures within doares, that he comes not out to sitt in justice once in a monthe soe that his nobillity and officers doe what they will, this is the trew state that this place and your bussines remains in.²⁹⁶

²⁹³ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 23 May 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.10

²⁹⁴ Consultation in Surat, 6 May 1634, IOR/G/36/1, f.298.

²⁹⁵ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 23 May 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.10.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, f.14.

Gibson was upset over another customs issue that was not addressed at court, and, the factors understood that the luxuries they enjoyed in the previous era were long gone. The new Shah at court would not freely extend his hand in friendship as Shah Abbas I had. The Portuguese no longer held sway over the southern islands forts and the entrance to the Gulf, and as a consequence the English became dispensable. The Dutch presence meant the Safavīd State had few reasons to rely solely on the English, and, with the Portuguese removed, there was no real reason to pander to the English.

Shah Safi's brutal onslaught against his enemies continued. Gibson wrote to London that "you may please take notice of the greate alteration in state since for that younge kinge not yett satisfied with blood spillinge hath cut off 4 more of the greatest of his nobilitye [heads] amongst whome one was his Lord Chancellor heere called Ettman Dowlatt."²⁹⁷ The high chancellor suffered a grisly death, and the factor's linguist stationed in Isfahan reported that it took hours for the dismembered man to die. The direct effect on the English is not quite as pronounced, but the slaughter of the nobility made it difficult for the English to broker another high ranking friendship equivalent to that of Mulayim Beg and Imām-qulī Khān. At the same time, the Company's Persian linguist reported that the previous means of silk acquisition was obsolete, and the Shah and his officers desired bullion instead of the previous commodity system of exchange.²⁹⁸ In lieu of the transformation of the nobility, the new Khān of Shīrāz proved less agreeable

²⁹⁷ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 13 October 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.34.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., f.34v.

as well, and, after refusing to pay the English for a debt of 300 *tumans* (£1890), the factors threatened to petition Shah Safi. The Khān eventually paid the English, but not before he put the English through a series of political hoops. In November, the factors wrote home that President Methwold was much less enthusiastic and willing to invest the Company's estate in Persia given the current political climate.²⁹⁹ Methwold had his sight on something greater.

IV. Conclusion

The difficulties in importing marketable goods into India left the early English merchants in a disenchanted state. In the context of English India, the Persian trade presented an opportunity to discharge their goods, particularly English woolen cloth, and acquire a slice of the luxurious silk trade. The information Aldworth and Kerridge gathered offered a promising solution to a rather urgent problem. For a student or seasoned scholar of the period, it is easy to mistake Connock's errors, as also those of Aldworth and Kerridge, for imprudent decision making in context of Roe's challenge to the trade. Connock's ill advised attempt to flatter the Shah of Persia with rotting cloth and dinnerware was probably not one of the better decisions made in the early period. The English merchants had few options available to them to salvage their broadcloth investments, and Persia was simply too promising of a venture to ignore. Dating back to the sixteenth century, reports on Persia painted a favorable picture from a perspective of both commercial and social condition. This depiction changed very little at the turn of the

²⁹⁹ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 27 November 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.46.

century, and after confronting a resistant Mughal elite, the Safavīds were a breath of fresh air.

Aside from the obvious problems with the trade that the factors vocalized early and often, they were not fully prepared to cope with the ramifications of entering Persia. From a commercial perspective, the English were unable to produce quality cloth in spite of a clear appetite for English cloth. When the cloth arrived in Isfahan, it was usually badly damaged or of lesser quality. At one point, Thomas Merry wrote that “our cloth which of laste hath beene soe bad, and of soe bad collor, that these people...weares other stuffles in leu.”³⁰⁰ Many of the complaints from the 1620s onwards were directed at the coarseness and colors of cloth shipped to Persia, and in many cases—whether from terrible packing methods or rain—the English cloth arrived damp and rotted. Unlike in India, the Safavīds wanted English cloth, but the cloth was in terrible condition when it arrived. In October 1634, Gibson informed London that their cloth arrived “defective, (through what cause we knowe not) by steynes & ratts in them.”³⁰¹ From a political perspective the merchants had not anticipated the direct consequences of an Anglo-Safavīd alliance, and they were drawn into an agreement that required the Company to lend quasi-military assistance to the Safavīds. There was always the sense that the Company ships would need to defend their interests against the Portuguese, but utilizing the fleet to topple Portuguese hegemony in the region was an entirely different matter.

³⁰⁰ Thomas Merry to the Company, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.139.

³⁰¹ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 13 October 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.36.

The traditional argument, and one that is ongoing, is that the English lacked purchasing power which ultimately brought the venture in Persia to a grinding halt. This is not entirely incorrect, but this chapter has shown that the English trade was equally reliant on the enthusiasm of the English to challenge the Portuguese at sea and on land. While their failure to assist at Muscat and the Persian Gulf cannot fully explain the failure of the English silk trade, it did shape the development of relations between the English and Safavīds. The English established important relationships early on that lasted well into the 1620s in spite of the English reluctance to provide assistance after Hormuz. These men, chiefly Mulayim Beg and Imām-qulī Khān, provided assistance in silk acquisitions and customs to a certain extent; however, after Shah Abbas' death in 1629, the English stood and watched their friends handedly removed from court.

In the years that followed, their friends were replaced with men who were wholly unsympathetic to the English. This, in part, is due to the entrance of the Dutch into Persia in 1623. The Dutch had bullion, and they possessed an unrelenting desire to squash the Portuguese. On the other hand, the English lost their luster after Hormuz, and they possessed only rotting broadcloth, little to no bullion, and most importantly an increasing reluctance to challenge the Portuguese on behalf of the Safavīds. The consequences of this will play out over the next decade and a half, but in February 1635 President William Methwold drove a knife into the heart of the English silk trade after suing for peace with the Portuguese.

Chapter 3: “The Gulfe of Persia devours all”: the fall of the English factory and Mīrzā Taqi, 1635-1650

The English merchants’ failure to deliver quality cloth to Persia made the trade virtually impossible, even as Company ships delivered supplemental commodities of pepper, Coromandel cloths, tobacco, and other spices.¹ The English were forced to rely on bullion to purchase silk as a consequence. The failure of English commodities forced the English to look elsewhere which eventually brought the Company to Basrā. The Company’s test there failed in a short period, which led to one of the more odious attempts to rid the Company of its broadcloth. The English merchants came to realize that English broadcloth could be exchanged with local leaders on the Island of Mohéli for slaves.² Yet in lieu of their struggle to sell English cloth, it will be argued here that a series of disputes between the English and the High Chancellor of Persia followed the English peace with the Portuguese in 1635 which contributed to the Company’s failure in Persia.

The records for Persia are exceptionally spotty at points, and some incidents, or years, are better documented than others. The 1640s are not well documented, particularly for Persia after Shah Safi I’s death. While the historical record is uneven, it does allow us to reconstruct a portion of the story. What is clear is that from 1635 until

¹ Consultation at Surat, 6 December 1632, IOR/G/36/1, f.169; William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 13 October 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.36.

² President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.172v.

roughly 1648, Anglo-Safavīd relations, which seemed warm with Connock's arrival, plummeted with incredible rapidity.

I. "A Union of Armes": William Methwold, Dom Miguel, Father Tavares and the making of peace, 1635

Four days after Christmas in 1634, President Methwold along with fellow merchants Nathaniel Mountney, Thomas Turner, Malachi Martin, and Richard Cooper boarded the *Jonah* in the road of Swally Hole. Methwold and his council anxiously awaited their departure for Goa where the newly appointed president hoped to put an end to nearly three decades of conflict between the English and the Portuguese in the East Indies. The embassy to Goa has yet to receive the attention it deserves, and it arguably had an equally important effect on the shape of English trade and relations in the region.³ William Methwold was not a diplomat, but he displayed enormous talent in the area of diplomacy, especially with the Portuguese viceroy and provincial padre. The term embassy here is more of an informal description of the interaction between President Methwold and Dom Miguel, viceroy of Goa, and other Portuguese officials including several Jesuit priests that concluded several months of correspondence between the two parties. The series of exchanges that began in 1634 led to one of the most important developments of the period. It had far reaching consequences on English commercial activity in the region, and it altered the political dynamic in the region between the English, Portuguese and Dutch, but especially between the English and Safavīds.

³ A.R. Ingram, *The Gateway to India: the story of Methwold and Bombay* (Oxford University Press, 1938).

Those writing on Persia or the English in Persia have minimized the importance of the embassy, or at the very least have given only a brief nod to the transformation in Anglo-Portuguese relations.⁴ A.R. Ingram wrote that “peace treaties effected in Europe had received scant observance in the East.”⁵ The Treaty of Madrid (1630) brought an end to Anglo-Spanish conflict at home, but, it did not preclude a cessation of hostilities in the Indian Ocean.⁶ Ingram spent a few words on the embassy, but he stops short of examining its broader implications. He argued that some tension followed the treaty, especially from the Dutch and the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahān, the scene quieted down once they recognized the treaty was not an aggressive pact.⁷ This was true for India, but in Persia the opposite occurred. Sir William Foster outlined the embassy in his introductory chapter to the *English Factories in India, 1634-1636*, but for Foster the largest impact of the treaty was the lasting peace between the English and Portuguese.⁸

Professor Matthee at least acknowledged that the treaty troubled leading Safavīd officials.

⁴ Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company”, 41. It is completely absent in the following works, if only a brief mention. David Macpherson, *The History of the European commerce with India*, 1812; John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East-India Company, 1600-1708*, 1810; James Mill, *The History of British India*, 1848; Rev. Philip Anderson, *English in Western India* (Bombay, 1854). Sir William Hunter, *History of British India*, 1899-1900; Arnold Wright, *Early English Adventurers in the East* (Andrew Melrose, Ltd, 1914). The more recent works of Chaudhuri, Steensgaard, Brenner, and Games similarly ignore the embassy. The handful of articles on the Company in Persia also fail to incorporate the embassy into the narrative. R.W. Ferrier, “The European Diplomacy of Shah Abbas I and the first Persian Embassy to England,” in *Iran*, Vol. 11, 1973; idem., “The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade was Transacted with Safavid Persia,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, 1986. Also, Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of trade in Safavid Iran: silk for silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Mage Publishers, 2006).

⁵ Ingram, *The Gateway to India*, 52.

⁶ CO 77/6, f.1.

⁷ Ingram, *The Gateway to India*, 62.

⁸ Foster, “Introduction,” *English factories, 1634-1636*, vol. 11, ix.

The ultimate demise of the Company in the 1650s could explain why scholars have negated the importance of the peace. But the past century of historical scholarship has focused on the economic history of the company, and considering the decline of the English Company in the 1640s the effect of Methwold's embassy is rather hidden from view. Ferrier erroneously claims that the English continued fighting the Portuguese and Spanish in the region over trade until 1637, but as early as 1633 the English ceased hostilities against the Portuguese, particularly when Methwold began opening dialogue with the Portuguese Jesuits in India.⁹ The Portuguese were well entrenched in India, and the most immediate and direct threat to the English Company. The English fleet overpowered the Portuguese thus far, but naval conflict was expensive and Methwold recognized that the Company could consolidate its base of commercial power if terms between the two were concluded.¹⁰ In 1633, Methwold arrived to India on the *Palsgrave* and began to work for peace.

In December 1633, President Methwold sent the first of many letters to Father Tavares in Goa. He was pleased that Father Taveres "so piouslie affected a rectification of those misunderstandings which have occassioned some hostility betwixt the English and Portugall Nations here in East India." After several years of escalating violence, Methwold was exceptionally polite in his letter to Father Tavares, and he solemnly promised to oversee the "persecution thereof if it [peace] may be by annie good meanes accomplished." Methwold had already begun negotiations in Surat with "Padre Paulo

⁹ Ferrier, "The Armenians and the East India Company", 41.

¹⁰ Rawlinson, *British Beginnings*, 100. See page 10 below.

Reimao and Padre Jacobo.” The three men compared the articles of peace “published betwixt our princes.” The details of the meeting are vague, and it does not appear that any records of the meeting exist. But it is clear that Methwold opened dialogue with the two padres in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Methwold was clearly pleased with the outcome of the meeting, however, and he was convinced that proper mediators “might accomplish the like good effects in India” as they had in Europe.¹¹

Methwold, however, was unwilling to readily accept a treaty unless it benefitted the Company, and he wrote to Tavares that “if your Fatherhood shall find in the Viceroyes Excellency or in the other aforesaid Gentlemen anie resolution to understand our nation to be excluded from these ports and places of India. I shall then for your sancteties sake desire your desistance from anie further treaty.”¹² Peace was the primary objective but Methwold was unwilling to handicap the Company to achieve his goals. He recalled the Peace of 1604 which barred the English from the East Indies, a point Dom Miguel willingly rescinded at Goa.¹³ On these terms, Methwold was eager to put an end to the long struggle in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese, especially Father Tavares, hoped an agreement could be reached, and Tavares was confident that peace would ensue.¹⁴

¹¹ President Methwold to Father Tavares, 14 December 1633, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.22. There do not appear to be any records of the meetings between Methwold and the padre.

¹² *Ibid.*, f.22.

¹³ Elizabeth Mancke, “Empire and State,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Palgrave, 2002), 184; *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648* ed. Francis Gardiner Davenport (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 247-248.

¹⁴ Copies of the Portuguese Father’s letters are in the IOR/G/36/84(3) volume, and they have been transcribed and translated into English from an unknown author recently. The following is found on folio

President Methwold's council fully supported a cessation of hostilities, if only for practical reasons. The council argued that "the large expence likewise in the landcarriage of our goods betweene Amadavad and this place, besides the danger of robbery wilbe much asswaged, by the transport of our caphilaes [*qāfilah*] by sea from Cambaiett [Cambay] or downe Baroch River on occasion."¹⁵ Both parties were optimistic, but the English were cautious, if not a little apprehensive, about meeting the viceroy in Goa. After nearly thirty years of conflict in India and in the Gulf, a handful of letters would not wash away the anxiety. In one example, President Methwold instructed Captain Richard Allnutt of the *Palsgrave* to assist the Portuguese with a single caveat that they could return aggression if provoked.¹⁶ Similar instructions were handed to the captains of the *Jonah*, the *Hart*, and the *Discovery*. Methwold and his council understood the advantages of peace, but they were not eager to expose themselves so soon and they postponed the voyage to Goa until the Portuguese offered some form of protection. The weather turned sour and gave the English a convenient excuse to delay until 1635.

As a surety, Dom Miguel de Noronha, the Conde de Linhares, sent President Methwold a letter of safe conduct throughout the Indian Ocean, signed and sealed with the Portuguese Royal Arms.¹⁷ President Methwold accepted the Conde de Linhare's letter as a genuine offer of peace, and he proposed several "qualified persons to negotiate a

23: "E porque nao: divide, que hira tudo na conformidade que a Ponto, pello que tenho entendido do Senhor Conde VisoRey."

¹⁵ Consultation at Surat, 15 April 1634, IOR/G/36/1, f.293.

¹⁶ Instructions for Captain Allnutt, 21 April 1634, IOR/G/36/1, f.288.

¹⁷ "Letter of Safe Conduct", Goa, 1634, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.26.

small conclusion” that would unite “both nations unto the perpetuity of all amity and good correspondence.”¹⁸ Before the peace was concluded, Methwold required an amendment to one line that called for a “union of armes” between the English and Portuguese.¹⁹ The proviso had the potential to become volatile, and Methwold hesitated to conclude the peace until the Portuguese changed the clause to “against the Common enemies.”²⁰ The change protected the English against recourse if the Portuguese and Dutch clashed, which they often did over the next two decades. Methwold wanted to avoid any potential agreement that placed the English in a position where they would have to choose between the Dutch and the Portuguese. This was especially the case since Anglo-Dutch relations were still cordial.

Methwold resolved to depart for Goa in secrecy, covering their movements from Dutch and Muslims officials. On the 29 December 1634, the *Jonah* crossed the Barr of Surat, and the fleet—the *Jonas*, the *Hopewell*, the *Palsgrave*, and the *Intelligence*—proceeded to Goa.²¹ The fleet temporarily anchored at Damān where Padre Ramon waited to accompany the fleet to Goa. On the 6 January 1635 the fleet anchored outside Goa Road where the atmosphere was exceptionally tense:

Where we found riding 6 galleons, and 2 carracks, and had presently aboard us visitants from the Viceroy to pronounce our welcome with pilotts and invitations to come to anchor within the galeons under safeguard of the Castle which we rejoiced in as much as concerned the greater shippes, because they were laden and suddenly to depart but the Hopewell and Intelligence went in

¹⁸ President Methwold to the 3 Noble Chancellors of State, Surat, February 1634, IOR/G/36/84(3), f. 31.

¹⁹ President Methwold to the Company, Goa, 19 January 1634/35, IOR/E/3/15, f.102.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f.102.

²¹ Foster, “Introduction,” in *English Factories, 1634-1636*, vol. 11, viii.

the next day and tooke of so much of the suspition or distrust which they conceived we had in the sincerity of their safe conduct when we approached a good way within shott of the Admirall.²²

It was probably a spectacular scene as the two rivals came together and put an end to decades of conflict. Any tension vanished as the *Jonah* lowered her sails and the *Palsgrave* discharged nine pieces of ordnance in a salute to their Portuguese hosts. The *Jonah*, the *Hopewell*, and an English pinnace complemented the *Palsgrave* and discharged their ordnance. The Portuguese countered with their own artillery salute from their ships and the fort. The English Embassy had officially arrived.

Once Methwold and his council touched on the shores of Goa “shipps of both nations shott no small number of ordnance” and the viceroy’s guard and captain went down to meet the small party of Englishmen. After the ceremonial greeting, the Portuguese captain brought the English to their temporary quarters. Later that evening the English joined the Portuguese where they were entertained lavishly and “our diett pletifull and accommodated with an abundance of goodly plate.”²³ After the warm reception, President Methwold wanted to conclude the peace as quickly as possible and return to Surat where he could begin to salvage the remnants of their estate in the wake of the Gujarati famine. He certainly appreciated the comforts of diplomacy, but Methwold was a serious individual who felt compelled from a sense of duty to his masters in London whose business took precedence over his personal pleasures.

²² President Methwold to the Company, Goa, 19 January 1634/35, IOR/E/3/15, f.101v.

²³Ibid., f.102.

Methwold and the Portuguee were locked in conversation for a few days because both sides were hung up on that pesky clause that could potentially bring the English into a fight with the Dutch. It was only a trifling impediment, however, and Father Tavares and the viceroy's officers agreed to Methwold's appeal to modify the clause. The treaty now called for a union of arms against a common enemy which satisfied Methwold. Having finalized the agreement, Methwold hoped to stand before the viceroy as a personal expression of respect. He intended to sign the treaty and state their oaths before each other. At the time of their arrival, the viceroy was bedridden and unable to take part in the meeting between his men and the English. Dom Fernando led Methwold to the viceroy's bedchamber where he had spent the previous four or five days resting. Methwold was stunned by the viceroy's condition, and wrote to London that "his contenance shewed that his body was indisposed for he had bin 7 times within 4 or 5 daies before let bloud and now his fevour had given him two daies intermission."²⁴ The two leaders embraced, and the peace was symbolically consolidated. The peace they concluded, both agreed, would last until either England or Spain dissolved it; and if either the king of England or Spain dissolved the peace, a six month grace period would begin to give English and Portuguese merchants an opportunity to withdrawal from the other's ports.²⁵ Afterwards, the viceroy invited Methwold and Padre Paulo Ramos into a private conversation. According to Methwold, they spent the next couple of hours exchanging details of their respective commercial ventures.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, f.102v.

²⁵ Ethel Sainsbury, *A Calendar of the Court Minutes of the East Indie Company, 1635-1639* (Clarendon Press, 1907), 4.

During the meeting Methwold provided details of the Dutch trade, leaving Dom Miguel “confounded with admiration how they could possiblie support so great a charge with so small a trade and get subsist and continue to trouble as much of the world.”²⁶ Dom Miguel supposedly claimed that the relations between the Portuguese and English faltered, not from prejudice, but because the Dutch and English were under “appearance of a seeming amity.” The details of the conversation are lost to us, but Dom Miguel saw the alliance as mutually beneficial and the Dutch as a significant obstacle to Anglo-Portuguese commercial interests. According to his authority granted by the King of Spain, he revoked the exclusion on English trade to the East Indies as outlined in the Peace of 1604. Methwold cautiously wrote to London that “not love towards us but hate to the Hollanders” compelled the outcome of the embassy, and as long as the Jesuits remained close by, there may be cause to fear the Portuguese.²⁷

Father Tavares thought the alliance was a natural move since historically England and Portugal were friendly. In a sense, their shared medieval past suggested that they were natural allies, an idea that Methwold seemed to accept, if only partially:

As for their pretences of Anncient amity and alliance betwixt the crownes of England and Portugall with their acknowledgment that much English blood continues still to runne in many of their most honorable veines, we must acknowledge the varity but have cause to suspect the pretence, for whilst they are tainted with so much contradiction in religion as makes us unto them even an abhominacion we may feare the ancient position of the Jesuits *cum haretics fides non est observanda*.²⁸

²⁶ President Methwold to the Company, Goa, 19 January 1634/35, IOR/E/3/15, f.102v.

²⁷ President Methwold to the Company, Goa, 19 January 1634/35, IOR/E/3/15, f.103v; see also, Foster, “Introduction,” *English factories, 1634-1636*, x.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f.103v. In 1589, Elizabeth I attempted, albeit reluctantly, to aid Dom Antonio against Philip II. The expedition failed miserably.

Methwold's actions, however, suggest that the president was anything but fearful of the Jesuits, and he may have intended to suppress any concerns at home over working with the Jesuits.

The treaty was concluded by the end of January, and Dom Miguel opened the Portuguese Indies to the English Company. The ports of Diu, Chaul, Damān, Goa, and any other Portuguese settlement were accessible to the English. Dom Miguel offered Goa as a wintering port for English shipping returning from the Spice Islands and the Orient. Dom Miguel offered the English the use of any rigging, sails, or other necessities for the reparations of their vessels during their stay at Goa. Before the peace, the English fleet sailed directly from Surat to Masulipatnam on the east coast of India. By adding Goa to the list of wintering ports, the English gained a safe harbor for obtaining provisions and supplies between Surat and Masulipatnam. Having access to Goa also provided the English with an emergency port in the event one of their ships was badly damaged. Before 1635, for example, if a ship was damaged on the voyage from Masulipatnam to Surat, the captain had to continue to Surat or return to Masulipatnam. In addition, the viceroy offered to supply the English with pepper from Goa. The embassy may have moved forward in secrecy, but it would not remain so for long. Methwold requested the Company to send a qualified person, both in education and condition, to reside in Goa. This move was an open show of unity between the two that was not likely to go unnoticed by the Dutch.

After several decades of naval conflict, Methwold felt the peace gave the Company an opportunity to cut extraordinary expenses for armed transport. There was some concern over the Malabar Pirates, but the Portuguese were the largest threat to English shipping before 1635. Methwold was convinced that small shipping would suffice for local routes, which prompted the construction of two small ships in Damān in 1636, the *Michael* and *Francis*. Both ships were active in the routes between Masulipatnam and Basra. The Portuguese threat no longer existed, and Methwold saw little else that could hinder the Company at sea. Most importantly the treaty effectively ended the quasi-military alliance with the Safavīd forces.

He requested a reduction in shipping costs to make the venture more profitable, and he requested for a reduction on the tonnage to under 500 tons.²⁹ From 1626 until 1629, Richard Wylde estimated that the Company sent 12,350 tons of shipping to India, which cost roughly £28,852 in provisions (approximately £2 per ton).³⁰ This figure does not include wages, reparations, and munitions for war. The fleet of 1624, for example, had two ships that exceeded 500 tons (approximately 800 tons in excess). It cost £5,985 to provision 2,570 tons of shipping. But if Methwold achieved his goal at maintaining a fleet of 500 tons or less, the 1624 fleet would have totaled 1,770 tons assuming the two

²⁹ Ibid., f.103.

³⁰ Richard Wylde, *The Humble Petition and Remonstrance of Richard Wylde, Merchant and Adventurer in the East-India Trade, Laying open the many wilfull Neglects, Illmanged Actions and Improvident Courses, the Governors and Committees of the East-India Company, have heretofore, and still do practice in all their way of Trade to the East-Indies, to the exceeding great prejudice of the Adventurer and Nation in generall. Together with a narrative of the principall Wrongs and Injuries the Dutch have barbarously perpetrated upon the Persones, Ships and Goods of the Company in Amboyna, and other parts of India; As also the manner of Trade the Potugals heretofore, and now the Dutch have, and doe practise, to their exceeding, great increase of stock which our Company would never be perswaded to follow, in so full and ample manner as they ought to have done* (Printed in the yeare 1654), f.3-7.

ships above 500 tons were reduced.³¹ Assuming that the Company spent an estimated £2 per ton on shipping, the Company would have spent approximately £3,540 to outfit the fleet with provisions. The illustration is not perfect, but it does suggest a potential reduction of £2,445 if the Company could reduce the tonnage. By reducing the fleet, Methwold hoped to reduce the number of mariners drawing a wage, which also included the store of provisions that each ship required.

Saturday, 17 January 1635, President Methwold and his men prepared to bid the viceroy farewell, and they enjoyed a final meal at Geronimo de Souza's estate before meeting with Dom Manuel a final time. The Viceroy reaffirmed his promises and presented the president with several gifts including "a hundred fardles [104-130 lb] of cinnamon...a fair chaine of gold" and samples of Malabar pepper, which President Methwold sent to London for examination.³² The English provided "300 Ryalls of 8t [£75]" among other gifts to "the Viceroy, his sonne Don Ferdinando; the Jesuits and divers other officers of quality which attended our association," of which Methwold did not list in his letter but must have "beene as frugall as the condition of our imployments."³³ The embassy came to an end, and the *Hopewell* departed for Surat where they arrived victoriously in late February 1635. The *Palsgrave* and the *Intelligence* continued their journey to Bantam, and the *Jonas* returned to England.

³¹ I simply reduced the ships that rated above 500 tons down to an even 500 tons.

³² President Methwold to the Company, Goa, 19 January 1634/35, IOR/E/3/15, f.105-105v. A fardle was also called a churl or at times a bundle according to Professor Maloni, and a single fardle equated to roughly 4 or 5 *man* (maund). Weights varied by region and by shah, but Professor Maloni estimated that in the Deccan and the eastern Indian coast, a *man* was about 26 pounds. See, Maloni, *European Merchant Capital*, 450-451.

³³ *Ibid.*, f.105-105v

In London, the Company welcomed the news, and Charles I instructed his ambassador in Madrid to have the treaty ratified. William Foster hints that the truce in Goa trickled into London and stimulated the creation of a treaty between Portugal and England.³⁴ In 1642, Robert Bertie, the first earl of Lindsey and Henry Clifford, the fifth Cumberland petitioned Charles I to return to Parliament to discuss, among other matters, the peace contracted in Goa.³⁵ A printed report appeared in June that stated “the convention of Truce made between D. Michael de Loronha, Conde de Linhares, Viceroy of Goa, and William Methwold President of the English in East-India, shall be continued and kept betweene the Subjects of both Kings in East-India.” This included all dominions under the authority of Charles I and “the most renowned Kind of Portugall beyond Cape bona Speranza.” Methwold’s embassy, therefore, played a larger role in English international politics, and it appeared to induce the earls of Lindsey and Cumberland to strengthen the agreement “so a perpetuall peace and confederation may be confirmed and established by the said Kings, and between their Subjects on both sides.”³⁶

In Methwold’s letters to the Company, it is clear that the English gained access to numerous ports in India and the Far East, but the published report illustrates the broader consequences of the peace. The earls, Lindsey and Cumberland, wanted to build on

³⁴ Foster, “Introduction,” *English factories, 1634-1636*, x.

³⁵ *The Earles of Lindsey and Cumberlands Petition to the King at Yorke, in behalfe of the Parliament, June 2, 1642. And his Majesties gracious Assent thereunto. With his Majesties Commission for the confirmation of Truce, made between his Majesty and the King of Castele, the two Kings of East-India, D. Michael de Loronha, Conde de Linhares, Viceroy of Goa, and William Methwold President of the English in East-India. In all the Lands, Places, Castles, Ports, and Coasts of Africa, Guyne, Bine, the Island of Saint Thome, &c. and beyond Cape bone Speranza in the Dominions of the King of Portugall.* (London: Printed for J. Harrison, June 11, 1642).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

Methwold's accomplishments in the east and "it is on both parts concluded on, that in the Lands, Places, Castles, Ports, and Coasts of Africa, Guyne, Bine, & the Island of Saint Thome, and other Islands...shall be no...trouble or injury done them by the Portugals." The treaty dictated that the English would not pay more in customs than any other merchant trading in Portuguese ports, and the English agreed to supply the Portuguese "wanting foreign ships for their Navigation and commerce to the Coasts and Islands." The dialogue between Father Tavares and William Methwold began as an attempt to end the conflict in the Indian Ocean between the two, but it quickly began to develop on a much broader scale "being perswaded out of the confidence of the anceint amity which hath been between the Predecessors of the same Kings."³⁷

Methwold's correspondence suggests that he was concerned in the first months after the treaty, but the Portuguese honored their agreement and lasting peace between the two came to fruition. The changes were felt immediately in India, and the most noticeable having developed in the correspondence between the English and several Portuguese officials which included the viceroy, the captain of Damān, and various other Portuguese officials and clergy that began to take part in the English factory life. After 1635 the English records suggest that a closer working relationship with the Portuguese developed then compared to the previous years between the English and Dutch. True to their word, the Portuguese welcomed English shipping at their ports, and William Pitt eventually

³⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

resided at Damān in a semi-permanent position. There Pitt oversaw the construction, alongside Padre Paul Remao, of the *Michael* and the *Francis*.³⁸

The English now had access to a string of ports from the Malabar Coast to Basra. Not everything proceeded as planned, however, and Shah Safi I and his court were suspicious of English motivations, especially since the Portuguese had been the Safavīd's enemy since the sixteenth century. While most of the changes were positive, the English saw a decline in Anglo- Safavīd relations that essentially forced the Company to pull out indefinitely. The problem was exacerbated by an increase in Dutch competition for Persian silk. In India, the peace had significant implications on English trade that were wholly positive. But it all but ended the Persian trade. The peace capped several years of reluctance to oust the Portuguese from Muscat, and combined with William Gibson's personal war with Mīrzā Taqī the English silk trade in Persia turned to dust. The fall of the factory in Persia occurred for various reasons, but the peace in 1635 opened the door and shoved the English through the opening. Then again, Persia never seemed to factor into Methwold's strategy.

II. “Plunge the trade until it dye”: William Gibson, Mīrzā Taqī, and Methwold's intervention, 1635-1638

At the end of 1634, Anglo-Persia relations began to stumble. This mostly began to develop as Shah Safi removed potential opposition from the Safavīd Court in the early

³⁸ Instructions for Captain Matthew Wild, 7 April 1635, IOR/G/36/1, f.360; Instructions for William Pitt, 9 April 1635, IOR/G/36/1, f.373.

1630s, many of whom supported the English. The English hesitance to lend naval assistance to the Safavīds against Muscat combined with their failure to protect—at least from a Safavīd perspective—the Persia coastline, caused many Safavīd officials to be suspicious of the English. English customs began to decline, and the acquisition of silk became a strenuous, and fruitless, task by 1634. As 1635 opened, Anglo- Safavīd relations sat on the cusp of change, and there was potential for the English to slide either way; but the Portuguese Peace caused them to descend on the wrong side.

The peace raised many caution flags for the Safavīds who spent several years attempting to push the Portuguese out of Persia. They finally succeeded with the assistance of the English fleet, but now the very Englishmen who pushed the Portuguese off Qishm and Hormuz now embraced the Portuguese as friends. The English chief of the factory in Persia, William Gibson, expected some backlash from the recent decision. The Court of Committees anticipated that the Safavīds probably had some reservations regarding the new alliance between her enemy and the English, but they had hoped Gibson could assure Shah Safi that the English had no intentions of joining forces with the Portuguese against the Safavīds. In light of the recent circumstances, the Company feared the Dutch would create a rift between the English and Safavīd elite by propagating anti-English rhetoric:

You seemed to bee in some doubt howe the peace made in India, betwext the English and Portugalls would bee taken of the King of Persia and his Ministers, the Portugalls and wee beeing friends, they might with out our lett, come into the Gulpe againe, and spe attempt [...] the regaining of Ormuz, or att their pleasures [...] the quite of those Persian wch tendes on those seas you doubt likewise wch you had of the mallicious practizes of the Hollanders wch they might use against you, by their suggestions, in agravating the king and

Nobles against you Nowe what issue all rhesse things were come unto.³⁹

The English successfully avoided joining the attack at Muscat due to several delays, but by 1635 any plans the Safavīds had on Muscat would have to move forward without the English. The clash between the English Mīrzā Taqī began.

William Gibson approached the Safavīd Court in 1636 to salvage their reputation with the Safavīds as best he could, but the fall of so many allies between 1629 and 1632 made it very difficult for the English factors to regain favor. At first, Gibson was moderately irritated because Shah Safi apparently ignored a petition that Gibson submitted in a previous visit “wherein was manifested both the reasons of my discontent and so abrupt a departure yet fearing it may have escaped your p[er]vall by some meanes or other.”⁴⁰ A copy of the petition alluded to here does not seem to have survived, but it probably contained complaints regarding the decline in silk; and apparently Gibson’s justification for storming out of court. The English were rather obnoxious petitioners in that it may be questionable if their factory in Isfahan was intended to house merchants or official petitioners; and in the previous decade their persistence in the matter led Imām-qulī Khan to question whether or not he should have simply executed the governor responsible for the offense.⁴¹ Gibson nonetheless wanted to verbally petition the court, because he expected that the Shah no longer read their petitions. Oddly, in order for this

³⁹ The Company to William Gibson, London, 25 May 1636, IOR/E/3/84, f.120.

⁴⁰ William Gibson’s petition to the King of Persia, 22 January 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.141-141v.

⁴¹ See chapter 2. After several complaints, Imām-qulī Khan suggested that he should have just cut off the governors head and resolved the issue forthright.

to come to pass Gibson had to petition Shah Safi for a verbal hearing. Surely someone had noticed the humor in Gibson's predicament, although it was most certainly not Gibson himself. He eventually complained to Shah Safi that "yor Maiestie will not allow us liberty of speech with you."⁴²

The situation at court was becoming uncomfortable. Although Gibson acknowledged the potential problems that could arise from the peace, his petition suggests that he expected to gain access to Shah Safi. When it was clear that he was unlikely to stand before the shah, he complained that "I cannot chuse but bewayle that losse of freedome my predecessores had in your blessed Grandfather's tyme, who always would question and parlye with us himself." This is a significant moment for the Company in Persia, and none more so than the idea that Gibson acknowledged a stark contrast between their present conditions and those their predecessors enjoyed. This was not simply a case of Gibson articulating a number of tedious complaints, but it illustrates the motion of the Safavīd court as it began to distance itself from the English. Someone at court probably perused Gibson's petitions and most likely Shah Safi received the information, but the Safavīd response, or lack thereof, was in a sense a direct rebuke of the Anglo-Portuguese union. Gibson certainly sensed something was out of place as he suggested "your Maiestie being possessed with in untruth by ill willers, harbor a bad censure of the parties."⁴³

⁴² William Gibson's petition to the King of Persia, 22 January 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.141-141v.

⁴³ William Gibson's petition to the King of Persia, 22 January 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.141-141v.

Shah Safi directed Gibson to Mīrzā Taqī for matters of commerce, and it was a tactic that Gibson deeply resented. The bubbling tension between the two men created such a rift that Gibson was convinced that Mīrzā Taqī obstructed the English business and “blame[ed] mee in the highest manner that may bee saying I am the most willfull and stubborne.” Gibson disagreed and countered that “his [Mīrzā Taqī] conscience cannot chuse but yeeld that hee is more blame worthy himself.” Considering the recent turn of events Gibson thought that he should not “have often wrote unto my Countrey in prayse of your majestyes respect and freedom,” especially as Mīrzā Taqī attempted to claim that “I goe about to sett difference betwixt your Maiety and my Sovereigne.”⁴⁴ This is somewhat of an interesting problem. In the early 1630s, the factors in Persia wrote to London concerning the decline in silk exports and the delays in handing silk over to the English.⁴⁵ The Company responded by petitioning Charles I for aid, especially as R.W. Ferrier wrote that Charles was particularly interested in the eastern trade.⁴⁶ Charles obliged the Company, but his letter seems to have affronted Mīrzā Taqī. At the very least Mīrzā Taqī used Charles’ letter as evidence that Gibson attempted to sabotage the relationship between the Stuart and Safavīd Courts, which was most certainly not the case.

Gibson, however, casually dismissed Mīrzā Taqī’s complaint “seeing how badly wee are complyed withall having nothing but p[ro]mises.” The Safavīds had sufficient

⁴⁴ Ibid., f.141-141v.

⁴⁵ See chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Court Minutes, 11 December 1635, IOR/B/18, f.91. Also see, R.W. Ferrier, “Charles I and the Antiquities of Persia: The Mission of Nicholas Wilford,” in *Iran*, v.8, (1970), 54.

reason to distrust the English after the recent union with the Portuguese, but the rapid decline caught Gibson and his subordinates unprepared. He eventually apologized for fleeing court “without your leave,” but Mīrzā Taqī “did daily more neglect mee without intermission.” Gibson’s petition reveals how quickly the English lost favor at court. A decade and a half earlier the English merchants dined with Shah Abbas I, but in 1636 the scene transformed quite dramatically as “his [Mīrzā Taqī] neglect of mee now is become a Courtesy, for within these four days I have received letters of Command from my Masters absolutely forbidding mee any further contracting for ought.” The recent delays in the silk trade led to the Company “forbidding mee any further contracting” for silk.⁴⁷

The tension between Mīrzā Taqī and Gibson spilled over into London creating a stir in the Court of Committees. The Company was troubled over the Shah’s ministers who forced the English to write “many untruthes” to the Company sealed with “your Majesties seale.” Gibson is rather vague and there is no indication of what Gibson or his subordinates were compelled to write. Nonetheless, Gibson wanted to avoid provoking Shah Safi and continued to focus his aggression towards Mīrzā Taqī by cautiously suggesting that Mīrzā Taqī and the Shah’s ministers “doe dishoner your Maiesty.” Gibson’s tactic is rather subtle, but he hoped to appeal to Shah Safi’s honor in suggesting that any transgressions were clearly the result of a corrupt and negligent group of administrators. Gibson then wrote that “I am persuaded your Majesty is ignorant therof, else twere impossible it should goe so long without punishing.” This more or less was an attempt to reassure Shah Safi that the English—including the Court of Committees and

⁴⁷ William Gibson’s petition to the King of Persia, 22 January 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.141-141v.

the English Crown—understood that the fault lie with those beneath him. As a consequence, Gibson wrote that he no longer had the “stomack to deale with” Mīrzā Taqī. He encouraged Shah Safi to decide whether or not the English were welcomed to trade in Persia, and if Shah Safi desired to continue commerce with the English “to command wee bee better complied with all.”⁴⁸ Gibson’s tactics at court seemed to have worked.

Shah Safi responded to the petition by granting Gibson an audience and an offer for a new account that “shall not bee so unreasonable.”⁴⁹ Shah Safi ordered his chief officers to deliver the remainder of the silk to the English and offered to meet with them to discuss an additional contract for silk. Gibson was pleased, but Lachin Beg blocked the transfer of silk to the English on grounds that he never received orders from Shah Safi for its delivery. The situation slowly began to spiral out of control when Gibson called on Mīrzā Taqī for assistance, but Mīrzā Taqī similarly refused to deliver the silk. Gibson believed the chancellor’s “disfavor of the business and unwillingness to give satisfaction” was plainly expressed in his astute apathy towards the English. Gibson remained as cordial as one could with Mīrzā Taqī, and perhaps that had more to do with Mīrzā Taqī’s recent bout with an illness; but his patience obviously wore thin: “I am sure I particularized all unto the full, but as yet receiving no answer of the same, nor comand for reformacon as p[ro]mised, I cannot chuse but wonder what should bee the reason.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., f.141v-142.

⁴⁹ Shah Safi’s answer to Gibson’s petition, IOR/E/3/15, f.142.

⁵⁰ William Gibson to Ettomon Daulat [Mīrzā Taqī], Isfahan, 20 May 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.142v-143.

The English were clearly frustrated with the changes at court. Under Shah Abbas, the English enjoyed the tutelage of Imām-qulī Khān and Mulayim Beg, both of whom dealt fairly with the English and mutually respected each other. Gibson voiced his displeasure with Shah Safī, and at first remained as amiable as possible with Mīrzā Taqī, but Gibson's tolerance quickly faded.

Gibson's rebuttals to Shah Safī only made matters worse. We also have little information on any verbal communication the two shared, but if the records are any indication the exchanges between Mīrzā Taqī and Gibson were much less amiable than one would hope. In May or June of 1636, Mīrzā Taqī instructed his brother Mahmud Sally Beg to hand over a portion of the silk to Gibson. The English were anxious to receive the silk, and immediately looked over the shipment to gauge the quality. Appalled by the shipment's condition, Gibson accused Mīrzā Taqī of acting deceitfully in that "you will force us to take rotten silke for our mony too." The English were upset at the condition but also the quality of silk they received, and complained to Mīrzā Taqī that "I found it [silk] was neither of England, nor a silke for our use, besides much of it was wonderfull bad, and damp inside. wheruppon I altogether refused it." Gibson's complaint was directed at the quality of the silk, and that the shipment was not the finer silk from Gilan; thus his claim that the silk "was neither of England."⁵¹

Instead of offending Mahmud Beg and creating further problems, Gibson initially decided to accept the silk. After a closer inspection, however, Gibson noticed that much of it had rotted in the damp conditions and was beyond salvaging. Gibson lost any sense

⁵¹ William Gibson to Ettomon Daulat [Mīrzā Taqī], Isfahan, 10 June 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.143v.

of propriety in his correspondence with Mīrzā Taqī, and “except against 12 bales of trash silke, I thought good to advise you herof that your self may examine the business when the parties shall come unto you, for belive it strange knavery hath bine played with this silke.” The poor shipment dampened the prospect of the English accepting a new contract for silk. Gibson dismissed the recent shipment and the notion of a further contract because “the some you stand indebted all ready is no small matter to bee slighted wherefore you shall doe well to pay that first.”⁵²

Mīrzā Taqī’s letter to Gibson no longer exists, but from Gibson’s response we can glean that Mīrzā Taqī either felt he was innocent or feigned ignorance of the circumstances regarding English customs and silk transactions. Mīrzā Taqī thought Gibson’s discourteous behavior was misplaced, and the English have “all waies bine a favored to my business.” Gibson was hardly amused and curtly responded “that in stead therof you are become my greatest obstacle.” One of Gibson’s complaints focused on the long delays of silk shipments or that none came at all: “Where is the Silke you so faithfully promised mee when I was at Court to receive it.” Of course Mīrzā Taqī could have instructed his servants to deliver Gibson the silk, but then “it seemed those appoynted have litle regard therto, for nothing as yet appeare to us like silk.” Gibson, however, was unconvinced that the fault lies with Mīrzā Taqī’s servants, and believed that if any delays occurred, they did because of Mīrzā Taqī. Since Shah Abbas I, the English received contracts, or royal *farmāns*, for a specific quantity amount of silk. In recent years, the English had not received the stipulated quality and quantity of silk stated

⁵² Ibid., f.143v.

in the contract, and Gibson was determined to negate any further contracts until the previous were settled. He then bid Mīrzā Taqī farewell: “in this poynt you may please to sell your hart at lest, and not expect other answers from mee.”⁵³

Professor Matthee argued that Taqī sent Gibson bad silk deliberately in response to the Anglo-Portuguese truce, but it was not simply the delivery of rotten silk that set Gibson off.⁵⁴ Customs were ignored, silk was either shipped in poor quality or none at all, and Shah Safī was uninterested in dealing with the English. This evidently led Gibson to question Mīrzā Taqī’s dignity and honor, and then accused him of blatantly lying to Gibson and his men to “drive us off.”⁵⁵ By July 1636, Gibson was thoroughly disenchanted with the silk trade, and he hoped to clear the accounts as soon as possible.

The new contract that Gibson alluded to ostensibly provided the English with silk for three consecutive years beginning in 1636. Much like earlier contracts, the English would pay 1/3 of the cost in ready money with the final 2/3 in imported goods. The English would receive in total 1,000 loads of silk containing 30 *mann-i shah* (5.8kg) per load at a rate of 42 *tūmāns* (£266) per load. It would cost the English an estimated 42,000 *tūmāns* (£266,000) of which 14,000 *tūmāns* (£88,667) of ready money and the remaining 28,000 *tūmāns* (£177,333) in goods.⁵⁶ The contract satisfied Gibson especially since the

⁵³ William Gibson to Ettomon Daulat [Mīrzā Taqī], Isfahan, 20 July 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.144.

⁵⁴ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 136. English sources do not touch on this issue until later when it is admitted that the peace hurt their Persian trade; however the English must have known the peace would ruffle a few feathers in Persia.

⁵⁵ William Gibson to Ettomon Daulat [Mīrzā Taqī], Isfahan, 20 July 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.144v.

⁵⁶ “Translation of new contract”, 16 July 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.145-145v. The conversions are rounded here instead of writing out pounds-shilling-pence.

price per load seemed to dip slightly from the late 1620s, and he eventually agreed to the terms.

When news reached President Methwold of Gibson's transaction, he was much less pleased than Gibson would have hoped. Methwold thought Gibson undercut the Company's trade for silk by failing to consider the Dutch agreement before accepting Mīrzā Taqī's terms. In a letter to London, Methwold and his council wrote quite plainly that "our opinions concerneing a new contract (intimated both to you and them) are negative."⁵⁷ Methwold was baffled as to why Gibson agreed to take on 1,000 bales spread over three years when the Dutch recently concluded a contract that provided them with 800 or 1,000 bales per annum.⁵⁸ That theoretically put roughly three times the amount of silk into Dutch hands. Mathee estimated that the actually Dutch exported 2,520 bales of silk from 1636 to 1638 whereas the English managed to squeeze out 1,124 bales.⁵⁹ Not only was the previous shipment a bust, but Gibson agreed to a contract without giving much thought to their Dutch competitors. This angered Methwold especially as "the wormes die, the silke is burnt, and carried away, Plague, warr, and famine interact whilest the Dutch for there redie monie finde almost 800 or a thousand bales every year."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 6 March 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.176v.

⁵⁸ President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 6 March 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.176v

⁵⁹ Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

⁶⁰ President Methwold to William Gibson, Surat, 4 April 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.107.

