

Lahore as a Centre of Commerce: 1580–1707

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journals.sagepub.com/home/ihr**Naseer Ahmad Mir¹**

Abstract

The Mughal Era witnessed a ceaseless movement of people, money and resources, which paved the way for a strong interaction between different provinces of that time. The desire to oversee a solid political domain by the Mughals brought forth a progression of urban focuses in various parts of the realm for their productive control. Urban Centres performed a distinctive sort of function by becoming either administrative, commercial or religious centres. Among these, Lahore was one which gloated the economy of Mughal Empire through its inland and overseas exchange. In the present article, an attempt has been made to assess the geographical location of Lahore, with its water and land transport facilities as a supporting factor for trade and to know the commodities of which there was a great demand, both inside and outside of the Mughal Empire. This article highlights the attributes of power in Mughal India; the interdependence of trade and politics; the impact on other towns of Lahore suba as well as on other subas of empire also. Furthermore, to examine the overall commerce of Lahore Suba (reflected from travelogues) is the part of paper.

Keywords

Lahore Suba, commerce, Mughal period, Lahore indigo, *karkhanas*

The Mughal period saw the unity of Indian Territory and stable administration, which encouraged trade and commerce. There was a market of high consumption. Towns and cities grew out of this spirit. Father Monserrate, who accompanied Akbar on his journey to Kabul in 1581, while describing the prosperity of Lahore, said, it was second to ‘no city in Asia’ or Europe, and that its shops were so full of every kind of merchandise and so full of people that passage was difficult. Situating on the Ravi River and possessing the port of Lahori Bandar, the city was well connected with the main over land and maritime trade routes leading to Persia, Arabia and Central Asia. Lahore produced

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silk artefacts, fine calico, shawls, satin, embroidery, carpets and sugar,¹ thus making Bernier incorrect in his argument, that in India, towns were little more than armed military camps.² John Lockwood Kipling said that ‘Lahore was the fashion capital of British India and showpiece of Mughal India’. Kipling’s ‘Kim’ is a tribute to Lahore. Sujan Rai Bhandari, writing in 1694, amid Aurangzeb’s rule, ascribed the thriving of Panjab to the solidness of the Mughal Empire.³

The city of Lahore was inhabited by great and rich merchants whose business spread across the whole of India; it was the key to the areas of Kabul, Balkh, Kashmir, Persia, Multan, Bhakkar and Thatta. Although, Lahore’s bazaars were ‘a little disorderly’ and, thus, became ‘active’ only twice in a day.⁴ Even so, the vibrancy of Lahore bazaar was unmatched: the ‘city’s’ bazaars were dotted with patron shrines, there was a separate bazaar for each commodity and caravanserais, where merchants and their pack animals were in ‘a safe sanctuary’, abounded.⁵ Morality was having a great influence over the flourishing of trade, and in Lahore, we see the moral lessons from a merchant as well as Sufi, Pir Hassu Teli. For instance, as recorded in the *Tazkira*, Hassu Teli was an honest merchant, never lied, or cheated by under-weighting merchandise. He purchased grain very dear and sold it exceptionally shabby, incurring heavy losses in the bargain. Yet, he saw current losses as future profits. Pir Hassu’s disciples were chiefly bazaar and overland merchants, whom he protected in various ways. He strolled the streets and bazaars of Lahore at night to make sure that they were safe; saved merchants in distant lands from incurring losses by advising them to hold on to their stocks and wait for prices to rise; safeguarded a caravan from fire; mended a camel’s broken leg; protected a merchant’s life from a ‘Mughal’ whose bill of exchange (*hundi*) the merchant had dishonoured; spared Lahore’s merchants unnecessary grief as they wrongly grieved the death of their leader (*sardar*) in distant Isfahan; silently guided merchants out of what the Pir knew would be unprofitable commercial transactions; and at long last, sorted out credit, thereby saving merchant’s business and honour.⁶ Indeed, Husain Khan Tukriya, the governor of Lahore, as he purchased Iraqi and Central Asian steeds at the price the steed traders demanded, did as such in the conviction that ‘a genuine merchant never demands excessively’.⁷

Even before the seventeenth century, very close trade relations had existed with Persia, the Levant and the Red Sea region.⁸ Inland trade and overseas trade flourished

¹ S. Jeyaseela Stephen, ed. *The Indian Trade at The Asian Frontier* (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2008), p. 250.

² Francious Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire 1656–58* (London: Archibald Constable, 1891), p. 205.

³ Farah Samrin, *Suba of Kabul Under the Mughals A.D (1585–1739)*, (Thesis) (AMU, 2009), p. 1.

⁴ Mahmud bin Amir Vali Balkhi, *Bahr al-Asrar, The Travelogue of South Asia*, ed. Riazul Islam (Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1980), Ms. 2372, f 217a.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Ms. 1375, 284 b.

⁶ Surat Singh, *Tazkira-i Pir Hassu Teli*, Ms.no. 196. Aligarh: Centre of Advanced Study, ff 15a, 15b, 17a, 17b, 22a, 30b, 38b, 39a, 39b, 99a, 99b.

⁷ Abdal Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t Tawarikh*, tr. George S.A. Ranking, W.H. Lowe and Wolseley Haig, 1884–1925, Reprint, (Karachi: Karimsons Publishers, 1976–78), vol. II, p. 230.

