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A Study on the Pattern of Mughal Occupation Skill in Seventeenth-Century in India

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Abstract – This paper identifies the absence of both sub-continentally oriented histories which knit together the land and sea trades, and convincing explanations of the persistence of the Indo-Central Asian trade (for example) despite the growing Indo-European trade from the seventeenth-century. The customs-union model usefully approximates this trading-situation (i.e. the Europeans were given a privileged trading position by the Mughals vis-à-vis the Central Asians). It is used to structure the investigation and provide suitable explanatory hypotheses, as it suggests the separation of the likely creative and divertive effects of such privileged relations. Two tradable (and related industries) are examined. The textile-industry demonstrates the possibility for trade-creation (i.e. due to substitution between otherwise regionally-specialized production-centres as in Gujarat, and the utilisation of spare capacity as in Bengal); it is not, however, possible to comment on the extent to which trade-creation took place. The horse-trade persisted because of limited trade-diversion. This was in turn the consequence of the absence of a European supply of horses, on the one hand, and the continued/unchanging geographical comparative advantage and demand conditions in the Mughal Empire, on the other.

Keywords: Mughal, Occupation, Skill, Seventeenth-Century, India, geographical, Mughal Empire, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

It is in the period after Vasco da Gama's landing in India in 14982 that the foundations were laid for the birth of the modern world3 and in which the way was paved for British dominance on the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth-century. In the early seventeenth-century, the Dutch (1606) and the English (1607) established their first trading posts in India in an attempt to wrest control of the profitable spice trade from the Portuguese. Following the defeat of the Portuguese in 1615, the Dutch and the English Companies would spend much of the seventeenth century in the struggle to secure monopoly rights over the trade of certain spices, and trading privileges for other valuable goods such as textiles and opium. The decline of the Dutch grip on Asian maritime trade after 1670, the dwindling competition from France in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the conquest of Bengal in 1757, placed Britain squarely on a trajectory towards territorial and commercial hegemony on the land and in the ocean.

The Indian sub-continent, however, had been connected to the fringes of Europe, the Near East and Central Asia (as well as East and Southeast Asia) not for centuries, but for several millennia before 1498. The first Indians are thought to have travelled to Central Asia approximately two-thousand years ago, where they contributed to the growing overland trade of the trans-Eurasian Silk Route, which (ironically) they 'outlived'. The first maritime contacts are thought to have been made across the Indian Ocean from India between 3,0005 and 5,0006 years ago. These trade networks probably did not disappear after 1498, or even after the 1750s, but have long been forgotten in the popular histories of the period.

Mughal Era witnessed a continuous movement of people, money and resources, which paved the way for a strong interaction between different provinces of that time. The aspiration to govern a strong political empire by the Mughals gave birth to a series of urban centres in diverse parts of the empire for efficient control. Towns performed different types of functions by becoming either administrative or commercial or religious centres. Different types of commodities prevailed in these towns and were traded. The "Great Mughal's" wealth and grandeur was proverbial, and nearly all observers were impressed by the opulence and sophistication of the Mughal Empire (Bayly, 2004). For nearly one hundred and seventy years (1556-1719) the Mughal Empire remained a dynamic, centralized, and complex organization. The main trade route acted as blood vessel which ran through whole of the Mughal Empire and strengthened the interaction between various trading centres. Trade was a major economic activity of that time and the subcontinent's productivity ensured that it enjoyed a continuing favourable balance of trade,' Not only there

was inland trade but also international trade since during the seventeenth century, craft industries originated and so on. Today centuries have passed after the decline of the Mughal empire but the towns that originated then are still existing though with a different scenario altogether (Bayly, 1985). Therefore to study their current status census 2001 data has been taken into account. It becomes imperative to look in to the general structure of towns which existed during that period.