Methwold thought this was incredibly suspicious, but it was his disposition to find fault in his men before relying on excuses to justify their mistakes. He would have preferred that Gibson declined the contract instead of accepting much less than the Dutch. Methwold was certainly aware Mīrzā Taqī was disingenuous, but he expected his men to make better, sound decisions. He reduced it to pure folly and asked Gibson “where is then the encouragement you should have for a new contract to plunge the Trade until it dye of a consumption.”⁶¹ Gibson was not entirely innocent and Methwold was already frustrated with the lack of communication from Persia, particularly in sending the factory account books.⁶² Gibson resented Methwold after constant pressure for the factory’s account books, but considering the previous shipment of Coast goods failed to vend well, Methwold wanted to guarantee “that the shippes might not goe unprofitably.”⁶³ Methwold was notoriously stern with his subordinates, and chapter five will discuss in more detail the presidency’s approach to Englishmen who neglected their duties and comported themselves in an unfitting manner. Gibson may have felt Methwold’s pressure was gratuitous, but he certainly was not the only subordinate to face Methwold’s draconian rule.

This brought one merchant, Francis Honeywood, forward who criticized Gibson for allowing the Company to meander in the silk trade blind and ignorant of both the silk

⁶¹ President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 6 March 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15, f.176v.

⁶² President Methwold to William Gibson, Surat, 4 April 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.106-107.

⁶³ President Methwold to William Gibson, 4 April 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.104; 106.

market and the Dutch.⁶⁴ Between his dispute with Mīrzā Taqi and the silk contract, Methwold's patience had run out. It was also about the same time that William Cobb attacked Mughal shipping in the Red Sea, and Methwold was already on edge in Surat.⁶⁵ Cobb's piracy was unresolved, and local Mughal officials either confiscated English goods or imprisoned them throughout Gujarat. Methwold was anxious, and Gibson's failure in Persia put the Company in a terrible position. Methwold finally had enough of Gibson's negligence and established a special disciplinary commission intended for the reformation of the factory in Persia.

In spite of the charges levied against Gibson, there was very little the factor could do. The English struggled to obtain the silk due to them from the previous contract, and the effects of losing their friends at Court, who regularly saw their trade through, was greatly felt. He effectively made an opponent, if not an enemy, out of Mīrzā Taqi and simultaneously managed to upset the presidency. Gibson's poor decisions came at a bad time and he was caught in the middle of Methwold's personal commercial feud with the Dutch over the indigo trade in India, which undoubtedly explains Methwold's frustration over the silk contract. Gibson's failure in allowing the Dutch to walk away with so much silk and the English so little was reprehensible.⁶⁶ Gibson died the following year leaving the agency in disarray and the previous silk contract unaccounted for. In May 1637, Francis Honywood convened a consultation to discuss potential candidates to succeed as

⁶⁴ Francis Honywood to the Company, 18 July 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.18v.

⁶⁵ See prologue.

⁶⁶ Matthee provides figures for the years of 1636 to 1638.

chief of Persia among other things, and at its conclusion Honywood became the acting chief although his role was provisional until William Fremlen nominated Gibson's successor.⁶⁷ Details of the former chief's underhanded activities, and those of his partners, came to light over the course of the next few months.⁶⁸

After Gibson's death, his fellow Englishmen in Persia began to tell a quite different story of the events that transpired in Persia between Gibson and Mīrzā Taqī. Francis Honywood, in particular, stood at the forefront of Gibson's critics in Persia. He suggested that Mīrzā Taqī was a reasonable man, and Gibson's tirade against Mīrzā Taqī was merely an attempt to pin the failures of the Persian Agency on Mīrzā Taqī to cover Gibson's malicious endeavors. Methwold suspected Gibson of having a mischievous hand in the Company's failure in Persia, but the president was preoccupied with the trade in India and depended on his subordinate factors to manage both the trade and people there. Francis Honywood dismissed the absurd rumor that Mīrzā Taqī intended to harm Gibson: "knowinge him too wise so weakly to open such violent intentons."⁶⁹ Honywood admitted that most recently Gibson was an "inveterate enemy" to Taqī, but the "fawning parasite" who divulged the fictitious story sought to tap into the Company's deep pockets for personal gain.⁷⁰ Mīrzā Taqī was one of the most powerful men in Persia, and, according to Honywood, the accusations simply were inconsistent

⁶⁷ Consultation at Isfahan, 31 May 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.11.

⁶⁸ Chapter five will explore the intricacies of factory life, which include the misdemeanors and nefarious activities of the Company's factors.

⁶⁹ Francis Honywood to the Company, 18 July 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f. 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, f.18.

with his status.⁷¹ Honeywood and his subordinates understood that they needed Mīrzā Taqī if the English had any hopes of restoring the silk trade, and without the chancellor's aid the silk trade would inevitably fail. William Fremlen found Gibson's "uncivill haughty and disrespectful behavior towards Eddemon Dowlutt [Taqī]" as the primary cause for the detention of English silk.⁷²

President Methwold was not in the mood to allow the factors to invest additional sums of money, and he instructed William Fremlen to sequester any money or goods from the factors currently in residence there. The Persian agency was effectively on lockdown.⁷³ Fremlen's outlook for the Persian trade was increasingly negative and "our peoples stupidity" brought it to its knees through "disorder, negligence, profuse spending and dishonesty."⁷⁴ The commissioner admitted that he could place trust in a few men, but the remainder consisted of little more than "evill weeds wee intend to roote out of this factory."⁷⁵ Fremlen exonerated Mīrzā Taqī of any wrongdoing in the Gibson feud, and he pinned the entire failure of the Company's business on the factors there, but the damage to Anglo- Safavīd relations was already done.⁷⁶ Fremlen defended Mīrzā Taqī to a point, but he did not dismiss the idea that Mīrzā Taqī was troublesome. Mīrzā Taqī was, as

⁷¹ Ibid., f.18v.

⁷² William Fremlen to the Company, Gombroon, 13 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.62.

⁷³ "Clauses of Instructions for William Fremlen", Surat, 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.51. Instructions for William Fremlen to Persia, Swally Marine, 20 November 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.35; William Fremlen's petition to Ettomon Daulat, 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.47.

⁷⁴ William Fremlen to Surat, Gombroon, 10 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.52v; 54.

⁷⁵ Ibid., f.53-53v.

⁷⁶ William Fremlen to the Company, Gombroon, 13 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.58.

Fremlen wrote, “our yett (for ought we know) enemy,” but in this particular dispute Fremlen found additional evidence to pin on Gibson for the failure.⁷⁷ In fact, all individuals were subject to Fremlen’s scrutiny, and the Company’s linguist in Persia found his head on the chopping block as well. Of him, Fremlen said “I am given to understand that Shavallet a servant of the Company your linguist is both dishonest and useless and yet he is the Company debtor, I know not well how much; let the monies be recovered by such waies as the custome of the country directs and warrants and then discard of him.”⁷⁸ Reports suggest Mīrzā Taqī “hath more spies in our house then eyes in his head” of which the English suspected Shavalet.⁷⁹

Fremlen granted Thomas Merry full authority to conduct and prosecute trade, and, while he was responsible to his council, Merry had control over the Persian agency. The commissioner called Merry to maintain a form of transparency in the maintenance of the account books to avoid further mishaps, or financial delinquency in the factories. Fremlen bestowed a tremendous amount of responsibility onto Merry: “the family you now goe to governe we all know hath bene formerly so misgoverned as that preadventure to so deadly a mallady as desparate [...] must be applied.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ “Instructions for Thomas Merry”, Gombroon, 13 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.76.

⁷⁸ William Fremlen to the Company, Gombroon, 13 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.60. The linguists apparently had not been dismissed, because he appears in letters as late as December 1639.

⁷⁹ Francis Honywood to William Fremlen, Isfahan, 4 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.66.

⁸⁰ “Instructions for Thomas Merry”, Gombroon, 13 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.76.

Before Fremlen's departure for Surat in February 1638, Fremlen sent a request to London for qualified men to oversee the Persian trade.⁸¹ Merry's immediate subordinates were John Willoughby and Francis Honywood respectively, and Fremlen left it to Merry to rank the others as he pleased; in other words, Fremlen left the decision to Merry to name his third and fourth factors behind Willoughby and Honywood. Fremlen instructed Thomas Adler and Thomas Codrington to stay in Isfahan and settle things with Mīrzā Taqī, and William Hall, Francis Honywood, and Robert Manley were to repair to Gombroon. With that Fremlen took his leave of Persia and prepared for Surat. In the following year Fremlen recalled Honywood for having "too much Persian liberty" along with Thomas Codrington.⁸² As chief of Persia, Merry had a steep hill to climb in order to reform the agency and return a semblance of respectability to the Company there. Of the many tasks, chief among those was the restoration of relations with the Safavīd Court, particularly with Mīrzā Taqī who "our yet (for ought we know) enemy must be visited" and honored with gifts of money and other valuables.

The decline in Anglo- Safavīd relations clearly began in the 1630s although its roots began in the immediate aftermath of Hormuz and the reluctance of the sea commanders to attack Muscat. That set the proverbial snowball in motion, and it picked up a tremendous amount of speed once the English made peace with the Portuguese. Professor Matthee suggests that William Gibson created the rift between Mīrzā Taqī and the English therefore the silk trade as a whole plummeted, but Mīrzā Taqī was equally

⁸¹ William Fremlen to the Company, Gombroon, 13 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.60.

⁸² President Fremlen to the Company, 4 January 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.190; Thomas Merry to the Company, 10 September 1639, IOR/E/3/17, no legible foliation.

unwilling to work with Gibson's successors.⁸³ While Matthee is correct in finding fault in Gibson's interaction with Mīrzā Taqī, the peace treaty with the Portuguese was the first domino to fall. Gibson's public rebuttal of Mīrzā Taqī produced unnecessary obstacles for the English, but the seeds of discontent were planted and nurtured in the immediate aftermath of Hormuz (1623) leading up to the peace. The Safavīd failure to hand Fort Hormuz over to the English created a chasm of distrust between the English and Safavīds that split wide open in 1635. What Gibson did was crush any potential for amity, and in light of the Peace of 1635 the English merchants were unlikely to find solace in Persia.

III. "Our bitter enemy": Thomas Merry, Mīrzā Taqī, and the agency's demise, 1638-'42

Cleaning the mess from recent years was no easy task, and Merry was confronted with the difficult task of repairing the dilapidated relations with the Safavīd Court. The level of trust between the two parties had diminished to an almost nonexistent state and Mīrzā Taqī's vilification of the Company did not bode well for Englishmen.⁸⁴ Francis Honywood, Henry Chapman, and William Hall all conceded that "wee haveing experienced what evill effects [injurious] as Persians have wrought against us in the factorye of Spahan to the prejudice of out Masters affaires in the disrepute of their

⁸³ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 137.

⁸⁴ Consultation at Isfahan, 8 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.69v.

principalls sometimes here resideing.”⁸⁵ In May 1638 Merry attempted to buy Mīrzā Taqi’s favor among a few courtiers such as Jani Khān (Sultan of Jolfā), Mīrzā Mushin (the Shah’s accountant), and [Ably] Khān. He presented Mīrzā Taqi, as well as several royal favorites and Court officials, with a noticeably valuable gift.⁸⁶ Merry’s bribe was worth an estimated 24,539 *shahi* (£773) and 83 *tūmāns* (£525 13s 4d), which brought the total bribe to an estimated £1,298 13s 4d in various cloths, spices, stones, and money.⁸⁷ At the moment, Merry and his fellow merchants could only wait and see if the bribes would pay off or not. In the interim, Merry had to confront a number of issues that plagued the factory in Persia.

The lack of skilled men, particularly in linguistics, made it nearly impossible to dismiss troublesome men without sufficient reason. Thomas Merry’s band of men changed very little, and many of the factors who served under Gibson received a second opportunity to finish their terms in Persia. Mark Bromley, for example, stood accused of carousing, but “is quallified with the Persian and Portagees tongues having allso the use of his pen safficient.”⁸⁸ Robert Manly, in spite of similar charges of drunken licentiousness, continued his employment in Persia as well. With these men, Merry hope

⁸⁵ Francis Honywood, Henry Chapman, and William Hall’s Reasons for retaining several items, Isfahan, March 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.86-86v

⁸⁶ The Particulars of Presents given in Spahan, May 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.122-122v. Jani Khān, the Sultan of Jolfā, Mīrzā Mushin, the King’s accountant, and [Ably] Khān all received gifts of spices, cloth, and various precious stones.

⁸⁷ “Presents given to Ettiman Dowlat [Mīrzā Taqi], and other Courtiers”, Isfahan, 30 April 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.102-103.

⁸⁸ Consultation at [Gugone], 28 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.84v.

to rein in their problems with the Gombroon customs house and ultimately trod down the long, arduous path towards repairing relations between themselves and Mīrzā Taqī.

Customs was a sticking point for Englishmen after 1635, and Merry hoped to come to some resolution over the matter between the Dutch and English. He reached out to the Dutch commander, Adrian van Osten, in Persia in an attempt to find some resolution, but van Osten refused to release the English money until the Grand Vizier gave the order. Van Osten “oftymes hee hath bin heard to make his brage that hee would not pay us.”⁸⁹ Mīrzā Taqī agreed that the Dutch should pay the English, but when Merry confronted van Osten, he refused payment until the High Chancellor provided a sealed order. In Merry’s eyes, the “English never fownd such an enemy” in Mīrzā Taqī, but he expected Mīrzā Taqī would provide the sealed order; he did not.⁹⁰ Whether the fault lie with Gibson or not, Mīrzā Taqī was not prepared to cooperate with the English, and on the issue of the Dutch customs Mīrzā Taqī allowed the Dutch to pass without paying the English.

The decline in Anglo-Persia relations appears in the customs disputes of Gombroon where the English customs dropped significantly from 1,200 or 1,300 *tūmāns* (£7,600 / £8,233 6s 8d) in 1629 to 200 or 300 *tūmāns* (£1,266 13s 4d / £1900) per annum in 1639, despite the “trade to that port soe ample as appeared in that customes were this yeare made up to bee 11,000 *tūmāns* (£69,666 13s 4d), and upwards, whereunto heere syed that it was the King will wee should have our due and if wee were robbed hee could

⁸⁹ Consultation at Isfahan, 24 March 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.88v.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, f.89.

not help.”⁹¹ Although the problem in customs collection began in the 1620s, Mīrzā Taqī’s relaxed effort towards aiding the English demonstrates how low relations between the two had fallen. One historian cites the English failure to protect the Safavīd ports as the principal cause of the drastic decline in English customs.⁹² Mīrzā Taqī did imply, however, that Shah Safī did not provide the Dutch with the English share of customs, but perhaps the English “might take it of them.”⁹³ In Gombroon, the shāhbandar, Muhammad-quli Beg, had “dealt basely with us at Port, robbing us of all that hee could possiblie.”⁹⁴ The previous year the English calculated that 340 *tūmāns* (£2,153 6s 8d) in customs was due to the English, but, contrary to his promise, the shāhbandar delivered no more than 180 *tūmāns* (£1,140) to Thomas Merry. The English complained in vain, and Merry eventually agreed to allow the shāhbandar to provide the remainder of the dues over the course of two months. Merry was certain they would never see another coin, but he accepted the terms because “hee shalbee sent thither to sustaine the same office this next yeare,” and he suspected that any conflict with the shāhbandar would create unnecessary problems in the future.

If Mīrzā Taqī threatened the Company’s trade from Isfahan, the Sultan of Gombroon began to pose a problem for the English in the south. He was dissatisfied with the English for not “furnishing his servants with morr money,” which took Merry by

⁹¹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.142v; Thomas Merry to the Company, March 1639, IOR/E/3/16, f.272.

⁹² Floor, *The Persian Gulf*, 312-313.

⁹³ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.143.

⁹⁴ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 20 September 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.150v.

surprise.⁹⁵ Merry had to maneuver carefully; otherwise the situation could potentially spiral out of control. In August, Merry reported that Shah Safi handed the English share of the customs over to the Dutch.⁹⁶ “From yeare to yeare the practizes of the Kings ministers to defeate you of your [Company] customes” reduced the potential income the English received annually, and tension in Gombroon slowly began to simmer as the English saw a reduction in important customs revenue.⁹⁷

The English factors began to consider abandoning the trade altogether. Merry complained in 1639 that the Dutch refused to pay customs to the English on goods “discharged out of 5 severall shippes att Bander to the value of 30000 tomans [£190,000].”⁹⁸ By the end of the year, he feared the English would lose the entire benefit of customs in Gombroon as a consequence of the recent disaster under Gibson’s watch.⁹⁹ Thomas Adler took over collecting customs in Gombroon after Honywood’s departure in early 1639. Merry instructed Adler to land “12 at least if not more Maryners too bee set on shore with the first ship that shall arrive and theare too bee continewed under your Comande too hand a constant watch.”¹⁰⁰ By the middle of 1640, the English expected a slight increase to 500 *tūmāns* (£3,166 13s 4d)—the sum should have been around 1,200 *tūmāns* (£7,600)—of which they received 341 *tūmāns* (£2,159 13s 4d) in June. Merry

⁹⁵ Ibid., f.151.

⁹⁶ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.142v-143.

⁹⁷ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 12 November, 1638, IOR/E/3/16, 161.

⁹⁸ Thomas Merry to the Company, March 1639, IOR/E/3/16, f.272v.

⁹⁹ Thomas Merry to Thomas Adler, Isfahan, 10 September 1639, IOR/E/3/17, no legible foliation.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., no legible foliation.

thought they were unlikely to receive additional payments considering the Sultan's recent expression of disapproval.¹⁰¹

By then the Company's Persian branch was in terrible shape, and, upon further investigation of the account books, Thomas Merry discovered just how much debt the Company accumulated during the previous years of mismanagement. Merry found that several factors had outstanding debts, an issue the English hoped to rectify by selling excess or unnecessary items in the house, or recuperating the sums from the estates of the deceased.¹⁰² After the President Fremlen recalled Francis Honywood to Surat in 1639, he detained him there until the council could carefully examine his account books.

Honywood, however, established a fair reputation in Persia with Thomas Merry, and Merry threatened to intervene on his behalf if the presidency found the former factor guilty of any obscene amounts.¹⁰³ Merry discovered that the recently deceased Nicholas Gore handed over to Honywood a bill of credit. A 2,000 *shahi* (£63 6s 8d) credited to Gibson, Bath, and Honywood were recorded in the factory account book, which Merry included was used for private purchases.¹⁰⁴ The presidency could balance individual debts over time by selling off an individual's goods or confiscating all or a portion of their wages.¹⁰⁵ It was an inconvenience and created unwanted holes in the accounts, but more pressing matters were at hand. In 1639, Merry discovered that one of their former

¹⁰¹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 5 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.269.

¹⁰² Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 3 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.147.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, f.147.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, f.147-147v.

¹⁰⁵ See chapters 5 and 6.

brokers owed Gibson and John Willoughby a significant sum of money; unfortunately Merry does not tell us how deep the debt ran. Merry intended to collect the debt and use it to defray the charges in the factory ledgers; but it is not clear if Merry ever received the debt from the broker.¹⁰⁶

In early 1639, Merry instructed Thomas Adler to join him in Isfahan to meet with Mīrzā Taqī for additional silk *farmāns*. Sometime after his arrival Adler provided an additional gift to Mīrzā Taqī for 50 *tūmāns* (£316 13s 4d).¹⁰⁷ The bribes from 1638 and 1639 seem to have worked, and later that year Thomas Merry reported that he and Mīrzā Taqī worked on concluding additional silk contracts. Mīrzā Taqī sent a little over 265 loads (530 bales) of silk before the end of the year.¹⁰⁸ Feeling a glimmer of hope after the *farmān*, Adler decided to test his luck and he petitioned Mīrzā Taqī for three loads (6 bales) of silk that “Lochyn Beage cozened [withheld from] Guy Bath.” He promised to provide the English with a *farmān* for the loss of silk once Lachin Beg returned from court. Mīrzā Taqī never handed over the *farmān*, and “soe it must begaine solicited att some other time, though wee are doubtfull when wee have done our utmost.”¹⁰⁹

When the silk arrived in Isfahan Merry found “168 bales as good as ever was packt and well condiconed,” but 89 of the bales contained very course and poor quality silk “and some of it verry wett.” Merry complained to Mīrzā Taqī that “wee doubt will

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Merry to Thomas Adler, Isfahan, 10 September 1639, IOR/E/3/17, no legible foliation.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 3 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.144.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., f.144; also see, Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243. Mathee claims the English exported 594 bales in 1639.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 3 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.144-144v.

cost us much more before wee shalbee able to gett any competent allowance for its bad condition.” As was often the case, the English now had to delay the entire caravan to Gombroon to resolve the issue “but hath alsoe cost us much vexation.” Mīrzā Taqi conceded to Merry’s complaints because the contract clearly stipulated that they should received silk of Gilan, not of Mazandaran, but instead of replacing the silk with quality stuff from Gilan “wee were forst to accept of a firmand for 90 laudes more, which certainly is the rather forct upon us in regard of the quantitie of Tynn wee forct on them in the last Contract.”¹¹⁰ Mazandaran silk—either *ardas* or *las* silk—Matthee argued was the worst silk produced in Persia; whereas the silk from Gilan was finer and a much better quality.¹¹¹ President Fremlen wrote to London that “we should exhibit unto you as much Cause of sorrow” after the latest shipment of silk was terrible.¹¹²

The English were paying more for less, which indeed gave the factors cause for complaint when the shipments included wet or rotting cloth. The prices rose to 50 *tūmāns* (£316 13s 4d) per load putting Fremlen in an uncomfortable position with the Company in London knowing full well that the investors were likely displeased with the higher rates.¹¹³ Roughly four years earlier, Gibson paid about 42 *tumans* (£266) per load, which is approximately £50 less per load than Merry paid in 1639. The difference is significant, and on the 297 loads of silk the English exported in 1639 the English would pay roughly

¹¹⁰ Ibid., f.147-147v.

¹¹¹ Matthee, *Politics of trade*, 36-37.

¹¹² President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.160.

¹¹³ President Fremlen to the Company, 20 January 1639/40, IOR/E/3/17, f.224.

£14,850 more than if they purchased the same amount in 1635/36.¹¹⁴ The rise in silk prices was probably linked to another silkworm disease. In 1631, the silkworm population sustained a heavy blow causing the prices to rise in the early 1630s, and by the mid-1630s it seems that another epidemic struck the silkworm population.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, as the English struggled over the issues in customs and silk purchases, rumors circulated regarding the English leaving Persia which the Dutch “have p[er]fect knowledge of for they reported it Confidently and liberally att the Kings campe (and doubtles with much rejoyceing).”¹¹⁶ These were not entirely rumors per se, and Merry admits that the English were attempting to pull out of Persia. The unremitting abuses at port, whether from customs or the theft of English goods, forced the Company to consider the viability of the trade and if it should be ceased. Merry was concerned about stating their imminent departure from the country and warned London “to keepe your resolutions of leaveing the country private but alsoe to forbear all show of departure.” He specifically warned against shipping household items to Surat and releasing native servants from the Company’s service less the Company incur “small consequences.”¹¹⁷ Merry was troubled to learn of the Company’s plan to retreat in response to several grim reports from the presidency concerning trade: “I assure your worships, that your discouragement by reason of the many abuses which you have

¹¹⁴ Ibid., f.224. Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

¹¹⁵ Mathee, *Politics of Trade*, 125, 134. President Methwold to William Gibson, Surat, 4 April 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.107.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 28 February 1639/40, IOR/E/3/17, f.150v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f.150v.

suffered (as well by your owne bad servants as by theis unconcionable Moores) upon which you have lately grounded your resolution too desert this trade.”¹¹⁸ Merry hoped to convince the Company to continue in Persia, and encouraged his employers to set aside the presidency’s proposal for the closure of the Persian trade.

The recent abuse in the customs house forced the English to take additional steps to protect their estate. Merry initially left instructions with Adler to land men to protect their customs, or more precisely intercept those—chiefly the Dutch—attempting to land goods without paying customs. In June 1640 “nere 40 Persianes” attacked the house in Gombroon and William Hall, including the “fowre common Maryiners” landed to protect their investment, were “sorely beaten.”¹¹⁹ William Hall stood guard at the house where the Shāhbandar’s officers attempted to remove several bales of goods and transport them to their master. Not expecting the turn of events, Hall refused to allow the Shāhbandar’s men to carry away the goods, and the officers, “caused William Hall to be extreemly beaten for not permitting” their entrance.¹²⁰ Hall and the mariners “miraculously with life” survived, but the assault marked a significant shift in Anglo- Safavīd relations and an end to peaceful coexistence.¹²¹ The English had not, to this point, suffered a violent attack from Safavīd officials, although thieves and robbers occasionally assaulted their caravans, Safavīd officers had not. William Hall had no reason to expect anything

¹¹⁸ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 10 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.273.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., f.269-270v.

¹²⁰ President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Marine, 29 December 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.304v.

¹²¹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 10 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.269.

different and was comfortable in denying the officers access to the house. The attack surprised the English, but there was very little Hall could do besides petition Mīrzā Taqi for assistance.

Merry urged Mīrzā Taqi to make amends for the attacks in Gombroon. He also took the opportunity to request satisfaction for the bad silk they received earlier in the year. Merry's temper was about to burst, but he managed to keep calm in light of recent events. The silk delivery consisted of "such trash" that arrived soiled and wet from the damp conditions that Merry refused to accept the ruined bales.¹²² Merry cautiously pinned the blame on Shah Safi's officers instead of the Shah himself, and "I doubt the losse cannot be lesse then 30 a shame so great a Kinge should be so dishonored by his ministers who contrary to the rules of humanity and honesty doe in this manner abuse us, that are strangers."¹²³ He expected redress for the lost customs in Gombroon, and, above all, he called for swift punishment for the shāhbandar and his officers who ordered the English commoners "beaten and abused" at port.¹²⁴ He demanded that the brother of the Sultan of Gombroon, Sufi quli Sultan, repay the English 120 *tūmāns* (£760), but in spite of the king's *farmān*, Sufi quli Sultan refused to pay.¹²⁵ Merry demanded that Mīrzā Taqi provide new *farmāns* and enforce the observance of the king's writ. Of course none of these complaints brought any amount of compensation, and the English merchants

¹²² Thomas Merry to Ettomon Daulat [Mīrzā Taqi], Isfahan, 9 July 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.282.

¹²³ Ibid., f.282.

¹²⁴ Ibid., f.282v.

¹²⁵ Ibid., f.282v.

expressed little hope for recompense for their losses, especially since Shah Safi I by 1641 showed little interested in English commercial affairs.¹²⁶

For all of his efforts, Thomas Merry and his subordinates were unable to save the branch, and over the course of the next decade the English factors spent time attempting to salvage the remnants of their investments. Merry admitted the trade was in a steep decline, but he figured an infusion of qualified men in commodities and language, particularly Portuguese, would ignite a renewal.¹²⁷ Merry's optimism towards the Persian trade was not met equally in India and less so in London, for which the Company was opposed to "sending, or hazarding for it is no better anie more goods or monies thither exclaimeing that that the Gulfe of Persia devours all that comes wthin its grasps."¹²⁸ The Company, according to Fremlen, wanted out of Persia since the trade had become increasingly dangerous an unprofitable. Fremlen wrote to London 29 December 1640 that "you also directed us to withdraw what wee could" from the Gulf.¹²⁹

The attack on the customs house in 1640 is a symbolic cornerstone event that epitomized several years of decline while at the same time it offered evidence of shifting Anglo- Safavīd relations. The incident marked the first time in their short relationship where state officials openly assaulted the English merchants. It was also the final year that the English would export any silk from Persia. From Gombroon William Hall wrote:

¹²⁶ William Hall to the Company, Isfahan and Gombroon, 1 December 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.41.

¹²⁷ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 6 August 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.9.

¹²⁸ President Fremlen to Thomas Merry, Surat, 20 December 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.165.

¹²⁹ President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Marine, 29 December 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.302v.

“The Hollanders being now the onely men, that bought his silke and brought trade to the port of Gombroone.”¹³⁰

One contemporary leaves us with an image that describes the mood in 1641. Since no artist captured the setting on canvas the retelling falls upon the notary’s hand, and while it lacks color, he filled the void with a succinct, yet vivid, description that characterized the English factory in Persia:

Whereas by extraordinary and excessive raynes which have fallen this last springe too the Ruynes of many hundredes if not thousandes of houses, Those of ours which the Kinge hath beene pleased too seate us in for our habitacon boath in this place and at siras [Shīrāz] are beyonde all preventious exceedinglie damnified, and in especiall that at Siras [Shīrāz] whose roafe (as generally all others are, beinge covered with earth) through the long and violent continuance of raynes, is not only washt away but with it agreat parte of the hous=sdes, too soaked and falling downe the reparacons whearof as is conceived will cost between 15 and 20 tomands And this in Spahan [Isfahan] if well repayed not much less; It was therefore debated whether in respect of the uncertenty of our Continewance in this Countrie.¹³¹

The rain trodden house that stood on the verge of collapse adds an ironic touch upon the fate of the Company in Persia. While the houses at Shīrāz and Isfahan crumbled, the house in Gombroon fell under the gaze of the Dutch who threatened to purchase the English house. While the English were prepared to dissolve the factory in Persia, Fremlen was not willing to let the Dutch swindle their house: “Wee hope your knowne providence will prevent them in the designes.”¹³² At last, Thomas Merry conceded that the Persian branch had failed therefore “wee thus relate then unto you that you may take notice in

¹³⁰ William Hall to the Company, Isfahan, 1 December 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.41.

¹³¹ Consultation in Isfahan, 1 June 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.11.

¹³² President Fremlen to Persia, 15 November 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.30.

what bad condition wee now are, and how much worse it may bee.”¹³³ Finally, after nearly a decade of rising tension between the Grand Vizier and the English, the tension burst into a flurry of animated dialogue between the two parties and the king.

Mīrzā Taqī was irritated with the frequent complaints from the English factors over silk shipments, customs, and other matters, and he felt that “wee had dealt discourteously” with him. Before long Mīrzā Taqī hoped to rid Persia of the English and thought “that wee brought noe benefitt att all to the Kingdome, but lived here as his unprofitable guests,” or so he informed Shah Safī.¹³⁴ The one redeemable attribute the English had, Methwold crushed in the peace treaty, which effectively ended the English Company’s usefulness in the region. They lacked the capital the Dutch Company could deploy and English goods were simply impractical. The English merchants just assumed that their relationships from the 1620s held enough weight to carry the English without nurturing further growth, and most importantly they underestimated Persia’s overwhelming distrust of the Portuguese. Naturally, Thomas Merry and his subordinates considered Taqī a “bitter enemy,” but the English failed to understand the nature of deep rooted prejudices which developed between the Portuguese and Safavīds.

In January 1642, tension once again erupted into violence in Gombroon outside the English customs house. Thomas Wheeler had recently arrived and Merry appointed him as the customer in Gombroon. His responsibilities as the customer were primarily focused on looking after the Company’s investment while it remained in Gombroon. By

¹³³ William Hall to the Company, Isfahan, 1 December 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.41v.

¹³⁴ William Hall to the Company, Isfahan, 1 December 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.41v.

now it had been clear that Mīrzā Taqī would not intervene on their behalf in the customs disputes, and Wheeler decided it was the best interest in the Company for him to preemptively establish a guard around the goods and money landed. The *Discovery* recently arrived from India in December 1641 at which time Wheeler claimed that thieves stole three quarters of the laden goods for private customs.¹³⁵ Captain John Allison claimed that many of the goods bypassed customs and effectively circumvented the English.¹³⁶ Wheeler requested assistance from a few men aboard the ship to stand guard near the customs house, and seven men responded to Wheeler's appeal.

The events that followed shocked the Company, and in the evening of the 4 January 1642 “the Sultan heareinge that our watch was strengthened drew together noe small number (our watch and others spectators) reported 200.” Merry reported that the Sultan's men were armed with “gunnes, bows and arrowes cuttleses, clubbs, and other weapons.” That evening the Safavīd soldiers descended on the English customs house and “by degrees salameing and giveing faire language” challenged the English merchants and mariners standing by. The shouting match between the English and Sultan's men quickly escalated to violence. Merry wrote that the Safavīd troops unexpectedly “layd hould of their weapons, and disarmeing them fell to slashing with their cuttlases, and knocking them downe with clubbs and cudgells.” The English received many “greiveous wounds and blowes” that left many severely injured or dead. Merry, however, does not list the men involved in the assault. After the Sultan's men concluded the assault:

¹³⁵ Thomas Merry to the Company, Gombroon, 16 April 1642, IOR/E/3/18, f.47v. Merry's account of the attack was likely drawn from Captain Allison's version of the assault.

¹³⁶ Captain John Allison to Surat, Gombroon, 12 January 1641/42, IOR/E/3/18, f.61.

They had after whc they dragged them by the hooses before the Sultans doore where the Lowres and others had fresh drubbing stickes given them (said a[s] many as twoe men could carry in their armes) which was used by as many as the ground contayne or could come neare to beate our people who spare them not but most unmercifully continued beateing them.¹³⁷

Witnesses to the assault reported that the Sultan's men continued to strike the English until it appeared that they died. If by chance one of the English moved or groaned, witnesses watched on in horror as "they doubled their [strikes] on them untill they thought them deade."¹³⁸ A surgeons-mate by the name of Daniel "was stopped at the Sultans doore and by some of his servants who bid him retourne for he must not pass that way," but before he could return he "had three Arrowes shott into his bodie... 14 inches into his belly and through his small gutts."¹³⁹ He succumbed to his wounds the following morning.

During the aftermath, native observers witnessed the Sultan's officers dragging several Englishmen through the sea and then returned to the customs house where they remained until the middle of the night.¹⁴⁰ Thomas Merry wrote that native onlookers were disgusted by the excessive and cruel nature of the attack. At one point in the attack, numerous bystanders attempted to protect the English furthest from the Sultan's view and out of sight, either by wrapping their cloaks on the individual, having them lay still, or covering them with anything in proximity to prevent further abuse. In the aftermath, the

¹³⁷ Thomas Merry to the Company, Gombroon, 16 April 1642, IOR/E/3/18, f.47v.

¹³⁸ Ibid., f.47v.

¹³⁹ Ibid., f. 48.

¹⁴⁰ Captain John Allison to Surat, Gombroon, 12 January 1641/42, IOR/E/3/18, f.61v.

Safavīd officers granted the English leave to collect the bodies of their men. When Merry arrived, he saw that “5 or 6 of them [Englishmen] seemed rather monsters then men,” particularly one Mr. Fensham who reportedly endured 80 wounds to his head.¹⁴¹ Captain Allison angered and “with teares in my eyes (thinking of nothing but revenge, and had it not bene for the Company’s estate on shoare and the merchants lives theare resident I would have heaved out all the Ballast wch I had formerly taken in and runn the Discovery ashoare” and “beate their durty brittle towne.”¹⁴² The number of casualties is unclear, but at least one individual died from a wound to the belly; although “the rest about them soo cruelly wounded and beaten that most of them lay in dangerous condicion for many dayes after though through gods providence and the surgeons dilligence they are now recouered.”¹⁴³

Thomas Merry was furious as news of the attack trickled into Isfahan. Before 1640, the English and Safavīds worked peacefully together, and in two years the illusion disintegrated after two violent attacks at Gombroon. Merry attributed the scenario to “the Sultans intemperance and madnes in his drinkeing fits.”¹⁴⁴ Their linguist approached the Sultan for an explanation which Thomas Merry found most unsatisfactory. The Sultan blamed the English for the attack citing excessive drinking and “the disorder of our

¹⁴¹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Gombroon, 16 April 1642, IOR/E/3/18, f.47v.

¹⁴² Captain John Allison to Surat, Gombroon, 12 January 1641/42, IOR/E/3/18, f.61v.

¹⁴³ Thomas Merry to the Company, Gombroon, 16 April 1642, IOR/E/3/18, f.48.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., f.48. For an elucidated discussion on alcohol and drug consumption in Persia, see Rudolph Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900* (Princeton University Press, 2005). Matthee claimed that Shah Safi did indeed have a drinking problem (see page 24-25).

Common people,” and some “crosse messages which he received” from the English after forbidding them against sending so many to the customs house for protection.¹⁴⁵ Even then, when in previous incidents where Englishmen indulged in heavy drinking and other illicit activities, nothing quite like this had occurred; if anything complaints were filed against the Englishmen. Merry protested that the men were “sober and honest persons” who would not have abused the locals.¹⁴⁶ To sooth the tension, the Sultan offered restitution for weapons, apparel, and other items taken during the assault, but the factors ignored the Sultan’s “kind expressions” since they likely were “noe other than Judas-like.”¹⁴⁷

IV. “Our Masters are Damaged,” 1642-1652¹⁴⁸

Just months after the smoke settled at Gombroon, the English faced another shift in Isfahan. Shah Safi I expressed little favor towards the English since taking the Safavīd throne, but on the 11 May 1642 he had died. President Fremlen wrote to London in January 1643 that “Shaw Suffe late King of Persia, being in May last advanced as far as Cashone in prosecution of his [...] for reducing Candahar to his obedience, dyed there unworthily.” His death, according to Fremlen, was the consequence of “much drinking

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., f.48v.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Merry to the Company, Gombroon, 16 April 1642, IOR/E/3/18, f.49.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., f.49.

¹⁴⁸ There is not much said about the agency during 1642 aside from Shah Abbas II’s succession and the poor state of English trade.

and other Dyets.”¹⁴⁹ His pre-adolescent son succeeded peacefully as Shah Abbas II, which was not necessarily a positive thing from an English perspective.¹⁵⁰ Instead of a civil war that could potentially remove the Company’s enemies, Mīrzā Taqī and Jani Khān remained in power. President Fremlen expressed “very great hope” in the new Shah after the Dutch obtained a new contract for silk. The Safavīd government, however, rested firmly in their nemesis’ hands.¹⁵¹ In the same year, William Pitt replaced Thomas Merry as chief in Persia who prepared to depart Persia for Surat to join the council of India. At the time of his departure, Merry was indebted to the Persia book for 100 *tūmāns* (£633 6s 8d) at Isfahan. He charged Thomas Adler with settling his business, and Merry departed for India.¹⁵² After a bit of a minor dispute over the charges with President Fremlen, Merry eventually cleared his account. Francis Breton later wrote of Merry: “hee exhibited such pregnant profe of his dilligence, and discrestion, that wee in him findeing your affaires there sufficiently cared for.”¹⁵³

Although English trade had declined to an almost nonexistent state in Persia, President Fremlen received promising news that Shah Abbas II dealt reasonably with

¹⁴⁹ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 17 January 1642/43, IOR/E/3/18, [doc1808] f.3. See also, Mathee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 24-25.

¹⁵⁰ Mathee, *Politics of Trade*, 149-150.

¹⁵¹ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 17 January 1642/43, IOR/E/3/18, [doc 1808] f.3. The foliation corresponds to the first page of the letter, not the location in the volume, which is listed as entry 1808. The foliation pertaining to its position in the volume is illegible.

¹⁵² Thomas Merry to the Company, Surat, 17 January 1642/43, IOR/E/3/18, f.183v. The account books (not extant), according to Fremlen, showed a debt of 150 *tumans*.

¹⁵³ President Breton to the Company, Surat, 27 January 1643/44, IOR/E/3/18, f.326.

their merchants. Thomas Adler and Thomas Codrington approached Shah Abbas II in 1643 for a renewal on their *farmâns*, which he apparently happily obliged the English. Before Merry returned to Surat, he handed a formal complaint over to Shah Abbas II relating to the recent atrocity at the Gombroon customs house. After decade of indifference from Shah Safi I, Shah Abbas II promised that: “if the Sultan should in the future attempt the like his head should pay for it.”¹⁵⁴ It was neither a baseless threat, nor an attempt to appease the English since he offered little in the way of restitution, but it did leave the English a little more optimistic about their future in Persia. English attitudes, however, towards the Safavîds had hardly changed for the better, and the president thought very little of “those ingrate, inhospitable Persians” who refused to quench the Company’s thirst for revenge.¹⁵⁵ It was William Pitt who later wrote that “our threats without performance of seekeing redresse, that we are laughed at by the kings officers and all merchants that use this port.”¹⁵⁶

A natural disaster struck the port of Gombroon in 1644, and William Pitt’s response reflects contemporary attitudes towards the Safavîds. In January 1644 “about ½ and houre before breake of day it pleased god to punish this Bandar with a fearfull Earthquake.” Pitt’s account is likely exaggerated, but the quake “ceased not altogether till about a month since.” The first “shake lasted about ¼ of an houre” and “hath throwne

¹⁵⁴ President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Marine, 20 March 1642/43, IOR/E/3/18, f.203v. This is the final letter composed in Surat during President Fremlen’s term, and the next surviving letter came the following year.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., f.203v.

¹⁵⁶ William Pitt to the Company, 27 March 1644, IOR/E/3/19, f.14v.

downe all the houses in this citty and destroyed whole families in an instant.” At the time of the earthquake, the Sultan of Gombroon was in his “common house” where a wall collapsed onto him “and buried him soe deepe under the Earth.” After several days, those involved in the search eventually pulled the sultan from the rubble. The rescue party found him heavily “brused in his face,” but Pitt commented that the Sultan’s wounds were not mortal. This was not the case, and the Sultan “died the 14th ditto [January] month about 2 dayes after.”¹⁵⁷

Pitt was rather indifferent about the entire event and less sympathetic to the sultan’s plight. He was concerned about the increased risk of mass looting and destruction, but really Pitt was concerned that the locals would loot the English warehouse. Relief came a day before the sultan died when “the Gouvernor of Laure [Lār] who very fortunately arrived here.” The Persian inhabitants of Gombroon suffered tremendously in the aftermath of the earthquake. Many lost their homes and possessions and perhaps loved ones as well. Pitt was also aware that the Dutch house collapsed onto them leaving them “buried under the ruines of their house.” Pitt was not overjoyed per se, but his sympathy was far less than one might expect in a natural catastrophe. He praised “the Almighty for his mercifull protecting of us,” while he claimed that the others suffered from God’s divine judgment. In a sense, Pitt saw the destruction of Gombroon in providential terms in light of the Company’s decline in Persia and also their weak position, or so Pitt reasoned. Since they could not enforce justice, God was compelled to step in on their behalf. He carefully noted how the English survived

¹⁵⁷ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 16 May 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.218-218v.

unscathed, while the Dutch and Persians in Gombroon suffered tremendously. For Pitt, the disaster gave the English retribution for several years of abuse at the hands of the Dutch and Safavīds.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile in Surat, President Fremlen's successor, President Francis Breton, was confident that the English could prevail in the Persian trade. Anglo- Safavīd relations, he argued, could return to its former state if they could muster a significant stock of money. If the Company could muster a significant pool of ready money, it was possible to oust the Dutch from Persia and regain the silk trade. He was convinced that they could purchase silk for as little as 40 *tūmāns* (£253 6s 8d) per load.¹⁵⁹ Breton's plan never came to fruition and with the English Civil War underway, the vision was simply impossible.

The English at least enjoyed a slight increase in customs dues from earlier periods. William Pitt reported a collection of 612 *tūmāns* (£3,876) and 111 *shahis* (£1 17s), which was still much lower than the 1620s but higher than the mid-1630s.¹⁶⁰ By the end of the year, the presidency was less optimistic, and complained that customs "will be less this year, than ever" in lieu of nothing short of "disrespect and affronts" from the Shāhbandar and Sultan.¹⁶¹ It was a small glimmer of hope, but all signs pointed towards the end of the English silk trade in Safavīd Persia.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., f.218-218v; William Pitt to President Breton, Swally Marine, 31 March 1645, IOR/E/3/19, 186v.

¹⁵⁹ President Breton to the Company, Surat, 27 January 1643/44, IOR/E/3/18, f.320.

¹⁶⁰ William Pitt to the Company, 27 March 1644, IOR/E/3/19, f.13.

¹⁶¹ President Breton to the Company, Swally Marine, 20 November 1644, IOR/E/3/19, f.101v. There appears to be some confusion in Surat over the customs, because in a letter dated 3 January 1645, Breton reports that a transcript of Pitt's letter written in April 1644 suggests the English should receive 616 *tumans*.

In November 1643, William Pitt approached Shah Abbas II for a new agreement for trade and customs rights. Pitt requested a *farmân* to keep men at the customs house in Gombroon for protection against customs theft. After the requisite bribes to various officers the English stood before Mīrzā Taqī who informed “us it was the Kings Majesties will wee should have kind useage and respect in his kingdome, and not to bee defrauded in the least of our Customes.”¹⁶² Shah Abbas II declined any requests to station men outside the customs house on the assumption that “a distraction and debate betwixt us and his souldiers” would likely ensue thus negating any advantage of having men stationed there.¹⁶³ Unlike his father, Shah Abbas II did not dismiss their concerns, and he promised that his royal authority would provide all the protection the English needed and the wall surrounding the house should sufficiently protect their goods.¹⁶⁴ Pitt, however, was unsatisfied. While Shah Abbas II promised to protect the English goods, and he may well have, Pitt was concerned that Shah Abbas II would continue to allow the Dutch to avoid paying customs to the English.

In addition, Mīrzā Taqī declined Pitt’s request for a one percent customs rate on all goods sold in Isfahan, which Mīrzā Taqī considered an incongruous request. At first Shah Abbas II seemed to follow in his great-grandfather’s footsteps, and he seemed more than willing to work with the English merchants. The English provided a gift of money and broadcloth to Shah Abbas II, Mīrzā Taqī, and other nobles worth approximately 29,

¹⁶² Ibid., f.13v.

¹⁶³ Ibid., f.13v.

¹⁶⁴ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 16 May 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.216.

455 *shahi* (£931). The *farmân*, however, did little to rectify the problems between the English and the Shāhbandar of Gombroon “it making onely mention that the Shawbandar should use us respectfully.” The English, however, were not quite willing to latch onto just any agreement, and Thomas Codrington rejected the *farmâns* as inadequate and petitioned for a new *farmân*.¹⁶⁵ This motion set Mīrzā Taqī “in a furye” from which he “threwe it from him without replieing a word a long time.”

Despite a promising opening to the new reign, Mīrzā Taqī continued to disregard the English customs in Gombroon. By 1645, the presidency was more than ready to wash their hands of the Persian branch.¹⁶⁶ It had been five years since their last silk load, and so long as Mīrzā Taqī was in power the English had little hope of moving forward. The Company instructed Pitt to force their share of customs from the native merchants landing goods at Gombroon. It was a bold plan that called for the apprehension of all native goods prior to landing in an attempt to exact customs.¹⁶⁷ This idea was met with far less support from the English agents who argued that any such move would incite violence against the English estate and people whom resided in Persia. Meanwhile, the customs collected remained stagnant, and they brought in just 615 *tūmāns* (£3,895).¹⁶⁸ Of

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., f.217v-218.

¹⁶⁶ President Breton to William Pitt, Swally Marine, 31 March 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.186.

¹⁶⁷ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 16 May 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.217.