⁸ K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions Of The People Of Hindustan*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1988), pp. 146–7

during the Mughals. There were two land routes for export trade in north-west region one from Kandahar to Multan and another from Kandahar to Kabul. The first route i.e. from Kandahar to Multan, was shorter in distance than via Kabul, but it met with desert and one had to march without water for 3 to 4 days. That is why the route from Kandahar to Kabul was mostly followed. There were 24 stages on this route: from Kabul to Lahore 22, from Lahore to Delhi 18 and from Delhi to Agra 6.⁹ The merchants of India used to assemble at Lahore and invest a great part of their money in commodities and joined themselves in *caravans* to pass the mountains of Kandahar into Persia. At Attock, a bridge was constructed in 1581 by Akbar,¹⁰ which removed the inconvenience of crossing the river and helped in the easy passage of goods between Kabul and Lahore during a non-winter season. On the western bank of the Attock River was a town named Zafarabad and on the eastern a castle called by the same name,¹¹ where all caravans halted from Persia, Tartary, Balakh, Samarkand, Kashghar, Kabul and many other Kingdoms. Annually from these places came about one hundred and fifty thousand horses, besides of many camels. Most of these were loaded with various kinds of fruits—melons, pears, apples, pomegranates, quinces, grapes and other dried fruits; three kinds of raisins, almonds, filberts, nuts and pine nuts. From all these goods brought across the river, Mughals derive huge revenue.¹² It was generally reported that through this route passed 12,000 to 14,000 camels loaded annually.¹⁴ In 1587, a caravan that halted in Peshawar headed for Kabul and had more than a 1,000 loaded camels accompanying it.¹³ These merchants were put to great charges between Lahore and Isfahan.¹⁴ Pack animals, carts and large boats were used as the means of transport. Large herds of oxen, called *tandas* were normally engaged by the Indian traders, mainly for the transport of food grains, sugar and salt.¹⁵ The Europeans preferred camels. Of the river navigation in Punjab, the testimony provided by William Finch (1609–1611), the merchant companion of Hawkins, observed that from Lahore, down the Ravi and the Indus, went many boats of 60 tonnes or upwards to Thatta in Sind, and it was a journey of some 40 days.¹⁶ Thomas Roe also pointed out that the river of Sindhu (Indus) was most commodious of all others, to which from Lahore anything

⁹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640–1667*, ed. William Crook tr. V. Ball, (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation [Exclusively distributed by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977], vol. I, p. 73.

¹⁰ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. III, p. 523; Hamida Khatoun Naqvi, *Urbanisation and Urban Centres Under the Great Mughals*, (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972), p. 23.

¹¹ We see mints of Zafarabad during the periods of Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Muhammad Shah. Manucci, p. 307n.

¹² Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, tr. William Irvine, (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2010), vol. I, p. 307.

¹³ Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t Tawarikh*, eds., George S. A. Ranking, W. H. Lowe and Wolseley Haig, 1884–1925; reprint, (Karachi: Karimsons Publishers, 1976–78), vol. II, p. 357.

¹⁴ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, (Glasgow: James Maclehorse and Sons, 1907), Vol. 4, p. 269.

¹⁵ William Foster, ed. *The English Factories In India 1624–29* (henceforth EFI), (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 270; *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, ed. Richard Carnac Temple, Hakluyt society, (London, 1914), Vol.2, pp. 56, 95, 98; Tavernier, vol. I, pp. 33–34.

¹⁶ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, vol. IV, pp. 52–53.

could pass by water.¹⁷ In March 1639, Henry Bomford noted that ‘from Lahore to Thatta the usual transport of goods is down the river in the flat bottom boats of a 1000 and 2000 *mans*’ He also noted that ‘from Multan the river is navigable at all times, but from Lahore {only} at the beginning of March till the cool time enter in October’.¹⁸ From Thatta to Lahore, the merchants reckoned 6–7 weeks long and from Lahore back, not above 18 days and sometimes 12.¹⁹ Despite the frequent use of riverine transport, all the rivers of Punjab were not navigable to the same extent and none was navigable throughout the year.

A large number of goods were manufactured for the market. Pelsaert, the famed Dutch traveller, pointed out that a task which one person could accomplish in Holland, where it passed through four persons in India before it was finished.²⁰ From this, we come to know that one of the features of commodity production in India was the division of labour. Admittedly, in the royal *karkhanas* (workshops), the artisans employed depended on wages and mostly produced items of luxury for the Mughal Emperors and nobility.²¹ But there were other artisans who brought their manufactures to the market themselves or through the mediation of brokers.²²

The city of Lahore acted as an important production centre, as all kinds of carpet weavers had settled there that led to a flourishing trade.²³ Carpet weaving continued to be an important industry in Lahore during the seventeenth century and catered to the demands of both the internal and export markets.²⁴ During the reign of Akbar, there were more than a thousand *karkhanas* in Lahore. A kind of shawl called *mayan* was chiefly woven there. It consisted of silk and wool mixed and was used for *chiras* (turban), *fotas* (loin bands), etc.²⁵ Akbar appointed experienced workmen for weaving carpets of wonderful varieties and charming textures. The *gilims* of Iran and Turan were no more thought of, although merchants still imported carpets from Goshkan or Joshagan (a town in Iraq-i-Ajami) Khujistan, Kirman and Sabzwar. In the imperial workshop, single *gilims* were made 20 *gaz* 7 *tassujes* long and 6 *gaz* 11 ½ *tassujes* broad, at a cost of ₹1,810, and those who were skilled in the business had valued it at ₹2,715.²⁶ It was up to the first decade of the seventeenth century, we see the English merchants seem not more familiar about the trade in Lahore which becomes clear from

¹⁷ William Foster, ed. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe 1615–19*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 96.