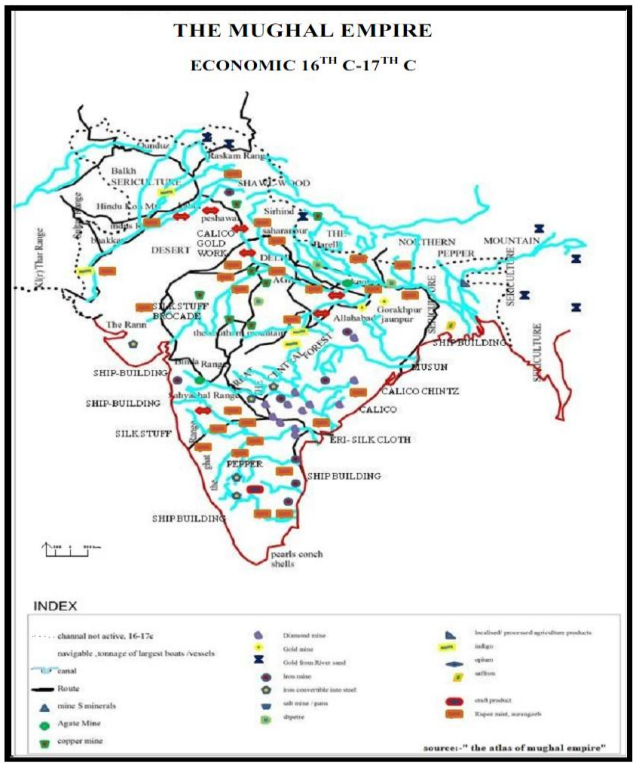

Figure-1: Mughal Empire Economic, 16th and 17th Century

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

S. Bose (1990) in his book urban development in India: since pre historical times gives a detailed account of the urban development during the medieval periods within which he tries to elaborate upon the urban setup from the medieval period to the end of the Muslim rule. He provides further information regarding the different trading centre which was existing and the views of different writers such as Abul Fazl, Thevenot, Manucci about the nature and characteristics of these towns and cities.

S. Broadberry (2005) in his work discusses about the weberian line of argument, faintly expanded to swot the nature of the state in the Mughal India. He writes, Weber Ian portrayal of the beginning, organisation and decline of the patrimonial state is the most effusive realised endeavour yet to analyse traditional politics. This study illuminates how Asian capitals were not the huge unstructured agglomerations illustrated by Marx and Weber. It makes an effort to convincingly show that Indian cities in common and Shahjahanabad in particular was no jerky Imperial camp, to a certain extent it was a permanent base of the Mughal Emperor and his officers, politically potent, economically vigorous and culturally blossoming.

G. Campbell (2005) the towns and urban agglomeration issue classifies the different towns according to census classification and provides the status of the towns in India.

D. Cannadine (2001) in his work talks about towns during the Mughal Empire and its main institutions. Besides dealing with the physic–administrative-cum-economic structure of the towns, It investigates in to the organisation, functioning and economic importance of the Mughal urban institutions such as market, mint and the port. Geographically it takes in to account the territorial limitations of the Mughal Empire.

The study further reveals that the simplified theories of Mughal-urban life that the towns then were either few, or only military camps, are no longer sustainable. Towns and cities in Mughal India, according to the needs of the time, were in sufficient numbers.

J. Chawla (2006) elaborates upon the kind of trading pattern which existed during the Mughal Era also he also gives a sequential and detailed account of the growth and decline of the medieval India.

THE TEXTILE TRADE AND TRADE-CREATION:

The Indian weaver of the seventeenth-century is characteristically portrayed as possessing a highly specialized craft learned from knowledge and learning-by-doing passed down many generations and utilizing relatively simple tools. Such weavers are appreciated for the skill and quality of their products: English contemporaries like the politician Pollexes, for example, commented on the quality (rather than speed) of such weavers: "As ill weeds grow apace, so these manufactured goods from India met with such a kind reception that from the greatest gallant to the meanest Cook Maids, nothing was thought so fit to adorn their persons as the Fabrick from India!" Yet, the of mentioned disadvantage of such textile production and technology is that the quantity and speed of production seldom matched the quality, as highlighted by K. N. Chaudhuri who asks whether the industry in this period was marked by ‘stagnation or stability (Chawla, 2006). If the idea of trade creation in textiles is to have any significance in explaining the Indian pattern of trade then it must necessarily

grapple with issues of technical learning and capacity.

THE HORSE TRADE AND TRADE-DIVERSION:

Kipling opens his novel Kim with a lively and informative description of the Kashmir caravanserai in the late nineteenth century (Darwin, 2008). The eponymous character works his way around the caravanserai to find the well-respected horse-trader Mahbub Ali, for whom he carries a message concerning a 'white stallion', which – given that such traders were often recruited as what today would be called 'intelligence agents' – actually conceals a secret coded message. This 'forgotten' description demonstrates that the trade was flourishing well into the Raj. The work of Jos Gommans on the horse trade in the eighteenth-century provides two (as yet unexplored, to the author's knowledge) suggestions with which it is possible to construct an explanation of the persistence of the Indo Central Asian trade and of the limited nature of trade diversion (Erikson and Bearman, 2004). The first is the suggestion that Central Asia exported horses to, and imported cloth from, India because of certain climatic advantages.

The Issue of European Supply of Horses: The trade-diversion hypothesis is premised on the absence of an Indo-European horse trade; hence, it is first necessary to establish the validity of this premise. On the one hand, there is evidence of animals (including horses) travelling by sea, destined for the sub-continent. Elephants, according to Tavernier, were transported not only from Ceylon (the principle source of elephants on the sub-continent) but also from East Africa and Southeast Asia – journeys which would have been undertaken by ship. This undoubtedly difficult journey is corroborated by the Mughal sources which document the transportation of elephants from East Africa during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. Horses were also transported by sea. The Jahangirnama records the arrival of Murarrao Khan in court to pay homage in 1610, and that among other preciosities; he "brought so many Abyssinian slaves, Arabian horses, and every other sort of thing...that his presents were offered for...inspection for a period of two and a half months." Furthermore, Tavernier also notes that the King of Persia sent the King of Golconda a gift of fifty-five horses by sea.