¹⁶⁸ President Breton to the Company, Swally Marine, 3 January 1645/46, IOR/E/3/19, f.302.

the 615 *tūmāns*, Mīrzā Taqī threatened to punish the shāhbandar if he paid out more than 350 *tūmāns* (£2,216 13s 4d) to the English.¹⁶⁹

Just as the English were prepared to walk away from Persia, another conflict erupted, but this time the English were not involved. The Dutch were frustrated with Mīrzā Taqī's management of their trade. Tension between the two spilled over into an aggressive attack against the southern coastline. The Dutch targeted Hormuz first and then dispatched ten ships with 15,000 men into the Persian Gulf to blockade Hormuz and fortify Qishm.¹⁷⁰ The Dutch, according to English reports, intended to compel the Safavīds into returning money that Safavīd officials extorted from the Dutch Company. If the Safavīds declined, Commander Blocq threatened to bombard the port of Gombroon. Tension in Gombroon escalated further after the governor refused to provide the Dutch with provisions. Pitt commented that Commander Blocq threatened that "if hee would not send their silk and people aboard they would come ashore and fetch them." On the 22 April 1645 the Dutch landed a small force of men and assaulted a group of unsuspecting Banyan merchants.¹⁷¹ The English cautiously stood aside and hoped the attack would turn the tide in Anglo- Safavīd affairs. At Qishm the Dutch were unable to dislodge the Safavīd defenders from the island fort, and, after several days of heavy bombardment, they ceased the attack.¹⁷² It is hard to tell if President Breton was disgusted or amused,

¹⁶⁹ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 9 May 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.19v.

¹⁷⁰ President Breton to William Pitt, Swally Marine, 31 March 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.186.

¹⁷¹ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 16 May 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.221-221v.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, f.228-228v; Robert Cranmer to the Company, Basra, 31 July 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.230-230v.

but he wrote to London that the Dutch attack ended “with dishonor” after they retreated from Qishm.¹⁷³

In Gombroon, the Dutch forced Mīrzā Taqī to concede to their terms. If the Dutch lifted the blockade on Gombroon, Mīrzā Taqī was willing to accept Blocq’s terms. In a rather bold move, Commander Blocq travelled to Isfahan to consolidate the new agreement, but on the 19 August 1645 Blocq died during his journey.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Blocq’s decision to resort to force had the desired effect, and the Dutch received a new *farmān* for two years and the restitution of nearly 4,000 *tūmāns* (£25,333 6s 8d).¹⁷⁵ News of the agreement had not yet reached the Dutch in Gombroon, and Robert Cranmer reported that the Dutch expected ten or fifteen additional ships to arrive to take Hormuz and Qishm by force.¹⁷⁶ Before fighting broke out again, the peace agreement finally arrived in mid-September. This effectively put an end to a brief period of Dutch- Safavīd hostilities, and with it the potential for Anglo- Safavīd recovery. The incident did not favor the English in the end, and to their sheer disgust the agreement provided the Dutch “such libertie and license of trade accordinge to their owne Demands.”¹⁷⁷

The Safavīds, chiefly Mīrzā Taqī and the officers of Gombroon, blamed the English for the attack arguing that if the English had garrisoned the Fort Hormuz

¹⁷³ President Breton to the Company, Swally Marine, 3 January 1645/46, IOR/E/3/19, f.316v.

¹⁷⁴ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 7 September 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.235v.

¹⁷⁵ Report on Dutch petition to Court, Isfahan, 18 September 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.238-238v; Mathee, *Politics of Trade*, 154-155.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Cranmer to the Company, Basra, 17 October 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.275v.

¹⁷⁷ Philip Wylde to President Breton, Gombroon, 16 November 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f. 281.

according to the agreement in 1622, the attack would not have occurred. President Breton expressed very little sympathy for Mīrzā Taqī given that “they are not ignorant how they have enfringed there contract and how impossible it was with that poore pittance of customes.”¹⁷⁸ The English, Breton said, could have prevented the Dutch, but the reluctance of the Safavīd officers to protect the English customs made it impossible for the English to intervene, but “you [Pitt] acquaint the King and Ettamon Dowlatt [Taqi] how displeasing the Dutch proceedings will be to our king and Company.”¹⁷⁹ The English were willing to aid the Safavīds in exchange for their former benefits in customs, which included the annuity of customs and the castle at Hormuz. In May 1645, William Pitt petitioned the Dutch to cease their attacks on the Gulf because “our Masters are Damaged by your unjust proceedings in disturbing of this their port.”¹⁸⁰

After the dust settled on the dispute between the Dutch and Safavīds, the man who tormented the Company for over a decade fell out of Shah Abbas II’s graces, and in October 1645 “Edamont Dowlett was killed in his owne house by Jonne Chaun and 5 more greate men who cut his body all into pieces to noe little joy to all in [...] here except the Queene Mother who as wee heere doth much lament his death.”¹⁸¹ Pitt recorded the attack as it follows below:

He was (at prayer) but Johnne Chaun told him hee Eaten the kings bread underservedly, upon which Nodget Chaun stucke him through the body with his

¹⁷⁸ President Breton to William Pitt, Swally Marine, 31 March 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.186.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., f.186v.

¹⁸⁰ William Pitt’s petition to the Dutch, 15 May 1645, Gombroon, IOR/E/3/19, f.211.

¹⁸¹ William Pitt to President Breton, Isfahan, 6 October 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.269.

dagger and presently the other 4 cutt him in pieces which done Johnne Chaun went unto the King, and holding his sword on his necke, acquainted him of what hee had done.¹⁸²

Afterwards, Pitt wrote that Jani Khan approached Shah Abbas II to report to him. At first it seemed that Shah Abbas was content with Jani Khan's decision, and he "comended him for his paines desiring to know who were his fellow actors with him in the murther and willed him to give him their names." Shah Abbas II promised to reward Jani Khan, but the reward was not quite what Jani Khan might have expected. The young shah, as Pitt recalled, instructed his officers to have "both their heads to be cut off and afterwards sent for the heads of the other 4 of Arrab Chaun, Abasse Cullebeage, Byram AlleBeage Shem and Jebbedar Bashee all which were brought on the Midanne before the kings house."¹⁸³

It would not be wrong to suggest that the English were moderately content after Jani Khān had Mīrzā Taqī and a few of his men were killed, but neither were they overly thrilled about his successor "Callasa" Sultan, whom Pitt described as an "inveterate enemy of Christians."¹⁸⁴ Pitt expected much of the same treatment from Callasa Sultan as Mīrzā Taqī, and he claimed that Callasa Sultan would force the English to convert to Islam.¹⁸⁵ It is unclear where Pitt's assumptions towards Callasa Sultan originated, but Pitt was pessimistic about their future in Persia, nonetheless. The incident took a bizarre turn when Shah Abbas executed Jani Khan and his men for Taqī's death. What makes the

¹⁸² William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 9 May 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.21v-22.

¹⁸³ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 9 May 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.21v-22.

¹⁸⁴ William Pitt to President Breton, Isfahan, 6 October 1645, IOR/E/3/19, f.269-269v; William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 9 May 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.22. The first letter is dated the 6 October, but Matthee suggest the execution of Taqī occurred on the 11 October 1645 according to Dutch sources.

¹⁸⁵ William Pitt to the Company, Gombroon, 9 May 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.22.

incident remarkable is the underlying cause for Shah Abbas' response to the issue at hand which had nothing to do with the Shah's admiration for the former minister; instead, he disapproved of Jani Khan's actions on the basis that he had not given the execution order himself.¹⁸⁶ Professor Matthee wrote that the execution of Mīrzā Taqī and others represented the Shah's coming of age, but it also provided an opportunity for the English to press for a better trading agreement with their nemesis removed from court; which Shah Abbas II apparently granted but to little effect.¹⁸⁷

Callesa Sultan's succession gave the English little to hope for at the Safavīd Court and elsewhere, and with the outbreak of civil war at home it was too little and much too late. English fortunes hardly improved in 1647 when the Sultan of Gombroon blocked all English exports of Persian horses.¹⁸⁸ By the end of the month the shāhbandar allowed the English to ship two of the original twelve horses for Surat.¹⁸⁹ The shāhbandar continued to assist the Dutch in bringing their goods into a private customs house, of which Robert Heynes claimed the Dutch brought "7 or 8 boates of goods which came from the Dutch ship" to the private house.¹⁹⁰ The English looked on as their trade in Persia crumbled, and, after losing their silk, their pepper imports began to wane, especially since recent

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 269v-270. Those executed in the aftermath include: Jani Khan, Nacoda Khan, Arab Khan, "Aboss: quli Beg, "Byram" Ali Beg, and "Jebadar" Bashi.

¹⁸⁷ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 155; President Breton to the Company, Swally Marine, 3 January 1645/46, IOR/E/3/19, f.302v.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Heynes to President Breton, Gombroon, 4 March 1646/47, IOR/G/36/102(a), f.94. This should not be entirely surprising as another round of Safavīd-Mughal conflicts over Kandahar began.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Heynes to President Breton, Gombroon, 28 March 1646/47, IOR/G/36/102(a), f.114-115.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., f.95.

shipments consisted of “despicable quality.”¹⁹¹ In addition, Samuel Wilton was a resident in Isfahan where he observed the arrival of the Mughal Embassy, and Wilton fully expected the two states to clash once again over Kandahar.¹⁹²

Persia had become so unprofitable, that in a general letter home in 1648 President Breton finally informed the Company that “the trade of that place [Persia] in generall as in all other is these pts of the world is become exceeding bad, and all sorts of commodities very much declines.”¹⁹³ The decline of Persia had been evident for several years now, but in early 1648 it was brutally clear to the presidency that Persia was only going to become worse before it improved. In 1649, John Lewis, for example, strictly prohibited Thomas Codrington from taking an allowance, regardless of the necessity.¹⁹⁴ As it happened, the Company collapsed in four short years, and Persian silk was replaced by other forms from China and at home. One of the last times we hear of Persia is from Thomas Merry in 1650, the president reported that the broadcloth sales, as low as they were, ceased in both Agra and Isfahan due to the outbreak of the Safavīd-Mughal War. The trade had died.

V. Conclusion

If we accept Rudolph Mathee’s data, the English never really exported large quantities of silk as Edward Connock initially anticipated. They enjoyed a few irregular

¹⁹¹ Robert Heynes to President Breton, Gombroon, 24 January 1646/47/IOR/E/3/20, f.80v.

¹⁹² Samuel Wilton to President Breton, Isfahan, 30 April 1647, IOR/E/3/20, f.131.

¹⁹³ President Breton to the Company, Swally Marine, 6 January 1647/48, IOR/E/3/20, f. 185.

¹⁹⁴ John Lewis to Thomas Codrington, Isfahan, September 1649, IOR/E/3/21, f.176.

years chiefly 1620 through 1622, 1627, 1629, and 1639 where they exported over 500 bales of silk. In most years they exported just over 300 bales of silk—and most of the time it was lower—but Matthee’s data also reveals that the most productive years were under Shah Abbas I. This is not surprising given that the English also enjoyed their closest relationships with Safavīd officials under Shah Abbas I; which included Mulayim Beg and Imām-qulī Khān and various minor officials in the south. Under these men—which included Shah Abbas—the English were protected, if not revered in Persia. Although silk exports were relatively underwhelming in the same period, the English had a close working relationship with several key figures. In 1629 this all began to change.

The years between 1629 and 1635 start to show minimal signs of corrosion, especially after 1632 when it appeared that the English were unlikely to lend further assistance against the Portuguese unless the Portuguese posed a direct threat to the English fleet. When President Methwold took his council to Goa and news reached Persia of the peace, the Anglo- Safavīd unity disintegrated rapidly. This development is not adequately explained through the English bullion crisis or the widespread disinterest in English goods. The English in India faced the same issues, but after 1657 the English reestablished themselves in northern India. This was possible, in part, through the development of strong ties to local administrators (i.e. Mīr Mūsā) and the timely establishment of a positive reputation among Mughal leadership. In Persia, the opposite ensued. Once the English lost their friends at court, it became much less likely that they would enjoy the benefits they had under Shah Abbas I; the collection of customs being the most noticeable example.

Professor Floor was correct when he stated that the luster of Hormuz wore off by the end of the 1620s, but the Portuguese Peace effectively eliminated the English as a potential ally against the Portuguese. In many ways, the entire English trade in Persia was contingent on the Anglo-Portuguese rivalry. So long as the tension persisted, the English would find solace in Persia. In 1635, the English lost their usefulness, and the next decade and a half illustrated just how much the Anglo-Portuguese aggression formed a central basis in Anglo- Safavīd relations. The English lost favor at court, customs collection became a regular obstacle, silk shipments were bad, and the most obvious turn of events came in the late 1640s with consecutive attacks by the local governor on the English customs house. The essence of English trade in Persia was truly established on a model of silk for ships. After the period looked at here, the English discovered methods to cultivate silk at home, and they imported silk from further east. The Company continued its trade in Persia for silver in exchange for opium and other commodities, but the East India Company's silk trade in Persia ended.

Part II

Introduction: “They were not our friends that would divide us”

The focus in Part I was directed at Anglo-Safavīd relations in the context of the silk trade, and Part II will examine the English lifestyle in Persia. Whereas the previous section examined the interaction between Safavīd officials and the English, this section will focus primarily on the English community and how the Englishmen confronted the surrounding environment and each other. Chapter 4 will examine the “English Road” from southern Persia to Isfahan. It will explore their living conditions, the climate, the people whom they lived near, diet, and the general health of the English community. It will provide an important base for understanding the two chapters that follow.

Chapter 5 will look closely at several rifts that developed within the English community, and how these problems eventually cost the Company a significant amount of money while simultaneously tarnishing the Company’s reputation in Persia. In the previous section, it was argued that specific points of contention created a rift between the Safavīds and the English. Methwold’s peace with the Portuguese in 1635, for example, transformed Anglo-Safavīd relations negatively. Aside from internal friction, we will see how English belligerence carried over into the Safavīd public sphere and ultimately stained their reputation before the great officers of the Safavīd State. The final chapter will take a slightly different approach and consider the pecuniary aspects of the English community. The information is limited, and we do not possess their financial records, at least not in any detail, but what we do have are particulars regarding their

respective salaries, probate records, and other miscellaneous sources that give us an idea of the wealth these men accumulated abroad.

The next three chapters will offer an alternative narrative that illustrates how internal squabbles and fraudulent activity were equally responsible for the implosion of the Company's venture in Persia. In a sense, the first half examined the politics and quasi-commercial aspects of the Anglo- Safavīd movement, and this half will develop as a social history of the English factory in Persia.

Chapter 4: “Life is nothing but a passage vnto Death”

I. Prologue: India

The structure of Anglo-Mughal trade in India was quite different from the trade in Persia. Unlike in Persia where the English had to travel from Jask (or Gombroon) to Isfahan for silk, in India the English established factories in numerous markets along the route from Surat to Agra. The lack of a state monopoly over commodities allowed the English to trade freely throughout Mughal dominions. In Ahmadābād, for example, the English bought large quantities of indigo, but they also purchased Indigo from Agra as well. This level of flexibility allowed the English to spread into various commercial centers and establish permanent or semi-permanent residents in the factories of Surat, Broach, Baroda, Ahmadābād, and Agra. In addition, a few factors travelled to Lucknow, Cambay, and further south to Rājāpur and elsewhere along the Malabar Coast to explore new commercial opportunities.

The English lived in relatively close proximity to each other (see Table 4.1) in India, but there was a significantly larger English community in India compared to Persia. The illustration provides a sense of how long it took for factors to travel between factories and perhaps more importantly, the time it took for correspondence to disseminate throughout the English community in India. Apart from Agra, the English residing in Surat, Broach, Baroda, and Ahmadābād were in reasonably close proximity to each other. A certain level of isolation existed in these factories compared to modern standards, but an Englishmen in Ahmadābād could get a letter to Surat in seven or ten

days. A courier could make the trip in a shorter time, but it is unclear how long that may have taken. Providing the recipient responded promptly, it would take anywhere from fourteen to twenty days for Surat to receive a response from Ahmadābād. In the worst scenario, Surat might wait nearly four months before they received a response from their subordinates in Agra, while letters between Surat, Broach, and Baroda were exchanged quite regularly.

Overland from Surat	Distance in days
Broach	2-3
Baroda	5-6
Ahmadābād	7-10
Burhānpur*	16-19
Mandū*	10-11
Ajmer*	18
Agra via Burhānpur	55
Agra via Ahmadābād	60

Table 2: Distances from Surat. The calculations in days are based on rough estimations given in the *Original Correspondence*. The asterisk denotes the cities that the English often visited but did not establish a formal residence.

The English houses in India were ample in size, particularly the house in Surat, and were typically two stories. They rented dwellings that served as a warehouse and living quarters, or as was often the case the lower chambers were used as storage. The Surat house, or factory, was significantly larger than the typical English factory, but it was also home to several Englishmen. Peter Mundy described the English house in Surat as “the best sort in Towne” and considerable in size, having two floors and a warehouse

the English used for storage.¹ Christopher Farewell claimed that the house was “in all respects saue lodging, which with breuity was very commodiously supplied.”² The English residence in Surat, and similarly in Broach, Baroda, Ahmadābād, and Agra, were comfortably furnished. A central courtyard included a lush garden lined with numerous fruit trees and a bath or tank where the English could relax and bathe. In most English residences between three and four men occupied the house. Surat was an exceptional case that saw anywhere from fifteen to twenty men in residence, and the entire Surat presidency—subordinate factories included—consisted between thirty and forty men on the higher end.³ Boys and other servants landed from the fleet are often left unnamed in the correspondence, so the number is an approximation.

Life was reasonably comfortable for the English from the perspective of their living conditions, and food was readily available. European travelers and Englishmen reported on the wide availability of fruit, rice, and meat (see Figure 7).⁴ Pork was readily

¹ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, v.2. ed. Mary Lavinia Anstey (London, 1914 reprint), 25.

² Christopher Farewell, *An East-India Colation; or, A Discourse of Travels; Set forth in Sundry Observations, briefe and delightfull; collected by the Author in a Voyage he made unto the East-Indies, of almost foure yeares continuance. Written by C.F.* (London: Printed by B.A. and T.F., 1633), 16-18.

³ List of Factors in Persia and India, July 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.104-105; Merchants employed in Surat and subordinate factories, 1648, IOR/E/3/20, f.215-216.

⁴ John Albert de Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo, (a Gentleman to the Embassy) from Persia, into the East-Indies. Containing A particular Description of Indosthan, the Moguls Empire, the Oriental Ilands, Japan, China, and the Revolutions which happened in those Countries, within these few years. In III Books. Written originally by Adam Olearius, Secretary to the Embassy. Faithfully rendered into English by John Davies of Kidwelly. The Second Edition Corrected.* (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Thomas Basset, at the Mitre near Temple-Barr, and at the George near St. Dunstans Church in Fleet-street, 1669), 20; Monsieur de Montfort, *An Exact and Curious Survey of all the East Indies, even to Canton, the chiefe cittie of China: All duly preformed by land, by Monsieur de Monfart, the like whereof was never hetherto, brought to an end. Newly translated out of the travillers Manuscript* (London: Printed by Thomas Dawson, for William Arondell, in Pauls Church-yard, at the Angell, 1655), 19-20; Edward

available due to Muslim and Hindu dietary restrictions. On one occasion, Peter Mundy was treated to a roast beef meal that “the trueth is, it was a peece of Buffalo, both hard and Tough, a sufficient tryall of our Jawes and stomachs, but for better disgestion wee added a Cupp of Sack.”⁵ The Company carefully restricted excessive consumption of food and house expenses to keep costs low, but different types of food were accessible if the English had the funds to purchase it. Aside from the Gujarati famine in 1631, the English did not lack for food, even if some Englishmen decided to maintain frugal diets: “I doe onely eate once every day which is a hearty dinner Wednesday excepted upon which day I drinke no wine nor eate anything at all upon Mondayes and Frydayes.”⁶ Geoffrey Park suggested that in the typical year in England, most Englishmen consumed 700 calories more than the basic metabolic requirment (1500).⁷ While Methwold tells his readers that he skipped a few meals, he recorded only that he ate a stew of boiled meat and rice and not the portion. A few consumables the English relied on were wine and *arak*, but beer was imported from London as well.

Terry, *A Voyage to East-India. Wherein Some things are taken notice of in our passage thither, but many more in out abode there, within that rich and most spacious Empire Of the Great Mogol. Mix't with some Parallel Observations and inferences upon the storie, to profit as well as delight Reader. Observed by Edward Terry (then Chaplain to the Right Honorable Sr Thomas Roe Knight, Lord Ambassadour to the great Mogol) now Rector of the Church at Greenford, in the County of Middlesex* (London, printed by T.W. for J. Martin, and J. Allekrye, at the Bell in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1655), f.92.

⁵ Peter Mundy, *The Travels*, 58.

⁶ William Methwold's letter home to his wife, Surat, 22 December 1634, ADD 11268

⁷ Parker, *Global Crisis*, 20-21. Parker cited an example during the Italian Plague (1630-31) where each patient in a local hospital received a half kilo each of bread, meat, and wine which approximately was 1500 calories.



Figure 7: Array of fruit trees and plants in Linschoten *John Hvighen van Linschoten. His Discours of Voyages* (1598).

The rough estimation of landed agents in Persia and India was about 406 men some of which spent as little as one or two months in Surat before departing to a permanent residence elsewhere.⁸ Of these men, an estimated 139 perished while an additional 18 died during their journey home or further east. From 1608 until 1652, an estimated 51% of the Company’s men perished in Persia and India. This data does not include the mariners who fell ill aboard the fleet and perished at port, and it reflects only those who served on the ground in the factories. Other than a brief moment during the Gujarati famine of 1631, the English fared quite well in India. Some 306 men resided in India while approximately 100 made residence in Persia, and this is particularly of interest once mortality rates are isolated to each region. In India, the records suggest an estimated 88 Englishmen perished in India, which was about 29% of the Englishmen who resided there during the period covered here (1608-1652). By comparison, Keith Thomas has argued that during times of plague, for example in 1603, 1625, and 1636, roughly a

⁸ This figure was determined after combing through both the original correspondence and William Foster’s *Calendar of Letters Received*.

sixth of the population in London perished. He argued that London was exceedingly bad, but broader mortality statistics for England are generally elusive given the lack of reliable statistics in the archival record.⁹ It is possible that the author of the correspondence in Surat and elsewhere failed to record the deaths of obscure individuals. There are numerous individuals who have gone unnamed in the records and it is virtually impossible to trace these people; but the data suggests that Englishmen coped with the Northern Indian environment pretty well.

The English seemed to adapt to the Indian environment, and the factors expressed very little dissatisfaction with the Indian climate. The “bloody flux” brought more Englishmen to their graves than murder and accidental deaths combined, but just under a third of all Englishmen perished due to conditions in India. From a modern perspective, that sounds astounding, but when considering their counterparts in Persia the data seems much more encouraging for those who resided in India. Life in India was by no measure easy, but the vast majority of Englishmen lived within ten days of each other. From Surat to Ahmadābād an estimated twenty to thirty Englishmen resided within reach of each other and this is not including the months of October and November when the annual fleet from England arrived. This chapter will establish a foundation for subsequent chapters by illustrating how the Englishmen confronted an entirely different environment and circumstances in Persia. Whereas life in India was relatively comfortable, the Englishmen faced a brutal environment in southern Persia where many of the English spent the majority of their time at Jask or Gombroon.

⁹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 7-8.

II. *The English Silk Road*: “the most horrid way in the world”

The English road began in southern Persia, at Jask and later Gombroon, and ended in Isfahan. To understand the physical details of the road to Isfahan we must look outside of the Company records. In the first chapter we looked at several reports from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to determine what Englishmen may have learned about Persia before the venture in Persia began. These reports and travelogues, however, tell us little about the territory south of Isfahan and the road between Gombroon and the Safavīd capital. While the early material was certainly useful in providing a basis of information, contemporary reports and travelers show us what the English merchants experienced during the seventeenth century.

The English merchants were plentiful in their descriptions of the trade and things pertaining to the Company’s estate, but they were considerably stingy with providing details of the road, culture, and people of the region. We can, however, use the robust travel narratives that European travelers such as Sir Thomas Herbert (1627), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1632), Adam Olearius (1635), and John Albert de Mandelslo (1635) produced. Their accounts allow us to reconstruct the English road and the social-cultural environment that Englishmen were immersed, and it is probable that much of their information came directly from their fellow Europeans in Persia, particularly the English merchants. Their respective accounts went through numerous rounds of printing in several editions.

European travelers provide invaluable information, but, as R.W. Ferrier argued, modern readers should read their accounts with some level of skepticism since some

aspects are embellished while others misunderstood.¹⁰ Of Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Roger Stevens wrote “He is good on commerce, weak on antiquities and fairly successful in concealing his ignorance of Persian.”¹¹ Tavernier was the son of an engraver from Antwerp, and he decided to take up travelling before making his fortune in commerce. His first journey to Persia was in 1632, but as Stevens has pointed out Tavernier made at least six trips between 1632 and 1668. His account of Persia is the result of several trips to and from Persia.¹² For all of his distaste towards the infrastructure and customs of the country, he must have found something appealing since he spent a great deal of his life travelling between Europe and Persia. European travel accounts may have a certain set of limitations in attempting to define Persian cultural practices, and they were certainly prejudiced. But these sources provide insight nonetheless of the environment where the English merchants resided.

William Bell’s forlorn grave stands as a solemn reminder that the English factory in Persia was a lonely and hazardous undertaking.¹³ Unlike in India where the Mughals established an open market, Shah Abbas I forced the English to buy directly from his agents in Isfahan. In India, the English tapped into several commercial centers that allowed for commercial flexibility. In Persia, the English relied primarily on two factories

¹⁰ R.W. Ferrier, “The First English Guide Book to Persia: A Description of the Persian Monarchy,” in *Iran*, v.15 (1977), 80. Ferrier is particularly critical of Thomas Herbert’s observations.

¹¹ Roger Stevens, “European Visitors to the Safavid Court,” in *Iranian Studies*, v.7, n3/4 (1974), 424.

¹² *Ibid.*, 424.

¹³ MSS EUR f370/824. This Latin inscription on a burial tomb marks the site of William Bell’s burial in Isfahan. Wilmvs: Bell [..]/Ioanf: Northumbr[..]/Apvd: regem: abbas/pro: anglia: agiens/ano: dni: 1624: at: sva/33: Mensis: feb: die: 24/spahani: defvnctvs/adpivm: peregrinvm.

over the course of the period—Isfahan and Jask then Gombroon—but they also kept a house in Shīrāz. Compared to English life in India, the English merchants did not live in close proximity to each other. Merchants employed in Gujarat moved between Surat, Broach, Baroda, and Ahmadābād which were all reasonably close. Agra of course was much further away, but the English relied predominately on goods from Gujarat and Cambay in the Sind Province. Comparatively, the English merchants in Persia were spread exceedingly thin, and they were effectively cut off from their colleagues in India. Aside from pearls, carpets, and horses, silk was the main prize and for that they had to travel to Isfahan.

Cities	Days from Jask	Days from Gombroon	Days from Shīrāz	Days from Surat
Mogustan	8	-----	16	-----
Shīrāz	24	24-32	-----	-----
Isfahan	49	32-42	10-25	44-69 (J) 79-109 (G)
Gombroon	-----	-----	24	30-60
Jask				12-27

Table 3: The table charts the rough distances from the ports of Jask and Gombroon to the interior cities. From Persia, the fleet returned to Surat before making its 7 or 8 months journey to London. “J” refers to Jask while “G” is Gombroon. The voyage for ships returning to Surat lasted as long as the outgoing voyage.

The distance between Surat and Persia made it significantly more difficult for the President of Surat to manage affairs in Persia. Traveling to Persia from India took a fair

amount of time (table 3), and this limited the contact between the factors in Persia and India. The far left hand column indicates the destination, and the data illustrates the distance in days from the point of origin depicted in bold at the top of the table. Table 4 illustrates the distance the English had to cover from port to Isfahan, and the distance between Surat and Persia.¹⁴ The variation in the data, for example from Surat to Gombroon, is due to a lack of consistency in the material. Most commentators agree that the voyage from Surat to Gombroon lasted about two months. Thomas Aldworth was the exception and claimed that English vessels could reach Jask in twelve days after departing Surat, but he seems to have been in the minority.¹⁵ While smaller vessels travelling alone could perhaps arrive in less time, the voyage according to most reports took the full amount of time as depicted in the table. Travel through the interior of Persia was much more difficult to assess because the figures are limited and inconsistent. The English travelled previously established roads from port to Isfahan, but the terrain was difficult for European travelers and merchants alike.¹⁶ A last point, and one that should be fairly clear from the table, is that communication was a dreadfully slow process.

¹⁴ Thomas Doughty to the Company, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:100-102; George Pley to Robert Middleton, 30 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:282; Ship Log of Expedition, 1627/28, L/MAR/A/L, f.14-18; Methwold to London, Surat, 6 March 1635/36, IOR/E/3/15; Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Surat, 19 August 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:99; Captain Nicholas Downton to the Company, 20 November 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:170; William Edwards to the Company, 1615, *Letters Received*, 2:153; William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 27 March 1622, IOR/G/29/1, f.125; Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia, and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1684), 245-255.

¹⁵ Thomas Aldworth to the Company, Surat, 19 August 1614, *Letters Received*, 2:99.

¹⁶ Willem Floor, "The Bandar 'Abbas-Isfahan route in the Late Safavid era (1617-1717)," in *Iran*, v.37 (1999).

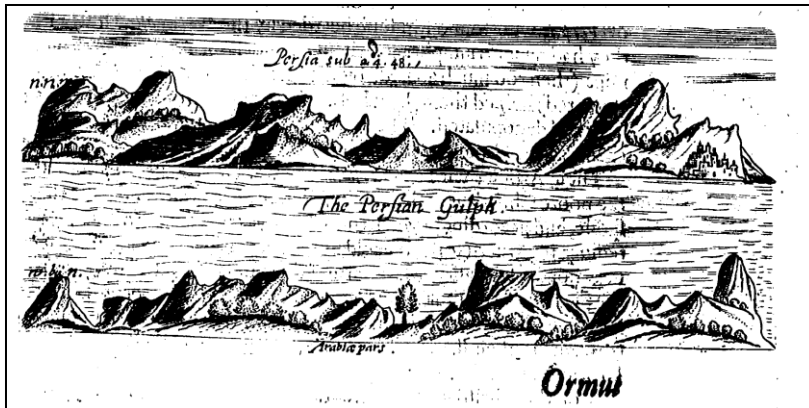


Figure 8: View from Hormuz to mainland Persia in Sir Thomas Herbert's *A Relation of Some Yeares Travels* (1634).



Figure 9: Adam Olearius' map of Persia as it appeared in the 1669 edition of his travels. Olearius' map depicts a very mountainous topography.

Before 1622 the English relied on Jask as their gateway into Persia, and from Jask they began their lengthy journey to Isfahan. William Biddulph claimed that Jask was little more than “a poor fishing town.” While the English acquired a warehouse near water’s

edge, they did not acquire a formal house.¹⁷ From Jask the English travelled to Isfahan via Mogastan “which is eight days’ journey from Jasques” and “as poor a town as Jasques.”¹⁸ Shīrāz sat “16 days further” north and from there the English travelled the “25 days’ journey from Siras” to Isfahan. The initial route from Jask to Isfahan was longer, and Jask provided very little protection from the Portuguese and local rebels. Jask was not a particularly good option, but it was the only viable port the English fleet could safely ride at. Having reliable protection was an essential after English caravans returned from Isfahan loaded with silk. Fort Jask reportedly was in shambles and could only shield the English minimally in the event of an attack.¹⁹ The English commented very little on Jask, and by the time contemporary European travelers arrived the English had long since dissolved their warehouse at Jask.

¹⁷ William Biddulph to the Company, 31 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:288.

¹⁸ Thomas Doughty to the Company, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:100-101.

¹⁹ Thomas Doughty to the Company, Surat, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:101-102.



Figure 10: John Speed's map of Persia in *A Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World* (1631). The border depicts several classes of Persianmen and women, and the cities of Ormuz, Taurus, Gilan, and Isfahan.

In 1623, the English established a residence in Gombroon replacing their house in Jask. According to Mandelslo the English house “lie near the Seas” for convenience, and he claimed that it was one of the best houses in the city.²⁰ By acquiring a house in Gombroon, the English established a suitable residence that was under the protection of

²⁰ John Albert de Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo, (a Gentleman to the Embassy) from Persia, into the East-Indies. Containing A particular Description of Indosthan, the Moguls Empire, the Oriental Ilands, Japan, China, and the Revolutions which happened in those Countries, within these few years. In III Books. Written originally by Adam Olearius, Secretary to the Embassy. Faithfully rendered into English by John Davies of Kidwelly. The Second Edition Corrected.* (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Thomas Basset, at the Mitre near Temple-Barr, and at the George near St. Dunstans Church in Fleet-street, 1669), f.7.

Note that Mandelslo's book was published with Adam Olearius' *The Voyages and Travels*. To avoid confusion I have decided to cite each individual text, and as a result the title above is the second half of a larger title of the work; but it is the title of Mandelslo's travel account.

the fortification.²¹ Mandelslo praised Gombroon and credited it for its place as a major center of trade, and he suggested that it was well protected “between two good Castles.” Similar to the English house in India, “the lower rooms serve for kitchins and warehouses, and the upper for Lodgings, which are the more commodious in this respect, that being high, they are the more fit to receive the wind of all sides” to provide some relief from the heat.²² Sir Thomas Herbert described the ceilings as “built low.” The house had a small courtyard and the upper floors included a balcony that wrapped around the entire structure.²³ Houses in Gombroon were constructed of stone amalgamate blocks consisting of “clay, sand, shredded-straw and Horse-dung.” Builders covered the structure with several layers of straw, sticks, and clay.²⁴ The bricks were not kiln fired, however, but “hardened by the Sun.” Windows were covered with “wooden trellized made to shut and open as they see cause.”²⁵

Contemporary European travelers—especially Herbert, Mandelslo, and Tavernier—commented disapprovingly on the rather narrow and unclean state of the city streets. While Mandelslo appreciated the commercial importance of Gombroon, the combination of “very unwholsom” air and the streets that were “narrow, irregular, and not kept clean” greatly disturbed him. Likewise, Herbert was thoroughly troubled when “troops of Jackalls which here more than elsewhere nightly invaded the Town, and for

²¹ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.118-119.

²² Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.7.

²³ Sir Thomas Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels into divers parts of Africa and Asia the Great*. 3rd ed. (London, Printed by J. Best for Andrew Crook, at the Green-Dragon at St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1664), f.119.

²⁴ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.7.

²⁵ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.118-119.

prey violated the graves by tearing out the dead, all the while ululating in offensive noises and echoing out their sacrilege.”²⁶

Gombroon was windy and it rained infrequently, although in 1632 Mandelslo reported that a “great shower” ended a three year drought in the region.²⁷ In the summer months, Herbert reported that the residents of Gombroon retreated to Lār where they would avoid the treacherous heat and had access to small rivers. Along the riverbank, rocks and trees provided some shade from the sun. A few local residence, however, stayed behind in Gombroon and “lie naked in troughs filled with water, which nevertheless so perboils their flesh as makes it both exceeding smooth, and apt to take the least cold when any winterly weather succeeds the heat.”²⁸ This cooling method apparently began in Hormuz according to Herbert.

The heat was unpleasant, even for local residents, but the tavern business seems to have flourished as a consequence, or so Hebert would have us believe. Taverns, wrote Herbert, were situated in the marketplace and “here being plenty of Shyrax wines brought in long-necked glasses and jarrs that contain some gallons.” Local residents also enjoyed coffee houses in the evening, and Herbert observed that “coffee or Coho is a black drink or rather broth, seeing they sip it as hot as their mouth can well suffer out of small China cups.” But, he continued, the drink was neither pleasing to “the eye nor taste, being black and somewhat bitter.” Herbert nonetheless admitted that coffee had a few redeeming

²⁶ Ibid., f.120.

²⁷ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.7.

²⁸ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.119.

qualities such as comforting “raw stomachs, helps digestion, expels wind, and dispels drowsines.”²⁹

The inhabitants of Gombroon fascinated Mandelslo. He wrote that “persons of quality, and Merchants” dressed in the Persian fashion, while the “rest go naked and cover only the privy parts.” He is not terribly specific here, but it seems probable that the English exchanged their heavy woolen clothing for lighter Persian garments. Mandelslo, however, was most interested in the women, because they wore “about their arms and legs a great many Rings, or Plates of Silver, Brass, or Iron, according to their conditions and abilities.” They “thrust through their left nostril a Gold Ring,” and in their ears the local women adorned heavy pendants. Figure 8 below is an illustration of a Persian woman and one particular type of nose jewel. Sir Thomas Herbert, however, was particularly offended by one group of women, and he described them as rather unbecoming:

But with these ‘tis no great injury to couple those filthy prostitutes ancient times properly termed Wolves, that infect this Town when seasonable weather (which is in November, December, and January) makes it the rendezvouz for Merchants and Travellers from most places; Women I mean who as to their bodies are comely, but as to their dress and disposition loathsome and abominable... And as a supplement to all the rest, want no *fucus*, for complexion; which, save for the desire they have to please white people.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., f.119.

³⁰ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.121.

Herbert was thoroughly displeased with the manner in which local women, and even the men, dressed. He perceived the residents of Gombroon as “hypocrites who are but half evil or corrupted in part.”³¹



Figure 11: An engraving of a Persian man and woman in Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels* (1664).

The Portuguese control over Hormuz and the Persian Gulf had one positive side effect from an English perspective. Whereas Persian, Arabic, and even Turkish were the primary languages, the inhabitants in the south—whether Persians, Arab, and Indian—“all in a manner speak the Portuguez Language.” Mandelslo suggests that the local inhabitants had a sufficient understanding of Portuguese after several decades of commerce, but by 1638 they were “the only Nation which is not permitted to come to Gamron.”³² The Company merchants who spent time in the Levant prior to joining the Company had some knowledge of Turkish, but most of the factors had at least some

³¹ Ibid., f.122.

³² Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.8-9.

knowledge of Portuguese. We can assume that the English could communicate with at least a few native merchants in Gombroon, but the English correspondence does not make much light of this.

Lār was perhaps the most significant town between Gombroon and Shīrāz; at least it is mentioned in the English correspondence more frequently. Dozens of small villages littered the road from Gombroon to Shīrāz, but the English merchants rarely, if ever, mention them. Between Gombroon and Lār travelers passed an abundance of water cisterns that one scholar described as beautiful and palatial in design.³³ Herbert mentioned that the residents near Band-Ally (caravanesera between Gombroon and Lār) “fetch their water usually from a great large cistern which they call a tanck, rather resembling a vault or cellar under ground more than a spear deep.” The water was “sweet to the last bucket,” but even Herbert was unconvinced that the water was potable considering “how long ‘tis kept and without motion.”³⁴

Lār “is seated at the foot of a Mountain, in a spacious Plain,” and provided refuge for southerners in the summer months.³⁵ The city of Lār had deteriorated from its former glory, and an earthquake in 1593 destroyed “three thousand houses” leaving a reported 3,000 inhabitants dead.³⁶ Herbert claimed that contrary to the “old authors” the province

³³ Willem Floor, “The Bandar ‘Abbas-Isfahan route in the Late Safavid era (1617-1717),” in *Iran*, v.37 (1999), 67.

³⁴ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.124.

³⁵ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f. 4-5.

³⁶ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f. 126-128.

of Lār was “barren having onely Date-trees or Palms.”³⁷ Mandelslo commented that the “water they have within it is brackish; so that those of the Garrison are oblig’d to save that which falls from the sky.”³⁸ Herbert also complained that “the rain-water is corrupt” rendering the water less than adequate for consumption.³⁹ Yet Mandelslo wrote that the people in the region “drink only water” and “there is no Wine, but an abundance of Dates” along the road, especially between Lār and Shīrāz.⁴⁰ The water collected in the cistern, if used infrequently, transformed from fresh rain water into a stagnant cesspool of parasites that caused illness if not boiled.⁴¹ Herbert found few redeeming qualities of Lār and even less of the inhabitants of the province, describing them as “blear-ey’d, rotten tooth’d, and mangie legg’d.” In order to cope with the scorching heat, the people wore a “wreath of Callico tied about their heads, their mid-parts circled with a Zone of vari-coloured plad, with sandals upon their feet.”⁴²

Shīrāz was roughly halfway between Isfahan and Gombroon, but the terrain was difficult to navigate and ranged from desolate and dry mountainous regions to high sandy plains.⁴³ The road was long and difficult, and the scarcity of water forced the English and

³⁷ Ibid., f.126-128.

³⁸ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f. 4-5.

³⁹ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f. 126-128.

⁴⁰ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f. 4-5.

⁴¹ Floor, *The Bandar ‘Abbas-Isfahan route*, 69.

⁴² Ibid., f.129.

⁴³ Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

other travelers “to go a great way out of their Road to find a Spring; and sometimes they shall ride ten or twelve Leagues.”⁴⁴ The lack of accessible water and barren mountains made the journey difficult and uncomfortable in the heat. Mandelslo (travelling southward) declared that “the five dayes following were the most troublesome of all my life...through the most horrid way in the world.” A stretch of the road, just south of the city of Scharim, passed through nearly impassable terrain that Mandelslo credited Imām-*qu*lī Khān with repairing, but “a man cannot pass, but in great danger of his life, by reason of the uneven and narrow wayes between steepy mountains on the one side, and dreadful precipices on the other.” It was February when Mandelslo arrived at this stretch of the road, and there was still snow on the ground. Mandelslo nearly fell to his death after his “horse’s hoof...stumbled upon” him forcing him towards the edge of the precipice, but he “caught hold of a wild Almond tree.” Accidents were apparently not all that uncommon in that segment of the journey.⁴⁵

The English rented a house in Shīrāz, but there does not appear to be a contemporary account of it, at least not with any significant detail. One passage suggests that the English house in Shīrāz was not quite as robust or solid as their residence in Gombroon. In 1641 heavy rainfall reduced the house to ruins since the roof “as generally all others are, being covered with earth” washed away and the walls were soaked beyond reparations.⁴⁶ Aside from this brief mention, details of the house in Shīrāz have

⁴⁴ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia, and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1684), f.143.

⁴⁵ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.4.

⁴⁶ Consultation in Isfahan, 1 June 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.11.

not survived. Herbert, however, provides a general description of the houses in Shīrāz, and they were much like their counterparts in Isfahan and Gombroon. The bricks were “sun-burnt, hard, and durable,” while the building was “not very lofty (seldome exceeding two stories) flat and tarrased above, having Balconies and Windows curiously trellized.”⁴⁷ The interior was covered with carpets, but he noticed that the occupants used very few pieces of furniture. Herbert described the Sultan’s house as having “painted glass” windows, which was unusual for housing. Like most houses in Persia, they had a central garden “forrests rather” of “Cheuaers (resembling our Elm) and Cypresses.”⁴⁸ Herbert identified other types of trees both ornamental and fruit bearing, such as, ash, pine, peach, orange, and various other species. The English house was likely no different from the other structures and the only real difference was perhaps the amount of furniture the English probably kept in their house. There are two inventory lists from 1629 for the house in Surat and Ahmadābād for examples. Both houses were supplied with cooking instruments, cupboards, tables, chairs, stools, carpets, and various other items.⁴⁹ From this we can infer that the houses in Gombroon and Isfahan were well supplied. We also know that William Gibson’s household came under scrutiny in the 1630s for excessive plates and other items.

⁴⁷ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.137.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f.137.

⁴⁹ Household supplies in Amadavad, 20 November 1629, IOR/G/40/24, f.36-36v; Inventory list of the household pf Surat, 6 December 1629, IOR/G/40/24, f.39-41.

The cities inhabitants, at least from Herbert's view were lewd. He claimed that "the women likewise for fourteen days have liberty to appear in publick; and when loose (like birds enfranchised) lose themselves in a labyrinth of wanton sports." On the other hand, the men, he claimed, spent their time drinking. Herbert penned this catchy verse in response: "They revel all the night, and drink the round, Till wine and sleep their giddy brains confound." The heat "makes lust so outrageous" that the people in Shīrāz were prone to unchaste lives.⁵⁰ Herbert does not draw attention to it, but the English merchants (as will be seen below) were equally as guilty of the same acts Herbert abhorred. From Shīrāz, the English set their course for Isfahan.

The road between Shīrāz and Isfahan consisted of numerous small villages or caravansaries for lodging. When Mandelslo departed Isfahan in January, merchant traffic along the route was relatively heavy. His journey seemed painless until he reached Gusti where "it were very bad weather, and snow'd all night." The mountain pass to the south was "a much worse way" since the road was covered in snow. Mandelslo, however, noted two landmarks of interests during his journey. Englishmen travelling north towards Isfahan would have passed through Mardasch, which was the site of "the ancient Persepolis" and the "ruines of Cyrus's Palace" (figure 9). Although, Mandelslo complained that "the barbarous people thereabouts ruine it daily more and more, and they convey away the stones to carry on private buildings." The other landmark was located further north in the village Madere Soliman where a "little Chappel built of white

⁵⁰ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.139.

Marble,” which Mandelslo claimed was “the Sepulchre of the Mother of Seach Soliman, the 14 Caliph, or King, of the posterity of Aaly [Ali].”⁵¹

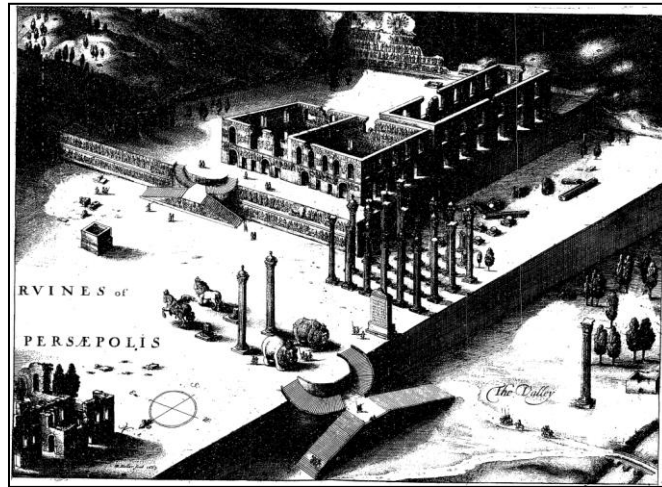


Figure 12: Engraving of Persepolis in Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels*.

In 1637, Adam Olearius visited Isfahan as an ambassador to the Safavīd court for the Duke of Holstein. Isfahan, Olearius wrote, lay “in the Province of Erak [Arak]...in a spacious Plain, having all sides, at about three or four leagues distance, a high mountain.” Olearius described Isfahan as a large city consisting of “above eighteen thousand Houses, and about five hundred thousand Inhabitants.” The mountains surrounding the city “being cover’d with Snow for near nine Months of the year” created a demand for English woolen cloth. Olearius was fascinated with the robust and thriving environment of the city, but he found the Persian gardens in Isfahan most pleasing. One particular component that struck Olearius was not the arrangement of ornamental flowers, but “their Gardens full of all sorts of Fruit-trees, and especially to dispose of them into pleasant

⁵¹ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.2-3.