¹⁸ William Foster, ed. *EFI*, 1636–41, (Oxford, 1912), p. 137.

¹⁹ Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of The East Indies from the year 1688–1723*, (London, 1739, rep., Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), p. 123.

²⁰ *Jahangir’s India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, tr. From the Dutch by Moreland and P. Geyl, (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyāt-i Delli, 2011), p. 60.

²¹ Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Punjab in the Seventeenth Century*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 179.

²² William Foster, ed. *EFI*, 1618–21, (Oxford, 1906), pp. 192–93, 168; William Foster, ed. *EFI*, 1642–45, (Oxford, 1913), p. 204.

²³ Abu’l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Nawal Kishore, vol. I, Lucknow, 1892, p. 33.

²⁴ William Foster, *EFI*, 1618–21, 51, 168; William Foster, ed. *EFI*, 1624–29, (Oxford, 1909), p. 93.

²⁵ *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p. 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

the following illustrations. On 18 January 1616, Nicholas Bangham received a letter in reply, from Surat merchants, where he was advised to invest his cash in the carpets of Lahore and also to provide a small quantity of spotted cloth (i.e., chintz) made in that place.²⁷ In May 1616, Thomas Roe thought only of a trail for cloth trade in Lahore, but Kerridge and his companions doubted whether they could sell much cloth in Lahore or not, because of the risk in Sind from the Portuguese settled at Lahori Bandar.²⁸ On 17 November 1617, there was no large/extensive sale of cloths brought by the company merchants because the people bought a kind of coarse cloth made in the city of Lahore, which was four times cheaper than theirs.²⁹ On 18 December 1617, the company merchants were able to provide thirty Lahore carpets of variant sizes from 4 ¼ coved or (cubit) square to 22 coved square, in three packs.³⁰ In order to get the best quality of Lahore carpets, it required a long time to search.³¹ Although both Agra and Lahore were able to send large quantities of carpets in 1618, yet Lahore was the chief place for that commodity.³² As to the provisions of Lahore carpets, *isams* (was usually striped blue and white) or parti-coloured cloth carpets, *necanies* (striped calicoes) were used for napkins and dutties. In 1625, with the demand for other goods from England, 30 pieces of Lahore carpets were also demanded.³³

All commodities of adjacent places were brought to Lahore, the prime city of traffic in India and were bought by Uzbeks and Kashmiris.³⁴ Cloth, which was called as *ambertees* (a corruption of native terms *ambati* or *ambatri*) available at Lahore was procured from Patna, according to Company servants in India.³⁵ But the actual producers were at Lakhwar, 20 miles away from Patna, and it required much time as the weavers had to be given money in advance before its manufacture.³⁶ *Bajwara* (1½ miles from Hoshiarpur) was famous for its cloth manufacture, especially *sirisaaf*, *adhars*, *doriah*, *pach-tolia*, *jhona*, white *chirah* and gold-embroidered *fotah*. In Bet-Jalandhar doab, at Sultanpur, chintz, quilts, *dardolaiyan* and embroidered cloths were finely made.³⁷ Swords, *jamdhars*, gypsum plates and embroidered cloths were manufactured at Gujrat.³⁸ It seems that there would have been a separate market for clothes with

²⁷ *Letters Received By the East India Company from its Servants in the East* ed. F. C. Danvers (vol. I) and W. Foster (vol. II-VI), (London: S. Low, Marston & Company (Limited), 1896–1902), vol. V, p. 55.

²⁸ Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe 1615–19*, ed. W. Foster, (London: Oxford University Press/Humphrey Milford, 1926), p. 193.

²⁹ *Letters Received By the East India Company from its Servants In the East* ed. F. C. Danvers and W. Foster, vol. VI, p. 200.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 246.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³² William Foster, *EFI*, 1618–21, p. 168.

³³ William Foster, *EFI*, 1624–29, p. 93.

³⁴ William Foster, *EFI*, 1637–41, p. 135.

³⁵ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, (London, 1914), vol. I, p. 361.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

³⁷ Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh*, ed. Zafar Hasan, (Delhi: J. & Sons Press, 1918), p. 66; Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his pilgrim*, Vol.4, pp. 267–68.

³⁸ Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of Mughal Empire c.1595: A Statistical Study*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 319.

embroidery in Lahore also, in the same way as we find in Agra, where designs were embroidered with gold and silver wire on turbans and garments of wealthy women. Due to Nur Jahan's extensive patronage, an entire market called *kinnari-bazar* was developed in Agra.³⁹ The cloths made at Panipat were sent to Lahore for sale.⁴⁰ Those made at Lahore were the coarsest of all and consequently the cheapest. These were sold in cargoes—a cargo consisted of 20 pieces and costing from ₹16–30 rupees.⁴¹ The 'semianas' was a kind of cotton cloth originating in the town of Samana.⁴² In 1620, the *Mogoles* (merchants from upper India or Persia) and *Praychaces* (in Sanskrit, *purbhiya*—an inhabitant of the countries to the eastwards, that is to those at Agra) were found at Lahore like bees, whose cheapest provisions were *mandyles* (a turban cloth woven with silk and gold thread) *gidells*, *layches* and *doupattas* (a kind of narrow calico) of Malda. These were bought for transport to Lahore and from there sent to Persia.⁴³ In the same year, that is, in 1620, sub-factories of English were started at Lahore at Samana (in Patiala) where a particular fine sort of cotton cloth was manufactured.⁴⁴