On the other hand, it is doubtful that such animals were either as strongly demanded or likely to survive (relative to those transported by land), save be traded by the English. First, Roe notes the persistence with which Jahangir requested that an English horse be sent to him, for both its novelty and quality (Fernandez-Armesto, 2007) and which Roe maintained would be impossible by sea; the persistent emperor maintained: "if six were putt into a ship, one might live; and though it came leaner, he would fatty" to which Roe "replied I was confident it could not be in soe long a voyage, but that for His Majesties satisfaction I would write to advise of his request."

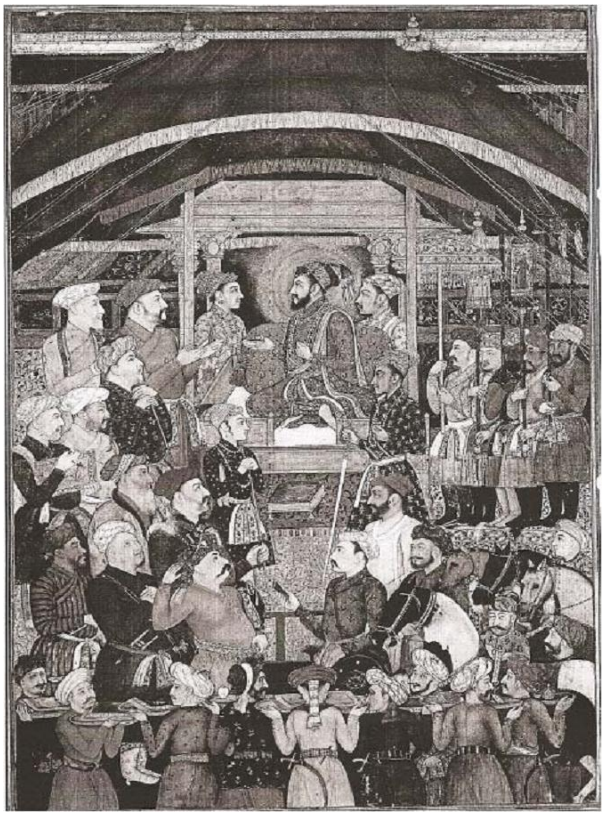

Figure 2: 'Shah-Jahan Receives the Persian Ambassador, M. Ali-Beg'

This is corroborated by a comparison of two leaves from the Padshahnama (the illustrated chronicle of the life of Shah Jahan): Figures 2-3 show embassies from Persian and European courts (respectively) - it is the former which makes a gift of horses (and are more involved in the scene). Second, as noted by Bernier (discussing an ambassadorial gift from the King of Abyssinia), humans and animals undertaking such voyages by sea were more likely to die than those transported overland: "Several slaves, however, and many horses died; probably from want of proper nourishment" (Flynn and Giráldez, 2004). Third, horses transported overland were preferred to those shipped by sea. Bernier notes, for example, that the master of the cavalry inspects recently received royal horses and "If they are found to be Turki horses, that is, from Turkistan or Tartary, and of a proper size and adequate strength, they are branded on the thigh." Indeed, Gommans suggests that the overseas horse-trade was complementary to the overland trade, making-up supply when political unrest in the north stopped caravan traffic or when (as in nineteenth-century British India) demand rose to the extent that Iraqi horses needed to supplement the Central Asian supply (Ghosh and Yamarik, 2004).

Figure 3: 'Europeans Bring Gifts To Shah-Jahan'

This also suggests that even if European private traders imported horses into India, such activities were likely to be inconsequential given the preference for Central Asian horses and the limited numbers of horses that could be transported by sea). Thus, it may be concluded that the Europeans did not supply horses to India (in competition with those from Central Asia), and hence that the investigation of the trade-diversion hypothesis may be fruitful to an understanding of the persistence of the Indo-Central Asian trade.

CONCLUSION:

This paper has aimed to evaluate the significance of the 'coming of the Europeans' – and, to that end, establish the foundations for an analysis of the international trade-relations or patterns of the Indian subcontinent – by focusing on the trade between India and Central Asia. This trade declined more slowly and gradually, and was a more regionally varied experience, than has traditionally been believed; the central focus has thus been to explain why this trade persisted – an aim that is not evident in the scholarship. This was in turn the consequence of the absence of a European supply of horses, on the one hand, and the continued/unchanging geographical comparative advantage and demand conditions in the Mughal Empire, on the other. The seventeenth century may have initiated the making of Northwest Europe (and especially Britain), but it would not witness the unmaking of South Asia: this was a more gradual process that would culminate only in the nineteenth century when economic and military forces crystallized into sub-continental domination.

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