Résumé
R. Pankhurst — Le commerce indien avec l'Ethiopie, le golfe d'Aden et la Corne de l'Afrique au XIXe siècle et au début du XXe.
Les courants commerciaux entre la côte occidentale de l'Inde et la « Corne » de l'Afrique, aux mains de « banyans » (commerçants hindous), ont subsisté et se sont même parfois renforcés jusqu'après l'intervention directe européenne, pénétrant très avant dans l'intérieur. Témoignages de voyageurs sur l'importance de ce trafic et le statut de ces commerçants.

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Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Throughout the nineteenth century the southern Red Sea area, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa enjoyed close, and long-established, commercial contacts with the Indian sub-continent. A large proportion of the trade of this part of Africa passed through the hands of Indian, or Banyan, merchants, small but vitally important colonies of whom were to be found at all the principal ports in the area. These traders, who were renowned for their business ability, dominated several of the principal fields of commerce, including the import of textiles and spices and the export of gold and ivory, and were to the fore both as money-lenders and organizers of the pearl trade. The goods they imported, notably textiles and spices, penetrated far into the African interior, reaching most parts of Ethiopia where they played a major role in economic and social life.

This Indian commerce was so extensive, and the Banyans engaged in it so able, that it easily survived the coming of the Europeans, and, as we shall see, actually benefited therefrom in several significant ways.

Indian Trade with the Gulf of Aden Area

India’s trade with the Gulf of Aden area was based in large measure on the western coast of the sub-continent, notably, as the French traveller Rochet d’Héricourt observed in the 1840’s, with Broche to the north, Bombay to the centre and Malabar to the south, but also with Bengal far away on the east coast of India. It was from these areas, he explained, that the Banyans imported all kinds of cloths, of both cotton and silk, rice and spices, on all of which commodities they earned considerable profits.

2. Rochet d’Héricourt: 29.

Cahiers d’Études Africaines, 55, XIV-3, pp. 453-497.
Indian traders held a dominant position in this trade. The British traveller Lord Valentia discussing the commerce of the African coast of the Gulf of Aden in the first decade of the century, stated that ‘the whole trade’ of the area was ‘monopolised’ by Banyans, or ‘Hindoo merchants originally resident in the independent and piratical countries from the Gulf of Cambay to the Indus’, and that ‘the return of the African for the valuable articles’ exported was ‘almost wholly in India goods, particularly the white cloths with a red or yellow border, on which the Banians charge profit of from 50 to 100 per cent’. Referring to shipments between Aden, Jeddah, Massawa and Berbera, he stated that Banyans ‘nearly monopolise the whole trade’, and made ‘a very considerable profit’, particularly on the export of gold and ivory. The import trade of Arabia, Valentia adds, was likewise ‘chiefly in Surat cloths—which comprise the dress of most of the inhabitants’, trade being ‘almost entirely in the hands of the Banians who acknowledge that they make a profit of 50 per cent’.

The importance of the Banyans in the whole of this area was confirmed a generation or so later by another British traveller, J. R. Wellsted, who exclaimed that ‘this wily race [. . .] confine themselves exclusively to commercial pursuits, their first object in all cases being to throw a veil of mystery over their proceedings, and to exclude other classes by every means in their power from participation in their gains’. He added that though ‘detested and despised’ by the Arabs the Indians had ‘by their natural shrewdness and address, been able, in most instances, to effect their purpose’. Indian traders were indeed so important, according to the French travellers Ferret and Galinier, as to ‘direct almost alone, the commercial movement of the Gulf of Aden’. Describing the activities of these traders the Frenchmen add that the Banyans being ‘established in most of the Red Sea ports, they put their hands on the most precious products of Africa, gold, musk, ivory, send them to India, and realised in several years immense profits’.

The port of Aden, which exercised a crucially important role in this trade, was as of old a major emporium of Indian trade with a sizeable population of resident Banyans. Early in the century Valentia noted that many Banyans from Mocha had made their way there, and that those who remained at the former port had ‘each a partner’ established at the latter. These traders at Aden, he reports, purchased myrrh and gum-arabic from the Somali Coast, the ‘greater part’ of which was brought from the African shore by Somali traders and sailors. This business was very profitable to the Indian traders who had established a ‘monop-

4. Id., 1811, II: 361.
which ensured them ‘the most enormous profits, though they profess to clear only fifty per cent’.

The commercial skill of these Banyans at Aden was shortly afterwards discussed by Valentia’s assistant, Henry Salt, who observes:

‘Though these traders possess a remarkable suavity in their manners, and an immovable command of temper, yet there are no individuals in the world more keen, artful, and rapacious in their dealing, and consequently in all communications with them undue exactions must be expected and carefully guarded against, notwithstanding there may be an appearance of minute and scrupulous accuracy in their accounts. [...] With respect to other points of character, I have been induced to think, from what I have witnessed, that they are a quiet, and estimable people; and even in that point, which I have seen reason to condemn, some allowance ought to be made in their favour from the unprincipled character of those persons with whom they are generally obliged to transact business. Duroz, the principal Banian at Aden,’ he adds, ‘appeared to be one of the most respectably of the class I have ever met with.’