A large quantity of fine cloth was made in Lahore; many pieces of silk of all colours called *alachah*; and much work in embroidery, carpets, plain and flowered, good bows and arrows, tents, saddles, swords, coarse woollen stuff, boots and shoes.⁴⁵ Lahore produced not only all sorts of painted cloths but everything that was wrought in the Indies.⁴⁶ On 7 November 1621, the company's instructions were communicated to the factories concerned 'that they have dissolved their factories at Lahore and reduced it to Agra, where *semianoes* were to be procured and Lahore indigo so easily at Lahore, with far fewer expenses.⁴⁷ The cotton cloths sold at Ahmadabad were mostly obtained from Lahore and Delhi.⁴⁸ There was in the town manufactures, not only of all sorts of painted cloths but also of everything else that was produced in India.⁴⁹ It brought into the great Mughal Empire about ₹37 million a year, which is a great argument of its fruitfulness.⁵⁰

West Asian traders resorted to Lahore in order to procure indigo and carry it overland via Qandahar and Isfahan to Aleppo. In contrast, the Armenian merchants often flooded Lahore with Persian broadcloth.⁵¹ After dissolving production lines in 1621,

³⁹ K. K. Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba 1580–1707*, (Pune: Ravish Publishers, 1998), pp. 142–43.

⁴⁰ William Foster, *EFI*, 1637–41, p. 13.

⁴¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels of India*, 1977, vol. II, p. 4.

⁴² William Foster, *EFI*, 1618–21, pp. 47, 161, 168, 337; William Foster, *EFI*, 1642–45, pp. 85, 137, 204.

⁴³ William Foster, *EFI*, 1618–21, Vol. 1, p. 195.

⁴⁴ *Travels Fray Sebastien Manrique of 1629–43*, tr. C.E Luard, assisted by H. Hosten, Hakluyt Society, (London, 1927), vol. II, p. 315.

⁴⁵ Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, tr. Willaim Irvine, (Calcutta, 1965), vol. I, p. 399.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 424.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁴⁸ J. Ovington, *India In the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J.P. Guha, (New Delhi, rep., 1984), vol. II, p. 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵¹ Surinder Singh, *Darul Sultanat Lahore the Socio-Cultural Profile of an Urban Centre (1550–1700)*, *PIHC*, vol. 54, 1993, p. 289.

it exited deep engravings on the volume of exchange in general and indigo and broadcloths in particular. On 14 February 1625, broadcloths sell very slowly; not more than 40–50 pieces were being sent to England yearly. At Lahore, the prices had come down by the competition of the cloth brought in by Armenians.⁵² On 29 August 1625, John Goodwin was at Lahore with some articles for sale. Most of what he had was a tapestry, for which there was scarcely any other buyer in the country than the Emperor.⁵³ At last, the company merchants set for the sale of 47 pieces of tapestry at Lahore to Asif Khan, who had deferred the payment deferred payment in order to force the factors to reduce the prices.⁵⁴ In 1641, the Armenians brought overland from Persia great quantities of broadcloth and sold it at such a low rate that Lahore and Agra were both cloyed.⁵⁵ King's presence or absence had a great influence on trade, even the prices of food grains were affected, but political stability was having positive influences on the overall economy, and this influence was more on inter-regional trade than on export trade. On 26 December 1642, English merchants found themselves unable to sell their broadcloths at Surat, Agra, Lahore, Cochin or any other place in India; they decided to send it to Gombroon.⁵⁶ It shows a large interdependence among the towns, which affected each other's trade.

The indigo traded from Lahore earned its separate name as 'Lahore Indigo' because prior to the establishment of Company's trade, this kind (indigo grown at Bayana and in other districts around Agra) was exported to Europe mainly through Lahore overland via Persia to Aleppo.⁵⁷ Francisco Pelsaert, an expert indigo buyer, opined that no European merchant in India would put himself in trouble by neglecting the indigo trade.⁵⁸ Those days, the chief market for indigo was Lahore rather than Agra since it was more convenient for the merchants, who travelled in caravans at fixed seasons by way of Kandahar and Isfahan to Aleppo. Indigo of Bayana was sent to Isfahan and some of it to Aleppo.⁵⁹ In an Aleppo-bound caravan in 1610, only 10 out of 120 merchants were from Hindustan.⁶⁰

For export trade from Lahore, the specific requirements of Persia and Turkey was a sort of stumbling block in gaining more profit, due to the great cost of overland transit as compared to that of the sea carriage.⁶¹ Indigo produced at Koil or Khurja was bought by the Armenian, Lahore and Kabul merchants; it was good but had no such reputation as that of Bayana and consequently was not bought by Dutch or by English merchants. In April 1609, we find the price of Sarkhej indigo was 5 s (shilling) a pound, while the Lahore kind was fetching 8 s. Finch's return to Agra was quickly followed by his departure for Lahore on 9 January 1611, to sell the purchased 12 laden carts of indigo

⁵² William Foster, *EFI*, 1624–29, p. 63.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁵⁵ William Foster, *EFI*, 1642–45, p. 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85; Manucci, vol. II, p. 424.

⁵⁸ *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, pp. ix, xi.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

⁶⁰ *An Economic and Social History of Ottoman Empire: 1300–1600*, ed. HilalInalick, Donald Quataert, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). vol. I, p. 339.