Walks.” Fountains stood in the center, large and made of marble, for the use of watering their trees and other plants.⁵²

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier’s description of Isfahan is quite biased, having found the Safavīd capital “ill laid out” and filthy. He complained that sitting outside of every home were “certain troughs to receive the filth and ordure of every Family.” A man from the country, according to Tavernier, “comes with his arse to lade the dung,” but he thought the smell was unbearable and infectious. “The Circuit of Ispahan, taking the Suburbs all in, is not much less than that of Paris; but the number of inhabitants is ten times greater at Paris than at Ispahan,” wrote Tavernier. It baffled Tavernier that a “City should be so large and yet so ill peopl’d,” and the city was surrounded by a wall of “earth to which do belong some pittiful Towers.” The roads, as with most cities Tavernier claimed, were narrow and unpaved, ranging between dusty in the summer to wet sludge in the winter.⁵³ Tavernier complained that “the Streets are many times annoy’d with Loads of Ordure and the Carcasses of dead beasts, which cause a most filthy stench.”⁵⁴

The Meydān, or piazza, where merchants sold their wares stretched for “seven hundred” feet (figure 10). Just outside of the Meydān a “striking-Clock” stood that “was made by an English-man named Festy.” The Meydān was an important marketplace in

⁵² Adam Olearius, *The Voyages and Travells of the Ambassadors sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein, to the great Duke of Muscovy, and the King of Persia. Begun in the year M. DC. XXXIII and finsih’d in M. DC. XXXIX Containing a Compleat History of Muscovy, Tartary, Persia. And other adjacent Countries. With several Publick Transactions reaching near the Present Times; In VII Books* (London: Printed for John Starkey, and Thomas Basset, at the Mitre near Temple-Barr, and at the George near St. Dunstans Church in Fleet-street, 1669), f. 217-219.

⁵³ Tavernier, *Collections of Travels*, f.149-152.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 149.

central Isfahan. English records provide few details of their experience in Isfahan, and it is difficult to determine where exactly Englishmen visited. The position of the English house is also obscured, but it is quite probable that the English merchants spent some time in the Meydān. They certainly spent at least some time in the Christian neighborhood nearby where the “wine-taverns and other Drinking-Houses” were located. Olearius suggests that several types of drinking houses existed, but he divided them between those houses that “sell wine” and those places that accommodate “those who have the least tenderness for their Reputation.”⁵⁵ In the same quarter, tea, tobacco, and medicine shops lined the streets as well. As we will see late in the chapter, some merchants, such as Robert Manly and Reverend Cardro, were inclined to excessive drinking. These men, and others like them, likely attended one or more of these drinking houses in Isfahan and Shīrāz.

The Meydān featured two mosques and the shah’s palace (figure 13), and Tavernier reported that both the Carmelites and Augustinians has houses in the Meydān. The Meydān was a bustling market-place except for the area outside of that palace, which was “always kept clean, without shops because the King comes often abroad in the Evening to see Lions, Bears, Bulls, Rams, Cocks, and all other sort of Creatures fight which are brought thither.”⁵⁶ On Fridays, people from the country transport their goods from their villages to sell at the Meydān. It was a rich environment where vendors of all sorts of commodities gathered regularly.

⁵⁵Olearius, *The Voyages and Travells*, f.219-223.

⁵⁶Tavernier, *Collections of Travels*, f.151.

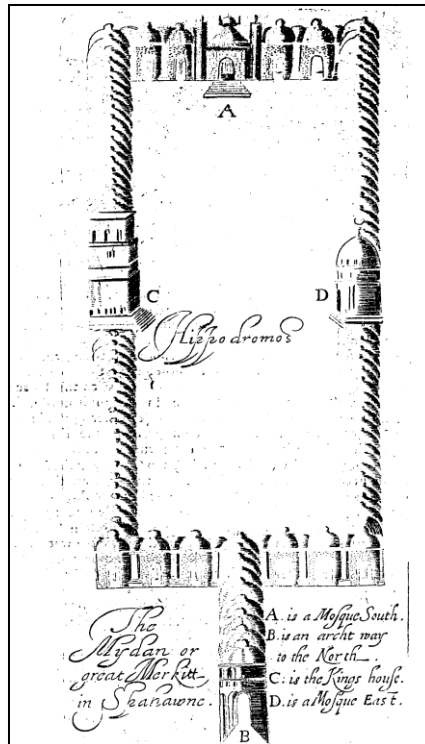


Figure 13: The Meydān, or market-place, in Isfahan. The engraving is from Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels*. (A) North Mosque facing south; (B) arch way to the north; (C) Shah's house; (D) Eastside Mosque.

The Safavīd capital was a major trading center that saw an influx of peoples from across Europe and the Middle East. Isfahan, as Olearius wrote, was home to many “Turks, Jews, Armenians, Georgians, English, Dutch, French, Italians, and Spaniards.” Isfahan was a multi-confessional city but Shia Islam was the primary confessional group. Christians and the “*Kebbers*... a sort of Pagan” along with Jews occupied quarters in the city.⁵⁷ The *kebbers*, or renegades, occupied a quarter in a suburb located on the western side of the city, and Olearius commented that suburbs encompassed the entire city; and within those suburbs various people formed small communities in their respective

⁵⁷ Olearius describes the *kebbers* as a group of renegades, which seems to address their lack of assimilation or acceptance of contemporary Persian dress and religion.

quarters. Two monasteries belonging to the Augustinians and the other to the Carmelites lay near the king's stables, and Olearius observed the construction of a "Convent for certain French Capucins."⁵⁸ Mosques, Synagogues, and monasteries were physical symbols of the State's tolerance of European Christians, while on the other hand the Tower of Heads offered a symbol of Safavīd strength, or from Herbert's perspective brutality (figure 14).⁵⁹

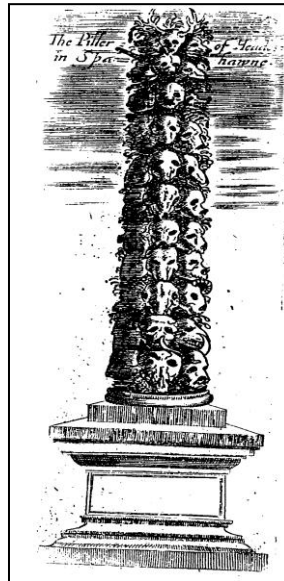


Figure 14: Tower of Heads as Herbert described it. The tower is also described by Olearius and Tavernier, and Shah Abbas apparently had the tower constructed from several animals he had slaughtered including the rebels slain

⁵⁸ Olearius, *The Voyages and Travells*, f.221-224.

⁵⁹ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, f.177.

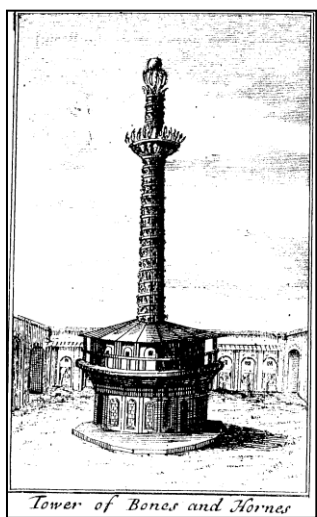


Figure 15: This image of the tower from 1695 is much less daunting, and it is in Monsieur Sanson's *The Present State of Persia* (1695).

The houses in Isfahan, it appears, were much the same as Gombroon. Olearius described the houses as “in a manner square, and most have four stories, accounting the ground-room.” The windows were “as big as their Doors” but the building’s interior was shallow as “the frames ordinarily reach up to the roof.” The Persians, according to Olearius, “have not yet the use of Glass,” and in the winter they cover their windows with “oyl’d paper.” Olearius never traveled to the southern provinces of Persia, so he may have been unaware of the Sultan’s house in Shīrāz. *Tenuers*, or small stoves, were used in Isfahan to cook meat and “bake Bread and Cakes over them.” These were common in local households due to the lack of wood; instead, they “procure a very natural heat with little fire” for cooking.⁶⁰ The interior boasted a courtyard and a small barren garden, but the English merchants provided scant details of their house. Tavernier described “some few arch’d Streets where the Merchants live is more like a great Village or City,” but he

⁶⁰ Olearius, *The Voyages and Travells*, f.219.

does not specify whether the merchants in this quarter were natives or included foreign merchants as well.⁶¹ The houses in the quarter “standing at a distance one from the other, with every one a Garden, but ill look’d after.” According to Olearius, foreign merchants resided in a designated quarter or “caravanseras.” Here the English probably resided, and Olearius described “spacious Store-houses, built four-square, and enclos’d of all sides with a high Wall, for the security of forein Merchants, who have their lodgings in them, as also for that of the Commodities they bring thither.”⁶²

While travelers had much to say about the people and places they encountered, it is more difficult to pin down how the English merchants viewed their neighbors. Until after 1635, the English, at least in context of their correspondence, wrote indifferently of the residents in Persia. It is really only in moments of commercial breakdown that we see the English merchants expressing any level of negative sentiments about their neighbors. In the worst cases, English commentators began to integrate anti-confessional language when discussing Mīrzā Taqī and other Safavīds, but in general they coexisted reasonably well. One scholar cites English literature as a source of anti-Islamic ideology and suggests that “the polarization between the English and the infidels is shown to be exclusively religious.”⁶³ At first, many of the English factors expressed favorable opinions of their Muslim neighbors. Edward Connock, for example, on his landing at Jask wrote of the governor there: “I have found this Governor of Jasque, Meere Tasside,

⁶¹ Tavernier, *Collections of Travels*, f.149-152.

⁶² Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels*, f.224.

⁶³ Matar, *Turks, Moors & Englishmen*, 142-143.

an honest Moor. I pray you respect him accordingly, for we shall have great use of him.”⁶⁴ Robert Covert’s opinion of Persian Muslims was much less congenial than those of the English factors when he said “generally they doe worship Mahomet, and are common Buggerers, as the Turks are.”⁶⁵

After Shah Abbas I died and the acquisition of silk became much more of a struggle the anti-Islamic language increased significantly. Englishmen began to complain that “theise faithlesse men are without shame or honestie.”⁶⁶ Edward Heynes continued with “the best of them is badd enough, perfidious and deceitefull, they are perseans and better fruite cannot be expected from them towards Christians.”⁶⁷ Before Shah Abbas’ death, the English factors expressed little animosity towards the Muslims in Persia—at least as far as the surviving records are concerned—but once the English began struggling with local officials, primarily Mīrzā Taqī, then their attitudes towards the Safavīds changed dramatically. William Fremlen wrote that “there is little owne faith in Moores” whom he expected would fail the English in spite of their promises of plentiful silk.⁶⁸ Of Lachin Beg, the royal merchant, Thomas Merry wrote that they could not trust

⁶⁴ Edward Connock to Captain Alexander Child, Kuhstak, 26 December 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:275.

⁶⁵ Robert Covert, *A True and almost incredible report of an Englishman, (that being cast away in the good ship called the Assention in Cambaya the farthest part of the East Indies) Travelled by land through many unknown kingdomes, and great cities* (London: Printed by William Hall, for Thomas Archer and Richard Redmer, 1612), 57.

⁶⁶ William Burt to Edward Heynes, Isfahan, 17 August 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.133.

⁶⁷ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1632, IOR/E/3/13, f.74.

⁶⁸ William Fremlen to the Company, Gombroon, 13 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.80.

him since “hee hath a Moores conscience.”⁶⁹ This language, however, was directly connected to the failing English business, and in most of the correspondence the English were rather indifferent.

III. “*They weere the tendrest chickins*”: the flux, heat, and English mortality

If the English community in Persia was scarcely noticeable, the mortality rates made it even less so. An estimate of roughly 100 men resided in Persia during the period covered here. After combing through the original correspondence and other manuscripts, it was possible to compile a list of factors and other assistants who resided in Persia. A few individuals went unnamed so it is impossible to trace them through the records, but of those who were named there were roughly 100 men who resided in Persia. This statistic does not include the mariners who temporarily landed at Gombroon for a few weeks every year. It is worth noting that a large proportion of the fleet’s crew fell ill or perished during the presidency’s experimental scheme of making Gombroon the first port of call for the European fleet in the early 1630s under President Hopkinson’s tenure.

The chance of surviving in Persia was dreadfully low, and it made it difficult to establish the factory there. Of the 100 men who resided in Persia over the period, 69 of them perished there, putting the mortality rate at a staggering 69%.⁷⁰ A few auspicious individuals endured lengthy employments in Persia, such as Thomas Barker the younger

⁶⁹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 3 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.147.

⁷⁰ Edward Monnox to Isfahan, 4 June 1622, G/29/1, f.42. The Company sent a letter to William Hoare in 1617 stating that before October, the months were too hot and dangerous. See, London to William Hoare, 21 March 1617, Egerton 2086, f.1-2; Roger Gifford to the Company, Surat, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.125; William Gibson to London, Isfahan, 26 June 1633, IOR/E/3/14, f.165-165v.

(1618-d.1636), William Bell (1616-d.1624), and Thomas Merry whom served for at least eight years in Persia before taking his post at Surat. But many, such as John Willoughby (1633-d.1638), perished within the first five years of service. Thomas Barker's 17 year service was unusually long and certainly an anomaly.

The graph below illustrates the level of mortality in Persia in five year increments. The table does not include mariners who perished during their brief stay at port, and it does not include the Englishmen killed during the siege of Hormuz. Those killed in the minor skirmish near the English house in Gombroon during the 1640s are not included as well. It also does not include Anthony Starkey who was apparently poisoned to death during his overland journey from Surat to Aleppo. In *Purchase, his Pilgrimage*, Purchas recorded that Starkey bumped into a few Catholic friars who were responsible for his death in 1613 (see chapter 5).⁷¹ In addition, one Mr. Gore perished, but the date of his death went unreported.

⁷¹ Purchas, *Pvrchas his Pilgrimage*, f.461.

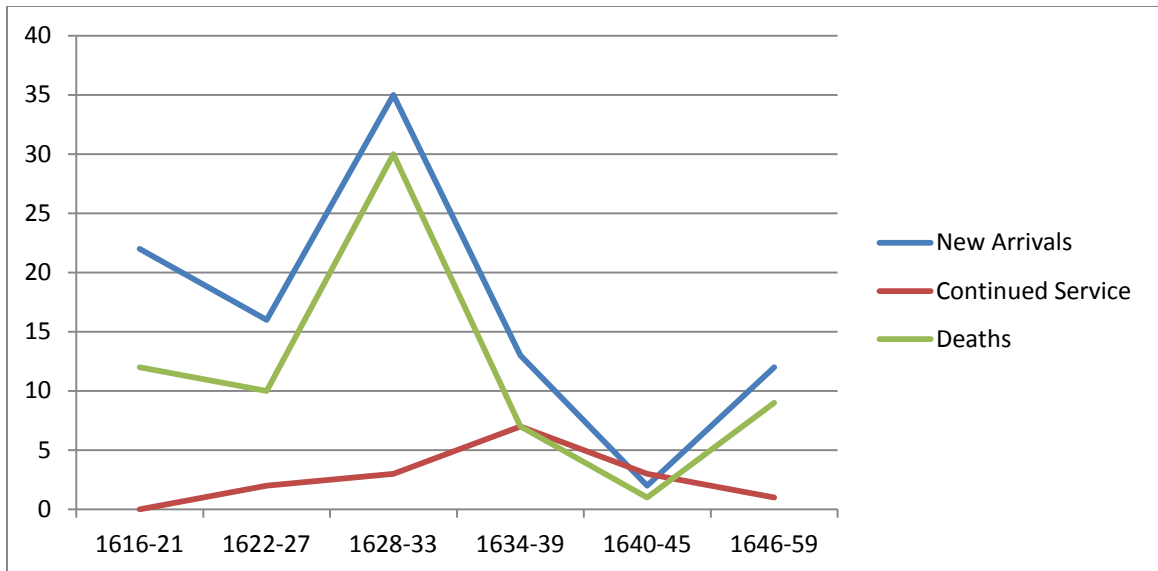


Table 4: The graph depicts the English mortality rate in Persia. The graph extends to the years after 1652 until 1659 to include those factors employed during the period but who died in Persia after the end of the study.

There are three important groups charted in the graph: the arrival of new merchants or factory assistants, the continued service of merchants, and the death rate of Englishmen. Many of the men accounted for here were minor assistants who often spent as little as a few months in Persia or until the following year when the English fleet returned at which point they boarded and prepared for India or the Spice Islands. Yet the graph still illustrates an interesting trend. The obvious point is the consistency in which the mortality rate paralleled the arrival of Englishmen to Persia. But also notice the very low rate of continuing factors, which illustrates that only once did it surpass five men. While it is true that the typical contract extended to five or seven years, the chart shows that the turnover rate of factors was horrendous. If we pay close attention, for example, to the period from 1622 until 1627 we observe that from the twenty-two men who arrived between 1616 and 1621, only four of those men survived or remained in Persia until at

least 1622. William Blundestone, for example, fell very ill after the party arrived in 1616, and Connock was forced to send his servant back to Surat with the fleet immediately. The graph will be referred to later in the chapter, but for now it is important to note the steady mortality rate with the arrival of new factors, and the very low level of continuing factors over the course of the period. The graph provides a broad graphic of the complications the Company faced in Persia, but by reducing our focus the problem becomes clearer.

Chiefs of Trade	Estimated years of term
Edward Connock	1616-d.1617
Thomas Barker	1617-d.1619
Edward Monox	1619-1622
William Bell	1622-d.1624
Thomas Barker, younger	1625-1626 (d.1636)
William Burt	1626-1630 (d.1632)
Edward Heynes	1630-d.1632
William Gibson	1632-d.1637
*Francis Honywood	1637 (d.1639)
Thomas Merry	1637-1647
Robert Heynes	1647-d.1647
William Pitt	1647-1648
George Tash	1648-1652

Table 5: These men filled the role of chiefs of trade or provisional chiefs during the period. The years are approximates due to the fragmentation of the sources, and a few men, for example William Burt, outlived their role as chief before dying in Persia. There appears to have been periods with no official chief sat in Persia. Francis Honywood filled the role temporarily after William Gibson's death. The Council of Surat named Robert Jeffries successor to Edward Monox in 1622, but the chief died on the voyage to Persia and Bell took his position.

Table 5 lists the men who presided as chief of English trade in Persia. Unlike the graph (above) which depicts a wide variety of Englishmen who landed in Persia, table 5 depicts the attrition rate of the factory's chief merchants. In many ways this is more

significant and reflective of the problem of attrition in Persia. These men were active participants, or leaders, in the negotiations for silk, carpets, horses, and other important aspects of the Company's trade. So unlike Adam Tanner who followed Edward Connock around to do his bidding, Thomas Barker, the younger was an active participant in organizing trade both as a supporting factor and provisional chief in 1625/26. When men like Adam Tanner died the factory was moderately inconvenienced, but when the chief merchants and their immediate subordinates perished it left the house without leadership and the account books mostly unfinished.⁷²

The statistics on silk exports that Professor Matthee provided illustrates that English silk exports fluctuated significantly during the period from 1618 (first bale exported) until 1640 (final bale).⁷³ There are many variables that impacted the drop and increase in exports (refer to chapter 2 and 3), but under Gibson's authority the English exported silk regularly and uniformly. While silk exports during Gibson's time were lower due to internal issues, the English consistently exported two to three hundred bales a year.⁷⁴ Merry came to Safavīd Persia just a few years before the Company ceased sending investments for silk, and it is difficult to gauge with any certainty how his lengthy tenure would have affected the trade. But from 1637 to 1639, Merry nearly doubled the total exports (281; 470; 594). The surge was due in part to Merry's reforms in the factory, but in 1640 the Company exported its last bales (43) of silk which were

⁷² See chapters 2 and 3.

⁷³ Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243. There are other variables to consider, but the consistency in the trend cannot be ignored. See appendix IV.

⁷⁴ See chapter 5 for a discussion on the problems under Gibson's tenure. Except for the transition year in 1633 (110 bales), the English exported 371, 325, 373, and 281 bales of silk consecutively.

merely the remnants of the previous year.⁷⁵ It is impossible to deduce if the trend would have remained positive for the duration of Merry's tenure had investments continued, but Matthee's data in context of the English mortality rate suggests that a level of consistency in silk exports persisted when the change in leadership was not a constant factor.

In the table, thirteen men presided officially or provisionally over the Persian trade, and nine of those thirteen perished in Persia. Nearly 70% of the leading merchants in Persia died at some point in their careers. If we accept that somewhere between six and eight factors resided in Persia between port (Gombroon or Jask), Shīrāz, and Isfahan, this placed the English trade in a very difficult predicament. When secondary factors are included, the percentage stays roughly at 70%. Given that travel between England and the Gulf took the better part of the year and between Surat and Persia a couple months, the English factory in Persia was constantly undermanned and trade always hung in a delicate balance.

The first wave of Englishmen in Persia died within three years after their arrival in 1616. William Tracy, Edward Connock and George Pley died in 1617 while Thomas Barker and William Robbins perished in 1619. These men were presumably buried somewhere in Persia, but the first known burial site does not appear until 1624. William Bell's tomb marks the earliest English grave in Isfahan, dated 24 February 1624.⁷⁶ Englishmen succumbed to disease in India and many died within a few years after arriving in Surat, but the environment in Persia was much less forgiving and the majority

⁷⁵ Chapter 5 will provide the details of Merry's reforms and why they were necessary.

⁷⁶ MSS EUR f370/824

of the English who contracted an illness eventually died. Compared to India, the climate in Persia collected more English lives, especially once they became physically indisposed. After Barker, Pley, Connock, Tracy, and numerous other Englishmen fell ill in Persia, they succumbed soon after.

Many of those who perished in Persia did so in the first few years after their arrival, and others died almost immediately after arriving (i.e. Thomas Griffin). The reason the mortality rate spiked in Persia is more difficult to pin down, but English observers seem to think that the primary cause of death was directly linked to the incredible temperatures of the Persian Gulf; especially after President Hopkinson's decision to make Gombroon the first port in 1631.⁷⁷ This decision brought the fleet to the Gulf between June and August. Early reports from the 1620s stated that "the contagious heat hath begun to come in, many of our men have beene cast downe in soe much that unless God shew the greater mercy, wee feare greate mortality"⁷⁸ As early as 1617, the Company recognized the dangers of the Gulf in the summer months, and this information probably came to them from the early travelers discussed in chapter one.⁷⁹

The graph in combination with contemporary reports reveals important insight to the reasons behind such a high attrition rate. The first problem is determining where these men became ill and if certain regions were actually harsher than others. These men were

⁷⁷ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1632, IOR/E/3/13, f.69v; Roger Giffard to the Company, Surat, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.125; Richard Cooper to the Company, Gombroon, 15 March 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.144; Directions and Instructions for John Lechland and John Robinson in journey to Brampore and Agra with Quicksilver and Vermillion which landed this year, 23 March 1631, IOR/G/36/1, f.161.

⁷⁸ Edward Monnox to Isfahan, 4 June 1622, G/29/1, f.42.

⁷⁹ London to William Hoare, 21 March 1617, Egerton 2086, f.1-2.

constantly travelling between Isfahan and Gombroon, and it is virtually impossible to determine where these men fell mortally ill from the sources alone. The graph, however, indicates with some precision where English were most likely to contract an illness that eventually led to their deaths. The significant spike in both English residents and English deaths in the period from 1628 and 1633 is not coincidental. It was in those years, specifically 1631 until about 1634, that English ships arrived at Gombroon during the summer months. The increase in residents was simply a matter of replenishing the English factory.

From this five year segment (see graph) we can infer reasonably that Gombroon was the site where the English suffered most. This is possible because it is during the same period that the English merchants complained of the impact of arriving in Gombroon during the summer months. If we look at the first two blocks of time on the graph, the mortality rate was still significantly high. The letters from those two periods also highlight several complaints regarding the Persian climate, but the English merchants do not indicate which region provided the most difficulties. In the third cluster (1628-1633), it is clear the English blame the summer temperatures in Gombroon for the significant loss of life. In the two previous clusters, the mortality rate moves between 55% and 65%. Alone this suggests very little, but given that the English factors were often divided into two groups in Persia—those responsible for traveling to Isfahan, and those responsible for maintaining the house in either Jask or Gombroon (after 1622)—one can infer that Gombroon was the primary cause for the death toll.

If we consider the first party into Persia which consisted of Edward Connock, Thomas Barker, George Pley, William Tracy, William Bell, and John Amy, three of the men (Connock, Pley, and Tracy) fell ill and died in Gatan. Gatan is located nearby Jask. William Bell eventually died in 1624, but it is unclear if he was sick before arriving to Isfahan where his English colleagues buried him. Thomas Barker perished in Isfahan, and again it is unclear if Barker was ill upon his arrival and his death is shrouded in mystery (see chapter 5). Of the original group, only John Amy seems to have escaped with his life. Still, half of the original party fell ill and perished in the south, and while Barker and Bell's circumstances are unclear the implication is that those men who resided in the south had a greater chance of dying than those who resided in the north around Isfahan.

In general, the English merchants complained that Persia was hot, especially Gombroon and the southern provinces. Thomas Merry, for example, characterized Gombroon as "a most Pestilous place."⁸⁰ Contemporary travelers provide a little more detail on the type of heat the English faced, and it certainly was unpleasant for individuals accustomed to the cooler climates of northern Europe. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier noted that Isfahan went through "six months of hot," but in the "Southern Provinces the heats are very excessive."⁸¹ In Mandelslo's description of Gombroon (above), he linked the poor air quality to the "excessive heat" in the port city. One constant between travelers is that while it was hot in Isfahan and the north, the southern

⁸⁰ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.125v. Sir William Foster noted that two letters sent from Isfahan in 1617 were "stabbed through and through, which points to their having been fumigated on the way home as a precaution against infection." Sir William Foster, *Letters Received*, 5:291n.

⁸¹ Tavernier, *Collections of Travels*, 143.

province was much more taxing on European travelers and merchants. Monsieur de Thévenot travelled to Persia in 1665, and in his writings published in English in 1687 he wrote that “there cannot be a more dangerous Air than that of Comoron [Gombroon], especially in Summer.”⁸²

John Fryer, an English traveler, visited Persia in the late seventeenth century, where he described the southern climate as uncomfortably hot with a “stifling Air.” Travelers and English merchants agreed that the temperatures were hot, and it appears that the Persian Gulf was quite humid. From Fryer’s perspective working in these conditions was a terrible inconvenience.⁸³ The heat was certainly taxing on the English, and the lack of a reliable source of water for consumption made the southern provinces particularly lethal for English merchants in the early seventeenth century. It is unsurprising that Roger Gifford begged the Company to abandon Hopkinson’s scheme because the fleet’s crew and factors, prior to arriving at Gombroon, were in good health, but the heat “proved not to the health of our people.” In Gifford’s brief interlude at Gombroon, he recorded that “many of our people fell sicke and some dyed” immediately after their arrival. Of the casualties, Edward Segar “dyed within some few daies” despite

⁸² Jean de Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant. In Three Parts. Viz. Into I. Turkey. II. Persia. III. The East-Indies. New done out of French. Licensd, December. 1686. Ro. L'Estrange.* (London, Printed by Henry Clark, for John Taylor, at the Ship in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, MDCLXXXVII [1687]), f.119;137.

⁸³ John Fryer, *A New account of East-India and Persia, in Eight Letters. Being nine years travels, Begun 1672. And Finished 1681. Containing Observations made of the Moral, Natural, and Artificial Estate of Those Countries: Namely, of their Government, Religion, Law, Customs. Of the Soil, Climates, Seasons, Health, Diseases. Of the Animals, Vegetables, Minerals, Jewels. Of their Housing, Cloathing, Manufactures, Trades, Commodities. And of the Coins, Weights, and Measures, used in the Principal Places of Trade in those Parts. By John Fryer, M.D. Cantabrig. And Fellow of the Royal Society. Illustrated with Maps, Figures, and Useful Tables.* (London: Printed by R.R. for R.I. Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul’s Church-Yard. MDCXCVIII [1698]), f.227.

being “in good health.” Henry Sill and Thomas Rose perished soon after, and Gifford reports that numerous men of the *James* were severely ill.⁸⁴

In 1633, William Methwold made his voyage for Surat where he took over as president of the Surat branch, but not before making the annual stop at Gombroon. There Methwold instructed seven men (five unnamed), including Richard Griffith and Francis Honywood, to stay behind in Persia. By the time Methwold arrived in Surat, five of them were dead, and Honywood and Griffith were “sickely too.”⁸⁵ President Methwold wrote that “the heates are certainly intollerable in June, July, and August which makes the Natives avoid them by receding up into the Countrey,” and Captain John Weddell flatly refused to return to the Persian Gulf during the summer.⁸⁶ Due to the incredible heat that plagued the Persian Gulf in the late summer and early fall months William Methwold reversed the shipping strategy. The decision was met without resistance, and the fleet resumed its earlier course from London and directly to Surat and then to Persia in November and December when the temperatures were tolerable.

The heat was indeed brutal, but dysentery was also a likely cause of death in Persia. Before refrigeration, food storage was a problem and poor water quality indeed could become infected with parasites in hotter climates, which ultimately led to dysentery. In a sense, English contemporaries were correct that the heat was partly the problem, but it probably was not the direct cause of death. The “bloody flux” brought

⁸⁴ Roger Gifford to the Company, Surat, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.125.

⁸⁵ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 23 May 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.11.

⁸⁶ William Methwold to the Company, Surat, 29 December 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f 82-82v.

more Englishmen to their graves than murder and accidental deaths combined. Men probably suffered from heat exhaustion and dehydration, but the English records do not make note of this. The factors complained of the water quality in Persia, specifically in Gombroon, and William Methwold noted that the water “is unwholesome to mens bodies.”⁸⁷

As a substitute, the English relied on beer, wine, and spirits for hydration. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier reported that the southern provinces he wrote “the heats are very excessive, and kill abundance of our Europeans, especially those that are giv’n to drink.”⁸⁸ Tavernier’s observations at least hint that perhaps a few men perished from heat exhaustion or dehydration. Olearius, interestingly, suggested that the flux and plague were rare, but “the pox, which is called *Sehemet Kasobi*, that is, the disease of Kaschan” was common.⁸⁹ In 1630, William Burt requested wine because “our water being neere durte and clay, which by reporte of the doctors had layd [...] of this Campe with bloodie fluxes.”⁹⁰ In 1638, Thomas Merry mourned the loss of John Willoughby whom was “a man of spare body” who abstained from alcohol. Merry did admit that “the most

⁸⁷ President Methwold to Captain John Weddell, Surat, 21 April 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.284-286. There were other potential problems with the water, but there is no evidence that the English suffered from such ailments. In the 1650s (book published in 1680s in English), Jean de Thévenot described specifically the presence of parasites in the water. The water, he wrote, was “very unwholesome because of little Worms that are in it, which (if they be drank down with the water) slide betwixt the Flesh and the Skin.” These worms eventually “fall down into the Legs” where Thévenot claimed they “grow to the full length of the Leg and are never bigger than a Lute-String.” Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.137.

⁸⁸ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia, and the East-Indies*, vol. 1 (London: printed for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-Yard, 1684), 143.

⁸⁹ Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels*, 226.

⁹⁰ William Burt to Edward Heynes, 17 August 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.134.

dangerous excess of ale and that which hath kild more in Persia.” Contemporaries pinned high attrition rates on high alcohol consumption, which is certainly one explanation given the likelihood that the men suffered from severe dehydration; it is more likely that high temperatures and lack of water combined with the flux and other infectious diseases sent most of the Englishmen to their graves.

Although in 1634 Captain Richard Allnutt complained that “some of the beer stunk, and the best of it had a scurvy taste.”⁹¹ It is possible, perhaps, that a few of the men consumed infected beer which in turn caused their ailment. If this had been the case, the English factors did not report any instances of foul beer or wine. It is also possible that these men consumed rotting meat as well as Thévenot suggested that “meat is also very unwholesome at Bander-Abasse.”⁹² Whether or not the English consumed rancid beer and meat is difficult to discern from the available sources, but it does offer some insight to the potential difficulties Englishmen faced while residing in Gombroon. Thévenot did offer his fellow Europeans a few sage words: “In fine, the best way to preserve ones Health at Bander-Abasse, is to keep a very regular Diet, eating so moderately that one hath always an Appetite: to quench a red hot Iron in the water, to strain it afterwards through Linnen Cloath, and to be always chearful.”⁹³

The toll on English life in Persia was high due to the heat, parasitic water, disease and excessive drinking, and it often left the factory unattended. John Crouther returned to

⁹¹ Captain Richard Allnutt aboard the *Palsgrave*, to the Company, Swally Hole, 31 January 1633/34, IOR/E/3/14, f.198v-199.

⁹² Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.137.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, f.137.

Surat from Isfahan after a dreadful bout with the flux. He described the experience as “being troubled with a flux, overflowing of the spleen, and merciless cramp rending my veins in pieces, that I am scarce to write six lines without intermission.”⁹⁴ A similar situation left William Blundeston ineffective and incapable of his duties in Isfahan, and at the same time in Gatan, William Tracy lay severely ill and near death. Monox recounted the grim scene:

And likewise the sickness of all or the most part of the rest of your servants, and Mr. Tracie so dangerously sick at Gayton aforesaid that there is small hope of his recovery; William Blounston, servant to Mr. Connok, at the same place in danger of death: in fine, not one afoot able to do any business.⁹⁵

The English merchants were divided between Isfahan, Shīrāz, and port, whether it was Jask or Gombroon. In 1616, for example, Thomas Kerridge sent six men to preside over Persia, and after their initial landing the party eventually divided.⁹⁶ Even in the height of the agency in the mid-1620s, less than ten Englishmen resided in all of Persia. In 1646 and 1648 the factory was dismal, and lists of employed factors put the total Persian agency at four men, not including household servants.⁹⁷ In both years, the records show that the Persian trade lay in the hands of Robert Heynes, Samuel Wilton, John Lewis, and Thomas Best. When men died, it left the factory severely depleted.

⁹⁴ John Crouther to the Company, Surat, 1 March 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:132.

⁹⁵ Edward Monox to the Company, Jask, 28 December 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:282.

⁹⁶ Consultation at Surat, 6 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:195. Edward Connock, Thomas Barker, George Pley, Edward Pettus, William Tracy, and Robert Gripps made up the small English party.

⁹⁷ List of Factors in Persia and India, July 1646, IOR/E/3/20, f.104-105; Merchants employed in Surat and subordinate factories, 1648, IOR/E/3/20, f.215-216.

The attrition rate in Persia forced Heynes to request additional men from Surat, and if Surat could not supply additional men, he felt the trade was all but finished. William Bell suffered from “a burning fevoer” in Isfahan and despite the aid of Shah Abbas’ best physicians he died the 24 February 1624.⁹⁸ In 1632, Edward Heynes reported that three Englishmen became ill in the heat and died soon after.⁹⁹ By 1638, Thomas Merry expressed similar concerns about the attrition rate of Englishmen in Persia and the destitution of their factories.¹⁰⁰ William Fremlen was hardly any more jovial “exclaiming that the Gulfe of Persia devours all” through “feavours and fluxes the most usuall decease of this country.”¹⁰¹ Whatsoever the cause, Englishmen were more likely to die in Persia than survive. Under President Hopkinson’s scheme to make Gombroon their first port, numerous mariners perished in the landing of goods and money. In one example, Captain Allnutt reported that he lost ten men sailing from England, eight of which died between Gombroon and Surat.¹⁰²

Edward Monox complained to London that business in Persia suffered tremendously from “your servants being few and sick and not able to manage your business.”¹⁰³ The high attrition rates created problems in settling the accounts books in

⁹⁸ John Puresye to the Company, Isfahan, 18 April 1624, IOR/E/3/10, f.115.

⁹⁹ Edward Heynes to the Company, Isfahan, 26 September 1632, IOR/E/3/13, f.69v. One Mr. Baker, Robert Loftus, and Edward Sadduck all perished.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 12 November 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.160v.

¹⁰¹ William Fremlen to the Company, onboard the *Discover*, 20 December 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.165; 169.

¹⁰² Captain Richard Allnutt aboard the *Palsgrave*, to the Company, Swally Hole, 31 January 1633/34, IOR/E/3/14, f.198v-199.

¹⁰³ Edward Monox to the Company, Jask, 28 December 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:284.

Persia. Those factors responsible for closing the books were either too ill or deceased. Later Edward Heynes complained that the significant levels of mortality in Persia made it nearly impossible to maintain the account books. The decision to send few Englishmen to Persia was ineffective, and this was apparent when factors either died or became too ill to perform their duties. This was especially an issue in Persia as the English merchants covered a large territory. Others, like the Reverend George Collins, determined that climate was far too harsh and fled the country, which disgusted William Gibson who, in need of merchants, wrote that he would “rather have there roome then ther company.” Gibson was unenthusiastic about the ministry, and he ironically claimed that “heere hath bin but two [ministers] since my tyme, but they weere the tendrest of chickins that ever I mett with all in my life.”¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately for Collins, he did not depart soon enough and died of an illness on the voyage home for London.

IV. “It is safest for an Englishmen to Indianize”: boiled meats, pulse, and *Schilao*

English diet in Persia and India were basic, and the Company strictly ordered against spending sumptuously on housing expenses, which by extension meant dining. A few lucky individuals were invited to the Safavīd Court where they enjoyed opulent feasts, but this occurred on extraordinary occasions and was not the norm. Water in Persia, particularly Gombroon, was not potable and the English shipped water in from

¹⁰⁴ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 23 May 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.14v.

other regions or relied on beer, wine, and spirits for hydration, which of course was counterproductive when the region endured intense heat waves. Just as the account books have gone missing, so to have inventory lists for each factory's expenditures and food consumption, making it difficult to account for English dietary practices. Scattered throughout the correspondence and other collections are glimpses of the types of things that the English consumed. The most comprehensive piece that we have is located in the *Persia Papers* and consists of a limited, yet invaluable, expense book for 1626 through 1628.

The expense book suggests that the English stored very little food and they purchased provisions on a daily basis. The first pages of the expense book are fragmented, and the first legible entry begins in March 1626. A series of entries follows that marked the daily purchases of certain foodstuffs. While the English seem to have stored certain commodities, they purchased bread daily.¹⁰⁵ Bread, according to Monsieur Thévenot, was made "into large cakes half a finger thick" while others were "so thin it looks like paper." Of course he could not discuss bread without a small quip as he wrote "and some French when first these Cakes were brought before them, took them for course Napkins."¹⁰⁶ The data does not provide a quantity of bread purchased, only the total cost of provisions for a specific day. For example, on the 4 March 1626, George Williamson recorded a purchase of hens, prunes, hay, bread, and milk but the badly fragmented sheet makes it difficult to determine which currency the sums were recorded in. Williamson

¹⁰⁵ "Two Accounts expenses of Journeys in Persia", 1626-1628, IOR/G/29/1, f.147.

¹⁰⁶ Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.96.

travelled from Gombroon to Shīrāz, and he made regular purchases of dates, oranges, lemons, and barley. He also recorded some quantities of oil, butter, cheese, and milk.¹⁰⁷

Peter Mundy commented that butter “heere [India] is most comonly Liquid,” and it is probable that the English in Persia used a similar type otherwise known as *ghī*.¹⁰⁸

Monsieur Thévenot wrote that “in Persia generally they make not use of Butter of Cow’s Milk alone, because it is not good; but they mingle it with the Butter of Ewes Mile, which is much better.”¹⁰⁹

In March 1626, John Berryman purchased bread, mutton, and arak on a daily basis. Berryman purchased oranges on the 12, 14, and 16 March, and oil, rice, onions, and cheese he purchased at least once. During Berryman’s journey from Lār to Isfahan his party consumed bread, mutton, and arak provided the basis for his party’s sustenance. Without quantities, it is difficult to determine how much Berryman purchased, but presumably the oranges, rice, and oil could be stored and therefore fewer purchases were necessary. Richard Cooper’s journey from Lār to Isfahan included regular purchases of bread, but also oranges, wine, butter, and to a lesser extent lamb, sugar, and cabob (Kabob). Cooper fell ill during the journey, and in one entry he recorded a purchase of

¹⁰⁷ “Two Accounts expenses of Journeys in Persia”, 1626-1628, IOR/G/29/1, f.148-148v. The English purchased large quantities of butter in India.. See, President Rastell to Broach, Surat, 10 November 1630, IOR/G/36/84(2), f.122. Sixty fardles of butter arrived from Ahmadābād.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, v.2. ed. Mary Lavinia Anstey (London, 1914 reprint), 126. In the index, Mary Anstey refers to it as *ghī*.

¹⁰⁹ Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.96.

lemons and rosewater for remedies.¹¹⁰ Much like Williamson and Berryman, bread, fruit, and mutton formed the basis for his party's diet.

John Benthall's expense sheet from March 1626 covering his journey from Gombroon to Isfahan included many of the same items. He purchased quantities of bread and mutton daily. Benthall regularly purchased quantities of lemon water, milk, butter, and on a single occasion he recorded a purchase of some hens on the 6 March. Lamp oil and wood appear in most account sheets with the latter purchased daily or most days. Benthall also purchased pepper, onions and barley.¹¹¹ Both Onions and garlic appear in the records although much less frequent than other foodstuffs.¹¹² Benthall purchased straw, which they could have used for the mules in the caravan, but ultimately the use is unknown. Robert Loftus, however, was partial to bread, mutton, and significant portions of butter.¹¹³ Mandelslo noticed during his journey that the English could purchase a goat for "six or eight pence a piece."¹¹⁴

Fruits, primarily lemons and oranges, were commonly consumed in Persia, although the English also purchased dates when they could. Aside from bread and mutton, lemons and oranges were staples. Cheese was purchased, it seems, in limited quantities, but without a quantity it is difficult to determine how rare cheese was in the English diet. It is also difficult to determine if the English consumed the milk they

¹¹⁰ "Two Accounts expenses of Journeys in Persia", 1626-1628, IOR/G/29/1, f.147-149.

¹¹¹ Ibid., f.149-150.

¹¹² President Methwold to William Gibson, Surat, 3 February 1635/36, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.69.

¹¹³ "Two Accounts expenses of Journeys in Persia", 1626-1628, IOR/G/29/1, f.158v.

¹¹⁴ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.8.

purchased or used it for the production of cheese. Contemporary writers, and those of the latter seventeenth century, mention cheese as normal for Persian diets, but they do not provide any detail to what Persian cheese actually entailed. It is unclear if Persian cheese, much like butter or *ghī*, assumed a slightly different form than European cheese. They bought regular quantities of barley, but it is unclear if the barley was made into bread or used for beer. Barley, according to Thévenot, was used as camel fodder.¹¹⁵ Rice provided another significant portion of their daily diet. They also purchased hens, although infrequently.

A few rare items appear in the expense sheet, such as honey and cucumbers. Thomas Barker's expense sheet of December 1627 shows quantities of fish. While citrus and dates formed the basis for their fruit intake, grapes appeared in the book although rarely. Pigeons and vinegar appear in a couple of times, while William Gibson bought almonds.¹¹⁶ Gibson's party enjoyed sugar of which they purchased quantities almost daily in 1628 during their journey from Gombroon to Isfahan. In 1646, Robert Heynes and his companions informed Surat that "the procury of Gammons of Bacon, meat tongues, etc" will arrive because they "are not all attainable" in Persia.¹¹⁷

During his stay in Gombroon, Mandelslo noted an abundance of red and white pomegranates, turnips, radishes, pears along with oysters and crabs.¹¹⁸ It is probable that

¹¹⁵ Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.114.

¹¹⁶ "Two Accounts expenses of Journeys in Persia", 1626-1628, IOR/G/29/1, f.155v-159v; 170.

¹¹⁷ Robert Heynes to Surat, Gombroon, 13 February 1646/47, IOR/G/36/102a, f.79.

¹¹⁸ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.117-118.

at some point the English consumed these items, but the expense sheets and correspondence do not list some of these items as provisions. The expense sheets illustrate the items the English purchased for their journey, but they do not provide a sense of what the men ate during their stay in the factory. The English, much like their fellow Englishmen in India, probably ate local foods. Mandelslo, for example, reported that in Gombroon natives sustained themselves of fruit, fish, and pulse or chickpeas.¹¹⁹ In Gombroon, the English probably indulged in similar fare since local food merchants were their chief source of food acquisition. A few Englishmen, such as Robert Heynes, were perhaps a little stubborn where their pallets were concerned, but President Methwold saw the importance in adapting local cuisine. In 1636, President Methwold recommended that “it is safest for an Englishmen to Indianize and so conforming himselfe in some measure to the diett of the country.”¹²⁰

Methwold’s advice was perhaps a little more than simply an urge to conform to local culinary practices. Since shipping a steady supply of food from London was impractical, relying on local foods and dishes made more sense logistically. And based on the surviving expense sheets it appears that the English merchants incorporated a few local dishes into their regular diet (i.e. kabobs and pulse). One of the more important examples leaned more on the medicinal effects of a particular dish, and one the English almost certainly incorporated into their repertoire of local foods. In the expense sheets and correspondence, the English purchased rosewater on numerous occasions. Monsieur

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁰ President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 29 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f. 195.

Thévenot suggests that a rice-based broth, or *cangi*, was blended with “two Yolks of an Egg with Sugar” and set to boil after which the broth was infused with rosewater. The dish, according to Thévenot, was a “very good food, especially for the sick, to whom they commonly give it, being of easie digestion, nourishing and pleasant.”¹²¹ If wine and beer were staples shipped from London to supply their factories, the factors also coveted shipments of rosewater as well. There is certainly some evidence to suggest that Englishmen incorporated local dietary norms into their daily lives, particularly when those practices were heavily tied to medicinal purposes.

Thévenot provides a few hints towards English food preparation and their daily consumption. “Mutton and Lamb” were typically boiled or roasted in an oven, while fish was often served with *Schilao* or rice boiled without butter than topped with some sort of broth. Thévenot recorded that Persians typically ate meat once a day, but “they wonder that the Francks eat twice.”¹²² In India, the English practiced boiling rice with butter, or *ghī*, which was served with boiled meat.¹²³ But even more interesting is Thévenot’s suggestion that Europeans consumed meat twice a day. This practice must have occurred somewhat frequently for local Persians to comment, but it seems to suggest that the English consumed meat more frequently than local residents. Fruit was also a staple in local diet according to Thévenot who warned his readers that “the Man of Ispahan is no less than twelve pound Weight...and indeed, many of them die through their excessive

¹²¹ Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.95.

¹²² *Ibid.*, f.95.