⁶¹ *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, p. 30.

from Bayana (50 miles south-west of Agra) in the hope of a good profit.⁶² He reached there in February 1611 and stayed in the city until August 1611. During his stay at Lahore, he understood that there was a good profit to be made out of it if sold at Aleppo, and fortunately, the caravan was bound to leave for Aleppo, as yearly there was from Lahore.⁶³ When the merchants left Surat for purchase of goods, if they fell short of money, the helping agents were then supposed to meet their debt at Surat, when the bill was due, which was at 2 months, by paying a high rate of exchange at Lahore; in Surat, the exchange went up to 6 ¼ per cent.⁶⁴ The places which produced meaner sorts of indigo were near to Cambay, Baroda, and Sarod in Broach district.⁶⁵ The three low-quality sorts of indigo were categorised as Serques at ₹14, Baroda at ₹12 and Serod at ₹8 the great *man*, whereas indigo of Bayana commonly called as Lahore Indigo was also of three sorts, viz: best rated at ₹36, second at ₹30 and the third at ₹28 the great *man*.⁶⁶ The prevailing rate of indigo in Agra market in 1625 was ₹30 per *man-i-Akbari*.⁶⁷ The indigo trade flourished in such a way that it tempted Shah Jahan, who in 1630s granted monopoly rights to one Manhandas Danda for the purchase and sale of indigo for the whole empire. However, it ended in failure and reduced the purchasing power of merchants.⁶⁸ It was the same time when English and Dutch Companies thought of abstaining from the purchase of indigo, and the proposal was initiated at Surat.⁶⁹ *Cannowa*, a small town, produced a good variety of indigo which competed with Bayana indigo, by reason of fastness of the soil and brackishness of the water there.⁷⁰ In 1644, complaints were received regarding Lahore indigo, and Bornford suggested that these bales may belong to the portion bought at Surat, and it was the Dutch merchants who sold Sarkhej indigo in Lahore indigo fashion.⁷¹ In 1656, the commodities brought from India to England had much declined their value, viz cotton yarn 1 shelling, 10 d (penny, British pre-decimal coin) the best per lb (a pound by weight); Lahore indigo 4s per lb; cardamoms 2s 3d; cloves 6s per lb, pepper Malabar 9d.⁷² Now, in 1660, the European merchants were advised that if the Lahore indigo may not be procured in India at about 18d. per maund and the Sarkhej at about 9d., no more be sent to them till their further order.⁷³ In the year 1663, the indigo price had increased due to

⁶² Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his pilgrim*, vol. IV, p. 47.

⁶³ *Early Travels in India 1583–1619*, ed. William Foster, (London (reprint): Low Price Publications, 2007), p. 123; Manucci, vol. I, p. 153.

⁶⁴ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels of India*, 1977, vol. I, p. 30

⁶⁵ Jhon Jourdain, *Journal 1608–17*, ed. W. Foster, (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1905), p. 174.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁶⁷ William Foster, *EFI*, 1624–29, p. 63; *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie Of Francisco Pelsaert*, p. 15

⁶⁸ William Foster, *EFI*, 1630–33, p. 324; William Foster, *EFI*, 1634–36, (Oxford, 1911), p. 13.

⁶⁹ B. R. Grover, 'An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of North India During the 17th and 18th Centuries', in S. Subrahmanyam, ed. *Money and Markets in India. 1100–1700*, (Delhi: Oxford University press, 1994), p. 234.

⁷⁰ *Early Travels in India 1583–1619*, ed. William Foster, (London (reprint), 2007), p. 151.

⁷¹ William Foster, *EFI*, 1642–45, pp. 122, 173.

⁷² William Foster, *EFI*, 1655–60, (Oxford, 1921), p. 61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

the failure of rains, the Lahore variety was at ₹67 per maund of 37 lb.⁷⁴ In December 1663, Mr Fremlen had most improvidently bought 3,000 maunds Akbari of Bayana indigo at ₹64 per maund, including ₹2 of collecting charges.⁷⁵ The high price of indigo was entirely due to the competition between the English and the Dutch. It was not unusual to send Bayana indigo overland to Persia via Lahore but no one would dream of dispatching any from Sarkhej by that route,⁷⁶ because after deducting transport charges, the merchants with Bayana indigo would still be able to get a satisfied profit owing to its reputation, whereas the merchants with Sarkhej indigo could not bear the transportation charges, which increased its prices and consequently had less chances to attract buyers to buy an average quality commodity at high prices. It suited more to sugar and indigo merchants to hire carts from Agra to Lahore or Multan at 2 or ₹2 ¼ per maund, where they would embark for Thatta at the cost of ₹1.⁷⁷ One important factor which adversely affected the *jama* of the Sind Suba was the famine and plague of 1656.⁷⁸ This is corroborated by the English factory records, which highlighted that in between 1658 and 1660, the famine and plague caused a sharp rise in prices.⁷⁹

The prices of Bayana Indigo kept on rising until it reached ₹85 per great man; sugar candy ₹15 per man; and sugar ₹10 per man.⁸⁰ Concurrently, with the rise in the cost in India, there had been in Europe a decline in the price to 4 s. Per lb. for the Lahore indigo and 3 s. 4 d. for Sarkhej kind. In 1665, the prices of Lahore indigo came down rapidly, so the factors were ordered to buy only if obtained at a rupee and the Sarkhej sort about a *mahmudi*, per lb. Further, in 1666, it was not supplied unless procured not above than 3 s. per lb for Lahore and 1 s 6 d. for Sarkhej.⁸¹ In 1668, since indigo was cheap, 200 bales of the Lahore variety were to be provided at the market rate; if procurable at a rupee or under per lb., the quantity might be increased to 400 or 500 bales.⁸² The fall in demand of Lahore indigo was due to its scarcity and high price, which led this commodity to be produced from Deccan and parts where it had not been known.

The most important items of inter-trade were foodstuffs and textiles, the network of merchants, *gumastas* (agents) and *dalals* (commission agents) made the movement of goods possible.⁸³ Lahore used to import food grains from as far east as Moradabad and Sirhind. Thus, we see, in the month of *Shaban*, 1,000 maunds of wheat from the former and 250 maunds of *Sukhdas* rice from the latter were received at the *Shahadrah Mandi*. The imperial staff at the *mandi* fixed their prices at 35 seers and 25 seers per rupee, respectively.⁸⁴ Agra imported from Lahore *ormesines* (taffeta) and carpets; in return,

⁷⁴ William Foster, *EFI*, 1661–64, (Oxford, 1923), p. 320.

⁷⁵ William Foster, *EFI*, 1634–36, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 192.

⁷⁸ *Adab-i-Alamgiri*, MS, Abdus Salam collection, 326/96, M. Azad Library, Aligarh.

⁷⁹ William Foster, *EFI*, 1655–60, pp. 210, n. 307.

⁸⁰ William Foster, *EFI*, 1637–41, p. 136.

⁸¹ William Foster, *EFI*, 1665–67, (Oxford, 1925), pp. 5, 17, 168.

⁸² William Foster, *EFI*, 1668–69, (Oxford, 1927), p. 180.

⁸³ S. Jayaseela Stephen, ed., *The Indian Trade at The Asian Frontier*, ed., (Delhi, 2008), p. 16.

⁸⁴ Hameeda Khatoun Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India (1580–1803)*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House 1968), p. 37.

Agra exported to Lahore most of the spices that were sold here for local consumption. The cotton cloths sold at Ahmadabad came from Lahore and Delhi.⁸⁵ There was pretty good wine in Lahore and the best sugars of all of Hindustan.⁸⁶ Sugar was produced in large quantity at Multan, which was carried to Thatta and Lahore, and in return, candy and powder were brought by water to Multan from Lahore.⁸⁷ In 1639, the price of sugar (being white, not much less in goodness than that at Agra) was at ₹7 per man pack and the second sort at ₹5.75 and ₹6; sugar candy at ₹11 was produced in great quantities here; *suffocannes* from above ₹40–60 per cargo; *cantaurs* at ₹30 per cargo, chintz from ₹30, ₹36 and ₹37 per cargo; and *salloos* at ₹32 per cargo.⁸⁸ The rates of sugar at Agra were: in 1639, ₹10; in 1646, ₹4.75 to ₹6; and in 1651, ₹6 per *man-i Shah Jahani*.⁸⁹ The freight of goods from different places to Lahore were: from Agra (if the camp be not that way) to Lahore usually above ₹2 per man; from Serwerpore (from where the greatest part of sugar comes to this place) to Lahore ₹1 per man; from Sirhind to Lahore is ₹0.75 per man; from Lahore to Multan 46 seer per rupee; from Lahore to Thatta ₹0.75 per man, but the best way was to buy a boat for ₹250, which could be sold in Thatta with a profit or with original cost.⁹⁰ The customs duty paid at Lahore on all goods either going to Kandahar or down the river to Sind was 2.25 per cent, besides some other charges at the *ghat* or passage which amounted to 0.25 per cent more.⁹¹ Fremlen was convinced that much expense would be saved to the company by bringing down their Agra goods via Lahore to Thatta instead, by way of Burhanpur or Ahmadabad to Surat.⁹² In Agra, the Mughal capital from 1526 to 1658, bazaar food prices, for instance, remained at least 20 per cent higher than Lahore between 1595 and 1708.⁹³

Niccolao Manucci pointed out that all the five rivers were navigable by large boats.⁹⁴ Large ships were built at Lahore and Allahabad, which were then sent to the coast. It may be recalled that the Lahori Bandar port passed into the hands of Akbar with the annexation of Sind in 1591. Sind lacked timber, and Akbar had the ingenious idea of building ships at Lahore, some 650 miles away from Thatta. Lahore, in turn, had the advantage of proximity to the Himalayan sources of timber.⁹⁵ The boat-building industry was available around all the main rivers, though Wazirabad on the bank of Chenab in Rachnao Doab was a large centre for this purpose. It was well known that the dealers used to remove the Sal wood from the mountains of Chamba and drove it through the Chenab stream for lucrative exchange benefits. The wood was utilised to manufacture

⁸⁵ Surendranath Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, (Delhi: The National Archives of India, 1949), p. 17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸⁷ *Jahangir's India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*: p. 31.

⁸⁸ William Foster, *EFI*, 1637–41, p. 135.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192; William Foster, *EFI*, 1646–50, pp. 56, 62; William Foster, *EFI*, 1651–54, (Oxford, 1915), p. 52.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–36.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁹² William Foster, *EFI*, 1634–36, p. 244.

⁹³ Amita Satyal, *The Mughal Empire, Overland Trade, and Merchants of Northern India, 1526–1707* (Thesis), (Berkeley: University of California, , 2008), p. 176.

⁹⁴ Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, tr. William Irvine, (Delhi, 2010), vol. I, p 306.