¹²³ William Methwold’s letter home to his wife, Surat, 22 December 1634, ADD 11268.

eating of fruit.”¹²⁴ The English certainly were not dying from starvation in Persia, and from the expense sheets and their correspondence fruit clearly played a significant role in their diets.¹²⁵

V. Conclusion

Food was available, but these men were thinly dispersed between three cities and consisted of no more than perhaps eight or ten men at best. The heat, water, disease, and excessive drinking led to high mortality rates, and long journey to the silk capital made for a very desperate environment within the English community. For most of the year, communication was generally relegated to the men residing in Persia and contact between those in Persia and India was much less frequent. If a contemporary painting could consolidate the realities of life for Englishmen in Persia onto a single canvas, the image would probably depict a couple men near their house with the sun glaring down and the small house swallowed by a larger city and population. The mortality rate left the house depleted and undermanned creating a significant logistical problem for the English attempting to manage the silk trade. Considering the bleak reality that stood before these men, it is hardly unexpected that the English factors began to facilitate personal gain and leisure in lieu of Company business. This includes the bawdy behavior that so characterized the English merchants in Persia and set them apart from their fellow Englishmen in India. As we turn to the unsavory aspects of English factory life, we shall

¹²⁴ Thévenot, *The Travel of Monsieur de Thevenot*, f.96.

¹²⁵ President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Road, 15 November 1641, IOR/E/3/18, f.33v; William Fremlen to Francis Honeywood in Isfahan, Gombroon, 4 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.50.

depart this with George Pley's plea to President Kerridge in May 1617: "Cousin, I pray you by the next ships to send us six beadsteads with their webs. Here are none to be had; for want we all lie on the ground, and to me much offensive."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ George Pley to Thomas Kerridge, Isfahan, 15 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:248.

Chapter 5: “This factorye is growne to the hight of unmerchant-lyke disorder”: internal squabbles, confessional politics, and the apostles of Bacchus

I. Prologue: India, 1608-1652

On the afternoon 21 February 1638, John Perkins, James Congden, and a boy named Thomas Cogan had very little to accomplish after their midday meal. The three factory assistants decided to spend the afternoon strolling through the English garden and relaxing in the bathing tank. Cogan and Perkins went into town to “the house of a Mestiza woman in towne name Ursula who sells Arrack, where they caused a small glasse bottle that might hold about halfe a pint to be filled with Arrack.” The two men headed back to the English garden where they spent a few minutes shooting “turtle doves” with the birding piece they brought along. A short moment later Cogan and Perkins made their way to the English bath where they removed their clothing and prepared to relax. James Congden joined the two men, and the three bathed and passed the bottle of rack around. Perkins had enough of the bath and climbed out of the tank to shoot at a few birds that landed nearby. Then tragedy struck. The gun had a faulty hammer, and accidentally fired striking Congden in the throat, instantly killing him.¹

The tragic story encapsulates one of the meaner set of issues the English had to contend with in India, and while the above case was an accident, drunkenness created a whole array of problems in Surat. Excessive drinking, lewd behavior, and theft created a number of issues, particularly at Swally Hole and Surat. The English regularly consumed

¹ “Proceedings in the trial of John Perkins”, Surat, 12 March 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.252-253v.

wine and Arrack, and beer was available as well. After the long arduous voyage from London, many Englishmen, especially mariners, found relief from the stress of the voyage by enjoying the comforts of local drinking houses. The English fleet set sail around February or March, and they arrived in India in September or October. Brief stops were made at Saint Helena, Mozambique, San Mauritius (Republic of Mauritius), and the Comoros Islands to replenish provisions of water and food, but the journey ended for many English merchants at Surat. Others stayed with the fleet until they reached the Coromandel Coast and further east in the Spice Islands. Mariners on the other hand, aside from brief layovers, spent at least two years at sea before returning to London. After six to eight months at sea, it is understandable that English sailors lost all sense of social propriety.

In 1616, Sir Thomas Roe received news that “our people are unruly ashore; that they bring goods by force to their house in spite of him.”² The English mariners had an amazing flair for defiling religious buildings and monuments, and Roe complained that “our people pissing rudely and doing other filthines against the walls [mosque]” offended the local inhabitants.³ These incidents made it particularly difficult to convince local officials that the English Company was a better option to the Portuguese. The situation became unmanageable once English sailors arrived in town, and Hopkins complained that

² Sir Thomas Roe to the factors at Surat, Ajmer, 15 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:206; Thomas Kerridge to the Company, Surat, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:120. This was a common occurrence on European fleets of the era. See also, N.A.M. Rogers, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain* (Penguin, 2005), 61; Pablo E. Perez-Mallaina, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Carla Rahn Phillips (John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 203-216.

³ Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, v.2, 509. The English factors struggled to obtain an agreement for Khoja Arab's house due to the incident.

“divers seamen being vainely addicted to the consumeing of their sallary licentiously, whereby at retourne or decease, little or nothing remains unto their wives, children or mothers.”⁴ Mariners created problems persistently throughout the period from 1608 until 1652, and it forced the presidency to respond.⁵

During the 1630s, both President Hopkinson and President Methwold attempted to resolve the problem by enacting a series of reforms. Hopkinson reduced the amount of wages a mariner could receive to a third in an attempt to curtail binge drinking at port. He implemented fines and publically whipped offenders, and by Methwold’s presidency mariners were banned from going ashore except for special circumstances and under supervision.⁶ The ban may have reduced the number of incidents, but there is plenty of

⁴ Commission and Instructions to Captain John Weddell, Surat, 24 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.198; Commission and Instructions to Captain John White, Surat, 25 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.200-201.

⁵ There are numerous examples of mariners who caused disturbances at Surat. Below is a list of references to particular issues, but this list does not cover every moment where mariners created issues in India and for the president and council. See also, Captain Nicholas Downton to Thomas Aldworth, Swally Road, 1 March 1614/15, *Letters Received*, 3:31; Edward Connock to the Company, Jask, 19 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:57; A Council held aboard the Charles in Swally Road, 28 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:129; Royal Mary, Swally Road, 15 October 1628, IOR/G/36/1, f.128. William Matthews and Richard Langford provided similar testimony on behalf of Eustace Mann; Commission and Instructions to Captain John Weddell, Surat, 24 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.198; Commission and Instructions to Captain John White, Surat, 25 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.200-201; Consultation aboard the Jonas, 4 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.174; Aboard the Jonas, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.175; Instructions for Osmond Smith, Surat, 4 May 1633, IOR/G/36/1, f.227; President Methwold to Andrew Warden, Surat, 5 May 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.162; President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 28 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.204v; Consultation aboard the London, 9 April 1635, IOR/G/36/1, f.371; President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 28 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.204v. In other cases of belligerence that were brought before the council of Surat, see also, A Consultation aboard the Comfort, 12 June 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.18; A Consultation aboard the Comfort, 16 June 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.19; Diary of William Methwold, 17 October 1636, IOR/G/36/1, f.30; President Breton and council to the Company, Swally Marine, 21 January 1638/39, IOR/E/3/21, f.106; Roger Giffard to the Company, 23 January 1632/33, IOR/E/3/14, f.125v.

⁶ Consultation at Surat, 29 April 1633, IOR/G/36/1, f.224; “Acts of the President and Council”, Surat, 4 May 1633, IOR/G/36/1, f.225v; President Methwold to Andrew Warden, Surat, 5 May 1636, IOR/G/36/84(3), f.162. For Methwold’s comments regarding the superiority of the Dutch and disciplinary action on their fleets, see also, President Methwold to the Company, Surat, 28 April 1636, IOR/E/3/15, f.204v.

evidence that mariners continued to create problems through Thomas Merry's presidency in the 1650s.⁷ Mariners were by far the most difficult group within the English community that the presidency had to manage, especially at Surat, but they were far less burdensome at the ports of Jask and Gombroon in Safavīd Persia.

Mariners were particularly obnoxious, but the English factors in India were much less troublesome. There were a few exceptions, but in those incidents the president of Surat and his council quickly removed the offending individual. Those who committed an offense—mariners, merchants, or ministers alike—appeared before the president and council of Surat in a semi-formal trial. The *Surat Factory Records* (1619-1636) consist of numerous orders and other important decisions, but they also include semi-formal hearings regarding delinquent individuals, particularly those who caused significant problems in the factory.⁸ Of the numerous reports and decisions against mariners, there are only a few pertaining to English agents serving in India.⁹

The consultations and letters suggest that the presidency was particularly good about penalizing offenders, but they simply lacked the manpower to police the road from Swally Hole to Surat in order to subdue the Company's unruly seamen. In contrast, the presidency carefully managed their underfactors, and they intervened swiftly when an

⁷ Consultation at Surat, 13 November 1651, IOR/E/3/22, f. 242; Consultation at Swally Marine, 1 December 1651, IOR/E/3/22, f.249; Consultation in Surat, 26 November 1651, IOR/E/3/22, f.248.

⁸ See, IOR/G/36/1.

⁹ There are twenty two volumes of correspondence books (IOR/E/3/1-22), one book of consultations (IOR/G/36/1), and two factory books of letters sent (IOR/G/36/84) and received (IOR/G/36/102) from Surat to her subordinate factories in India. There are also two volumes of miscellaneous letters that cover portions of the period between 1608 and 1652. See also, Egerton 2086 and Egerton 2123. There is a wealth of material for India, but there are very few reports of men quarreling with each other.

individual stepped outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior, such as Paul Canning, Thomas Ashwell, William Lesk, Richard Boothby, and, to a lesser extent, John Lechland, and the unfortunate incident in the garden with James Congden and John Perkins (above). Another incident which included the president of Bantam (George Willoughby) came to trial in Surat, but it occurred outside of the presidency's purview and was an extraordinary situation.¹⁰

The charges against the men varied, and in the case of Perkins the president and council determined that he was innocent of any wrongdoing and thus pardoned. Similarly, the president and fellow Englishmen regarded Lechland well, but he was ultimately dismissed from the Company's service because he fell in love with a local Hindu woman and he refused to cast her aside. The others were guilty of excessive drinking, vulgar and slanderous speech, and insubordination. Canning died before Thomas Aldworth (chief of India in 1613) could respond, but the others were immediately reprimanded and released from the Company's service.¹¹

¹⁰ The incident saw President Willoughby seize control of Fort Armagon from the chief as dictated in Surat. The incident occurred at an interesting junction in Company's history on the Coast of Coromandel. After 1623, the retrenchment policies that followed the massacre at Amboina saw the Coast temporarily fall under Surat's control. When Willoughby arrived in 1631, the Coast had reverted back to Bantam's control but Henry Sill (Surat's designated chief over the fort) at the time oversaw the trade on the Coast. Willoughby arrested Sill and planted his men in control of the fort. See, Consultation at Surat, 9 February 1631/32, IOR/G/36/1, f.154; George Willoughby's answer to the accusations, Royal James, 17 December 1632, IOR/E/3/13, f.95; "Certain Interrogatories for George Willoughby, etc concerning their proceedings against Mr. Henry Sill, Christopher Reade, etc", Surat, 10 December 1632, IOR/G/36/1, f.177. Another copy is found in the original correspondence, IOR/E/3/13, f.94; "Examination of George Willoughby", Surat, 10 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.180; Consultation at Surat, 15 January 1632/33, IOR/G/36/1, f.194.

¹¹ Charges against Rev. William Lesk, Surat, 8 January 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:36; President Wylde to the Company, Surat, 1 April 1629, IOR/E/3/12, f.72; "Richard Boothby's letter book," IOR/G/40/11. In the 1620s, it came to President Thomas Kerridge's attention that one of his underfactors, John Lechland, was involved with a Hindu woman whom he had a daughter with. Kerridge instructed Lechland to dissolve the relationship, but Lechland refused and Kerridge immediately released him from the Company's service.

The sources suggest that few factors, or other Englishmen (surgeons, ministers, and others), were guilty of some illicit activity, but it is possible that squabbles arose in the factories that either went unreported or were resolved peacefully. It is also essential to consider that the men mentioned above were not the chiefs of trade in India, nor were they presidents or a member of his council. These men were factory assistants or low ranking underfactors. The president and his council, along with his chiefs who presided over the northern factories, were not involved apart from their judiciary function. This is very different compared to Persia where the chiefs and second or third factors were at the heart of the problems that plagued the factory, and the English in Safavīd Persia often divided into small factions. This Surat presidency seemed to curtail problems with their underfactors probably as a consequence of their swift action against those who crossed the boundaries of acceptable behavior.¹²

Part of the reason that fewer problems emerged in India was perhaps directly a consequence of population size and range of authority. First, there were quite a few English merchants in India, and the factories were in close proximity (table 3). Surat alone in a typical year was home to around fifteen to twenty Englishmen while the entire system of factories from Surat to Agra had roughly an English population of thirty to

Consultation at Surat, 20 February 1625/26, IOR/G/36/1, f.117; Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, vol. 2. ed. Mary Lavinia Anstey (London, 1914 reprint), 83. Likewise, President Hopkinson dismissed Thomas Ashwell from the Company's service immediately after reports circulated that he acted belligerently. Consultation in Surat, 4 August 1633, IOR/G/36/1, f.229. In the case of Paul Canning, the factor died in 1613 before Thomas Aldworth could reprimand him for quarreling with his entourage during his journey to Agra. Nicholas Withington to Sir Thomas Smith, Ahmadabad, 9 November 1613, Egerton MS 2086, f.1.

¹²There were probably minor scuffles among the men, especially in periods of intense pressure and particularly during the 1620s. But if they occurred, the authors of the letters and the notary in Surat did not record them. It is possible to infer that if any such incident occurred the factors considered them negligible and unnecessary to report.

forty men. Their numbers were quite small compared to the Portuguese and almost irrelevant, but enough Englishmen lived in close proximity to each other that it created a sort of social checks-and-balance system. The Surat presidency, which was the central English authority in the region, could assert its influence over both their subordinate factories and their subordinate factors. This was not the same in Persia where fewer men resided at a much greater distance from each other, especially from Surat's authority. In Persia, we will see how the conditions of the English community changed drastically, and its internal collapse describes an additional aspect of the degeneration of Anglo-Safavīd relations previously discussed in chapters two and three.

II. “Your disagreeing can bring forth no other effect but losse unto us for amity is the best linck”: the English Community breaks

The factory in Persia was in a difficult position as a subordinate factory to Surat. The English were thinly dispersed throughout Persia and at a great distance from Surat where the bulk of decisions were made. Many of their colleagues were sick, dying, or dead, and aside from those few locals who could communicate in Portuguese, the English had few opportunities to communicate on a regular basis. The presidents of trade in Surat were too far to assert any genuine authority, and the small party in Persia was left to organize trade in difficult conditions. The materialization of inter-community conflict offers an alternative explanation for the collapse of the English factory in Persia. Before William Fremlen's arrival in 1637, the chiefs were involved in, or privy to, numerous

counts of illicit activity that greatly hindered the company and, at times, manifested as disputes between Englishmen.

Environmental and social pressures opened the door for confessional conflict, which formed mostly as shouting matches between factors. This played out quite differently in India where a clear line of demarcation separated the English (Catholics and Protestants) from their Portuguese Catholic rivals. The strong Jesuit influence in India fostered suspicions of the dreaded Catholic poisoner. A few examples from India were more or less the consequence of longstanding fears of the link between the devil, popery, and poison, but not everything was merely a contrived suspicion and actual attempts to poison the English occurred in India. A couple examples illustrate how the act played out in India. First, after a dispute over the burial of his cousin in Isfahan, Paul Canning feared “the danger hee was in of poysoninge by the Jesuits.” Canning died a month after writing the letter, but it is impossible to determine the cause of his death. The expectation that the Jesuits would poison him over the dispute, however, reflects contemporary English fears of their Catholic neighbors. In the latter case, and this most likely fueled the English imagination, were actual moments where the Jesuit priests attempted to murder the English. In 1615, for example, the English and Portuguese fleets clashed outside of Swally Road. During the sea fight the Jesuits or “Jesuites Jesuitisme (I cannot call it Christianity)” reportedly “sent to the Muccadin of Swally, to entice him to poyson the Water of the Well, whence the English fetched for their vse.”¹³

¹³ Samuel Purchas, *Pvrchas his Pilgrimage. Or Relations of the World and the Religions Obserued in all Ages and places Discouered, from the Creation vnto this Present. Contayning a Theological and Geographical Historie of Asia, Africa, and America, with Ilands adiacent. Declaring the ancient Religions before the Flovd, the Heathenish, Jewish, and Saracenicall in all Ages since, in those parts professed, with*

The nature of the popish plot or Catholic threat changed from India to Persia. In the former it was a direct consequence of Anglo-Portuguese relations, but in Persia the English merchants began to accuse their fellow Englishmen as potential threats, particularly in characterizing them as a poisoner. The same confessional fights in England between the ‘godly’ and ‘ungodly’ and between Protestants and Catholics were also evident in the English Community in Persia. The surviving material allows us to see these conflicts unfold, but there are some limitations. The narrative is incomplete at critical moments making it very difficult to determine what ignited some of these conflicts, but there is a wealth of information for reconstructing the tense moments. While some of the finer details are lost, these conflicts tell us quite a lot about English life in Persia. Chapters two and three demonstrated how the silk trade failed from the context of Anglo-Safavīd relations, and this chapter will highlight some critical points of contention from within the English community that equally damaged the English silk trade and stability of the English house. The stories recounted below, on one hand, will take a close look at the deep resentment that developed between several Englishmen in Persia, and how these feuds created tension and division from within the English factory. On the other hand, these stories will highlight the lack of order or social discipline in English Persia, which eventually forced the presidency in Surat to intervene in the 1630s.

their seuerall opinions, idols, Oracles, Temples, Priests, Fasts, Feasts, Sacrafices, and Rites Religious: Their beginnings, Proceedings, Alterations, Sects, Orders and Svccessions. With briefe Descriptions of Countries, Nations, States, Discoueries, Private and publike Customes, and the most remarkable Rarities of Natvre, or Humane industrie, in the same. The fourt Edition, much enlarged with Additions, and illustrated with Mappes through the whole worke, And there whole Treatises annexed, One of Russia and other Northeasterne Regions by Sr. Ibrome Horsey; The second of the Gulfe of Bengala by Mister William Methwold; The third of the Saracenicall Empire, Translated out of Arabike by T. Erpenivs. By Samuel Pvrchas, Parson of St. Martins by Ludgate, London (London: Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, and are to be sold at his Shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the Signe of the Rose, 1626), 527.

I. Thomas Barker and Edward Connock: “for he that shaves with the priests is not far from popery”

Professor Ferrier blames Thomas Barker for the rift that developed between the English factors in the late teens, but this view is problematic.¹⁴ The details of the origins of the conflict are rather ambiguous, and it is not entirely clear what caused the conflict although there are a few hints. The correspondence is fragmented but at a glance it does appear that Barker was perhaps a little confrontational. The material allows us to pinpoint certain moments of tension, but it is unclear what caused the disagreements in most instances. In addition, the protest against Barker came from the same three men: Edward Connock, George Pley, and Edward Pettus and should be read carefully. The opposition to Barker was not unanimous, however, and William Bell, William Tracy, and William Robins had reported nothing ill of Barker. If Barker was negligent, it would seem that the entire factory, particularly William Robbins who Sir Thomas Roe seemed to trust and was in communication with (see chapter 2), would unanimously levy charges against Barker. This was not the case. The conflict lasted under a year due to Connock’s untimely death in December 1617, but the available correspondence suggests that something transpired underneath the surface and that Barker was not necessarily the problem.

The story of the feud between Thomas Barker and Edward Connock lacks several details that leave portions of the narrative unexplained. It seems that the feud evolved from an issue regarding Connock’s supposed claim to the ambassadorship in Safavīd

¹⁴ Ferrier, “An English view of Persian Trade”, 189.

Persia. The evidence supporting one side or the other is minimal at best, but it is clear that during the journey to Isfahan in 1617 a series of minor disputes divided the English in Persia. Connock found support from George Pley and Edward Pettus, while Thomas Barker seemed to have William Bell, John Amy, and William Tracy's trust. The dispute ended prematurely in December 1617 after Connock died, but over the course of the year Connock and his faction attempted to slander and remove Barker from the Company's service in Safavīd Persia. While the details remain elusive, there is evidence to suggest that Connock and Pley attempted to pilfer the Company's estate while slandering Barker.

Before addressing the conflict, there is one particular aspect of the dispute that played a role in its development. George Pley was Thomas Kerridge's cousin—who at that time was chief of the Indian trade (the term president was not used formally in India until 1618 or 1619)—and Edward Connock and Pley were friends. Connock and Pley's friendship presumably began in England before their arrival in India. There is some ambiguity in the initial stages of the conflict, but Pley and Connock were tied together. How Pettus fits into this is much more difficult to pin down, but he eventually sided with Pley and Connock after a dispute in Shīrāz which will be addressed below. That left William Tracy, who spent the majority of 1617 under Connock's wing, and William Bell, who was a youth in the Company's service. Another factor by the name of John Amy arrived at the same time, but his role in the conflict is completely nonexistent. Amy left nothing in writing, and his movements are largely unreported. The final player was William Robbins who resided in Isfahan before the Company arrived, but he was likewise as silent as Amy.

Thomas Barker was in a rather difficult predicament in Persia, and the odds were stacked against him. A brief glance at the records suggests that Barker was an uncouth and riotous man who made his colleagues anxious. But a closer look at the events and the language involved suggests that something fundamentally different shaped the dispute, and although we do not have all of the pieces there is enough to construct a fairly detailed picture. While I make every attempt to avoid claims, or hints, that these men universally lied, in this particular incident Connock, Pley, and Pettus' narratives do not make sense in context. With this in mind we should now turn to the conflict at hand.

After the English landed in Jask sometime in November or December of 1616, problems began to arise. The first of these seems to have occurred shortly after landing in Jask, but before the party departed for Shīrāz. According to Thomas Barker, Edward Connock reportedly fashioned himself an English Ambassador to Persia. Although Connock later denied it, the assertion troubled Pley initially since “to come unto so potent a prince as Ambassador sent immediately from our King, without great state, will dishonor both our King and country.”¹⁵ Yet Pley was unconvinced of the charges against his friend, and Connock rejected the claim which was so “ignorant and beastly.”¹⁶ This was a problem because the Company granted Sir Thomas Roe exclusive authority pertaining to matters of state or delegation between the English and the eastern courts, and here Connock crossed into Roe's territory.¹⁷ It is nearly impossible to confirm

¹⁵ George Pley to Edward Connock, Shīrāz, 4 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:195.

¹⁶ Edward Connock to George Pley, Isfahan, 10 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:196-197.

¹⁷ Sir Thomas Roe to Thomas Kerridge, Mandū, 25 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:201; Mishra, “Diplomacy at the Edge,” 23.

whether or not Connock styled himself as ambassador, but the rumor that Barker started reached Roe in India by April 1617. Roe was furious. He complained to Thomas Kerridge, in which he ultimately mocked Connock's status and recommended that "his [Connock] wages is the best argument for him, which yet says plainly he was designed for the Southward [Spice Islands]."¹⁸ Roe was convinced that Barker's charge was genuine: "But that it is so I am confident, for his [Connock] accuser [Barker] I know."¹⁹ Roe then implied that perhaps Kerridge should recall Connock and establish a new chief of trade in Persia.

If there was a source for the feud, this is probably where it began. What is difficult to determine, however, is why Barker thought to challenge Connock at all and then report to Roe. In their initial meeting in Swally Hole 2 October 1616, there is no evidence that Connock and Barker were on the verge of feuding, and both men agreed that expanding the Company's trade into Persia made commercial sense.²⁰ If anything, the evidence suggests that the opposite would occur. Roe's puzzling claim that "for his accuser I know" could potentially suggest that Barker and Roe were at the very least acquaintances before arriving in India. That certainly would provide grounds for Barker to report to Roe, but there is no evidence in the Company records aside from that small hint that the two men knew each other beforehand. Nonetheless this small, but significant, accusation seems to have, and probably did, fuel the larger conflict.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5:201.

¹⁹ Sir Thomas Roe to Thomas Kerridge, Mandū, 25 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:201.

²⁰ Consultation aboard the Charles, Swally Road, 2 October 1616, *Letters Received*, 4: 190-192.

Connock departed the party at some point between Jask and Shīrāz, and he took with him William Tracy. It is unclear when Connock split from the main party, but it is plain that the tension between Connock and Barker began to simmer in or around Shīrāz. At some point during their journey north, Barker began to delicately challenge Connock. We do not have Barker's initial comments on the matter, but a letter from George Pley outlines Barker's general accusations. Pley brought the charges up in a letter, but much like the previous charge he was unconvinced of Connock's guilt. Pley described himself as Jethro who offered council to Moses in his time of need "though far inferior unto him [Moses], was strengthened thereby." Barker, however, charged Connock with spending in excess of a reasonable amount, but he did not provide an estimate of Connock's expenses. Even then, what constituted an excess was ambiguous and rather subjective. The Company did not provide or openly declare a specific expense ceiling for their factors, and often the two seemed to have very different views of what was necessary.

The second charge was much more disturbing, at least from Barker's perspective. He accused Connock of allowing "this country people to lay violent hands on one of your fellow servants [William Bell]." ²¹ It is unclear how Barker came to this information, but presumably Bell informed Barker after Connock departed for Isfahan, or perhaps Barker was present if it occurred on the road between Jask and Shīrāz. Connock denied this charge, and argued that Bell was "a foolish youth" who risked "my life by his faction with our rude sturdy cook." Yet Connock stops short of acknowledging that Bell was beaten, but it does appear that Connock implied that Bell deserved it and Bell's behavior

²¹ George Pley to Edward Connock, Shīrāz, 4 April 1617, *Letters Received.*, 5:195.

justified it his lack of action. In this letter we see the first signs that Pley and Connock were unified in the matter. Connock insisted that they maintained “secrecy of our negotiation” from their “mortal enemy,” Thomas Barker. This is an interesting comment given that it had only been seven months after they stood onboard the *Charles* and collectively agreed that the venture to Persia was necessary. At some point, the two took the large jump from companions to mortal enemies. Pley agreed nonetheless and they carried their plans out in secrecy without raising Barker’s suspicions.

Unfortunately, aside from their attempt to discredit Barker, we know very little about their plans and what they hoped to accomplish. It is possible that Connock feared that some connection between Barker and Roe, however strong it was, would bring Roe against Connock and Pley. This would explain in part why secrecy was necessary from Connock’s perspective. At the same time, Connock needed to conceal his plans because he was defrauding the Company and he did not trust Barker. This will be addressed shortly, but for now Connock bid Pley adieu and urged him to “but haste, sweet Mr. Pley, haste; if you love your country, haste; and bring with you what ready moneys.”²²

By this point, Barker had accused Connock of styling himself the ambassador to the Safavīd Court, claimed that the chief spent lavishly, and allowed a few Persians in their caravan to beat William Bell. By late April 1617, Pley had long since departed Shīrāz, thus leaving Barker behind, and joined Connock in Isfahan. Pettus followed Pley to Isfahan a few days later, and after their arrival the minor squabble between Barker and Connock evolved. From Asupas, a town on the road to Isfahan, Pley attempted to garner

²² Edward Connock to George Pley, Isfahan, 10 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:197-199.

support from both Pettus and Bell against Barker.²³ Pley attempted to convince the two by suggesting that Barker was responsible for the failure to move the goods from Shīrāz to Isfahan due to an issue with the camel hire. Barker failed for reasons of drunken negligence, according to Pley, which delayed the shipment of English goods to Isfahan. Interestingly, it was Barker who argued that Pley lost a camel in a drunken stupor, to which Pley responded: “Is it possible that they who daily swim in Bacchus bowls can so speak of Others? But alas! What will not malice say to excuse their own follies.”²⁴ In addition, Pley claimed that Barker procured a significant private trade in ginger, but when Pley confronted him, Barker branded Pley a “knave, puritan knave, prying knave and threadbare knave.”²⁵ We do not know what transpired between the three in Isfahan, but they evidently spent some time mulling over Barker’s alleged misdemeanors. From Isfahan, the accusations suddenly transformed.

Early on in the venture we see many of the same points of contention that existed in post-Reformation England begin to crop up in Persia. There are strong religious overtones in the scenario above that reflect some of the confessional disputes among Englishmen in England. J.J. Scarisbrick argued that Protestants, particularly the godly, preached for sobriety while also urging their co-religious to accept their social standing in

²³George Pley to Edward Pettus, 28 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:210; George Pley to William Bell, Asupas, 3 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:211.

²⁴ George Pley to William Bell, Asupas, 3 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:212. Bacchus was the Roman god of wine.

²⁵ George Pley to William Bell, Asupas, 3 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:212.

society and respect their superiors.²⁶ In early moments of the confrontation, Barker challenged his superior and attempted to defame him by suggesting that he assumed the title of ambassador. By disparaging Connock over his choice in the Bell incident also demonstrates Barker's challenge to the establish authority, which in this case meant Connock's position as the principle merchant in Persia. From Pley's perspective, Barker established himself as an oppositional force in the English community which threatened to undermine the venture from internal dissention.

Peter Lake has more recently argued through retelling Stephen Denison's story—a puritan minister of St. Katherine Cree church in London—that society, as Denison thought, was divided between those who engaged in the carnal activities and those who opposed it. In some cases, as Lake showed, the word puritan entered the vocabulary as an insult directed at those who opposed the carnal actions of the “ungodly” laity.²⁷ Barker's confrontation with Pley illustrates the transfer of confessional language at home to the factories in Persia. Pley's description of the altercation expresses contemporary ideas about the “godly” and “ungodly” in his letter to William Bell. He claimed that Barker acted unlawfully therefore it was his duty to confront Barker. The accusations against Barker of drunkenness associated him with those Englishmen who were notorious sinners. This provoked Barker's reply that Pley was a puritan. Pley was unlikely an English puritan in a strict sense, especially as his close friend and associate was a

²⁶ J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Blackwell Publishers, 1997 reprint), 179.

²⁷ Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 36-37. Also see, Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists & Players in Post-Reformation England* (Yale University Press, 2002), 292-299.

professed Roman Catholic (below). But Barker's reaction, if it happened at all, suggests that Barker saw Pley as a hypocrite and responded as his co-religious in England would have by labeling Pley a puritan. At least this is the image that Pley invoked in his letter to Bell. The credibility of Pley's account is questionable, but we can see how the divide between religious conservatives and the religious moderates in England permeated the frontier of English society and reemerged in disputes among English factors even if it functioned solely as a tool to slander one's opponent.

In May 1617, Connock was joined by Pley and Pettus in Isfahan, while Barker, Bell, and John Amy—a factory assistant—stayed in Shīrāz. On the 8 May 1617, Connock wrote to Barker and accused him of purposely detaining the goods and his party at Shīrāz: “Be not cause of our business’ ruin; you have through your sloth and negligence already put it a-bleeding.”²⁸ Connock argued that Barker was a danger to the Company's trade, and his “faithlessness to the public service” would bring the East India trade in Persia to a halt. As a side note, Connock withheld an outright condemnation of Barker until he was joined at Court by his closest supporters. He boasted to Pley and Pettus that “you will see him one day repent, if not weep, for breaking my order.”²⁹ Again the idea of social order appears in the conversation, and Barker's early complaints or concerns were curiously understood as a direct challenge to Connock's authority. At this time, Connock appealed to Thomas Kerridge in Surat, and the accusations against Barker became more elaborate.

²⁸ Edward Connock to Thomas Barker, Isfahan, 8 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:217.

²⁹ Edward Connock to George Pley and Edward Pettus on the way from Shīrāz to Isfahan, Isfahan, 8 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:218.

In Connock's letters to Thomas Kerridge at Surat dated the 15 May 1617, his story suddenly expanded into somewhat of a wild fantasy that began as a subtle disagreement over a camel hire in Shīrāz and transformed into an elaborate tale of disobedience and buggery. His narrative of the events to Kerridge suggested that Edward Pettus was meant to stay at Shīrāz as second but "Thomas Barker, thrust out of doors, threatened his tying at a horse tail if he refused to come hither, and instead of him hath detained young Bell, whose youth doth well and fully serve his purpose."³⁰ Combined with "unlawful and sensual entertainments," Thomas Barker, according to Connock, threatened to destroy the Company from the inside out. Connock claimed that Barker after their arrival in Persia "styled me in opprobrious manner but threats to pistol me if I check his proceedings."³¹

Pettus confirmed this version of the story in a private letter to Robert Middleton who was a merchant in London and later a member of the Company in London, but at the time Middleton did not appear to be affiliated with the Company.³² He wrote Middleton that "He [Barker] is so turbulent and proud a fellow, and hath so overweening a conceit of himself, that at Surrat they were right glad to be rid of him."³³ The Council of Surat does not appear to have had any issues with Barker, and if they had indeed thought Barker an inappropriate fellow they made no mention of it in their general letters to

³⁰ Edward Connock to President Kerridge, Isfahan, 15 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:229.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5:231.

³² Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:292; Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 211.

³³ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:292.

London. But if Pettus' tale is credible, a single man "in his jollity" seemed to coerce the entire factory to "write and re-write their letters at his pleasure."³⁴ So not only did Barker express an appetite for buggery, he also seemed to wield an immense amount of physical control over his colleagues. The accusations, however, tilt towards exaggeration, if not complete fabrication, which seems probable since several other factors in Persia were content with Barker.³⁵ There is only a single letter from Thomas Barker during this dispute (after Connock's death, we hear more from him), which Thomas Barker and William Bell signed and dated on the 8 May 1617. The most remarkable part about the letter is the absence of any evidence of internal strife from Barker's perspective.

Edward Connock finally confronted Barker on the 18 May 1617 in writing, just three days after he dispatched letters to Surat. By May, Connock had strong support from Pley and Pettus, and he began to appeal to Pley's social status as a means to shame Barker:

Mr. Pley is an ancient man, hath wife and children, hath lived in good fashion in a small corporation in our land, and in these regards is in extraordinary good respect with our masters at home, being ever, as well in his prosperity as his misfortune, noted to be an honest man. He came out of England in better fashion (give me leave to tell you) by far than yourself.³⁶

It is clear that Connock and Pley shared a friendly relationship in England, but it is equally evident that Connock was unhappy with Barker's status in Persia. From

³⁴ Ibid., 5:293.

³⁵ William Bell, William Tracy, and John Amy seemed to support Barker, and none of the men wrote ill of Barker. Sir Thomas Roe, who was in India at time, also thought well of Barker, but Roe was equally perturbed with Connock.

³⁶ Edward Connock to Thomas Barker, Isfahan, 18 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:256.

Connock's perspective, Pley should have served as his second instead of Barker.

Whatever Pettus' role was in the affair, it is clear that Pley and Connock were bound together from a pre-existing friendship that began in England. It also seems that the two men depended on Pley's relation to Kerridge to have Barker removed from Persia.

Barker may have been guilty to some extent, but the proceedings were rather peculiar. From India, Roe questioned the validity of the accusations against Barker, and although Roe was still bitter over the initial voyage, he wrote "I confess, but will not seek to protect anything but his [Barker's] innocence."³⁷ It made sense for Pley to complain to his cousin in Surat, and he probably expected Kerridge's sympathy. It is sort of understandable that Edward Pettus would convey a similar set of complaints to Robert Middleton in June 1617. It, however, makes very little sense that in two letters to London from June 1617, Connock, Pley, and Pettus completely disregarded Barker's supposed negligence and abuse. Apparently Barker's fondness for buggery and his physical prowess over his assistants was no longer an issue, at least not one that the Company needed to hear about. This is particularly strange since the Company would have recalled or at the very least questioned Barker for his alleged misdemeanors against the Company. Yet Pettus' final lines to Robert Middleton raise further suspicions of his and his colleagues' credibility: "I write you these lines apart because I would not have them seen to any but yourself." Pettus finally begged his friend "to stand my friend if any injurious person by letter or otherwise may wrong me."³⁸ The only reasonable explanation, and one

³⁷ Sir Thomas Roe to Thomas Kerridge, Mandū, 25 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:202.

³⁸ Edward Pettus to Robert Middleton, Isfahan, 2 June 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:294.

that a later investigation of Connock confirmed, is that Connock and Pley were defrauding the Company and did not want to draw the Company's attention.

Meanwhile in India, Sir Thomas Roe received instructions from the Company to oversee their trade in India and Persia (see chapter 2). He was already perturbed over the initial decision to transfer a portion of the Company's estate to Persia, but the news out of Persia disturbed Roe, especially the assertion that Connock fashioned himself the ambassador of English trade there. The recent news of Barker's alleged activities probably reached Roe, and before the end of the year Roe was determined to send additional merchants to Persia to look into the factory's progress. While Connock and Pley continued their attack against Barker, Kerridge—perhaps at Roe's request—sent Edward Monox, a merchant who recently arrived from London, to Persia to assist Barker and to examine Connock's papers. Roe was concerned with the reports of private trade. Monox arrived in Persia probably around November 1617. If Connock had anything to hide, Monox certainly would expose it. But, as it happened, fate intervened and Connock and Pley died before the end of the year.

Edward Connock died in Gatān (near Jask), 24 December 1617 just a few days after Pley died. Before turning to the final chapter of Connock's story, let us briefly touch on the question of Catholicism in Persia since his last act was connected to it. At the moment of Connock's death, the subtle confessional struggle between the English factors was brought to light. On his deathbed, Connock confessed to being Catholic and he "grieved that he had written to your Honours so much to the disgrace of a Portugall friar

at Spahan,” which he likely did to conceal his Catholic identity.³⁹ Connock probably referred to a letter that he sent to London 2 April 1617 from Isfahan. Connock wrote: “if once the Spaniard hath but footing on his shore; how insolent he will use, or rather abuse his prince and people, having gotten possession, which as I well cal instance so may I boldly assure this King ‘twill be too dishonourable and not befitting a monarch endure.”⁴⁰

Connock’s guilt likely derived from this moment at court when he attempted to entice Shah Abbas I to dismiss a Portuguese friar from Court. At the time he wrote the Company with an unsympathetic tone, but the considerable presence of Catholicism in the Safavīd capital seemed to weigh on Connock’s conscience. In a sense, Connock assumed the role of the good Catholic Conformist (papist) who internalized his Roman Catholic faith and openly defended the Protestant State’s interests, or in this case the Company’s.⁴¹ It was a decision he came to deeply regret, which is not entirely surprising since Connock spent most of his time in Isfahan where Roman Catholicism was reasonably well represented. The re-immersion into an openly Catholic Community probably stirred deep lingering feelings that Connock’s co-religious in England often struggled to manage in regards to conformity and maintaining a sense of one’s Catholic identity.⁴² As early as April 1617, Sir Thomas Roe suspected that Connock was indeed a

³⁹ Edward Monox to the Company, Jask, 28 December 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:282.

⁴⁰ Edward Connock to the Company, Isfahan, 2 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:190. Connock’s disillusionment did not stop there as he inflated the English navy’s power far above what it was capable of.

⁴¹ Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, conformity, and confessional polemic in early modern England* (Boydell Press, 1993), 1-3; 73-74. Also see, Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 42-43; 294-295.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 50-51.

Catholic, or worse, a Muslim: “now it is feared he may, for he that shaves with the priests is not far from popery, and many talk of a Turkish lock.”⁴³

The Augustinians and Carmelites both had monasteries in the capital, and Catholic clerics from the Iberian Peninsula, the Italian States, and France travelled to Isfahan. The Catholic community in Persia was noticeable, and, in contrast to India where a few Englishmen feared for their lives, the English in Persia were relatively comfortable with this. It is a great irony that in India the English feared the Jesuits and the potential that their fellow Englishmen would die from poisoning at the hands of the Jesuits, but in Persia, where the English lived and communicated with various Catholic orders, they gave little thought to the potential dangers their colleagues in India felt. John Percy observed in Shīrāz in 1626 that “the Blacke fryers are all heere in hould exceptinge fryer Ambrosia whoe I understand is fledd the occassion of this apprehendinge as by father John.”⁴⁴ John Loftus at roughly the same time conversed with the local priests: “the fathers of the Carmelits I met in two companies uppon the waye the first before I came to [Ojone?] whoe tould mee that there was newse that our shipps were arived at port.”⁴⁵ The fear of poison lingered, but in Persia the English began to suspect their fellow Englishmen.

⁴³ Sir Thomas Roe to Thomas Kerridge, Mandū, 25 April 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:201. Sir William Foster explains in a footnote that “Turkish lock” was a reference to becoming Muslim or the “practice of shaving the head except for a tuft of hair on the crown.”

⁴⁴ Copy of a letter from John Percy, Shīrāz, 9 April 1626, IOR/G/29/1, f.19.

⁴⁵ Copy of a letter from Robert Loftus, Shīrāz, 29 June 1626, IOR/G/29/1, f.21.

There was already an existing fear, or belief, that one Englishmen, John Midnall an English Papist and fugitive from the Levant Company, had “learned (it is reported) this act of poysoning, but which he made away three other Englishmen in Persia, to make himself master of the whole stock.”⁴⁶ Midnall fled from the Levant Company and arrived in the region around 1614, which was discussed briefly in chapter two. His pursuer, Richard Steel, was instrumental in the early explorative venture to Persia to test the market for English cloth. Midnall had ostensibly established himself in Persia, although the English correspondence does not make light of him after Steel’s initial arrival around 1614. In this context Connock lay dying in Gatan, and he, according to Monox, had requested a “confessor and other rites of that his blind religion.”⁴⁷

On his deathbed Connock, who was apparently unwilling to die without having the last word, accused Edward Monox of poisoning him. Perhaps a little delirious from a fever, Connock “publicklye said Monnox hath poysoned me, confessed by him selfe, Adam Turner (Mr. Connocks servant) wrote to Mr. Barker at Xiras that if he could come to him, he would reveale a seacret of Mr. Monnox.”⁴⁸ Connock’s fear of poison, however, coincided with the handful of incidents in India where poison was suspected. In India, the increased level of awareness over potential poison plots in the first decade led

⁴⁶ Purchas, *Purchase, his Pilgrimage*, 528. Purchas seemed to borrow this information from Nicholas Downton’s journal. Downton was one of the English fleet captains in the early teens.

⁴⁷ Edward Monox to the Company, Jask, 28 December 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:282.

⁴⁸ “Articles against Edward Monox”, Jask, 17 December 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.95. This is a duplicate of letter 793 from IOR/E/3/6.

to conversations regarding cures and antidotes.⁴⁹ If Connock and Monox disliked each other, the records left no trace of any dissention other than Monox's quip about Connock's blind religion. In this we are at the mercy of our sources, but our imaginations allow a little room for picturing Connock's final moments with Monox. If the two did not exchange bitter words over Connock's Roman Catholic faith, Monox was probably visibly disgusted and any exchange between the two men may have led to Connock's accusations against Monox. It is impossible to know with any certainty what transpired, but Monox was clearly disgusted. Once Monox learned that Connock requested a Catholic priest to administer his last rites, the conversation was probably less amicable. It should not be forgotten that Monox was not at Connock's side to offer his condolences, and instead he was there to investigate the factory books and look into the status of the English estate in Persia. For Connock, Monox was not simply a confessional opponent, he also posed a threat to anything Connock and his colleagues established behind the scenes.

From Monox perspective, Connock's open acceptance of Catholicism tied into confessional politics at home and the anti-Catholic polemic that characterized papist as entirely untrustworthy. Monox does not mention anything to this regards, but in one sweeping motion the previous reports of fraudulent activity and Connock's alleged ambassadorship must have made sense to Monox. If Monox bought into contemporary prejudices against Catholics, Connock's deviance from the Company's interests would

⁴⁹ Joseph Salbank to the Company, Agra, 22 November 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:186.; Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, 1:178, 178n.

have appeared as a natural progression of a papist who sought to undermine the Protestant State.⁵⁰ What Monox represented, however, was an opponent to Connock's fraudulent activities, and in this context both the dispute between Barker and Connock and the alleged poisoning assume a different role in the narrative.

In the wake of Connock's death, Sir Thomas raised Thomas Barker to chief of Persia, and Edward Monox served as second to Barker. Barker was obviously pleased with his new position and he declared that Connock's failures there gave the trade "her death's wound" through mismanagement.⁵¹ For all of Connock's efforts to crush Barker, he failed in the end, and, under Roe's influence, Barker emerged unscathed and as chief of Persia.⁵² As fragmented as they are, the records suggest (as we will see below) that Connock, along with his colleagues, managed to swindle the Company in the process while attempting to slander Barker's name. Before the factory could regroup and move past the disagreements of the previous year, disturbing reports surrounding Edward Connock's death surfaced.

While previous historians have taken to heart the complaints lodged by Connock and Pley against Barker, a closer look suggests that Connock and his faction attempted to smear their opponents to protect and conceal their personal interests. This becomes more evident after Monox and another factor, William Blundeston, began sifting through

⁵⁰ Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 3. Hibbard states clearly that she is looking at court Catholics, but the idea that Catholics were an untrustworthy segment of English society went beyond Charles I's court.

⁵¹ Thomas Barker to Surat, Isfahan, 28 April 1618, IOR/E/3/6, f.19-19v.

⁵² Instructions to the factors in Persia, Mandū, 6 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:112.

Connock's papers and inventory.⁵³ In March 1618, Monox compiled an inventory of Connock's belongings, which consisted of numerous trinkets, clothing, and books including "1 papist prayer book; 1 Italyan book; 1 reames [Reims] testament" and two papist books.⁵⁴ Pley's inventory consisted of a French Psalm book, while William Tracy—an assistant and merchant who seemed to play little or no role in the affair—apparently had a French Bible and a French Psalm book as well.⁵⁵

During the investigation of their papers, Barker was shocked to discover the level of resentment Connock harbored against him. He claimed that he knew nothing of Connock's dishonest activities until copies of the letters were collected out of the house in Isfahan. He responded nonetheless to the various charges brought against him. According to Barker, he brought the goods to Lār a month early where he wrote to Connock for instruction but "he neither answereth by wryteing, nor hath copped my said lettre into his bookes of coppies, thoughe the oryginall was found amongst his papers since his decease that my appolligie might not bee extant to his disgrace."⁵⁶ The originals are apparently lost as well, since the only letter from Barker that exists after the company departed Jask is dated 8 May 1617.

⁵³ Consultation at Shīrāz, 2 February 1617/18, IOR/E/3/5, f. 283.

⁵⁴ "Inventory of goods apertayning to Edward Connock taken in Spahan the 6 March" [1618], IOR/E/3/6, f. 283-284.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f.286v; 288. The list does not clarify whether or not the French books were of Catholic or Protestant nature, only that they were French. William Tracy also had in his collection works written by John Dod and William Perkins.

⁵⁶ Thomas Barker to Surat, 28 April 1618, IOR/E/3/6, f.19-19v.

The content of Connock's letters baffled Barker, but he responded to accusations of his alleged debaucheries that "hee supposed all men soe vitious as himselfe, who had not only his panders to bring whores to the howse, on whom hee wasted his owne Bodye and the Companyes Meanes but would nightly goe to common howses of lycentiousnes." He admitted to referring to Connock "in an approbrious manner to George Pley and Edward Pettyes," which he justified after Connock "belched forth certeyne speaches tending to the derogation of his Majesties Ambassador Sir Thomas Roe." He also conceded to the claims of his private trade, but Barker countered that he properly recorded that in the factory books. Connock, however, "had not proceeded soe farr in the arte of Arithmetyke as subtraction but in distractions hee exceedeth all." Barker surmised that Connock sought to undermine Barker in order to hide his personal interests. The account books are missing, but Barker claimed that Connock left the factory £1,500 in debt; which presumably included several missing bales of silk. Barker finally grew tired of "soe maney intricate laborinthes of untruths" that he stopped responding to the accusations.⁵⁷

It is tough to pinpoint what actually happened, because both Pley and Connock died in December 1617, and the account book for the period has been missing since the late nineteenth century; and, casting a greater shadow over the conflict, Monox discovered that "the day before his death (we being absent) he burnt divers papers."⁵⁸ It seems that Connock's faction did, in fact, operate in secrecy, and Monox discovered that

⁵⁷ Ibid., f.19-20.

⁵⁸ Edward Monox to the Company, Jask, 28 December 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:285.

140 bales of silk were detained at Mogustan of which Connock informed to have only acquired 60 or 70 bales. Of those, Connock sent down from Gilan 40 bales and the remaining 30 were left unaccounted for, but the rest of the details are lost with the papers that burned. Monox and Barker suspected that Connock and Pley brought the missing bales to their personal accounts. Roe and Kerridge must have accepted Barker's version of the events, because he remained in Persia as chief until his death in 1619.

After the deaths of Pley and Connock, Edward Pettus was in an awkward position now that his former rival sat at the head of the Persian agency. In April of 1619, Barker and Monox ordered him to rendezvous at Mogustan "to carry money to our sick Mr. Ball to bring up the Company goods," but Pettus refused. Barker was in an ill mood over what transpired, and he dismissed Pettus from the Company's service.⁵⁹ In an interesting turn of events, Barker cast his adversary out, but Pettus, left in "nothing but discomfort," begged Monox and Barker for a nominal sum of money for provisions.⁶⁰ Barker had little sympathy for his rival and mutineer. He had Pettus arrested and chained, and then transported him to Jask. There Pettus awaited the incoming fleet to transport him to Surat. At Surat, Pettus remained there under guard and as the Company's prisoner, but later that year Thomas Barker died.⁶¹

In the aftermath of the conflict there were few pieces for the Company in London to work with. Connock, Pley, and Tracy died in 1617, and soon after in 1619 Barker and

⁵⁹ Consultation at Isfahan, April 1619, IOR/E/3/6, f. 145-146.

⁶⁰ Consultation at Isfahan, 4 June 1619, IOR/E/3/6, f. 150.

⁶¹ Consultation at Isfahan, 24 September 1619, IOR/E/3/6, f.155v.

Robbins died. Pettus, although he supported Pley and Connock, did not commit any grievous sins against the Company, and after 1620 he departed India for England. Even had the Company wanted to investigate further, the papers were burned and the men were dead. The only real option was to sell the deceased factors belongings to recover as much of their losses as possible. Connock defrauded the Company, but there was little else that could be accomplished, and the Company, as did the remaining factors in Persia, moved on with the trade.

There are a few points to take away from this particular incident, and many of the same issues occurred consistently in Persia throughout the period. The limited household of roughly five to ten (at most) Englishmen was dispersed between port (Jask or Gombroon), Shīrāz, and Isfahan. This was a significant reduction in manpower compared to India where the Surat Presidency had an estimated thirty to forty men between Surat, Broach, Baroda, Ahmadābād, and Agra. This is not including those who served on the Coromandel Coast or those few men instructed to scout the region for new markets deep into the northwest or around the Malabar Coast. Unlike in India, the men who resided in Persia were not in close proximity to the other English factories. In the example here, at one point Barker and Bell were in Shīrāz while Connock's faction sat in Isfahan about two or three weeks away. The combination of a scanty English population and the great distances between residences, created a scenario where disagreements between factors transformed to outright hostility. On a final note, the small population of Englishmen also opened the door for illicit activity and made it incredibly difficult for the presidency to monitor the trade in Persia. For this reason, Connock and Pley were able to "lose" thirty

bales of silk, but they were not the last English merchants in Persia to increase their personal wealth at the expense of the Company.

II. *Monox and Jeffries: "Your Agent, your minister, and Phisitian and their divell"*

In 1619, Thomas Barker died, and Edward Monox succeeded as chief of the Persian trade. The following year opened with excitement when in May 1620 Robert Gifford was charged with threatening to "stabb a knyfe att his [Monox] harte." The momentary lapse in judgement cost Gifford very little since he was "well respected" by Shah Abbas and other "great men in this Countrye." Monox fined him 6s and dismissed him from the Company table for two days.⁶² It was an odd beginning to the year, but the brief moment serves as an example of the tension between Englishmen in Persia. Immediately into the newly appointed chief's tenure, controversy sprouted although of a slightly different nature than the previous incident. In this case, Robert Jeffries' opponents were only loosely tied together against him. Unlike the Barker-Connock feud, there was not a preexisting relationship between Monox, George Strachan (physician), and Reverend Cardo. The confrontation was the culmination of three unique incidents that eventually drove Jeffries' opponents together.

The series of events, much as the one above had, lasted only for a brief period from January 1620 until August 1620; although the correspondence continues into 1621. Several individuals resided in Persia at the time, but the conflict centered around four men: Robert Jeffries (merchant), Edward Monox (chief merchant), Reverend Matthew

⁶² Consultation at Isfahan, 10-15 May 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.195.

Cardro (minister), and George Strachan (physician). Several other factors were present, but their role in the series of incidents is much more difficult to figure out since Monox and Jeffries produced most of the correspondence.⁶³ Monox was the chief of trade during the confrontation, and Jeffries was an under-factor behind Thomas Barker the younger. John Percy and Benthall were fourth and fifth respectively. One point of consideration is that this was generally a clash between the chief of Persia and the third factor, as the second, Barker, was indirectly involved.

The first sign of trouble developed after Jeffries accused Monox of misappropriating the Company's estate. Monox's account book indicated that he spent up to 352 rials of eight on personal expenses.⁶⁴ Jeffries compiled a list of fraudulent charges against Monox that he sent to the Company. The extraordinary charges range from "3 mapps for 50 shahi [16s 8d]" to pillows, blankets, a bow and arrow set, and an Armenian broker who "is neither Broker or linguist" but happily squandered the 100 *shahis* [£1 13s 4d] given him.⁶⁵ These were paltry sums, but it was enough to disturb his superiors in Surat who seemed content to uphold Roe's expectations, and by extension the Company's, stingy allowance down to the single pence.⁶⁶ There also seems to be additional sums recorded in the account books, but since they are missing it is difficult to know what Monox charged to the Company's account. Among other charges included

⁶³ Robert Gifford, William Bell, John Benthall, Richard Smith, John Percy, and Thomas Barker the younger were present.

⁶⁴ Isfahan account current of Edward Monox, 15 April 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.8-9.

⁶⁵ Explanation by Robert Jeffries of his charges against Edward Monox, 15 April 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.10-11v; Court Minutes, 15 October 1623, IOR/B/8, f.181.

⁶⁶ Instructions given to our loving friends in Persia, Mandū, 6 October 1617, *Letters Received*, 6:111.

excessive costs for “meat and drink” and, perhaps the most damaging to the Company, 30 bales of Indian commodities that fellow merchant, John Benthall, discovered.⁶⁷ There is no evidence for this, but it is possible that these were the bales that Connock had stored away. When Jeffries and his assistant, John Percy, and Thomas Barker questioned Monox about the 30 bales, he “would not give answer.” Jeffries was irritated with Monox’s casual response, and for a second time Jeffries demanded Monox to answer but “he answered he would not nor could not tell.”⁶⁸

The above is an extraordinary case of a subordinate factor challenging his superior in a semi-formal environment. In the episode between Barker and Connock, the complaints were mostly behind the scenes. Here, Jeffries publically confronted Monox in the presence of Thomas Barker and John Percy. Monox refused to bend to Jeffries’ interrogation, but it is nonetheless astonishing that the third factor challenged the chief of trade in Persia. Jeffries was not meekly questioning Monox, but this was a formidable confrontation from Jeffries’ side. Even more fascinating is the fact that the second factor, Thomas Barker, followed Jeffries’ lead in the interrogation. As the second, one would expect Barker to lead the questioning, but he evidently stepped aside and allowed Jeffries to dictate the course of the investigation. From Monox’s perspective this was a significant affront to his authority in Persia when the third factor and his assistant challenged him in the presence of his second factor. This will be an important idea to consider when George

⁶⁷ Explanation by Robert Jeffries of his charges against Edward Monox, 15 April 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.11.

⁶⁸ Attestation against Edward Monox, 9 January 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f. 103.

Strachan delivered a series of complaints to Monox later on. But, still in the early stages of the quarrel, Jeffries took issue with another of Monox's decisions.

In 1620, Edward Monox decided to invest a significant portion of the Company's estate in pepper. At some point in 1619 or 1620, Giles Gonsalves, a Portuguese merchant in Isfahan, approached Monox for assistance; or at least that is the presumption considering Gonsalves sought a loan to purchase pepper.⁶⁹ This created a rather interesting scenario for the English. First, the money and goods sent to Persia were almost always intended for the purchase of silk, and as we will see below this was a significant monetary investment. Next, the pepper loan was considered and implemented in early 1620, just two years before the sack of Qishm and Hormuz. On the eve of the English assault on Portuguese forces in the region, Monox loaned an estimated 550 *tūmāns* [£3,483 6s 8d] to Giles Gonsalves. Aside from a potential conflict of interest, Jeffries thought the idea was preposterous, and he immediately cried foul and declared that Monox was guilty of mishandling the silk trade in Isfahan.

Monox, as with most factors, dabbled in private trade, but loaning a significant portion of the Company's money to a Portuguese merchant, when the Company expected silk shipments, was alarming on two fronts. He provided an independent merchant—perhaps even an enemy—with a substantial sum while simultaneously cutting into the Company's silk exports. The investment was an instant failure that turned into an awkward mess after Gonsalves the capital for Shīrāz. In May 1620, William Bell wrote to

⁶⁹ Gonsalves may have arrived alone as an independent merchant or as a companion to one of the various Catholic orders in Isfahan. His background is unknown, and the English recorded few details about Gonsalves. It is also uncertain if Gonsalves was Catholic, Protestant, or perhaps something else.

Monox that Gonsalves “as yet hath sould none of his pepper,” but unlike Jeffries he did not appear overly concerned at the time.⁷⁰ Monox had loaned Gonsalves the money in good faith, and he expected a full repayment with interest; Monox fully intended on pocketing the interest payment. Gonsalves, however, struggled to sell his shipment of pepper in Shīrāz, and on 27 May, Bell informed Monox that he purchased the entire stock of pepper from Gonsalves. After weighing the shipment, Gonsalves and Bell determined that it was worth around 1,350 *tūmāns* (£8,550), and Bell “deducted the 550 tomans [£3,483 6s 8d] lent him and have taken interest...att 2 percent [approximately £70].”⁷¹ Gonsalves was not prepared to accept the money while in Shīrāz, but Bell promised to pay Gonsalves the remaining 800 *tūmāns* [£5,066 13 s 4d] in Isfahan. Jeffries reported that Monox spent roughly £5,000, which was the remainder of the sum owed to Gonsalves. Jeffries does not account for the initial loan of approximately £3,483, making the entire investment worth over £8,000 for pepper instead of silk. Needless to say, Jeffries was thoroughly displeased.

On 9 June 1620, Jeffries, along with John Amy, John Benthall, and John Percy, wrote William Bell about the pepper. Jeffries and his subordinates were not very fond of the pepper deal. One issue that upset Jeffries was that 1,800 man-i-Tabriz (5,220kg) of pepper “is a great quantetie” and would not sell.⁷² Three days later on 12 June, Jeffries wrote Monox “I could wish that busines never effected,” but it was too late and the

⁷⁰ William Bell to Edward Monox, Shīrāz, 8 May 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.191v.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f.191v.

⁷² Robert Jeffries to William Bell, Isfahan, 9 June 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.208.

Company now had 5,220kg (11,508 lb) of pepper on their hands.⁷³ Finally on 14 March 1621, Jeffries complained that the Company “will be sustayned much aboute £1,000 losses, besides the dead lying of so much monyes without a penny retorne.”⁷⁴ Jeffries was disgusted with Monox’s decision to spend the Company’s estate haphazardly. If Jeffries’ report is accurate, the Company lost approximately £1,000 and Monox also diverted the Company’s estate away from potential silk investments.

Even as Jeffries opposed the loan, he spent time in conversation with Gonsalves in 1619; although as we shall see in a moment the conversation left Jeffries in hot water with a few of his colleagues in Persia. Jeffries’ complaints were not necessarily a consequence of defending English interests against Portuguese interests, or for that matter Protestantism against Catholicism, but rather sound commercial decisions against bad commercial decisions. Jeffries was convinced that it was a terrible decision, and he posed a threat to Monox’s authority in Persia. It was not long after, however, that Jeffries’ world began to unravel.

Around August 1620, Jeffries confronted two English deserters from the fleet in Jask. Edward Patten and John Hawtrey, stumbled into Jask where “some unrulye drunken disorder” broke out between them and another individual named Mason, a dockhand. Robert Jefferies was nearby when the altercation occurred, and “for such misdemeanor bestewed on him [Patten] 3 or 4 switches with his riding chabucke.” Jeffries meant to punish the men, especially Patten, severely, but Reverend Matthew Cardro disagreed with

⁷³ Robert Jeffries to Edward Monox, Isfahan, 12 June 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.209.

⁷⁴ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/8, f.113.

Jeffries' harsh reprisal and intervened on behalf of the deserters claiming "that he [Patten] did not run away from the Company but that he did run unto them." Cardro was a recent arrival to Persia where he intended to serve as the factory's minister. In Jeffries' view, the punishment was more than justified, but Reverend Cardro had other ideas about the notion of justice and demanded that Jeffries "should not use him like a rogue."⁷⁵

Jeffries was irritated that Cardro overstepped his authority, and he cordially reminded him to "meddle with his studie" and leave the administration of Company affaires alone. Cardro refused to yield, and he publically declared Patten free and released him until a proper consultation convened. Jeffries decided to temporarily dismiss the ruling until a formal consultation could convene, but the damage had been done. Cardro brought Patten to his chambers for protection, but his small victory was short-lived and Jeffries met with fellow merchants Thomas Barker the younger and John Benthall to discuss the matter. The small council determined that Jeffries' initial ruling was fair, and they collectively agreed to punish the men as Jeffries intended initially. When they appeared before Cardro's chambers to collect Patten, the minister barred the doors and refused entry to Jeffries and his men.⁷⁶ Between the pepper debacle and Cardro's undermining of his authority in Jask, the development of another faction slowly began to form. In July, tension between the two men increased while Monox was away at Court. Robert Jeffries convened a council to complain that "this factorye is growne to the hight of unmerchant-lyke disorder, and certayne inferior servants of the Company growne so

⁷⁵ Consultation at Isfahan, 14 August 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.239.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, f.239-239v.

insolent.”⁷⁷ Jefferies’ angst was directed at Reverend Cardro who apparently took to gaming, particularly dice, in the factory and refused to take orders from Jefferies.

At the time Jeffries probably did not realize that his opposition to the pepper loan and Cardro would create problems. In a sense, Jeffries’ narrative was a series of coincidental circumstances that would nearly cost him his employment with the Company. It was not intentional, but Jeffries established himself as a dissident within the English community in Persia. From the perspective of Surat or London, Jeffries’ approach to each individual situation was something the Company certainly approved as he attempted to maintain order.⁷⁸ By confronting the problem of excessive expenditures and private trade, opposing the flawed pepper loan to protect the Company’s estate, and reprimanding the deserters, Jeffries acted respectably in the Company’s name. In Persia, however, the perspective was much different and his intentions not understood quite in the same way. Instead of the Company’s loyal servant, Jeffries suddenly represented a mutinous agent who disrupted the factory.

Shortly after, George Strachan sent Edward Monox a set of articles (not extant) against Jeffries—these were briefly alluded to in a consultation the 30 August 1620—that forced Monox to call a consultation (also not extant). Strachan argued that Jeffries was disruptive to the factory. Monox agreed, and Strachan along with Monox, John Benthall, Richard Smith, and John Hawtrey convened to decide on Jeffries fate in Persia. After

⁷⁷ Consultation at Isfahan, 3 July 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.215.

⁷⁸ Court Minutes, 13 January 1606, IOR/B/3/, f.9-11; Anonymous, *The Lawes or Standing Orders of the East India Company* (London, 1621), 54-55. Numerous entries in the *Court Minutes* impress upon the need to maintain orderly conduct in their factories in the east. Jeffries’ actions are a reflection of this.

their morning prayer “the said Agent [Monox] in publique audience of the people of this house did pronounce the dismissal of the Honorable service unto the said Jefferis.”

Jeffries was outraged after the council’s decision and declared that “your Agent [Monox], your minister [Cardro], and Phisitian [Strachan] and their divell, have taken much paynes, to make themselves scandalous to all honest and reasonable apprehentions.”⁷⁹

The committee transported Jeffries to Jask for questioning where he was held prisoner onboard the *London*.⁸⁰ One of the charges against Jeffries, as it appeared in Jeffries letter from Surat, was treason. Strachan insisted that Jeffries “in February 1619 [1620] in Xiras [Shīrāz] I should tell one Giles Gonsalves (a portingall) that our vertuous Queen Ann (of happie memory) died a Catholicke And that our hopeful prince Charles was tutored in the Papist religion, wherfore yt was presumed there would bee a marriage with the daughter of Spaine.”⁸¹ Monox was prepared to have Jeffries strung up in London if possible, and declared that Jeffries crimes were “little inferiour to the Gunpowder Plot.”⁸²

Once at Jask, William Baffin brought Jeffries aboard the *London* where he waited until the ship made for Surat in February 1621.⁸³ In the interim between his arrest and hearing in Jask, news arrived from two Portuguese friars that “Stracan our surgain had

⁷⁹ Robert Jefferies response to the accusations and dismissal from the Company, IOR/E/3/7, f.244v. The short note is undated, but Jefferies likely wrote it in 1620 before leaving for Jask under arrest.

⁸⁰ Consultation at Isfahan, 30 August 1620, IOR/E/E/7, f.244; Certificate of Agent Monox having placed Robert Jeffries in close confinement, 10 February, 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.321.

⁸¹ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.341v.

⁸² Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat., 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/8, f. 114.

⁸³ Certificate of the ship *London*, 10 February 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.321. From aboard the *London*, Robert Jeffries witnessed the battle at Jask between the English and Portuguese fleets. His letter home in March 1621 recounts the sea fight.

poisoned William Robyns and Thomas Barker.”⁸⁴ George Strachan was the Company surgeon in Persia at the time, and presumably he presided over Barker and Robbins before their deaths. Much like the previous case, there is no evidence to suggest that Monox’s companions poisoned Barker or Robbins, and like many of their colleagues they probably perished as a result of environmental factors. While he was confined onboard the *London*, Jeffries witnessed the battle at Jask between the English and Portuguese fleets.⁸⁵ At this point, Jeffries was under a tremendous amount of stress, and the accusation of poisoning suddenly influenced his imagination that a much deeper Catholic conspiracy against both him, and more importantly the Company, was in progress.

Jeffries arrived at Surat sometime between February and March 1621 onboard the *London*. In Surat, Jeffries began his relentless attack on his opponents. He complained that his fellow Englishmen treated him poorly and gave him but a nominal allowance while under arrest, and a “pockie bankrupt Italian (entertayned by the Agent a continewall burthen and a villanie for your proceedings, and companion to some your lewd inferior servants for whoring wickedness) could make choyce of the romes housed and attendants whereof I was denied.”⁸⁶ It is unclear who this Italian was, but once again we have an example of the English fraternizing with individuals from the Catholic community. Jeffries thought the trial was little more than a farce, and, with the news of

⁸⁴ Translation of Pietro Chevart’s letter, Isfahan, 8 December 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.243-243v. The original is in Italian, and Robert Jefferies, factor in Persia, translated the report. This is the same Thomas Barker who quarreled with Edward Connock, not Thomas Barker the younger who was second to Monox in Persia.

⁸⁵ See chapter two.

⁸⁶ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat., 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/8, f. 115.

Barker and Robbins' alleged poisoning, Jeffries lost his patience and alerted the Company of "the unreasonable inconscionable corruption" of Monox, Cardro, and Strachan.

Beforehand, Jeffries expressed his displeasure with Monox's decisions among the factors in Persia. Although he claimed that he sent three letters overland via Aleppo to alert the Company of Monox's failures, but Jeffries suspected that Monox's "interception of my letters to your honors" prevented them from arriving in London.⁸⁷ After his arrest, Jeffries notified the Company of the previous year's events. One of the issues he focused on was Monox's misappropriation of the Company's estate and his private trade that "hindered the sale of our goods, to your honors disadvantages: his private trade of ymportant consideration: his ymployment of almost £5,000 without consultation." At some point between his arrest and arrival in Surat, Jeffries convinced himself that the separate incidents were really just components to a larger movement. These were not separate incidents, but moments where Jeffries had to fend off the attacks from Monox's faction. When Jeffries first complained of Monox's nefarious trade or Cardro's interference, he does not make any connections between Monox and Cardro. Once news arrives at Jask that Thomas Barker and William Robbins were poisoned, then Jeffries begin to see a connection between the three men.

Of the alleged poisoning of Robbins and Barker, Jeffries stressed a point he made earlier that "your Agent, your minister, and Phisitian and their divell, have taken

⁸⁷ Ibid., f.113.

much paynes, to make themselves scandalous.”⁸⁸ The suspected poisoning seemed to function as a catalyst for the transformation in Jeffries’ narrative. A common scene on the English stage during poisoning scenes typically included a Catholic minister, who might otherwise be disguised, and the infamous physician who typically administered the poison.⁸⁹ This theme played out in many conversations after the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in 1613, and the setting in Persia was not one the English factors would have easily missed. From Jeffries’ perspective, these men represented the characters one might find in an English play, but Monox, Cardro, and Strachan were not characters in a play and posed a real threat in Persia. Jeffries does not draw any connection to contemporary cultural stereotypes that playwrights articulated on the English stage, but Jeffries certainly would have been familiar with anti-Catholic conversation in London and the way this was portrayed on the late Tudor and early Stuart stage. Although he does openly state it, it seems that the concept of the poisoner in London, particularly on the stage, provided Jeffries with grounds to suspect that the three men were connected in their attack against him. Jeffries was convinced that George Strachan did indeed poison Barker and Robbins, and after Monox dismissed him from Persia he quickly warned the Company:

And our Stracan our Antexpian [Anti-Christian] Phesitian, for his flattery lying discimulation inconseconable scores of purloyment, with his tentar hookes of deere peniworthes of plaisters and purges, sowing discention in the factory, his

⁸⁸ Robert Jefferies response to the accusations and dismissal from the Company, IOR/E/3/7, f.344v. The short note is undated, but Jefferies likely wrote it in 1620 while at Jask.

⁸⁹ Tanya Pollard, “Dangerous Remedies: poison and theater in the English Renaissance,” Ph.D. thesis (Yale University, 1999), 28; also see, Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*.

scandalous reporte of poyzoning the Company servants As the late Agent Mr. William Robyns.⁹⁰

The suspected poisoning of Barker and Robbins concerned Jeffries, but he was worried about the broader implications that followed. In this, he began connecting the dots in a larger plot to hurt the Company.

Jeffries is our only source for the bold accusations that he presented throughout his letters to the Company. We should not simply assume that Jeffries fabricated the story, or parts of it, but in context of his contemporary's fears regarding Catholics in combination with the events from early April until his arrest; it is easy to see how Jeffries leaned on contemporary stereotypes in his relation of the Company's affairs in Persia. What becomes clear below is that Jeffries' account was strongly influenced by the anti-Catholic narrative that was commonplace in early seventeenth-century London. Drunkenness, negligence, and fraudulent activity were problems that several Englishmen cited in both India and Persia, but Jeffries' account differs in that suddenly popery, the devil, and the Catholic threat play a significant role in his perception of the decline of the Company's estate in Persia. If we look at his decisions leading up to his arrest, we can describe him as somewhat of a Company man. The altercations that he was involved in were over issues that harmed the Company's business. Add to the mix the poison scandal and the Portuguese attack on the English fleet at Jask, which Jeffries witnessed from the *London*, and the proverbial light bulb flicked on for Jeffries.

⁹⁰ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.341.

The charge of poison was heinous, but it also helped him make sense of the other issues that developed. The first thing Jeffries noted was that Strachan willingly divulged the Company's business plans to the Portuguese friars in Isfahan. In early 1620, Jeffries was rather tolerant of Gonsalves—his early letters do not suggest that he harbored animosity towards him—but revealing the Company's business strategy to the Portuguese was altogether an entirely different thing. Jeffries wrote to London that “his [Strachan] discovering all the passages of our busines to the fryers in Espahan, (through his confession and disloyall service to the Company intercepting of their letters.” He claimed that Monox intercepted his letters while Strachan intercepted the Company's letters. Yet it was not entirely surprising since Strachan was a “*Vagamundo* married to a moore in Arabia” after “leaving wyffe and family to prosecute the divells commission in doing evill.” Jeffries concluded that Strachan's decisions characterized the physician's distaste for “his owne Conntry and yts church.”⁹¹ Jeffries eventually implicated Monox in the scheme to provide details of the Company's plans to their enemies.

Jeffries' narrative of Strachan reflects many of the same suspicions and social concerns his co-religious in England expressed frequently regarding their Catholic neighbors' loyalty to the English State.⁹² He quipped that Strachan apparently “confesseth to have the despensation of the Pope to descemble his Religion in all his

⁹¹ Ibid., f.341. Strachan was Scottish, but it is uncertain if he lived in Scotland or in England at the time of his employment with the Company.

⁹² Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, 124-127. Also see, Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism in Elizabethan England* (University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

Pilgrimage.”⁹³ We do not have Strachan’s alleged confession, but Jeffries seemed to accept Strachan’s admission that he was a Catholic. Strachan was a “plaguye infection” who regrettably “costeth your honors £100 per annum.”⁹⁴ In a sense, much like Edward Connock had, Strachan was somewhat of a church papist, but the difference, however, is that Strachan stood accused of poisoning two Company employees. The idea that Strachan concealed his Catholicism until his confession, and was implicated in a poison scandal simultaneously, made Strachan one of the most feared types of Catholics. From Jeffries’ perspective, Strachan was a physician poisoner, a papist, and privy to a plot against the Company. Strachan, as Jeffries declared, “hath wrought him to acte the divell, to make a compleat number of my cappitall adversaries.”⁹⁵ In combination with the other two individuals—Monox and Cardro respectively—Jeffries imagined a clear popish plot to overthrow the Company in Persia. Jeffries’ understanding was conceivably irrational, and the trio, like many of their colleagues, sought to advance their personal interests through private trade, but Jeffries, the Company’s moral defender, felt otherwise and that the two were not mutually exclusive. So what then was Jeffries version of the popish plot, and was there indeed a plot at all?

He saw each of the three as inextricably linked to the antichrist, or devil, and cited numerous social ills as proof of their social and religious deviation. Monox, apparently, received the same “dispensation of the divell” that Strachan formerly received, and

⁹³ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f.341.

⁹⁴ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat., 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/8, f. 113v.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f.113v.

Matthew Cardro's "unclericall carriage" connected him to Monox as another conspirator against Jeffries and the Company. Jeffries was merely an obstacle in their path and "whose triple Treachery hath begotten a bastard some called Treason by the union of their iniquitie, to wage warr and if possible to robb me both of life and reputation."⁹⁶ In regards to Reverend Cardro, Jeffries accused the mischievous minister of "unchristian carriage in drinking and tobacco" among other appalling manners, such as "denying us prayers."⁹⁷ Convinced that each of the three men were connected to Catholicism and mere tools of the devil, Jeffries implied that each of the three men existed as the antithesis of the righteous men who occupied similar positions. In this he depicted Monox, Strachan, and Cardro as the darker, or devilish, rendition of the pure agent, physician, and minister. Or in Jeffries' poetic words "our crittical Agent Monnox, our carnall Minister (Cardro) and Stracan our infernall phesitian."⁹⁸ Together these men intimately reflect the "world, the flesh, and the divell whose conspiracye hath caused theis lynes to take their being."⁹⁹

Jeffries popish plot then was the combination of their individual actions that when taken together show clear signs that the three men intended to destroy the Company from within—at least in Persia. Above all else, their open willingness to partner and communicate with Portuguese merchants alerted Jeffries that something unusual occurred

⁹⁶ Ibid., f.113v.

⁹⁷ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 15 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/7, f. 341.

⁹⁸ Robert Jeffries to the Company, Surat, 14 March 1620, IOR/E/3/7, f.113. This is an additional copy of the previous letter. There are some variations, most notably the hand, but also the letter has more detail.

⁹⁹ Ibid., f.113.

out of plain sight. This is especially the case since the English at the time were negotiating a potential amphibious attack on Hormuz with Shah Abbas I. The pepper loan was simply the beginning of a larger problem, and the poisoning of Barker and Robbins put to rest any doubts in Jeffries' mind that English Protestantism and the Company were under siege in Persia. But it should also act as a reminder that Jeffries, at first, seemed more than willing to work alongside the Portuguese if it advanced the Company's estate, and it was only after his arrest that he seemed to take issue with their Catholic neighbors. Yet Jeffries found comfort in the idea that "God who is all truth will in his good tyme let truth prevaile, and put Hells instruments to confusion."¹⁰⁰

The question of whether a plot existed or not is impossible to argue for certain, but it is unlikely that the three men intended to hurt the Company in Persia. Jeffries' was in a sense the right man for Persia at simply the wrong time. He was conservative in the sense that he put the Company's interests before his, and he checked those around him who failed to act responsibly. His personality and approach to the Persian trade resembled Thomas Merry and President Methwold in that while Jeffries traded privately, he generally sought to maintain an upright and orderly factory much as Methwold and Merry would during the 1630s and 1640s. His colleagues, chiefly Monox and Strachan, perceived him as a nuisance and a regular disturbance to the English trade in Persia. His personality essentially clashed with the current culture of the English community during the 1620s. From Jeffries' perspective, the poison scandal touched on a sensitive nerve for Protestants, and the intense stress of his imprisonment in the middle of a naval battle at

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., f.113v.

Jask probably led to Jeffries' fear that Cardro, Monox, and Strachan were indeed plotting his and the Company's demise.

The presidency eventually exonerated Jeffries after he "sufficiently satisfied Mr. Kerridge and this counsell of the wronges" he endured, and President Kerridge re-commissioned him for employment.¹⁰¹ But Jeffries' blissful ending was cut dramatically short when he fell ill aboard the *Whale* in December 1621 in the port of Jask where he died. President Rastell dismissed George Strachan from the Company's service in 1622, but it is unclear what happened to him afterwards. Rastell seems to have believed that Edward Monox's transgressions were marginal and allowed him to continue in Persia for awhile longer. After his return to London in 1623, Monox was heavily fined and eventually released from service. The Company fined Monox between £250 and £300 for excessive expenditures, which seems to suggest that the books showed considerably higher charges than the paltry charges mentioned earlier.¹⁰² More details will be provided in chapter six regarding several fines levied against Monox for private trade, but for now suffice it to say that Monox was released from the Company, fined roughly £300, and expected to leave a small sum in the Company's poor box.¹⁰³ As for Reverend Cardro, he died in Kuhistek in 1621 along with his boy and another merchant Christopher Askwith.¹⁰⁴ If the presidency and the Company gave any consideration to Jeffries concerns, they showed little interest and Jeffries' plot was thought of no more. In 1622,

¹⁰¹ Robert Jeffries to the Company, 14 March 1620/21, IOR/E/3/8, f.115.

¹⁰² Court Minutes, 15 October 1623, IOR/B/8, f.181.

¹⁰³ Court Minutes, 17 October 1623, IOR/B/8, f.185.

¹⁰⁴ William Bell to the Company, Isfahan, 18 August 1623, IOR/E/3/10, f.21v.

the English sacked Hormuz, and any concerns of Jeffries' suspected Catholic plot were no longer a priority.

This scene in English Persia exemplifies, in part, why the English venture failed in Persia. If the chiefs of trade could not manage trade without succumbing to inter-communal strife, how then could the presidency expect loyalty and efficiency from those at the bottom of the hierarchical structure? This problem also began to transform from an entirely internal crisis to a public problem that irked local officials. The Barker-Connock and Jeffries-Monox quarrels did not pour into the public sphere in Persia; rather these incidents did not affect local Persians. This began to change by the 1630s.

III. "We have turned the Company house into a brothel": drinking, gaming, and the perfidious whoremaster

From 1622 until about 1628, there was a period of relaxed tension between the English factors, or so it seems. There are a couple reasons for this. In 1622, the English successfully defeated the Portuguese at Hormuz, and the English merchants were busy establishing the silk trade and fighting for their portion of the spoils from Hormuz. The English factors were preoccupied two years with defending Hormuz and the Safavīd coastline against the Portuguese. From 1625 until 1629, the records are unfortunately too few, and there are just over five letters covering this short period. One could speculate that the English were preoccupied with local issues (i.e. Mughal Rebellion) and were not concerned with recording minor squabbles between their colleagues.

The period was free from clashes between the factors, but there are hints from the 1630s that the English began to agitate local officials in the late 1620s. Mīrzā Taqi penned a rather passive letter to the Company in the late 1620s praising men like Thomas Kerridge and Richard Wylde, but stopped short of William Burt, chief of Persia, of whom he wrote “neither marchant or other are well pleased or contented with him hee spending his time in drinking.”¹⁰⁵ Mīrzā Taqi’s remarks were probably fairly precise, which Burt indirectly confirmed when he complained that the water “being meer durte and clay” forced Burt and his colleagues to “wringe our bottles to gett a draught of wine.”¹⁰⁶ It is unlikely that Mīrzā Taqi would complain if the number of drunken Englishmen had not increased from a few men lazing around their residence to something more visible. From the numerous travel narratives of period it is clear that wine was widely consumed in Persia, and therefore a culture of wine consumption was not unusual for local officials to witness.¹⁰⁷ For Mīrzā Taqi to complain about the English factors implies that they became overly belligerent and perhaps unruly in the streets.

While the general state of the English community seemed relatively calm, behind the scenes private trade began to emerge as a fairly regular problem. In December 1630, President Rastell wrote to London that reports arrived from Persia that “25 bales of silke...belonging to private men” arrived.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately nothing else was said about

¹⁰⁵ Right worth famous society, [162?], Egerton MS 2086, f.110.

¹⁰⁶ William Burt to Edward Heynes and William Gibson, 17 August 1630, IOR/E/3/12, f.134.

¹⁰⁷ Mandelslo, *The Travells of John Albert de Mandelslo*, f.5.

¹⁰⁸ President Rastell to the Company, Surat, 31 December 1631, IOR/E/3/12, f.217v.

this particular shipment. The few letters that we have from William Burt and Edward Heynes' respective tenures as chief tell us very little, but there are a few hints from individuals who had returned to London that private trade was a growing concern in Persia. Edward Oakley, for example, sailed under Captain Charles Green of the *Blessing*, but Edward Heynes brought him ashore to temporarily assist with a shipment of silk from Isfahan. In August 1633, Oakley told the Court of Committees that two bales were missing once the shipment arrived in Gombroon from Isfahan. Initially the English factors blamed a local Armenian Merchant (unnamed) for the theft, but as Oakley noted "hee [Nicholas Grove] found them againe under a pile of wood." Oakley soon discovered that it became common "knavery and dishonesty" in Persia for the English merchants to buy "of silke for themselves and selling it to the Dutch."¹⁰⁹

Richard Cooper served in Persia from the late 1620s until 1633, and his colleagues accused him of using the Company's money for private trade upwards of £1,000. The issue of private trade will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter; but for our purpose here it is necessary to acknowledge that while the English stopped fighting amongst themselves for a short period in the 1620s, private trade seemed to function as the 'new' poison. In a broader context, private trade inflicted enough of a dent in the Company's estate from the Far East to Persia that Thomas Munn proposed that all offenders "to be proceeded against in Star Chamber."¹¹⁰ By the time William Gibson took over as chief of trade in 1632, there is an increase in the available

¹⁰⁹ Court Minutes, 2 August 1633, IOR/B/16, f.34.

¹¹⁰ Court Minutes, 4 September 1633, IOR/B/16, f.65. Again this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

correspondence. The records do not allow us to build a complete image for the period covering roughly 1625 until about 1630, but there are subtle hints that the English factors began pilfering a little more than crumbs from the Company's table.

There are two important pieces of information here. The first is Mīrzā Taqī's complaints directed at local displays of public belligerence from the English factors. That with Thomas Munn's petition for harsher penalties against private trade suggests that the factory did not operate as smoothly during the late 1620s as it might seem. The details are lost, but this suggests that the circumstances in Persia were slowly becoming unmanageable. It is not until after Gibson's death that the details of the factory's mismanagement and the factors' poor conduct come to light, and in May 1637, William Gibson, the chief of English trade in Persia, died. The agency was already under scrutiny from Surat, but the depth of the factory's problems was still unknown. Between 1637 and 1638, the presidency discovered a number of problems that plagued the factory under Gibson's control. Aside from Gibson, the prominent figures involved, and are frequently acknowledged in the correspondence, were Guy Bath (accountant), Francis Honywood (second), and the remainder of the under-factors William Bell (not the same man from the early 1620s), Thomas Codrington, Robert Manley, Henry Chapman, and Thomas Adler.

With Gibson gone, Francis Honywood attempted to absolve Mīrzā Taqī in the eyes of his superiors in Surat and in London. His testimony and rejection of Gibson was curiously belated in that he waited until after Gibson's death to voice his concerns and even more suspicious after Methwold began to inspect the Persian agency for foul play.

Honywood only distanced himself from those of “your Agents delinquencies herein will so prejudice the repute of his successors” after Methwold intervened.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, Guy Bath wrote a cryptic letter to the Company 26 June 1637 after the provisional chief Francis Honywood seized his papers. The letter, however, is atypical, and it appears to be the only surviving letter of the period that is written in stenography. In the opening lines, which are in English, Bath wrote “I within 2 dayes after my comeing to towne had all my books and papers and what else I had ceasd one and put out of your servis only one [...] false and envious suppositions having noe prooffe.”¹¹²

After declaring that he was unjustly accused in Persia, Bath justified writing “in the Stenography Characters” to protect himself. Bath addressed the letter to the Company knowing that its members probably did not have the key. In fact, Bath left us a subtle hint that he probably had no intentions of the information ever reaching the Company’s ears: “I presume there willbe many founde can read it to your worships if you please.” If the Company did wish to hear, there was no real way to prove that the letter was decipherable. Especially as Bath added one final caveat that “I have som thinge altrd [regarding characters] but...any Artist will be able to Cobby it.”¹¹³ Bath included a few notes on the alterations at the end of the letter, but the folio is damaged and illegible. Bath was noticeably anxious due to the circumstances in Persia, and after Gibson’s death it does not appear that his fellow Englishmen in Persia shared Gibson’s affection towards

¹¹¹ Francis Honywood to the Company, 18 July 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.19.

¹¹² Guy Bath to the Company, 26 June 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.13.

¹¹³ Ibid., f.13.

him. Bath was alone, and in the waning days of June Francis Honywood and his council pressured Bath for Gibson's papers and books.

It was not unusual for the factors to inventory a deceased factors estate and closely examine their account books, mostly to insure a smooth transition from one factor to another in regards to the business, but also to gauge the extent of the deceased individual's inventory and what belonged to the Company and what did not. After Gibson's death the factors "determined before any should be elected chiefe amongst us for the reestablishing this government and the better ordering of your bussines," they should examine Gibson's papers. The situation became awkward, however, when Guy Bath refused to hand over Gibson's papers.¹¹⁴ Bath was the factory accountant, and he worked alongside Gibson for several years. During their employment, the two men appeared to establish a strong friendship. His refusal to hand over Gibson's papers alarmed Honywood and his assistants in Persia.

If Bath hoped to intimidate the factors, he failed miserably and they seized the key to Gibson's residence and the papers inside. Francis Honywood and his council—at the time consisted of Thomas Adler, William Hall, Robert Manly, Henry Chapman, and Thomas Codrington—charged Guy Bath with aiding and abetting William Gibson in loaning the Dutch a substantial sum of money. Honywood questioned Bath about the loan to which he responded "you maye goe after the Dutch," and then blatantly refused Honywood's authority.¹¹⁵ What they found infuriated the presidency. After perusing

¹¹⁴ Francis Honywood to the Company, 18 July 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f.21.

Gibson's papers, Honywood discovered three bills from the Dutch Commander "dated in December and Januarye the last all importuning 4000 tomands, lent unto him of your proper estates."

Honywood discovered that Guy Bath assisted Gibson in the affair and attempted to question him, but Bath denied the accusations and refused to become subjected to their scrutiny and "debated on about those moneys so privately conveyed and lent to our enemyes." Honywood concluded that Mīrzā Taqī was innocent of the accusations pertaining to the Company's lost revenue, although the factors would "not wholly excuse the falsnes and unconscionablenes of this people" in the Company's failure there.¹¹⁶ Mīrzā Taqī indeed made the Company's trade virtually unattainable in Persia, but in this case "your principalls with the damned Dutch nation" were equally responsible.¹¹⁷ The factors deduced from the letters that the Dutch used the 4,000 *tūmāns* [£25,333 6s 8d] to purchase large quantities of silk that Mīrzā Taqī intended to send to the English to settle a silk debt. The consequences of Gibson and Bath's loan left the English without disposable capital and still without silk.¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding Honywood's determination to correct the delinquencies, he realized that Methwold may not excuse him and the others after all. The impromptu council declared that Bath was little more than "an evill member," and Honywood arrested Bath and prepared to hand him over to President Methwold to answer for his

¹¹⁶ Ibid., f.21. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 137. Also see chapter three.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f.21; Court Minutes, 14 October 1640, IOR/B/19, f.310-311.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., f.21v.

transgressions¹¹⁹ Bath apparently slipped away during the night to the Dutch house, or at least that is what Honywood expected since “he had shown them so many curtesies.”¹²⁰ In India, anti-Dutch sentiments began to simmer among the English factors there, and Gibson’s loan sparked an increase in anti-Dutch sentiments in Persia. Methwold was irritated with Gibson’s decision to provide assistance to “our hollow harted frinds the Hollands.”¹²¹ Honywood found evidence that Gibson and Bath received a handsome interest payment from the Dutch, which reportedly amounted to twenty percent and went into their personal coffers to perpetuate their private trade. In an interesting turn of events since the Monox pepper loan, Honywood surmised that Gibson and Bath were connected to the Dutch in their “malignant practices” against the English business in Persia. Honywood’s criticism never descended into the anti-confessional polemics as Jeffries’ criticism had, but he seized Bath’s entire estate in an attempt to recover some of the Company’s losses.¹²²

William Gibson and Guy Bath, however, were not the only guilty parties in Persia. With Bath out of the way, the English factors began turning on each other and issued several complaints directed at their colleagues in Persia. Gibson’s failed leadership and attention to self interests trickled downward into the rest of the Englishmen residing in Persia. The entire community under Gibson’s command fell into utter lawlessness, and

¹¹⁹ Ibid., f.21v.

¹²⁰ Ibid., f.23.

¹²¹ Instructions for William Fremlen to Persia, Swally Marine, 20 November 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.35.

¹²² Francis Honywood to the Company, 18 July 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.21v-22.

it was an embarrassing moment for the Company. On the eve of William Fremlen's reform mission to Persia, the English factors began to turn on each other in an attempt to clear their names. The scene was embarrassingly unbecoming of the Company as the English community imploded into a barrage of accusatory claims against each other. By the time dust settled, each person was ostensibly guilty of at least one misdemeanor.

By 1630, the factors' negative behavior began to receive attention from Mīrzā Taqī, but as previously stated the details of Mīrzā Taqī's concerns are lost. But, in October 1637, Thomas Adler's report begins to shed light on the factory's problems that probably upset Mīrzā Taqī in the late 1620s. Adler and William Hall informed the Company that concerning the factory in Isfahan "we can write of nothing but neglect and disorder [...] inclosed we gave advice of your factors takeinge women or concubines by contract [...] them the time of their stay in this countyre."¹²³ William Hall complained that the factors in Isfahan have turned the Company house into a brothel, "for what end with the keeping of wenches...they would make it a generall haram, and feeding them with their returns from the Companies table, and such like absorbent abuses."¹²⁴ Hall misunderstood the Muslim harem, but that does not diminish the importance of their complaints. It was Hall's view nonetheless that the factory became a facility for "takeing women and concubines" at the Company's expense, while others participated in gambling, of whom Robert Manly was the most notorious.¹²⁵

¹²³ Thomas Adler and William Hall to the Company, Isfahan, 5 October 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.31.

¹²⁴ William Hall to Thomas Adler, Isfahan, 9 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.71.

¹²⁵ Thomas Adler and William Hall to the Company, Isfahan, 5 October 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.31.

Of the factors in Persia, Thomas Adler held Manley and Chapman responsible for the increase in concubines, although they “weare not content to keepe their Concubines in the Company howse themselves (but they suffered) [nay] drew on Thomas Codrington and Mark Bromley to doe the like.” At least four factors were involved in bringing concubines to the Company house—Manley, Chapman, Bromley, and Thomas Codrington—but the latter two men allegedly “procured and paid for their concubines...the former [Codrington] hath discarded his for stealing some three tomands.” On the other hand, Bromley “keepte his Gentellwoman untell he depearted hence the Rest are yet Maytained by them and their whole families.”¹²⁶ Chapman apparently stood accused of taking women into the Company house and then kicking them out later in the evening. But Robert Manley found the accusations absurd because “hee would never have beaten the hoare out of [...] at such an unseasonable tyme of night.”¹²⁷ Turning the house into a private brothel was not the Company’s only concern in Persia, and gaming posed moderate problem, particularly from Robert Manley.

Gambling was an issue the Company hoped to limit among other recreational practices. In the event that an individual factor evolved into “a common Drunkard, a notorious Gamester, or Whoremaster, or wronger of the Company by priuate trade,” the appropriate official, whether it was the chief of trade or the president, had the authority to arrest and ship the delinquent to London.¹²⁸ Admittedly Francis Honeywood suspected that

¹²⁶ Thomas Adler to Commissioner William Fremlen, Isfahan, 9 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/20, 72v.

¹²⁷ Reply of Robert Manley to the Interrogatories of George Hatrill, onboard the Discovery, 20 December 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.173.