⁹⁵ *Akbar And his India*, ed. Irfan Habib, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 144.

vessels and additional transports. The vessels made were transported to Bhakkar and Thatta through the stream course. The boatmen in various parts of northern India were usually Kashmiris, who belonged to the *mallah* caste. According to Abul Fazl, the first ship constructed by the side of the river Ravi was completed in 1594 and had a length of 35 *gaz-i-illahi* (over 93 feet).⁹⁶ It was made of 2,936 large planks of *Sal* wood and pine tree. We are told that as many as 240 carpenters, ironsmiths and others were employed in the ship's construction, but it took 10 days to put the ship in the river. To overcome this difficulty, an oversized barge was constructed, which could carry 370 tonnes of weight. Another ship was completed in December 1596, 99 feet long and cost ₹16,338.⁹⁷ In Kashmir, a model of a ship was made which was much admired.⁹⁸ The '*rahdari* of the way of all boats above 500 *man* to 2000 will not fall much under 1000 rupees besides payments of mariners and soldiers for its guard, which can't be less than 10 or 12 rupees of the former and 20 of the later'. Custom payment was made according to the market rate.⁹⁹ It appears that overland custom duty was fixed due to its expensive transport expenditure as compared to overseas trade where customs duty was charged according to the market rate. The cost of long-distance overland transportation of cotton goods was 66.66 per cent higher than that of river transport; the insurance rates of goods sent overland were 22.72 per cent cheaper.¹⁰⁰ Aurangzeb's endeavour did endeavour to make a seaport 40 *kos* to the northeast of Lahori Bandar and was to invite merchants there; and for that he assured that he will remit all customs,¹⁰¹ the need aroused due to silting of river Indus.

Civet¹⁰² sold at Lahore in 1617 was having no comparison in India. European merchants claimed to have never seen anything comparable to it in sweetness and strong smell in the West.¹⁰³ The best kind and the greatest quantity of musk came from the Kingdom of Bhutan, from where it was conveyed to Patna to be sold to the people of the country. All the musk sold at Persia came from there, and in exchange, they received yellow amber and coral, rather than gold and silver.¹⁰⁴ The merchants of Bhutan who returned from Lahore, Multan and Agra took back calicoes, indigo, carnelian and crystal beads.¹⁰⁵ It appears that the civet known by the Europeans was actually musk from Bhutan in the same way as indigo from Bayana was called Lahore indigo due to its overland transportation via Lahore.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. H. Bloachmann, (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2011), vol. I, p. 290.

⁹⁹ William Foster, *EFI*, 1637–41, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ B. R. Grover, 'An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of North India During the 17th and 18th Centuries', p. 241.

¹⁰¹ William Foster, *EFI*, 1651–54, p. 10.

¹⁰² The odoriferous substance obtained from the glands of the civet cat. It is brownish fluid contained in this animal's anal gland. *Travels Fray Sebastien Manrique* of 1629–43, tr. C.E Luard, assisted by H. Hosten, (London: Hakluyt Society, , 1927), vol. II, p. 214.

¹⁰³ *Letters Received By the East India Company From its Servants In the East* ed. F. C. Danvers and W. Foster, Vol.6, p. 254.

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels of India*, 1977, vol. II, p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–3.

In the year 1617, the demand of quicksilver had strongly fallen down, partly through the quantity brought by the Europeans and partly by the discovery of a mine at Lahore. In Jammu, there was a mine of bismuth. Taking gravel from the river Tavi and setting it on fire, they made bismuth of unparalleled whiteness, hardness and durability.¹⁰⁶ In certain rivers especially Bias and Jhelum, gold (*Ain* adds 'silver, copper, zinc and brass') was obtained by washing sand.¹⁰⁷ Elephant's teeth were sent to Lahore, where the women wear them as bracelets through which commodity gets its vent.¹⁰⁸ The export trade during the Mughals was more profitable for Indian merchants than for the Europeans and others. A Dutch factor in 1634 remarked that the total value of textiles, indigo, sugar and gum lac exported annually from Agra, Lahore, Sind, Gujrat and Daulatabad sold in the markets of Iran was 2,130,350 *mahamudis* or 24.20 metric tonnes of silver.¹⁰⁹ And the merchants of Surat alone imported annually 22.7 tonnes of silver as reported by another Dutch factors.¹¹⁰ The *Ain* mentions copper and iron mines at Sukhet and Mandi in the Bet Jalandhar Doab, salt mines at Dhankot on the Indus and at Makhiala and Shamsabad.

The author of *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh* highlighted that it was in Sind Sagar Doab (between the Jhelum and the Indus) near Shamsabad where the rock salt was extracted, which was an important item of inland trade.¹¹¹ Although the rock salt was extracted from many places, *Khuhra* and *Keohra* were two large mines near Shamsabad, from which about one *lac man* of salt came out every year. This salt was collected in the imperial treasury with all other salt extracted from other mines. From Ganj Shireen mine, some utensils were made for the *havelies* (palaces) of rich people.¹¹² The whole salt Mountain exceeds the length of 100 *kos*. The Persian sources *Zafarnama* and *Akbarnama*, called it 'the mountain of Judha'. Judha was the chief of the tribe of *Janjohia*.¹¹³ But, Ganesh Das Wadera, the author of *Char Bagh-i-Panjab*, mentioned that Jud was the name of a tribe living in the towns of Garjakh, Makhala and Pind Dadan Khan and in other places in this region. They make beautiful lamps, saucers covers, cups, etc. out of the gypsum and sold them.¹¹⁴ A mine of salt was called *kha-warrah*. There were five places close to one another which were known for the good quality of their salt; Khewrah, Khorah, Saroi, Jotana and Makrachha. Another spot from where they extracted the salt was the village of Choha Warchha in the *ilaqa* of Khushab. Also, there were places in the area of Peshawar across the river Attock, where large quantities of salt are mined. However, the salt found in the hill of Judi had no rival

¹⁰⁶ Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh*, ed. Zafar Hasan, (Delhi: J. & Sons Press, 1918), p. 74.

¹⁰⁷ *India Of Aurangzeb* with its extracts from the *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh and Chahar Gulshan*, tr. Jadunath Sarkar, (Calcutta: Bose Brothers, 1901), p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁸ *Letters Received by the East India Company From its Servants In the East* ed. F. C. Danvers and W. Foster, vol. VI, p. 250.

¹⁰⁹ S. Jeyaseela Stephen, ed., *The Indian Trade at the Asian Frontier*, (Delhi, 2008), p. 257.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. 2, p. 153; Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of Mughal Empire*, (Delhi: Oxford University press, 1982), p. 12.

¹¹² Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh*, ed. Zafar Hasan, (Delhi, 1918), p. 75.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Shireen Moosvi, 'Economic Profile of the Punjab 16th-17th centuries', *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab Society, Economy, Politics and Culture*, ed., Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005. p. 102.

on the earth for its taste, flavour, wholesomeness and loveliness. The medical men called it 'Lahauri salt'.¹¹⁵ The *zamindari* of the salt mountains at Kheora and Sindh Sagar belonged to the *Janjohia* tribe settled in *parganas* of Chahak, Nandna, Makhiala etc. The salt mountain was also known as *Janjohia* after the name of a tribe.¹¹⁶ In short, men called *alasha-khash* were engaged in extracting the salt, whereas *nunias* were experts in extracting salt from nitrous soils. From *Ain*, we learn that the merchants purchased rock salt from the mines at 2 2/5 to 3 3/5 pies a *maund*, the landlord charged a royalty of 4 *annas* on each porter of salt (i.e., 1 1/2 *maunds*), and the state got its share by charging ₹1 for every 17 *mans* (*maund*). Thus, the *maund* of salt costs 5 *annas*, a little less than ₹5.25 during Akbar's reign.¹¹⁷ On 20 December 1680, Aurangzeb had appointed Abdul Qadir as the *amin-i-namk* and *faujdar* of Shamsabad (Suba Lahore). Near Shamsabad, there was a quarry of sweet lime which was used in whitewashing the inside of the houses of wealthy men. Of this stone, professionals made dishes, cups and other things.¹¹⁸ Ganesh Das opined that Miani was a town on the bank of the river Jhelum. Previously, salt was extracted from the mines for sale at Miani. Custom on salt used to be collected there. That could have been one of the reasons for it to be known as Lun Miani. Since old times, Anands have been the most prominent persons of Miani. They also enjoy the title of *malik*.¹¹⁹

The testimonies from Thevenot and Tavernier suggest that silting of the river Indus was having great influence on trade. With this, it deviated the whole traffic via overland with an increased transportation cost, reduced the quantum of trade that was carried out. Even artisans began to migrate to more profitable areas.¹²⁰ Alexander Burnes negated any kind of riverine trade from Sind to Punjab and consequently no boats in the early nineteenth century.¹²¹ In 1648, the political disturbances in Turkey also stopped the Armenian merchants, who carried goods from Punjab.¹²² To make a gouge in the Aleppo–Lahore overland association that nourished Levant's trade, the Company factors effectively consulted with Kalantar, the boss of Armenian merchant, who swore in 1688 that his dealers would totally surrender going along overland courses among Hindustan and the Ottoman territories.¹²³ Even in this way, it took one more decade or so for the promise to produce full results on the grounds that, as a factor noted, 'they

¹¹⁵ *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab* from Ganesh Das's *Char Bagh-i-Panjab*, tr. & ed. J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, (New York, 2016), pp. 34–35.

¹¹⁶ B. R. Grover, 'An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of North India During the 17th and 18th Centuries', p. 237.

¹¹⁷ *India Of Aurangzeb* with its extracts from the *Khulasatu-t Tawarikh and Chahar Gulshan*, tr. Jadunath Sarkar, (Calcutta, 1901), p. lxxvii.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹⁹ *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab* from Ganesh Das's *Char Bhag-i-Panjab*, tr. J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, (Routledge India, 2016), p. 60.

¹²⁰ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels of India*, 1777, vol. I, p. 74.

¹²¹ Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara and a Voyage on the Indus (1831–33)*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1973), vol. III, pp. 108, 121, 202.

¹²² John Stoye, *Europe Unfolding, 1648–88*, (London: Collins, 1969), pp. 65–6.

¹²³ Baladouni, Vahe and Margaret Makepeace. Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries English East India Company Sources, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, vol. 88, No. 5, 1998, pp. 91–92.

(Armenians) and their worries were so dispersed'.¹²⁴ The political disturbances in the north-western region of India ultimately became a stumbling block in the flourishing trading centre (Lahore) of the Mughal Empire. In 1693, out of the 191 villages of *pargana* Bayan, only two villages produced indigo, while as in 1625, the list of Indigo producing villages was 24.¹²⁵

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¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹²⁵ Rajeev Bargoti, Bayana under the Mughals, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1990, vol. 51, p. 230.