¹²⁸ *The Lawes or Standing Orders of the East India Company* (London, 1621), f.55.

many Englishmen “the continuance of one (amongst other) most damnable vices of gameing and dice to long practized in this factory.”¹²⁹ These men abused their relative freedom in the factory upsetting both local officials and the presidency. Adler complained that several men stayed out late drinking and stumbling around the streets at “2 clock in the morning,” which apparently occurred at an alarming frequency.¹³⁰ The regularity caused local inhabitants to take notice, and eventually complaints reached Mīrzā Taqī. If Mīrzā Taqī favored the Dutch later on, the English could only pin the blame on themselves for their recent conduct.¹³¹

The council in Isfahan—Francis Honywood, Thomas Adler, Thomas Codrington, and William Hall—agreed that various forms of gaming needed redress, and above all immoderate gaming ultimately hindered the Company’s business. Robert Manley received multiple warnings from the former chief, but he continued “absenting himself out of their howse often and unseasonably and rebukes for his accustomed playing” that there “is now noe hope of his reformation.”¹³² If the council’s report is accurate, five days earlier Manley supposedly lost approximately 200 *tūmāns* (£1266). For comparison, the average president at Surat earned £300 to £400 per annum, which suggests that Manley lost a little more than three years of the president’s wages. Manley could have very well

¹²⁹ Consultation at Isfahan, 15 December 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.40. Lake and Questier, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat*, 342-345. Also see, Paul Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford University Press, 1985).

¹³⁰ Thomas Adler to the Company, Isfahan, 5 October 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.30.

¹³¹ William Fremlen to William Methwold, Gombroon, 10 January 1637/38, IOR E/3/16, f.54-54v. See also, Matthee, *Politics of Trade*.

¹³² Consultation at Isfahan, 15 December 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.40.

won the money, but the council suspected Manley gambled the Company's estate. The council dismissed Robert Manley from service and had him detained in the house until he could depart with the next fleet for London. Once in London, Manley was expected to stand trial before the Company.¹³³

Meanwhile, William Fremlen arrived in Persia in December 1637 to carry out Methwold's reform policies. Methwold sent Fremlen to Persia to recover the account books that Gibson neglected to send to Surat, but he was also concerned with Company's estate after "a great estate in ready monies belonging to our honorable Emploiors lies entangled by Mr. Gibsons indirect dealings" with the Dutch.¹³⁴ Methwold gave Fremlen full authority over all Englishmen in Persia. Thomas Merry had arrived from London, and Methwold sent him with Fremlen to eventually succeed as the chief of trade in Persia. At this point, it does not seem that Methwold was fully aware of the factory's lack of social order, and his primary concern was recuperating the Company's estate that Gibson appeared to have squandered on the Dutch.

Shortly after Fremlen's arrival, the English captured Bath after he escaped in July and sent him to Gombroon where they held him until the fleet arrived.¹³⁵ When Methwold's disciplinary commission arrived, they had specific instructions to seize goods, papers, and other belongings of William Gibson and Guy Bath. If the factors in Persia expected Fremlen to receive them gracefully, especially considering their actions

¹³³ Ibid., f.40.

¹³⁴ Instructions by President Methwold and Council to William Fremlen, Surat, 20 November 1637, IOR/E/3/16, f.35.

¹³⁵ William Fremlen to Surat, Gombroon, 10 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.52v.

taken against Robert Manley, Gibson, and Bath, they were very wrong. In spite of their recent efforts, Fremlen considered the failure of the Persian branch as direct consequence of their “silent complacency with your Agent [Gibson],” particularly in the gross excess of expenditures.¹³⁶

The Company expected their factors to live frugally and avoid unnecessary expenses, but Gibson seemed to have a different gauge for frugality. The English stable in Gombroon, for example, held “39 horses and mules” which Fremlen considered exceeded the necessary limit and suggested that four horses should suffice. Gibson spent lavishly on household items such as “furnitures of gold [and] silver”, and Fremlen expected to sell majority of the vendible items that their “predicessors vanities induced them to triumph in” for the purpose of recuperating as much of their losses as possible.¹³⁷

In a letter to Thomas Adler, William Hall was thoroughly disgusted with the condition of the agency and he claimed to be “silently ignorant” of the abuses.¹³⁸ In what was clearly a response to Fremlen’s admonition of the factors’ silent complacency towards the mismanagement of Persia, Hall declared that he was innocent. Adler added to the list of abuses by claiming that along with Gibson and Bath, Robert Manley, Henry Chapman, Thomas Codrington, and Mark Bromley took part in regular carousing with their concubines.¹³⁹ Adler was particularly keen on noting Manley’s proclivity towards:

¹³⁶ William Fremlen to Thomas Adler, Gombroon, 4 January 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.48v.

¹³⁷ Ibid., f.48v.

¹³⁸ William Hall to Thomas Adler, Gombroon, 9 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.71.

¹³⁹ Thomas Adler to William Fremlen, Isfahan, 9 February 1637/38, IOR/E/3/16, f.72.

whoring, drinking, and gameing comes not behind any as also neglect of the Company bissnes for one of which dangerous vicees we not longe since dismissed him the Companies service of which I make no question but your worships hath not noticed longe since.

While out carousing one evening, Codrington overheard Manley “saye in his copes lets make ourselves stronge and weele roote out them two well enough (meing Mr. Hall and my selfe).” Adler, however, was unsure how Manley intended to “roote us out,” but the threat failed to go unnoticed in the very least.¹⁴⁰ Given the direction of the factory, it is entirely possible that Manley suspected Adler and Hall of some illicit activity for which Manley could pin on the duo in order to redeem his personal shortcomings before the Company. Hall and Adler, however, received reports of Manley’s claim through Codrington who was probably a little intoxicated himself. From India President Methwold declared that Gibson and his friends tarnished the Company’s reputation in Persia.

William Fremlen and Thomas Merry began their purge of the factory soon after their arrival. Bath, Bromley, and Manley were released from the Company’s service. More details will be presented in chapter six, but the Company levied fines against the three men after their arrival in London. Hall, Codrington, Adler, and Chapman continued to serve in Persia. Fremlen recalled Honywood to Surat in 1639, but he suffered an illness and perished on the voyage to Surat. Fremlen returned to Surat in 1638 to succeed President Methwold, and Thomas Merry began to re-organize the English trade in Persia. Merry curbed excesses in drinking, gambling, gaming, and it seems that the English

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., f.72-72v.

brothel was eradicated as well. Private trade continued as it had, but Merry established order in the English factory that had not existed since the Company's arrival in 1616. If anything occurred during Merry's tenure as chief of Persia (1637-1647), the Merry and his subordinates do not make light of it in their correspondence to Surat and London.

In a broader context, the deterioration of social order in the factory is not entirely surprising. Shah Abbas I died in 1629 marking a significant shift in Anglo-Safavīd relations, and President Hopkinson's failed scheme to establish Gombroon as the first port-of-call in 1631 led to an astonishing loss of English life. In India, the famine had crushed the Mughal economy in Gujarat and stalled English trade in the immediate years that followed 1631. This culture of English dissidence was not entirely accidental, and it was heavily tied to local environmental and commercial conditions as well as a very small English community. At the same time, many of the complaints that followed the factories implosion in the 1630s probably characterized, at least partially, the English community of the late 1620s. Especially as we consider that Mīrzā Taqi and Thomas Munn's responses act as markers to a problem that had gone unreported in the correspondence. The political and environmental problems from 1629 and into the early 1630s seem to have exacerbated a problem that already existed. But on the horizon stood Thomas Merry, and with him came a set of radical ideas for transforming the factory in Persia.

Thomas Merry enjoyed power, or at least he was very ambitious, and he did not appreciate gratuitous checks against what he understood as his right of authority. He seemed to have a sense of style, or at the very least understood the importance of self

presentation. In all of the factors, chiefs included, who landed in Persia, Merry was the first to request a personal tailor to join him in Isfahan under the “pretence of necessary use for him in Isfahan to make him such English Clothes.” As a result, John Hillaries, a tailor by profession, initially employed with the fleet, joined Thomas Merry in Gombroon. He took his post as chief of Persia seriously, and, in many ways, Merry began to think of his role there as a president of the Persian branch.

Merry had in effect usurped President Fremlen’s authority over Persia, and it created some dissention between the two parties. Merry’s role as chief was quite different from those who presided as chief over one of the subordinate factories in India. The most important difference existed in the line of communication. Unlike in India where all information flowed through Surat, letters were exchanged directly between Persia and London. The presidency still expected Merry to continue sending correspondence to Surat, but the direct line between London and Persia provided Merry with a justifiable reason to push for an independent Persian factory. Merry argued that remaining in a subordinate position to Surat opened the door for inconsistencies since the factory in Persia received direct orders from London therefore Surat’s role in the Persian trade was irrelevant and perhaps ineffective.

In late 1638, Fremlen critiqued Merry’s attempt to reform the factory in Persia, and “wee find our expectacions so much deceived in the hopes for reformation of that disordered Government.”¹⁴¹ Fremlen’s response came after he learned that Henry Chapman and William Hall charged the factory in Isfahan with a bill of exchange for

¹⁴¹ William Fremlen to Thomas Merry, Swally Hole, 20 December 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.164.

2,000 *tūmāns* [£12,666 13s 4d] that they expected the English in Surat to pay to the Dutch. Merry was unaware of Chapman's deal with the Dutch, but Fremlen simply marked it as another example of the excruciating disorder associated with the factory in Persia.¹⁴² A consultation in Isfahan consisting of Merry, Honywood, and Adler denounced Hall and Chapman's decision. The action, they argued, "wouyld suffer much in their reputacion to scandalize and dishoner the Company." Hall and Chapman claimed they received orders from Surat that authorized the bill, but Merry dismissed the claim as "having no ground nor warrant for it from the letter they received from Surrat what ever they pretend."¹⁴³ Fremlen refused to honor the bill in Surat, although they eventually paid it and held Merry and the factors in Persia accountable for the mistake.¹⁴⁴

Merry was genuinely offended when Fremlen suggested the Persian Agency failed to reform, and the new chief "appose the commandments of the Honourable Company," which Merry countered that the year's account book would prove otherwise.¹⁴⁵ This particular incident is rather interesting. Merry attributed it to "the Rashnes" of the two men involved, and seemed to dismiss their claim that they received orders from Surat to authorize the bill.¹⁴⁶ Whether it was a misunderstanding or simply

¹⁴² Ibid., f.164-164v.

¹⁴³ Ibid., f.21.

¹⁴⁴ The English paid out 72,375 rupees in Surat; the loss being charged to Merry's account. President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.168; President Fremlen to the Company, Swally Marine, 29 December 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.302v; Notorial protest by the Dutch Chief against the English Agent for non acceptance of a Bill for 2000 Tomands, July 1639, IOR/E/3/16,.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Merry to President Fremlen, Isfahan, 28 February 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.246v.

¹⁴⁶ Consultation in Isfahan, 25 April 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.103.

terrible judgment, the grounds for Hall and Chapman's decisions are somewhat ambiguous. As a consequence, however, this incident did provide, although indirectly, some basis for Merry's argument later that the branch in Persia should operate independently from Surat.

The bill of exchange, however, was not the only point of stress between Merry and Surat. Fremlen was unhappy with Merry's agreement with Shah Safi for a new contract for silk which was against the Company's instructions. In February 1639, Merry wrote to Fremlen that "wee thinke our selves still obleiged raither to obeye our Masters immediate orders then yours; when they shall Command us to Submit all unto your instructions and that wee have it under their hand it wilbehoove us to obey."¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, Merry thought that his instructions from London gave him the authority to purchase the silk. It is unclear if Merry received a separate set of instructions from London, but President Fremlen accused Merry of making "other construcion of your words" for his own ends.¹⁴⁸

In December 1639, Fremlen again complained of Merry's disregard to the president's commission, citing Merry's decision to keep "more plate then was ordered" as an indication of Merry's refusal to adhere to orders.¹⁴⁹ Here Fremlen referenced the order to disassemble Gibson's extensive collection of household fineries. Merry intended to follow Fremlen's instructions, but he saw the value in maintaining a refined household

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Merry to President Fremlen, Isfahan, 28 February 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.246.

¹⁴⁸ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.160.

¹⁴⁹ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 9 December 1639, IOR/E/3/17, f.160v.

if the English had any chance to rekindle Anglo-Safavīds relations. Poor and bland simply was neither fitting nor becoming of a merchant house trading with the Shah.

Ironically, in the same letter, Fremlen followed his hefty critique of Merry with:

Setling Mr. Merry theare for wee doe not heare but that the [...] many beastly debaucheries unchristian like conversation (too long continued and practized amongst the then Residents) is totally abolished, your business more honestly and sollicitously managed and the House Government well ordered.¹⁵⁰

Yet, in a general letter to the Company, Fremlen claimed “we received nothing lesse then Taunts...and contempt of that Authority you have bine pleased to confer on and continuat unto your President and Councell of Suratt.”¹⁵¹ After the previous decade, it was obvious to the council of Surat that they could not trust the factory in Persia to operate without direct supervision. Merry’s drift towards autonomy probably concerned President Fremlen even if Merry proved his loyalty in reforming the factory. In 1638, the English almost doubled their silk collection from 1637, and collected more silk during 1638 and 1639 annually than they had the previous three years. The English exported 325, 373, and 281 bales of silk respectively from 1635 to 1637. In 1638 and 1639 under Merry’s supervision the English exported 470 and 594 bales of silk.¹⁵²

In February 1640, Merry began to imply that Persia should operate independently of Surat, but “wee shall willingly follow directions that are reasonable,” which by the middle of the year became a direct call for centralized authority in Persia.¹⁵³ Merry would

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., f.160v.

¹⁵¹ President Fremlen to the Company, 29 December 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.302v.

¹⁵² Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, 243.

¹⁵³ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 28 February 1639/40, IOR/E/3/17, f.241.

comply with the Company's orders, but he argued that slow communication and the distance from Surat necessitated the creation of an independent presidency. The infrequent correspondence between Surat and Persia troubled Merry more than anything. The current structure, Merry noted, was inefficient and it had proved largely ineffective over the previous couple of decades. What English in Persia needed was a central authority in Persia that dictated the full terms of Persia's trade. Depending on Surat for instructions and aid was ineffective given the distance and time it took for messages to reach Gombroon (two months) and Isfahan (three and a half months) from Surat. This delay, Merry thought, played a critical role in much of the dysfunctional management of Persia, and when letters finally arrived from Surat or London with specific instructions, they were either ambiguous or no longer made commercial sense.¹⁵⁴ The disagreements with the presidency in the end of the 1630s derived partially from this issue. In one incident, for example, President Fremlen instructed Merry to depart for Gombroon, but Merry had also received direct orders from London to repair to Isfahan; he decided to follow the Company's "immediate instructions."¹⁵⁵

The dispute between Fremlen and Merry was quite different from the previous incidents, and in many ways while the two appeared to respect each other, if at times they seemed at odds, the struggle here developed over controlling trade. There was also another matter with Merry's rise in Persia. In January 1639, President Fremlen also had designs for governing the Company's trade. Whereas we can effectively suggest that

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., f.241.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 5 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.268.

Merry pushed for an independent government, Fremlen proposed to centralize the entire trade under a single government “either at Bantam or heere [Surat] as you shall find to stand.”¹⁵⁶ In the following year, Merry began to propose his centralization plan for Persia.

Thomas Merry was not shy about centralizing the Persian agency, and “howfitt it wilbe for you to impose or they to understand the same power of governmente and direction unto this soe farre remote, wee thinke it a matter deserveing your serious delliberacon.”¹⁵⁷ His idea was that Persia’s economic climate is best understood from the ground, and the direction of the Persian trade should follow decisions made in Persia in agreement with the governors in London. The Surat presidency functioned as an unnecessary hindrance to the progression of English trade there, and, while Merry’s proposal made sense, if the Company agreed, they said nothing. Still, Merry pressed his plan to centralize the agency, which conveniently meant that Thomas Merry would rise as the first president of Persia or at least this was what he anticipated.¹⁵⁸ After his subordinates refused to follow his orders, Merry was hard-pressed to make Isfahan a presidential factory. According to Merry, one factor avowed “that they will have their directions in government from Suratt nott from mee.”¹⁵⁹ Merry’s attempt at centralization never came to fruition, and in a few short years the Company nominated him for president in Surat, and he conveniently dropped the scheme altogether.

¹⁵⁶ President Fremlen to the Company, Surat, 4 January 1638/1639, IOR/E/3/16, f.186.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 5 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.268v.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 10 June 1640, IOR/E/3/17, f.273v.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, f.274.

After Fremlen's commission and Merry's appointment as chief in Persia, the factory overcame the embarrassment left in the wake of Gibson's authority. Merry reformed the agency and cleansed it of malcontents. Regardless of his aversion to operating the factory under the auspices of Surat, he maintained the branch without allowing it to succumb to internal problems. From 1637 until 1647 the English ceased fighting with each other, and under Merry's leadership the silk trade gradually improved from 1637 until 1640.¹⁶⁰

After Merry's arrival in 1637 until the Company lost its monopoly on trade in 1653, the English factory in Safavīd Persia was relatively free of the internal problems that plagued it from 1616 to 1636. A final moment of tension occurred well after Merry's departure, but it paled in comparison to the early period. A brief quarrel between Thomas Codrington and John Lewis began in 1651, but by this time the Persian branch was all but finished having exported its final bail of silk a decade earlier.¹⁶¹ Soon after the English began a transition from silk to silver exports from Persia, which picked up in the 1650s.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 243.

¹⁶¹ In an attempt to ruin Codrington's reputation, John Lewis concocted a story that a local Catholic priest baptized Codrington. Nothing came of the minor scuffle, and it disappeared quietly. See, Thomas Codrington to President Merry, Isfahan, 15 September 1651, IOR/E/3/22, f.209

¹⁶² Matthee, *Politics of Trade.*, 158-160.

IV. Conclusion: A culture of dissention

The questions we need to consider is how this could happen in Persia when it did not occur to the same degree and shape in India? To a degree the answer is geographical. The powerbase at Surat lie too far to the east of Persia to properly oversee the agency. At the end of a long journey from London via Surat, with the exception of a few years from 1631 until about 1635, incoming merchants and factory assistants arrived in Persia where very few Englishmen lived. This is not a case where the best and most loyal agents went to India, but instead the powerbase in Surat was strong enough to manage the small string of factories and factors in Gujarat and in the Sind.

Apart from the geographic dilemma, the high attrition rate created both a practical and psychological strain on the English. From a practical perspective, the English house was almost always undermanned, and at points the household was too ill to perform their tasks. When men died or fell severely ill, it also limited the social circle in which those surviving Englishmen could interact within. This seemed to be less of a problem in Isfahan where various travelers, dignitaries, and Catholic clergymen from Europe converged, but in the southern provinces the opportunity to partake in casual conversation and other pastimes was much more difficult. For those who were fortunate enough to speak Portuguese, or even Arabic, they could communicate with a wider public, but there were only a few Englishmen who showed capabilities in Arabic and fewer still in Persian.

The psychological stress this small group of Englishmen faced from 1616 until roughly 1652 was tremendous. Environmental factors, such as the unbearable heat,

combined with the attrition rate probably weighed heavily on these men. In addition, they were surrounded by various Catholic Orders, most notably in Isfahan. To the south, the Portuguese navy repeatedly threatened the English fleet at the port of Jask. After the defeat at Hormuz, the Portuguese still held onto Muscat, which allowed the Portuguese fleet to harry the Safavīd coastline. Surrounded is a rather strong term, but the English factors were certainly left in a delicate state. President Methwold's peace in 1635 alleviated some of the stress, but by that point the factory in Persia was in a rapid decline.

The Company entrusted these men with their investments to trade sensibly, but by the end of their service, or their life, they transformed into den of bickering, lecherous thieves. In London, these men probably held a mixture of reasons for travelling east to Safavīd Persia—many of whom only received their orders to land in Safavīd Persia after they arrived in Surat—and their motivations probably loosely divided them between Company men (Jeffries) and those seeking to boost their personal interests (Connock). At least a few of these men probably sought personal gains, but others perhaps became discouraged after learning of their employment to Persia. While their motivations are unclear, the combination of environmental, political, and religious factors altered their general outlook on life.

They turned on each other and began to utilize the Company's resources for their personal benefit, while others succumbed to vices of excessive drinking, gaming, and sexual sins. A few men maintained their integrity, but the social and environmental stress was too great for many of these men, and who could really fault them? As profitable as silk was, Roe was correct when he attempted to sway the English away from the Persian

trade. While the lack of bullion, bad cloth, and London politics did not make the trade any easier, the developing culture of belligerent behavior within the English community had a healthy hand in the factory's implosion.

Chapter 6: “The unjust courses of our people”: Wages, Private Trade, and family

On 5 January 1628/29, Reverend Thomas Fuller approached the Court of Committees to offer his services as a minister to the Company. As with most of the agents who intended to serve abroad, the Company conducted an extensive background check. Thomas Fuller was not an exception, and the Company seemed pleased to hire him but they “received some private informacon whereof they desired to be satisfied.” At the time, Fuller was married and the Company “demaunded the cause why he being a married man and having recd a porcon of 7 or 800£ [dowry] with his wife (who is yet living) he wold undertake wuch a voyage and absent himselfe so long from her.” Fuller’s response was probably unexpected, but one can imagine several of the committee members grinning hysterically. He admitted that he was married, but “shee is a woman whose life and conversacon is incompatible, and not to be endured.” For Fuller, the prospect of serving the Company in the east—he eventually served in Persia—was an opportunity to begin anew. He complained that “her uncivill and dishonest behavior, as for the many wrongs & injuries done him by her which are not to be indured.”¹ On 14 January 1628/29, the Court of Committees accepted Fuller’s request for employment, but they required a letter of consent from his wife before they would allow him to depart. Fuller’s optimism abruptly diminished, and he was doubtful that she would consent to his

¹ Court Minutes, 5 January 1628/29, IOR/B/13, f.236.

employment.² Fuller eventually received an official contract, but his stay in Persia was short-lived after he realized the climate was not entirely what he expected.

There is a drop of humor in Fuller's story, but it also highlights an aspect of the Company's narrative that is somewhat overlooked. The Englishmen who earned employment with the East India Company took an enormous risk, and in the process they waved farewell to parents, wives, children, brothers, and sisters. As was often the case, the wives and children—this was true for Fuller as well—who stayed behind depended on their husband's wages for living expenses and debts. This brings to light a dilemma regarding the factors' wages and how their actions abroad had far reaching consequences. In previous chapters, the theme focused on Anglo-Safavīd relations and how the English coped with the environment and their countrymen. While there were certain luxuries, the English in Safavīd Persia faced several difficulties and this chapter will offer a glimpse at how the Company compensated them for it.

The previous two chapters began with a prologue to illustrate a difference between India and Persia, but this chapter will take a broad look at English wealth over the course of the period. Comparing India to Persia here is somewhat inappropriate since there is no substantial difference between what men earned in India compared to Persia. The chapter will continue to focus on the factors in Persia but in the context of a broader concept of English wages and probates in between Persia and India. In chapter five, it was demonstrated that Englishmen living in Persia succumbed to a number of social ills, and this chapter will, in part, examine how the incidents abroad also created problems at

² Court Minutes, 14 January 1628/29, IOR/B/12, f.252.

home, especially for their families. This is not a comprehensive look at individual financial gains and legal proceedings against the Company agents in London, instead it is meant to offer a broad illustration of the issues that confronted families and the English serving abroad by taking into account wages, probates, and fines.

I. “A fitt man to be imployed by the Company”

Prospective merchants and other factory assistants, such as ministers, surgeons, tailors, and other artisans, had to provide evidence of their abilities before the Court of Committees or have someone of importance speak on their behalf.³ Thomas Barker the younger, for example, earned a spot on the recommendation of one Thomas Lowe. It is not clear if was the Sir Thomas Lowe who was a London MP in 1610 and 1614, but most importantly his recommendation helped Barker find a spot in the Company.⁴ The Company hoped to employ reliable and trustworthy men, but prospective employees still had to possess a valuable talent.⁵ Finding a place in the Company was not quite as simple as claiming to have a successful wool stall alongside the River Thames, one needed tangible experience and abilities specific to a region or commodity.

The Company did not necessarily employ the “jack-of-all-trades” type of individuals, but rather men who may have a single talent that they performed well. Thomas Barker the younger, for example, spent much of his youth in the Ottoman Empire, and he acquired knowledge of Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Spanish, and Italian.

³ Games, *The Web of Empire*, 94-95.

⁴ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 207n.

⁵ Games, *The Web of Empire*, 94.

Having a multilingual factor, especially in Arabic and Persian, was just as valuable as someone who understood the silk or calico trade. Having men with these qualities also reduced the dependence on local linguists who were not particularly loyal. Other men were hired for their experience in the trade. John Percy served under Christopher Clitherowe for eight years before requesting a contract to serve as a factor in the Company.⁶ Christopher Clitherowe was a member of the Levant Company, and one of forty-seven new members brought in as Directors of the East India Company over the course of the 1630s. Of those men, Clitherowe and four others were leading merchants in the Levant Company and now held key posts in the East India Company.⁷ Needless to say, John Percy's education under Clitherowe's tutelage was more than sufficient. John Lechland was employed for India due to his knowledge of indigo and Arabic after spending a few years in the Consul's court in Aleppo. He also was adequate with raw silk, but Lechland never went to Persia to assist with the silk trade.⁸

The Company was not focused on simply bringing in the most experienced merchants or those who were multilingual, and they were equally as interested in finding and employing decent men or so they hoped. This was tricky, and the Court of Committees relied on their personal convictions and the word of their patron or sponsor at in the General Court. It was therefore more difficult to gauge lesser known individuals. Patrons often assured the court that the individual was an exemplary model of

⁶ Court Minutes, 14 December 1618, IOR/B/6, f.270.

⁷ Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 78.

⁸ Court Minutes, 21 October 1614, IOR/B/5, f.251.

“sufficiencie and honestie.”⁹ Several members of the Court in 1623 vouched for Nicholas Bix by describing him as honorable and well respected.¹⁰ This was probably the most important quality a merchant could possess given that after departing London there was really not much the Company could do to guarantee the factors returned with their money or goods. Even the ‘honest’ private traders returned to London with their trade, and the Company took measures to recuperate their lost funds (see below). The Company employed a group of individuals who were regarded as honest and were at least well versed in one area, such as, specific commodities, accounting, and language. Or in William Price’s case, he was considered knowledgeable in merchandizing.¹¹

The supporting cast of apprentices (minor assistants) surgeons, bakers, tailors, and ministers were expected to perform well in their respective practices. Ministers, for example, were expected to deliver sermons before the Company to display their proficiency in scripture, but also their ability to “hould argument with the Jesuits.”¹² After the English landed in Surat, it was important for English ministers to arrive prepared, because “this place requireth more profound learning to defend God’s cause against these cunning Jesuits.”¹³ On the other hand, surgeons needed to know their craft well. George Turner, for example, gained invaluable knowledge of Indian medicines in

⁹ Court Minutes, 13 March 1625, IOR/B/10, f.311.

¹⁰ Court Minutes, 19 December 1623, IOR/B/8, f.320.

¹¹ Court Minutes, 17 March 1625, IOR/B/10, f.320.

¹² Court Minutes, 26 October 1614, IOR/B/5, f.255; Court Minutes, 30 January 1632/33, IOR/B/15, f.185.

¹³ Thomas Kerridge to Sir Thomas Smith, Surat, 26 March 1615, *Letters Received*, 3:92.

Surat, and the Company reemployed him for the purpose of bringing local medicine to the Company's account in India.¹⁴

There was no sure method to guarantee that the men the Company employed would serve loyally in the Persia, India, and the Far East. They could verify to some extent the individual's abilities, but there was no mechanism for testing an agent's inclination to mishandle the Company's investment purposefully or otherwise. Nor did they have the ability to foresee how their agents would respond to numerous difficulties in a largely unknown environmental, commercial, and political environment. There were some similarities to dealing with the Ottomans in the Levant, but this was a relatively new commercial forum for the English. The previous chapter revealed that the Company's attempt to weed out the bad apples was tenuous at best, and in the end the Company settled for the best possible candidate.

The Company employed these men and offered them salaries for a predetermined number of years. It is difficult to determine, if not impossible, how an individual's salary influenced their decisions abroad. The immediate suspicion is that it probably had little to no affect on the agent's loyalty to the Company, but it is worth considering that these men were unlikely to amass a small fortune from their salaries alone. By looking at salaries and wealth (though wills), it is possible to gauge how the men employed in Persia fared compared to their countrymen in India and the Far East. In other words, how can their wages shed light on the issues in previous chapters?

¹⁴ Court Minutes, 13 January 1625, 13 January 1625/26, IOR/B/10, f.217-218.

Contracts typically extended for five to seven years, which typically included an annual increase that on average was £10 or £20 for each year after. If a factor began at £50 per year for five years, his salary for the second year increased to £60 and so on. Each contract had slight variations, but many of the factors were expected to put money, in the form of a bond, into the Company's stock. Thomas Kerridge, for example, agreed to put £1,000 into the Company's stock with the condition that if he served for four years he would receive £2,000 in return.¹⁵ John Percy paid £400 into the Company's stock before setting off to Persia in the early 1620s.¹⁶ Many Englishmen followed Kerridge and Percy's example, but others, such as William Methwold, chose to temporarily surrender a portion of their annual salary to the Company's stock. Of the £500 annually that he was due to receive, Methwold authorized £400 to go into stock from which he would receive interest.¹⁷

Englishmen serving in Persia received similar compensation for their service as their countrymen in India. The Company did not have a standardized wage schedule for modern researchers to consult, but it seems that an average factor—that is someone who had experience as a merchant abroad, some language skills, and perhaps a specific talent with certain commodities—received between £50 and £100 per year.¹⁸ The salaries that Englishmen earned likely depended on a number of things, such as, their abilities,

¹⁵ Court Minutes, 29 December 1623, IOR/B/8, f.328.

¹⁶ Court Minutes, 9 November 1627, IOR/B/12, f.145.

¹⁷ Court Minutes, 19 February 1639/40, IOR/B/19, f.138.

¹⁸ This wage approximation was determined by looking at a combination of Company minutes and the original correspondence where the notary or author recorded the factor's wages.

experience, and perhaps location. There was a large range of salaries, but it is not always clear why some merchants earned more than others. The general picture suggests that the salary schedule was structured on a tiered system: president, chief, secondary agents (subordinate factors; ministers, surgeons), and assistants (writers, servants, apprentices). The President's of Surat earned anywhere from £200 to £500. On the low end Thomas Rastell earned £200 per annum in 1620 while President Methwold sat comfortably at £500 per annum in 1633.¹⁹ Methwold, for example, returned to London with an estimated £2,600 between his wages and Company stock, but this does not include any interest earned on the stock or his private trade. Francis Breton and Thomas Merry brought in over £300 per annum.²⁰

For all other Company agents in India and Persia, the wage scale was spread across a wider spectrum. Their salaries ranged from as little as £13 6s 8d to £200. Henry Hunt received the former sum, and he was most likely a factory assistant or apprentice. Edward Knipe on the other hand was a seasoned merchant, and the Company granted him £200 per annum.²¹ Thomas Barker (younger) agreed to a seven year contract from the Company starting at £30 per annum, but after the first year of service his wage increased £10 per year for the next six years.²² The Company allotted him a £100 allowance for anything he may need for his voyage out to Persia. If Barker survived, his contract was

¹⁹ Court Minutes, 18 February 1619/20, IOR/B/6, f.524; Court Minutes, 5 January 1623/24, IOR/B/8, f.338-339.

²⁰ List of Merchants employed in Surat and subordinate factories, 1648, IOR/E/3/20, f.215-216.

²¹ The Company to Surat, IOR/G/40/12, f.72; Court Minutes, 29 December 1643, IOR/B/21, f.102; The Company's instructions for Edward Knipe, 16 March 1641/42, IOR/G/40/12, f.2-2v.

²² Court Minutes, 6 November 1618, IOR/B/6, f.246-247.

worth at least £270. On the other hand, ministers received a relatively stagnant wage. They earned between £50 and £100 per annum, and they, much unlike the factors, did not receive an annual increase.²³

In addition to wages, it was possible for men to earn a bonus or gratuities for their service. While the Company extended gratuities, the president of trade often issued gratuities to deserving subordinates in India and Persia. The *Lawes or Standing Orders* mentions gratuities for officers of the Company, which was not “a greater value then the summe of One hundreth pounds,” but nothing about the factors in the east.²⁴ Still, the Company seemed to honor any bonuses given to factors in the east. In many examples, the president offered gratuities of less than £10, which often was intended to provide factors with money for necessities. For that, the Company could hardly complain, at least not too vociferously. In 1617, Edward Connock provided John Amy with £6 for apparel costs.²⁵ This was standard for most gratuities granted to factors in India and Persia. William Biddulph, however, received a much larger gratuity in 1617. Biddulph was a merchant who spent most of his time in northern India, and after his initial contract expired the Company agreed to extend his contract for an additional five years. Part of his contract called for £400 to go into the Company’s stock, but Biddulph only paid £200 as the Company paid the remaining £200 as a gratuity for his service. Most gratuities,

²³ Games, *The Web of Empire*, 226; Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 84-88.

²⁴ *Lawes or Standing Orders*, f.63.

²⁵ Edward Connock to Thomas Barker, Isfahan, 18 May 1617, *Letters Received*, 5:261.

however, were small sums to provide factors or other Englishmen with money for provisions, clothing, or other necessities.

While wages give us an idea of how much an Englishmen could make in India or Persia, probate records help provide a clearer picture of their general wealth and close relations. The English will and probate records allow modern observers a glimpse into the wealth of early modern Englishmen and women. For the period covering 1600 until 1652, there are approximately 775 wills not including a few unofficial bequests or inventory sheets kept in the Company records. Most of these wills belonged to English mariners of various ranks from the common seaman to high ranking officers. The focus here is on the probates that the Englishmen in Persia prepared, but some attention must be given to the wider collection of English probate records. The corpus is reduced to ten year increments to help illustrate a trend in the composition of English wills. The surviving probate records follow a pattern that closely parallels several developments in the region over the course of the particular decade (see table 6). In other words, in periods of profound crisis, the English had a tendency to produce more wills.

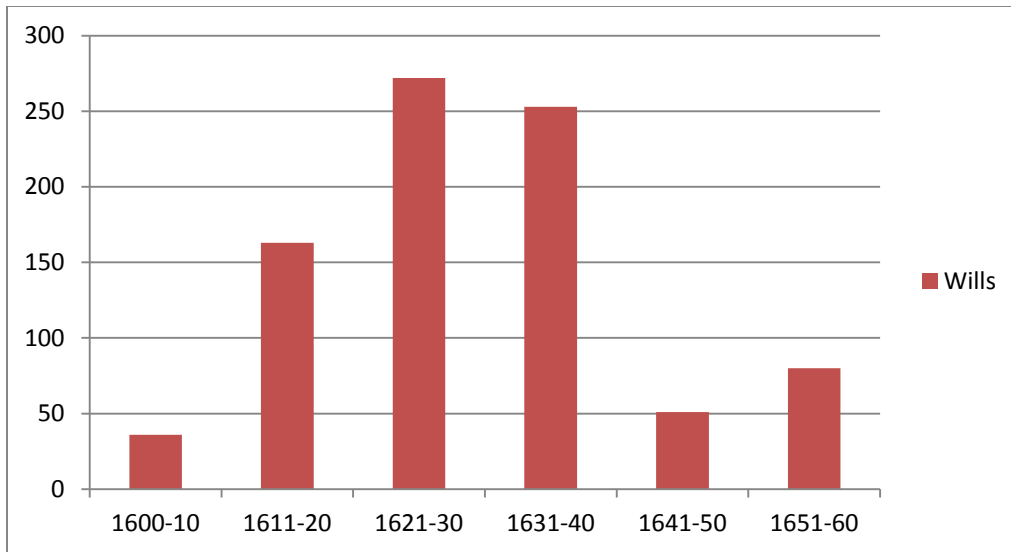


Table 6: This is the total amount of proven bequests for the period between Persia, India, and the fleet.

In the first decade the amount of wills is unsurprisingly low. The English Company employed few people for its venture to the Spice Islands, and the venture was still explorative. Shipping during the first decade was rigid, and the Company took a cautious approach until the second decade of the seventeenth century. The Company delayed the outgoing fleet which did not depart until the previous fleet returned from the east. Once the Company established a steady flow of shipping, combined with the founding of factories in India, there was a sharp rise in the English probates from 36 in the first decade to 163 in the second. The 1620s and 30s saw the largest volume of English probates with 272 and 253 respectively. In the 1640s there is a sharp decline to 51 wills and the following decade followed with a slight increase to about 80.

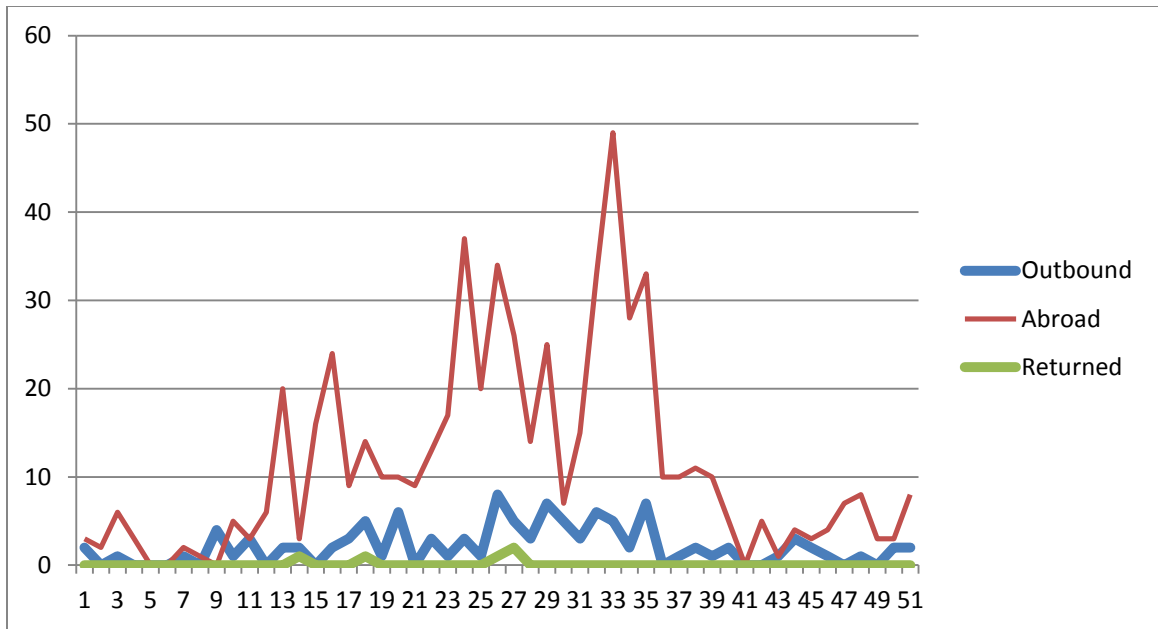


Table 7: The volume of wills per each year since 1600.

The chart above (table 7) illustrates the volume of wills for each year since 1600, and it is broken into three plot points: wills written before departure, during their employment, and after an individual's return from the east. Not terribly surprising is the low volume of wills produced after Company employees returned, in which case just five wills exist. This does not include men who returned and resided in England for several years and later produced a will (i.e. William Methwold). To maintain some level of precision, I have limited the selection to probates produced immediately after returning to London. Of the 775 wills, 108 were written before departing for India, mostly from mariners. The most prominent statistic, however, is the volume composed abroad at 662 wills.

By looking at the proportion of wills on an annual basis, there are some remarkable pieces of information. The graph illustrates three spikes while men were

abroad. The first falls between 1611 and 1617 at precisely the time when Anglo-Portuguese tension began to rise and conflict at sea became a regular occurrence. Captain Middleton and Thomas Best both overcame major clashes with the Portuguese fleet outside of Surat, and in 1613 the threat of poisoning whether ill conceived or not began to unfold in northern India. The period featured aggression from the Jesuits in Agra and the Portuguese fleets at sea. Similarly, between 1621 and 1629 a second spike in English bequests correlates to the siege of Hormuz and an escalation in violence between the English and Portuguese at sea. The 1620s also marks severe political upheaval in India and in 1623 the massacre at Amboyna probably made the English a little anxious. The final surge, and by far the largest, falls between 1632 and 1636 immediately during the aftermath of the Gujarati famine. In 1629, the death of Shah Abbas I created an uneasy situation in the Gulf region, and in 1632 Shāh Jahān reignited the clash with the Deccan Princes in India.

The spikes in English probates follow major points of upheaval in the region. These spikes occur precisely during moments of increased stress on the mariners and factors alike. From 1637 until 1652 Englishmen produced very few wills. An obvious explanation can be found in the reduction in both shipping and men as a consequence of the Company's decline; although the Company does not commence its retrenchment policy until roughly the mid-1640s. An alternative explanation, however, hints towards the conclusion of President Methwold's embassy to Goa in 1635.

After 1637 the number of wills drops significantly from previous years to a meager 91 probates for a seventeen year period. In 1634, Englishmen left roughly 49

wills which was more than half the number of wills produced in the entire period after 1636 until 1652. For English seamen, at least, Methwold's peace with the Portuguese meant the fleet was less likely to engage in naval conflict. The pattern illustrates an additional layer to Methwold's embassy to Goa, and the surges in English probates parallel an increase in tension at sea and on land. In chapter three the consequences of Methwold's peace on Anglo-Portuguese and Protestant-Catholic relations brought into relief crucial points to understanding the early Company's development. It also seems to suggest that after 1635, the English were less anxious and were not pressed to prepare probates.

If Englishmen felt concerned about the possibility of death as a consequence of environmental factors, it seems that the data would reflect a significant and evenly dispersed number of wills composed prior to departure. This was not the case, however, and well above half of all wills written in the east, particularly as the chart shows between the years 1611 and 1637, directly correlates to Anglo-Portuguese aggression. This suggests to some extent that while Englishmen probably were aware of environmental factors that left many dead, their primary concern and reason for creating bequests derived from the threat of conflict at sea and on land. Further into the 1660s, the number of English legacies continues to persist in low volumes with only 76 probates for the decade.

For the fifty years of this study, these men collectively left £25,072 5s 9d in ready English money listed in the records. This figure does not include wages or additional funds the individual received or the value of the goods they left behind. Nor does it

include their bonds with the Company. Some careers were lucrative while others provided paltry salaries. Seaman for example left their beneficiaries an estimated £5,090 1s 1d, which translates to about 20.3% of the total monetary wealth bequeathed. Mariners owned nearly a quarter of the total sum of English money reported, they produced about 45.7% (353) of the wills. On average each mariner had roughly had 14.4£ pounds to give, and in many cases individuals left much less. Thomas Bethill, for example, of the *Hector* left an estimated 1£.²⁶ On the other hand, the wills left by ten fleet commanders tell quite a different story. Few men held the post of fleet commander, and those who did benefitted handsomely. These men acquired an estimated £4,730 6s 8d or 18.7% of the entire wealth bequeathed; and whereas the percentage of the total wealth is lower than that held by common mariners, these men had an average of 473£ of English money at their disposal. Sir James Lancaster owned nearly half of the estimated sum having handed out 2,484£ 6s 8d, but he was an exception.²⁷

Aside from fleet officers and landed factors, the majority of all other positions held between .01% and 2% of the total estimated wealth, with most individuals holding less than 1%. We do not have reliable data for a handful of wills belonging to one trumpeter, his mate, one pilot, one soldier, and two cooks, but presumably they earned meager salaries. Of the 29 factors (including Bantam and the Coast), these men left both English and local currency: £3,969 1s 8d, 476 rials, 445 rupees, 4265 *mahmudi*, 27 *tūmāns* to their families and friends, which combined with the English pounds sterling

²⁶ PROB 11/122/354

²⁷ PROB 11/131/663

roughly amounts to a total of £4,580. This is not including the value of rings, clothing, spices, weapons, and other items of value that they carried. The average merchant left roughly £158 whereas seamen averaged £14. Some factors passed on significantly higher sums and others lower, but the statistics provide an interesting glimpse of the distribution of wealth among Company employees. It also is unclear if the factors calculated the wages they expected to receive, or if the money they bequeathed took into account only the money they had in their possession.

In general, these men as a whole were not particularly wealthy aside from a few exceptional cases. The men who resided in Persia earned salaries similar to their countrymen in India holding similar positions as chief or underfactors. The president was an exception as he earned much more than the average factor. It is also clear that wages were not a contributing factor in the decision to trade privately since men of all ranks were involved in private trade. There is a subtle aspect that offers a partial explanation for the issues discussed in previous chapters. The Company held the men in Persia to the same expectations as their countrymen in India, but they were expected to perform their duties in an exceedingly more difficult environment for similar pay.

The mortality rate was astounding, and the structure of the silk trade was significantly more difficult than the open trade in India. They also had to perform their duties with far fewer of their countrymen for support and companionship. Yet with the difficulties they faced these men were not compensated accordingly, and they earned comparable salaries to their countrymen in India whom had a significantly higher probability of returning to England alive. One could possibly attribute the lack of

differentiation in salaries to the general apathy towards maintaining order in Safavīd Persia and failing to disassociate themselves from frowned upon activities, such as, gaming, excessive drinking, consorting with concubines, and theft. While the evidence does not explicitly show a link between the two, implicitly it seems to have played a contributing factor.

II. “His business had bene found very foule”: private trade and the ‘dead man’s estate’²⁸

“Wee shall alsoe for the future be very carefull to send both particuler Accompts of dead mens estates,” wrote Thomas Merry to London in 1638.²⁹ Before money was turned out to grieving relatives, the Company needed to ensure that their deceased agents’ debts were settled. Wages were conditional, and as many Englishmen discovered they could lose portions of their wages or bonds, or both. The *Court Minutes* of the East India Company illustrate the challenges many beneficiaries confronted when attempting to collect their loved one’s wages. An agent could lose their wage, or a significant portion of it, as a consequence of private trade, debts, and riotous behavior in the factories.³⁰ In 1621, the Court ordered that factors would not receive their wages until the account books cleared.³¹ C.R. Boxer once wrote that low wages opened the door for dishonest

²⁸ I have decided to place this section here instead of combining it with the material in chapter 5 in order to contain individual financial matters in one chapter.

²⁹ Thomas Merry to the Company, Isfahan, 30 August 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.139v.

³⁰ Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company*, 88.

³¹ Court Minutes, 22 October 1621, IOR/B/7, f.149.

methods such as contraband or private trade.³² Yet even well paid merchants dabbled in private trade. Before most men concluded their contracts, they had to agree to abstain from private trade, which most failed to do. Thomas Kerridge solemnly promised in 1623 that “he would not at all meddle with private trade but hinder it in others.”³³

Very few men, however, exercised responsibility and the Company was forced to find ways to curtail private trade. Private trade was not something that was a niche problem, and everyone from the average deckhand to the President of Surat engaged in private trade. The problem was not necessarily focused on the average sailor returning home with a small pouch of pepper; instead what concerned the Company were the large amounts of private trade coming into London and the suspicion that their men used the Company’s estate to purchase commodities. As early as 1614, the Company notary recorded a prevalent sentiment at Court when he wrote “howe hatefull those courses are unto the companie.”³⁴ In 1617, Thomas Kerridge informed the Company that “private trade is too common to be reformed by us.”³⁵ In 1621, the Company’s *Lawes or Standing Orders* declared that the chief factors “shall diligently enquire and carefully seaze vpon all such priuate trade.”³⁶ Again in article 285, “hee shall Forfeit all the monyes, Wares, Interests, and other profits whatsoever... arise by any such priuate Trade.”³⁷ Those found

³² Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 205-207.

³³ Court Minutes, 29 December 1623, IOR/B/8, f.338-339.

³⁴ Court Minutes, 16 August 1614, f.201.

³⁵ Thomas Kerridge to the Company, 26 February 1616/17, *Letters Received*, 5:118.

³⁶ *The Lawes or Standing Orders*, f.54.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, f.64.

guilty of excessive private trade were entered into the Company's black book with the earliest entry in 1624.³⁸

In 1625, President Kerridge warned Thomas Barker (younger) and his assistants in Persia that "private trade in this fleete hath bene so extreordinary that it is indeed insufferable...these shippes houldes being stufte with bulkey goods."³⁹ One of the issues the Company faced was in the use of their ships to move large quantities of private goods. Kerridge took measures to help curtail private trade, and he instructed the factors in Persia to check all incoming and outgoing ships for bulk private trade. He authorized Barker and his assistants to "make seysure of all such bulkey comodities," regardless of whom the goods belonged to, and bring it into the Company's account. But there was still a high level of leniency in this, and the factors in Persia were instructed to "pay unto them [private traders] the price only it cost in Indya."⁴⁰ Both sides benefitted in this approach because the Company obtained goods that it would otherwise have purchased in India, and the private trader received their money in exchange. If anything the Company benefitted slightly more as the goods they desired were already loaded onto their ships and they would not have to haggle with local India merchants. For the private trader, the brief venture was a waste of time and he gained nothing. This method, however, only worked if the fleet captains, factors, and others involved sought to limit private trade. It

³⁸ IOR/H/29. This miscellaneous volume covers the period from 1624 until 1655. The cover of the physical volume is actually black.

³⁹ Instructions for Thomas Barker, John Percy, and John Benthall, February 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.198v.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, f.198v.

was also not particularly well suited if the private trade was in a commodity that was at the time worthless or oversaturated the market in London and Europe. In 1634, William Methwold reported that over 77 bales of goods arrived on the *James* at Bantam.⁴¹ Clearly this method had its limitations.

In 1628, the Company petitioned Charles I for a proclamation banning extensive private trade. The proclamation that followed reiterated article 286 in *The Lawes*, which essentially authorized a limited volume of private trade. Charles' proclamation dated 20 March 1627/28 and posted in the East India Company House, read:

And it is further declared, that each particular man employed in the Voyage, as afore written, may lade and adventure, for his owne priuate and proper accompt, in the Wares and Mercandize afore written, and not otherwise, so much onely as can be packed in one Chest of foure foote long, one foote and a halfe broad, and one foote and a halfe deepe.⁴²

The proclamation allowed the leading officers and merchants “a double portion,” but those brought before the court and charged with excessive private trade imported significantly more than the allotted amount. The double allotment was an additional proviso that was not in article 286 from the *Lawes or Standing Orders*. The Company did not squirm when their factor's trunks failed to close; rather it was those who returned home with several butts of cloves, or multiple bales of exotic cloths that irked the Company. But even this was confronted with a certain level of inconsistency as favored

⁴¹ President Methwold to the Company, Goa Road, 29 December 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.82-85.

⁴² *By the King. A Declaration of Orders made by the Gouvernour and Company of Merchants of London, trading to the East Indies, concerning priuate trade, to, in, or from the said Indies, ratified and allowed by the King; And by His Maiesties consent may bee Printed for the better publication thereof* (Imprinted at London by Bonham Norton, and John Bill, Printers to the Kings most Excellent Maiestie, 1627); Court Minutes, 3 March 1627, IOR/B/12, f.301-302.

members of the Company, such as William Methwold, Peter Mundy, and William Biddulph had significantly more leeway than an under-factor serving in the Sind. The proclamation was reaffirmed in 1633.⁴³

Thomas Mun, the director of the East India Company in 1633, was thoroughly appalled with the level of private trade in spite of Charles I's royal proclamation. In the early 1630s, Mun addressed the Court of Committees about the issue, and "untill the Company shall cause some punishment to bee inflicted upon them they shall not bee able to restraine them." As a solution to the problem, Mun suggested to "have a bill forthwith putt into Starre Chamber against them [private traders]." He instructed the names of those found guilty of excessive trade were handed over to "Mr. Acton that hee might frame a Bill against them." On 13 September 1633, the Court of Committees reported that William Acton, solicitor to the Company, submitted a bill to the Attorney General at Star Chamber.⁴⁴ Two years later in 1635, the Court of Committees declared that "all captaines, factors, Maisters, Pursers and other officers shall forfeyte their wages in case they shall at any time practise any private trade" in addition to the allotted amount of private trade.⁴⁵ Regardless of Mun's attempts to counter the problem and the threat of fines, the Court of Committees complained in 1640 that "1/4 parte thereof [ship's cargo] is for mens profit." ⁴⁶

⁴³ Court Minutes, 4 September 1633, IOR/B/16, f.62.

⁴⁴ Court Minutes, 13 September 1633, IOR/B/16, f.77-78.

⁴⁵ Court Minutes, 16 November 1635, IOR/B/18, f.76.

⁴⁶ Court Minutes, 30 October 1640, IOR/B/19, f.329.

None of these preventive measures seemed to work particularly well in limiting private trade. In December 1634, Methwold complained that “the manner of Private Trade hath also its aggravacon to divert your stocke unto particular occasion is a fraud not to be better termed then flatt felony.”⁴⁷ A few years later in January 1638/39, President Fremlen complained to London that “some of them [factors] are more dishonorable as when a factor should make use of your meanes in the prosecution of his owne profit.”⁴⁸ It was one thing to return home with a few parcels of pepper or nutmeg, or a few bolts of cloth, but to return with several bales of commodities or use the Company’s money to purchase goods was something altogether different. Methwold decried it as fraudulent, and it was. But, what does this actually mean for the English factors and factory assistants in Persia?

In both branches, Englishmen lost their wages and goods for bringing home excessive quantities of private trade and delinquent behavior, but, as had been the case in India, the Company was lenient to those who served the Company well. Due to the level of problems in Persia, the Company was not quite as lenient. Conversely, many of the delinquents died in Persia, and the Company could do little more than shore up their losses. If an individual died in Persia before the presidency could recall them, their families received only partial payments or none at all. Private trade was not the only financial issue that was troublesome, and with the high attrition rate many factors died in

⁴⁷ President Methwold to the Company, 29 December 1634, Goa Road, IOR/E/3/15, f.82-82v.

⁴⁸ President Fremlen to the Company, 4 January 1638/39, IOR/E/3/16, f.187.

Persia before clearing their debts. We have a few examples of this, and in these cases the deceased agent's estate was used to cover various debts charged to the factory books.

William Robbins died in 1619, and he left a debt in the factory account for approximately 126 *tūmāns* (£798). Robbins reportedly acquired the money for personal use, and Thomas Barker warned the Company that “I feare we shalbe forced to paye the whole somme.” Robbins expected to settle the debt with “mony from Aleppo,” but the money never arrived. Barker discovered that a Dutchmen, William Lancelot owed Robbins 1,126 ½ dollars. In these situations the factors had few choices available to them, and the only thing they could hope for was to sell the deceased individual's estate to cover or defray any debts left in the books. This typically did not work out particularly in favor of the Company, and in this example Robbins' estate was worth between “16 or 17 tomands [£101 6s 8d / £107 13s 4d].” The factors found little comfort in this, because after perusing his papers and estate, they learned that Robbins' owed “7 or 8 tomands [£44 6s 8d / £50 13s 4d]” to several individuals, which “we cannott refuse to paye.” In addition, Robbins' owed an additional 59 *tūmāns* [£373 13s 4d] to two local merchants (unnamed). The factors cleared this debt with a collection of rubies that they found in Robbins' inventory. They also discovered that the local Carmelite house owed Robbins 15 *tūmāns* [£95] and a servant of Lalah Beg owed two *tūmāns* [£12 13s 4d], which they did not expect to receive.⁴⁹

In Robbins' case, he was not defrauding the Company, and he expected to receive payments from several individuals before his untimely death. He was unable to clear his

⁴⁹ Thomas Barker to the Company, Isfahan, 16 October 1619, IOR/E/3/7, f.49.

account before he died, and this left the Company in charge of picking up the pieces. Selling off Robbins' estate to clear his account was the best possible scenario, but when the estate was too small (as it was here) it created difficulties. Collecting sums from Robbins' debtors was also not guaranteed, and Barker and his assistants fully expected that they would not receive payment from Lalah Beg's servant or the friars. Similarly, they were not guaranteed to receive the money from William Lancelot, and it was entirely probable that the factory would have to clear Robbins' debt with the Company's investments.⁵⁰

After factors died, managing their estates could become complicated, especially if they prepared a will. As we saw above, the factors in Persia created few wills, but this did not make the task any easier. Factors accrued debts from their colleagues, local merchants, and other Europeans, and above all else they often were indebted to the Company for various charges. When these men died, the surviving factors were responsible for clearing the deceased factor's debt they may have accrued. Unfortunately we do not have lengthy financial records for every Englishmen employed in Persia, but due to the scandal surrounding Connock and Barker, we do have a fairly detailed inventory of Connock and Pley's goods.

After the Connock-Barker affair in Persia, Edward Monox collected what remained of Connock and George Pley's papers. Monox enlisted William Blundestone's assistance and they uncovered numerous items, debts, and money. Monox discovered that William Blundestone was in possession of "2 peeces of goulde value at 5 abassees

⁵⁰ Ibid., f.49.

[‘*abbasis*] per peece, more in silver about 21 abashees.” The little stockpile was worth about 26 ‘*abbasis* (approximately £3 3s 4d), which is not much at all but it still concerned Monox who knew “hee [Blundestone] brought none [money] for the country nor had received any wages.” The gold and silver was a gift from Connock along with a few other small trinkets, which Monox listed as a gold ring worth 15s, and two small stones in a silver box worth roughly £1. Monox convened a consultation to determine if Blundestone should receive the small gifts, but the council consisting of Thomas Barker, Monox, and Francis Tipton declared that “these and all other legacies which hee had given unto any shoulde bee brought [...] the Company’s account to whome the said Edward Connock was posed to bee much indebted.”⁵¹

It was quite clear early on that the small council was intent on transferring all goods and money to the Company’s account and this also included stripping gifts Connock bestowed upon others. At some point during Connock’s journey from Isfahan to Mogustan, he gave a gentleman named Benedict [Benedicto] “a horse and saddle of the Company’s and a bridle of Mr. Connocks plated with silver all worth 15 or 20 pounds sterling.” Barker demanded that, since the Company funded his expedition to the south, the horse was well above what he should have received and he stripped the horse from Benedict.⁵² On 6 March 1618, Barker, Monox, Tipton, Blundestone along with William Bell and Edward Pettus produced an inventory of Connock’s goods found at Gatan. It was here that they found the papist books (see chapter 5) among numerous other goods.

⁵¹ A Councill concluded in Shyraze the 2nd of February 1617, IOR, E/3/5, f.280-280v.

⁵² *Ibid.*, f.280v-281.

What they found was mostly various garments, cloths, boxes, and swords, and with most items on the list Connock only had a single item except for beads and hats. Connock compiled “39 agath hattes” and “60 greate agath beades.” It appears that the values were recorded as *‘abbasis* and *shahi*, but which value they used is rather ambiguous. They did recover over 250 items from Connock’s stash, and an additional 1,747 Persian *larin* (approximately £60) and 400 rials of eight.⁵³

Blundestone and Tanner pressed the council for their items, but Barker and Monox refused to compromise without “produsing any testimony therof.”⁵⁴ Barker and Monox recorded a total of “4,729-2,” but they do not specify if the sum was in *‘abbasis* or *shahi*. If they recorded in *‘abbasis*, the total was roughly £595; and in *shahis* just below £200. It was not a tremendous amount of money, but it is useful when considering the thirty bales of silk that Connock reportedly pilfered from the Company. In this context, Connock’s inventory, as robust as it was, could not cover the lost bales of silk. At that time, the 30 bales would have cost around £5,000.⁵⁵ Connock’s salary was probably between £60 and £80 for the first year, which would suggest that he could potentially earn between £340 and £440 (assuming a £10 annual raise). He died in the first year and at best, the combination of his inventoried goods and salary, Connock left around £675 and at worst £260 which was far short of the mark. Much as Connock had,

⁵³ Ibid., f.280-285.

⁵⁴ Ibid., f.285.

⁵⁵ Thomas Baker to the Company, Isfahan, 30 May 1624, IOR/E/3/10, f.121v. A marginal note states the factors paid 50 *tūmāns* instead of 45 ½. A load is equal to 2 bales or 36 *mann-I shah* (5.8kg). See, Matthee, *The Politics of Trade* and Maloni, *European Merchant Capital* for conversion tables

Pley also had a fairly significant inventory of various boxes, swords, and most of all clothing, which sold for roughly 1,879 *'abbasis* (approximately £241).⁵⁶

While the combination of their goods sold could not cover the substantial debt from the lost silk, it does illustrate the difficulty the Company had in recuperating their losses when their factors left significant debts or used the Company's money for private trade. Presumably Connock and Pley paid into the Company's stock, but the combination of their salaries, goods, and bonds could not cover the loss. It is also unclear if the factors ever recovered the missing bales of silk, but if they had not Connock's private trade cost the Company money. Through Monox and Barker's efforts the Company was able to recover a portion of their losses, but the closing figures are unclear. Even then, there was still a slim chance the Company could recuperate further sums after other factors perished without wills or debts.

Thomas Barker died in Persia two years later without preparing a will, and the factors found 3,706 *shahis* (approximately £114) in Barker's estate. Edward Monox credited the Company's account with Barker's estate in the event that Barker had any outstanding debts in the Company's books.⁵⁷ It also does not appear that Barker was married, and the *Court Minutes* do not show that anyone approached the Company for his wages, particularly a wife, child, or close family. It appears that the Company absorbed Barker's estate, although it is unclear if that also included his bond and wages. Presumably they did not release either as well. Providing Barker died without debt, the

⁵⁶ A Councill concluded in Shyraze the 2nd of February 1617, IOR, E/3/5, f.286v-287v.

⁵⁷ Edward Monox to Surat, Isfahan, 3 March 1619/20, IOR/E/3/7, f.108.

Company could use Barker's estate defray any losses from others. Yet this is quite ambiguous, and since many of these men died in Persia we do not have their testimony before the Company. After individuals perished, the Company had very few options.

The Company was especially confused when men departed England with nominal estates, yet somehow acquired significant amounts of private trade. Edward Monox, for example, "went out poore that he hath had [on return] 30 bales of private trade." On 13 October 1623, the Court of Committees declared that Monox's business "had bene found very foule." Monox's private trade was not the only matter called into question, and the Court brought attention to the charges that he was "ever contentious both towards his superiors and inferiors."⁵⁸ Apart from that, Monox appeared to detain "600 Larees [£37 20s]" for his personal use, but he also admitted to keeping "certyne stuffes given as a present by the Chaun of Shiraz which he having converted to his owne use."⁵⁹ Monox was also guilty of transporting "70 Cammells loades of goods" for 30 *tūmāns* (£190), which Monox allegedly kept. Monox, however, rejected that he kept all thirty, and that "the President of Suratt had deteyned 20 Tomans from him," and he only received 10 *tūmāns* (£63 6s 8d). The Company was hardly amused, and informed Monox that "he ought to have bargayned for the Companey's benefit and not for his owne."⁶⁰ They dismissed Monox from the Court, and deliberations began over Monox's fate.

⁵⁸ Court Minutes, 13 October 1623, IOR/B/8, f.178.

⁵⁹ Court Minutes, 15 October 1623, IOR/B/8, f.181.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, f.181-182.

Over the course of a couple days, the Court debated whether to charge “£200, £250, and 300 poundes” for “damages that the companie sustyned” from his private trade in calicoes. For that, they decided to levy a fine of £250, charge 3s per bolt of calico, and then ordered him to give to the poor box.⁶¹ Once that was settled, the Court of Committees released Monox from the Company. Much like the matter of wages, the fines against those who committed to private trade in excess hardly fell into a uniform criterion, and it seemed that the Court judged each case uniquely. Factors who ended their employment in Persia and India on negative terms received little sympathy in London. Despite Monox’s 30 bales of Indian commodities, the Company limited the fine to £250. It is also unclear if they stripped his wages and bond, but presumably they had. In November 1633, Monox requested to serve the Company again, but “beeing very ancient, the Court conceaved him unfit for such employment.”⁶² For Monox, it seems the Company was not too disappointed, and they may have extended a second term of service had he been younger.

In contrast, Guy Bath faced a rather hostile Court of Committees in London, and had his wages sequestered indefinitely. Bath stood accused of loaning the Dutch about £25,333, but Bath denied the charges and insisted that he knew of 1,000 *tūmāns* [£6,333 6s 8d]. The Court regarded Bath as untrustworthy and his plea of innocence fell on deaf ears. The Court argued that he cost the Company silk while allowing the Dutch to

⁶¹ Court Minutes, 15 October, 1623, IOR/B/8, f.181-182.

⁶² Court Minutes, 11 November 1633, IOR/B/16, f.157.

purchase silk instead with Company money.⁶³ The Court refused to give Bath his wages as a consequence, although they allotted him £20 to provide for himself until the Company concluded the investigation. Finally, in 1644, Bath agreed to pay the Company anything he may owe if they re-examined the charges against him. It seemed that Bath hoped to clear his name, but nothing else is mentioned regarding Bath's charges.⁶⁴

By comparison, factors in India who acted well on behalf of the Company were granted an enormous amount of leniency. In 1624, the Court treated William Biddulph reasonably well and agreed to purchase the eleven churls of indigo (3,256 / 4,070 lb) that he returned to England with. Biddulph complained that the £300 the Company paid was half of what the shipment was worth, but the Court responded "the Companie hath given enough and over above all this he is bound from private trade." Biddulph decided to not push his luck further and accepted the offer.⁶⁵ William Methwold returned with a significant cache of private trade—much more than two chests full—that included 28 fardles [8,288 lbs to 10,360 lbs] of cinnamon, 250 pieces of calico, and a single bale [221 lbs] of pintados. The Court determined that his lengthy service, most importantly his diplomatic maneuverings that resulted in the Portuguese Peace, was sufficient enough and authorized Methwold to take his entire shipment.⁶⁶ In addition, shortly after Methwold's return he joined the Court of Committees and was voted in as Deputy-

⁶³ Court Minutes, 14 October 1640, IOR/B/19, f.310-311.

⁶⁴ Court Minutes, 10 April 1644, IOR/B/21, f.153.

⁶⁵ Court Minutes, 4 August 1624, IOR/B/9, f.54.

⁶⁶ Court Minutes, 22 April 1640, IOR/B/19, f.172-173.

Governor of the Company in 1641.⁶⁷ Methwold's treatment was drastically different than Bath received.

Likewise, Thomas Adler returned to London with a fair amount of private trade consisting of two bales of 190 broad bastas, 254 pieces of various types of cloth, four fardles of indigo, a bale containing four carpets, six cups of lapis tuttia, two small fardles of cloves, two boxes of red wax, a parcel of amoniacum, and a parcel of cardamom. The minutes report that "hee had done the Company very good service in Persia" thus the Court handed Alder his goods free of freight except the cardamom, indigo, and bastas.⁶⁸ Adler used his bond to clear his debts, but he received his goods and £55 11s from his wages.⁶⁹

It is clear that a fine line between legal and illegal private trade existed, and there were measures in place to punish those who crossed the line. But the punishment for excessive private trade was unusually inconsistent as the penalty appeared to coincide or reflect a factor's reputation, not necessarily their crime. There is a blurred pattern, however, that suggests that factors who served the Company poorly and returned with private trade were more often than not fined or punished heavily. By comparison, those who returned with a sizeable store of private trade, but served well, were typically charged a freight fee if at all. But what happened when relatives approached the

⁶⁷ Court Minutes, 2 July 1641m IOR/B/18, f.1-3.

⁶⁸ Court Minutes, 21 August 1645, IOR/B/21, f.317.

⁶⁹ Court Minutes, 10 November 1647, IOR/B/22, f.169-170.

Company after their loved one's had died and stood accused of various misdemeanors against the Company?

The Company *Minutes* depict an insatiable stream of relatives who appeared before the Court every year hoping to collect their husband's, brother's, or son's wages. Family members were somewhat of a nuisance at Court, and by 1625 President Kerridge instructed Thomas Barker and his subordinates to settle the Persian books quickly because the factor's relatives and friends had flooded the Court.⁷⁰ To make matters worse, relatives displayed an incredible amount of endurance and persistence, so it was unlikely the Company could swindle people who attempted to collect on their deceased one's estate. Dispersing wages, bonds, and goods to relatives depended on whether or not the factor died indebted to the Company. In a few cases, relatives waited for a long time before receiving anything from the Company. In one example, it took twelve years for John Pashly's wife to receive a portion of his estate, which finally came after the Court determined that a small estate belonging to Pashly existed in the Persian accounts.⁷¹ The minutes do not record the size of the estate, but after twelve years the widow finally received her husband's estate. For those factors heavily indebted to the Company or involved in fraudulent activity, their relatives endured a painstaking process that did not always end in their favor.

Henry Darrell arrived in India in 1620 before leaving for Persia where he died three years later. During his short employment, the factory assistant accumulated a small

⁷⁰ President Kerridge to Thomas Barker, Surat, February 1624/25, IOR/E/3/10, f.198v.

⁷¹ Court Minutes, 1 October 1634, IOR/B/17, f.53.

debt to the Company for 3150 *shahis* [£52 10s].⁷² This sum was rather insignificant, and the Company decided to simply deduct it from his estate. But this was not the issue when Darrell's brother appeared before the Court in 1626 requesting his brother's estate. Before his death, Henry Darrell sent a bill of exchange for £700 at 6s interest to London. Darrell's brother expected payment of the bill in addition to the remainder of his wages and other sums of money and goods, but the Company, bemused by such a large sum, "wonderred how a bill should be given for more then he could be pretended to bee due to him." The Court was unwilling to part with the money, and informed "Mr. Darrell that his brother had lived but two yeares in the cuntrye, that he went out poore having bynn steward."

Darrell's brother insisted that the bill came at the result of several investors, including £300 of personal funds and an additional £50 the late factor's brother dispersed. Darrell reportedly "consigned carpetts from Persia to Surratt to Mr. Rastall" and Giles James (member of Surat Council). James confirmed that he was "appointed to make sale of them," and James sold the Persian carpets to the Mughal Prince's servants "the proceeds wherof being taken into cashe this Bill."⁷³ James' report, however, was not necessarily enough, and the Court ordered Darrell's brother to prove that Henry Darrell left London with the resources. The Court had its doubts that Darrell left England with over £700, but the Court eventually released £550 to Darrell's brother for wages and other debts due to the late factor. They awarded only a portion of the £700 since his bond

⁷² Court Minutes, 3 March 1625/26, IOR/B/10, f.298-299.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, f.298-299.

with the Company forbade private trade regardless if the money for the carpets came from the Company's estate or of private means.⁷⁴

William Burt's mother on the other hand confronted a rather unsympathetic Court when she approached in 1634. Her son accumulated an excessive amount of private trade which left him heavily indebted to the Company. The Court rejected her petition for additional funds to support herself. The same entry, however, notes that the Court previously paid out nearly £500, in which case they felt Mrs. Burt should be content with the sums previously granted.⁷⁵ By this time the Company received word from Persia that Burt was disruptive, which also included Mīrzā Taqī's complaints of Burt's drunken behavior. The sources are limited during the late 1620s, but the Court's unsympathetic approach to Burt's mother was probably a consequence of his role in the deterioration of relations between the English and Safavīds. He was also partnered with Edward Heynes' private trade (see below) that cost the Company over £2,000.

In comparison, Reverend William Hall died abroad, and the Court was concerned about his private trade amounting to twenty-five bales between Persia and Surat. The Court summoned his father for an explanation. Hall's father claimed that the late President Rastell and other merchants provided Hall with money to invest, but he was otherwise ignorant of any other funding. He begged the Court for at least a portion of his son's estate. They agreed, but not before confiscating £200. He received what remained.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Court Minutes, 29 May 1626, IOR/B/10, f.445.

⁷⁵ Court Minutes, 17 October 1634, IOR/B/17, f.69.

⁷⁶ Court Minutes, 28 September 1639, IOR/B/19, f.45. It is not clear how much of Hall's estate remained after the fine.

This seems to suggest that while the Company was troubled by the level of Hall's private trade, his reputation in Persia was clean and the Company was lenient towards his father.

In contrast, the example of Edward Heynes illustrates a change in the Company's approach to their agent's families. Heynes' will hints that his sisters relied, in part, on his salary for subsistence, and for awhile the Company gladly distributed a portion of his wages to them. Once news arrived that Heynes amassed a significant amount of private trade, they became much less willing to distribute his wages. In this particular case, we can see how one factor's decision to engage in private trade affected his immediate family at home.

Edward Heynes left a will dated 6 January 1636 towards the end of his lengthy service with the Company, and he was very ill at the time he wrote the bequest. Heynes had a fairly sizeable family. He had, at least, three sisters Margaret Elsworth, Mary Heynes, and Susan Wetherly. Two of his sisters were married and Margaret had four children with her husband, Peter Elsworth. Edward Heynes had a single brother, Richard, who married twice. With his first wife, Richard fathered three girls named Margaret, Mary, and Judith Heynes, and with his second wife he fathered four daughters and a son whom Edward Heynes left unnamed in the bequest. Although he did list an Edward Heynes as a godson, which most likely was Richard's son, but the daughters were left unnamed. Heynes left £754 for his family. Although Heynes did not leave anything for his parents, which suggest that his parents died before he could compose his will.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ PROB 11/166/281

Aside from relatives, Heynes left an additional £25 for charitable purposes, the sum divided between the poor of Shirehampton, the poor of St. Augustine's near Bristol but also to Reverend John Woolhouse, his wife, and Anne Hungerford.⁷⁸ Mrs. Hungerford's son, George, was Heynes' servant in Persia. Heynes bequeathed £120 and 27 *tūmāns* (£171) for a combined £291 and his collection of plates to his fellow Englishmen in Persia. He instructed the factors in Persia to sell his collection of swords, girdles, and other accessories to clear his accounts. He sent his apparel home, but he left an undetermined portion divided among the factors in Persia. Heynes' probate is but one example of many wills, but it describes the typical bequest from English agents. Based on Heynes' will, the factor lost his parents and remained unmarried while at the same time he must have had a reasonably close relationship with his siblings and their children. Heynes probably was born in or nearby Bristol, or at least held some connection to the city based on his affection for the poor there.

In 1629, the Court ordered that £30 annually granted to Edward Heynes' three sisters for their livelihood. In fact, the Court was more than willing to provide Matty Heynes, one of Edward's sisters, an additional £40 for financial aid in 1633.⁷⁹ In another example, the Court released £200 of Edward Pearce's wages for his sister's marriage.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in 1635 news arrived of Heynes' private trade, the Court ceased payments to the factor's sisters until they could determine the extent of his estate, in which case

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Court Minutes, 25 October 1633, IOR/B/16, f.141.

⁸⁰ Court Minutes, 3 March 1647/48, IOR/B/22, f.206.

they informed the sisters that Heynes' estate was seized until his accounts cleared.⁸¹ Heynes' private trade consisted of 10,000 *mahmudi* [£500] of quicksilver from India, and the Company deducted the amount from his estate.⁸² The reports suggest that Heynes and William Burt spent eight chests of the Company money on Heynes' trade in quicksilver. In addition, Heynes reportedly spent £1,000 annually on house expenses in "prodigal living."⁸³

On 2 October 1635, Susan and Margaret Heynes, whom Edward Heynes named joint executors, approach to the Court to protest the stop payment but the Court denied further disbursements until Heynes' accounts cleared. The sisters were concerned about £800 in legacies that they received suits for, particularly Anne Hungerford, but the court was indifferent. Heynes' designated that Hungerford's son should receive a plate, rings, and jewels, but the Court sold the plate for cash. The rings and jewels, however, they turned over to the Prerogative Court.⁸⁴ On 30 October, the Court clarified that the money for the plate was sent to the Prerogative Court, but they refused to send the jewels.⁸⁵ On 5 April 1637, the Court of Committees declared that Heynes' pilfered 4,000 rials [£1,000] of the Company's money for his trade, and reportedly lost a chest to Captain Bickley in a game.⁸⁶ Finally on 19 May 1637, the Court informed Mary Heynes that Edward Heynes

⁸¹ Court Minutes, 2 October 1635, IOR/B/18, f.48-49.

⁸² Court Minutes, 5 August 1635, IOR/B/18, f.14.

⁸³ Court Minutes, 25 September 1635, IOR/B/18, f.46.

⁸⁴ Court Minutes, 2 October 1635, IOR/B/18, f.48-49; PROB 11/166/281.

⁸⁵ Court Minutes, 30 October 1635, IOR/B/18, f.68-69.

⁸⁶ Court Minutes, 5 April 1637, IOR/B/18, f.304-305.

was in debt for £2,100, shortly after she requested £2,000 to settle her affairs. The court abolished Heynes' bond, but eventually offered Mary Heynes £1,000.⁸⁷

What is abundantly clear here is the incredible mess that Heynes created for his relatives in England as a consequence of his private trade. His sisters lost part of their legacy, but received suits from Heynes' other beneficiaries as well. Edward Heynes died in 1632, and five years later his account closed with the Company. For five years, his sisters appeared before the Court of Committees in an attempt to collect their brother's estate, and in the end the £1,000 was little more than a consolation after several years of grief. Unlike Connock, Pley, Monox, and several others, Heynes' private trade had a direct effect on his sisters' in England. The example of Heynes' illustrates how poor decisions in Persia—India as well—caused problems within the Company, but also potentially created a fiasco at home for their relatives leaving many dejected and humiliated. The issue of private trade therefore was not simply a problem between factor and Company, but it extended to all those directly connected to the individual in question.

On the other hand, in 1645 Sir Walter Devereux barged into one of the Company's meetings demanding William Gibson's estate, but the Company refused to hand anything over to Devereux since Gibson was highly indebted to the Company. Gibson's tenacious display towards Mīrzā Taqī left little to be desired from the late factor, and the immense level of private trade that his fellow factors accused him of

⁸⁷ Court Minutes, 19 May 1637, IOR/18, f. 326-327; Court Minutes, 14 June 1637, IOR/B/18, f.336-337.

placed Gibson in an unpleasant position with the Company. Regardless of Sir Walter Devereux's social status, the Company refused to budge.⁸⁸

While numerous factors defrauded the Company, there were a few men who do not appear to have committed anything too injurious against the Company. These men had few possessions, and what they did possess the factors in Persia and the Company in London distributed appropriately. Their respective estate which was predominately clothing, books, and perhaps a few pounds sterling, was disbursed to their beneficiaries accordingly. Reverend George Collins's had at least four brothers and two sisters whom he left a meager £50, and it appears Collins' parents were deceased when he produced his will.⁸⁹ The only strike against Collins was, as Gibson complained, that he was the "tendrest of chickins".⁹⁰

John Powell left a series of items for his companions including hats, pillows, bedding, clothing, musical books, paint brushes, bottles, rings, boxes, and other small trinkets.⁹¹ John Jones, surgeon in Persia, seemed to not have any living relatives, and his entire estate went to factors in Persia and Surat. His bequest consisted of clothing, surgical books, and rings but no money.⁹² Jones bequeathed his meager estate to William Gibson, Robert Manley, Richard Cooper, and Reverend George Collins in Persia and Robert Carpenter from Surat, but he also left items for fellow surgeons Peter Ross and

⁸⁸ Court Minutes, 24 November 1645, IOR/B/21, f.371.

⁸⁹ PROB 11/168/543

⁹⁰ William Gibson to the Company, Isfahan, 23 May 1634, IOR/E/3/15, f.14v.

⁹¹ PROB 11/205/139

⁹² PROB 11/166/323

John Woodall. In the example of Jones, the lack of relatives—though it is possible Jones disavowed his family—meant Jones passed his estate onto a select group of men in Persia and India. Jones' bequest is somewhat of an anomaly though, yet it depicts a vital social development within the ranks of the Company. Nicholas Grove had £114 1s due unto him, but the factor had perished in Persia and it does not appear that anyone attempted to collect on his estate. The factor (in Persia) John Antill proved loyal enough, and the Court granted his father, Nicholas, £200 for his entire estate.⁹³ Thomas Merry's reforms in Persia satisfied the Court and they happily allowed his personal shipment of cloth to pass after a nominal freight charge, but it did not hurt Merry's case that the silk shipment was directed to William Methwold, who by 1650 sat as deputy of the Company.

In most cases the English factors received their wages, bonds, and at worst lost a portion if they traded privately in excess. Despite threats of Star Chamber, a loss of wages, and fines, the penalty for excessive private trade was generally inconsistent. The Company approached each case individually, and those who served well were likely to enjoy the Company's leniency. Those men, such as Guy Bath and Edward Heynes, were penalized heavily; rather in Heynes' case his family suffered the brunt of the Company's anger. One problem, however, is that many of these men perished abroad, so the most notorious private traders and subversive of the agents never answered for their crimes against the Company. For example, Edward Connock, George Pley, Reverend Cardro, George Strachan, William Gibson, William Burt, Edward Heynes, and even Thomas

⁹³ Court Minutes, 13 November 1635, IOR/B/18, f.74.

Barker and Robert Jeffries were not held accountable before the Court of Committees in London.

This makes it very difficult to determine how the Company would have confronted these men. There are hints in the above examples that the Company probably would not have received these men well, but there are also examples from men who served in India. Christopher Farewell, for example, stood before the Court of Committee in 1617 charged with bringing home roughly £200 worth of calicoes and Japanese boxes.⁹⁴ After several months of deliberations the Court decided to strip Farewell of his wages and clear his debt of £186.⁹⁵ In 1623, the Court denied James Bickford his wages based on excessive charges of 400 rupees (£50) for clothing.⁹⁶ In 1636, President Methwold wrote to London complaining about Nathaniel Kingsland's private trade. As a consequence, the court denied him access to his wages, and abolished his bond.⁹⁷ These are just a few examples, but they provide additional insight of the Company's response to private traders; and it is highly probable that the Company would have dealt similarly with those men who perished in Persia and could not answer for their abuses.

III. Conclusion

The English who went abroad left families behind who depended on their wages for their livelihood at home. Most English factors did not earn salaries comparable to the

⁹⁴ Court Minutes, 2 October 1617, IOR/B/6, f.21.

⁹⁵ Court Minutes, 27 February 1617/18, IOR/B/6, f.136.

⁹⁶ Court Minutes, 1 December 1623, IOR/B/8, f.289.

⁹⁷ Court Minutes, 27 June 1636, IOR/B/18, f.185.

presidents of English trade, or even the chiefs of Persia and other factories. These men earned modest wages, but they had easy access to valuable commodities. The combination of living conditions, mediocre wages, and access to luxury items probably swayed some of these men towards private trade. The few probates that exist, aside from Edward Heynes, were quite modest. These men predominately accumulated various forms apparel, perhaps a few weapons, books, and a modest sum of money. They certainly earned more than the average sailor, but the wills suggests that generally they held humble estates.

The money these men accumulated typically was bequeathed to their family members, while most left clothing to their colleagues in Persia. In context of the entire trade, these men in general departed London to reside in an environment that was harsh, a region that was at times politically unstable, and among people much different than themselves culturally. The compensation they earned pales in comparison to the difficulties they faced abroad. This was not necessarily a matter of greed—although surely it was the case for some men—or intentionally negligent behavior, rather it seems that these men attempted to amass a small fortune before they returned home. If we ignore men as Connock, Monox, and Gibson, the majority of Englishmen seemed to collect very minute amounts of private trade—at least far short of 30 bales. It was not necessarily enough to drive the Company mad, but it would supplement their salaries reasonably well. The Company often agreed to pay these men for their shipments, or they allowed them to keep them for a freight charge and in the end both parties probably walked away fairly content.

The pattern suggests, however, that the Company's approach to these men was highly dependent on the reports from their colleagues and the president of trade. If the president, as with Kingsland, reported negatively, it was unlikely that the Court would look favorably upon that individual. On the other hand, positive reports about an individual's actions and character often worked in favor of the individual charged with private trade. Despite breaking the rules of their contract, they served well and were thus treated well when they returned.

Conclusion: “the hazard of their lives and to the ruin of the goods they carry.”¹

“The Court this day taking a perticular Notice of what factors they have already in India and upon reading of each mans name and his wages they did by erection of hands resolve not to entertheyne any man for my part of India this yeare,” and so the Company voted in 1651.² Early in 1652, Thomas Merry handed Captain Jeremy Blackman the reins of the Surat presidency and bid India farewell. After nearly two decades of service in Persia and India, it was time for Thomas Merry to return home for England. In a sense, Merry’s departure punctuates the end of an era in the East India Company’s history, and his return home is steeped in irony. The English Monarchy had fallen, and the East India Company abroad was on the eve of an important transformative period itself. Trade had all but collapsed and very few English remained abroad.

The following year Parliament revoked the Company’s monopoly on trade throughout the East Indies, a privilege they held since the original charter of 1600. The scene in India was bleak as commercial stagnation threatened the very existence of the Company there. After half a century of relative peace between the Dutch and English companies abroad, the outbreak of the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1652 effectively put an end to a period of a loose commercial coexistence. The acquisition of Bombay in 1660 diminished the importance of Surat and eventually superseded Surat as the presidential

¹ Joseph Salbank to the Company, Agra, November 1616, *Letters Received*, 4:235-236.

² Court Minutes, 17 October, 1651, IOR/B/25, f.83.

factory on the western coast of India. In Persia, the English lingered, but the silk trade was dead.

The Company's foundation in Safavīd Persia was unstable and based on a semi-political policy that was impossible to adequately maintain. The strength of the English commercial alliance rested squarely on the English navy instead establishing relationships built on trust between the English and Safavīd officials. The structural integrity of the Company's commercial scheme in Safavīd Persia was fragile, and it shattered under the weight of President Methwold's peace with the Portuguese in 1635. Their inability to create lasting relations with various Safavīd officials handicapped the English both politically and commercially after Shah Abbas I's death, and particularly after 1635.

The factory in Safavīd Persia could not withstand the heavy expectations placed on the Company's fleet, but internal issues equally attributed to the factory's collapse. If the factory was politically unstable, it was also destabilized through high attrition rates, internal squabbles, and a general sense of apathy towards the Company's estate. The factory, in a constant state of flux, was never able to firmly establish its roots in Persia, and as a consequence the English silk trade collapsed. The English factors failed to establish relations, they failed to provide a sustainable means of purchasing power, and in most cases they failed to maintain order.

This dissertation has demonstrated that the Company's venture to Persia was a complicated undertaking that failed for many reasons. We cannot fully understand the history of the Company's silk trade if we do not look past economic history. The

economic narrative only allows a glimpse into the larger picture, but much is lost underneath. The approach taken in this study should not be limited to Persia, but more focused studies are desperately needed for the Company in India as well. But for this present work, it is very clear that the English Company failed in Persia for several reasons that were indeed political, environmental, commercial, and generally the inability to maintain order and structure from within.

K.N. Chaudhuri once wrote that the real history of the Company began in 1657, and perhaps from an economic perspective Chaudhuri had a point.³ This, in fact, misses the opportunity to understand the rugged beginnings of the English Company, and how these men in the early period established the foundation for which the Company after 1657 relied on. The men employed in Persia, India, and the Far East (chiefly the Spice Islands) opened up commercial highways and established an English network of factories that did not disappear in 1652 with Merry's departure. The English would not return to Persia in any significant capacity until the nineteenth century, but the early attempt in Persia illustrates a number of issues reflective of the nascent British Empire.

The dissertation begins to touch on the formation of administrative bodies and bases of power in the early English imperial or commercial system. From a structural perspective, the factory in Safavīd Persia was not sustainable and lacked many of the important administrative and diplomatic qualities that set the factory in India apart. While at the same time, it also illustrates how ineffective Surat was, and broadly the general

³ K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 43.

weakness of the Company, in administrating the system of factories in the Persian Gulf. Although the dissertation examines the rise and fall of the English factory in Persia, it begins to ask questions pertaining to the early formation of the British Empire. Chaudhuri has understood the period before 1657 as one of commercial exploration, but this work has shown that the English agents were involved in complex circumstances involving commerce, politics, and society. Trade was the focal point, but these men often found themselves involved in numerous matters outside the purview of trade.

The presidents and chiefs of trade made decisions that shaped the early Company, and these decisions are important for not only understanding the factory in Persia but also India and the Far East in context of Britain's commercial empire. This study has revealed that English trade in the region was far more complex than importing precious metals and goods in exchange for local commodities, and there is a need to examine the interaction between the English and local officials. The relationships that the English established, or in many cases failed to, are equally as important to the story. The case of Persia illustrates how the English navy was potentially a valuable diplomatic, and thus commercial, piece, but it was far more limited than it was useful for the Company's long term strategy. In contrast, the English in India faced numerous local and regional obstacles, but from their arrival in 1608 until 1652 they built relationships with numerous Mughal officials and merchants who aided the English in establishing a reputation and in some instances saved their lives.

By looking at how the English interacted with their environment and the people, whether merchants, religious figures, or state officials, it then becomes possible to

explain how an eastern British Empire came into existence. In this sense, Chaudhuri overlooks the value of looking critically at the early period beyond the role of exports and imports, and so long as historians continue to examine the Company's successes and failures from a commercial perspective much will be overlooked. Philip Stern has recently begun to examine the East India Company as form of corporate state, yet many of these issues in their nascent form began in this early period.⁴ Although imperfect and far less effective, the English before 1657 were merchants but they equally filled roles of administrators, judges, accountants, diplomats, and to some extent the roll of defense. In Safavīd Persia, the English mostly did a poor job of satisfying those roles, but this present work at least revealed how one segment of the English overseas enterprise functioned. By extending the approach to India and the Far East, but also to English interlopers and European relations, scholars can identify the strengths and weakness of the early Company from a local and regional perspective and begin to build on the narrative of empire. If the real history began after 1657, the Company's foundation was certainly established beforehand. As for Safavīd Persia, President Fremlen once wrote, "the Gulfe of Persia devours all that comes within its grasps" and with it the English Company.⁵

⁴ Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ President Fremlen to Thomas Merry, Surat, 20 December 1638, IOR/E/3/16, f.165.

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Appendix I

Englishmen Deceased in Persia

Antil, John	Abbot, Edward	Askwith, Christopher
Baker, Mr	Barker, Thomas	Barker, Thomas the Younger
Beard, William	Bedford, George	Bell, William
Berry, John	Best, Thomas	Burt, William
Cardo, Matthew	Carpenter, Mr	Collins, George
Connock, Edward	Darrell, Henry	Gibson, William
Gifford, Robert	Green, Samuel	Griffin, Thomas
Grove, Nicholas	Herbert, Peter	Heynes, Edward
Heynes, Robert	Hobbs, Giles	Holliday, Nathaniel
Honywood, Francis	Jeffries, Robert	Jones, John
Joscelyn, Edward	Joyce, Isaack	Kirkham, Edward
Loftus, Robert	Mills, Mr.	Monox, John
Otgher, Daniel	Oxenden, Christopher	Pitt, William
Pley, George	Reynardson, Thomas	Robins, William
Rose, Thomas	Russell, Nicholas	Sadduck, Edward
Seigar, Edward	Sherland, John	Stern, Charles
Tipton, Francis	Tracy, William	Trottman, Joseph
Turner, Adam	Waldo, Thomas	Willford, Nicholas
Willoughby, John	Wilton, Samuel	Wylde, Mr.
Young, Constantine		

*Unnamed (11)

Appendix II

Weights and Measures

Persia

1 mann-i Tabriz	= ca. 2.9kg
1 mann-I shah	= ca. 5.8kg
1 bale	= .98kg
1 load	= 2 bales (mann-i shah)

India

1 <i>Fardle</i> (churl or bundle)	= 4 to 5 maunds
1 bale	= 221 lb.

Currency

1 <i>tūmān</i>	= £6 6s 6d
	= 50 <i>'abbasis</i>
	= 200 <i>shahi</i>

1 *'abbasis* = 2 *mahmudi* (2s)

1 *shahi* = 4d

Sources: A Description of the moneys, weights and measures which are current in the kingdom of Persia and especially in Spahan, October 1615, *Letters Received*, 3:176-178; Mathee, *The Politics of Trade*, 245-246; Maloni, *European Merchant Capital*, 450-451.

Appendix III

List of ships in English fleet*

Abigail	Aleppo Merchant	Antelope	Ascension
Attendant	Bee	Blessing	Bull
Charles	Christopher	Clove	Comfort
Crispin	Darling	Defense	Diamond
Discovery	Dolphin	Dove	Dragon
Eagle	East India Merchant	Elizabeth	Endeavor
Endemion	Exchange	Expedition	Falcon
Francis	Globe	Great Defense	Greyhound
Hart	Hector	Hope	Hopewell
Jewell	John	Jonah	Jonas
Katherine	Lion	London	Love
Michael	Moon	Morris	New Year's Gift
Osiander	Palsgrave	Pearl	Peppercorn
Peppermint	Recovery	Red Dragon	Reformation
Refuge	Roebuck	Rose	Royal Ann
Royal James	Royal Mary	Ruby	Ruth
Samaritan	Samuel	Seahorse	Simon
Solomon	Speedwell	Star	Supply
Susan	Swallow	Swan	Thomas
Trades Increase	Unicorn	Union	Unity
Whale	William		

*This list does not include smaller boats the English used.

Appendix IV

Chiefs of Trade, 1618-1640	Year	Bales of silk exported
Edward Connock	1617	0
Thomas Barker	1618	71
Edward Monox	1619	0
	1620	523
	1621	772
William Bell	1622	820
	1623	0
	1624	160
Thomas Barker, the younger	1625	105
William Burt	1626	60
	1627	938
	1628	93
	1629	582
Edward Heynes	1630	200
	1631	350
William Gibson	1632	224
	1633	110
	1634	371
	1635	325
	1636	373
Francis Honywood/Thomas Merry	1637	281
	1638	470
	1639	594
	1640	43

*See also, Rudolph Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 243-244. Professor Matthee produced the data for exported bales of silk in his book. The years from 1620 to 1622 show a considerable quantity of exports, and it is important to note that these years coincided with the semi-military alliance between the English and Safavids.

Glossary

Bandar-Abbas. The English regularly label modern day Bandar-Abbas as Gombroon. The port city is situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

caravansaries (caravanserais). Roadside inn. These inns lay strategically near commercial routes for merchants and other travelers.

factor. A merchant or representative of a European chartered company.

farmân. Royal decree.

Hormuz. Contemporary English spelling of the island fortress regularly followed as Ormuz.

qāfilah. The English regularly used this Arabic term instead of caravan, although they did use them interchangeably.

Royal Factor. Although a similar definition to factor, this title was used to describe the Safavid Officer who controlled all silk transactions.