Though ‘few’ in number these Banyans, as Wellsted later remarked, monopolised ‘the greater part of the trade’ of the ports, and were both well-off and influential, for he says that they lived in ‘good houses, substantially built’, and exercised ‘considerable authority in the town’.

Contacts between Aden and India were further strengthened, and modernised, in 1839, when the port was occupied by the British who annexed it to their Indian Empire, established a garrison of some 2,000 Indian troops, and made the Indian rupee the official currency. A decade and a half later, in 1855, a fortnightly steamer service with Bombay was initiated by the Peninsular and Orient Line.

To the west of Aden, the port of Mocha which was situated just inside the Red Sea, also played a major role in the trade between India and Africa. Valentia noted that this port was ‘the depot whence Jidda, Massowah, Abyssinia and even Aden’ were supplied with ‘India goods and European manufactures’ and that the port sent Massawa ‘India goods of every quality, from fine muslins and kincaubs to the coarse Surat cloths, which are used as articles of apparel in a great part of Africa’.

Much of this trade was in the hands of Mocha’s resident population of Banyans who, according to Valentia, numbered ‘about two hundred and fifty’. Discussing these Banyans, or ‘Gentoos’, as he also calls them, he states that

‘... most of them come from Jeygat, a piratical State at the entrance of the Gulf of Cutch; they come young, and stay till they have made a sufficient property to

10. Wellsted, II: 393.
15. Id., 1811, III: 256.
live comfortably at home. They never bring their wives with them, from a dread of their being insulted by the Arabs. ‘Nothing but the great profits attending their trade, could induce a person of any property to live so wretched a life.’ He went on to say that the British East India Company’s broker Devagé was nevertheless ‘considered as sufficiently rich to command three or four lacs of dollars at a moment’s notice’, and continued: ‘The Arabs are perfectly aware of their riches, and frequently extort money from them, particularly when about to return to India. [...]. The Gentoos live according to their own laws, and show a great obedience to the chief Banian, who acts for them in all public concerns. In private life they are inoffensive and timid. [ ...] As traders, however, it is impossible to speak well of them, for no tie of honesty binds them. One merchant boasted to Mr. Pringle that, in a sale of silk, he had made ten frassels turn out twelve and a half.’

Though they often earned good profits the Banyans of Mocha also on occasion suffered from the arbitrary practices of the local Arab ruler, who, according to Valentia, on one occasion ‘invented a new method of extorting money from the Banians, by confining them in a room, and fumigating them with sulphur, till they complied with his demands’.17

Despite such indignities and arbitrary practices the Banyans continued to exercise an important role at Mocha for many decades. In the 1830’s the French Saint-Simonians Combes and Tamisier reported that these traders enjoyed ‘complete confidence’, were ‘entrusted with affairs of administration’, and were ‘fairly important in this town’. The Frenchmen also observe that the Banyans are ‘almost all fat and stately’, and add:

‘They have the least possible contact with persons who are not of their sect; they are uncommunicative and taciturn. [ ...] The Banians are very particular, even sordid, in their commercial affairs. They are, however, of an exemplary patience, they support without murmuring all sorts of outrages, their law forbids them vengeance, and, be it from weakness or virtue, they are faithful to the precept.’18

A few years later, in the early 1840’s, the British envoy Cornwallis Harris noted the wealth of the local ‘Parsee and Mohammadan merchants’ who, he says, even carried an ‘assortment of European commodities’,19 and, with his malicious pen, proceeded to describe the ‘fat and sensual money-changer from the city of Surat’,20 and added:

‘A dark slouching turban, and ample folds of snowy drapery, envelope the sleek person of the crafty Hindoo, and his lethargic motions render it difficult to comprehend how he could have contrived to exile himself from his native soil, and in such a forbidding spot; even in pursuit of his idol, Mammon.’21

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17. Ibid.: 355.
The extent of Mocha's trade with the East is evident from the statement by Rochet d'Héricourt that the port was 'a necessary navigation stage between India and the upper part of the Gulf of Aden'.

Though cotton was the principal import from India, Combes and Tamisier noted that each year there arrived 4,000 bales of *tombak burni*, or tobacco, from Surat, and that in the houses of the rich it was a common sight to see tables and chairs imported from Bombay.

From Aden and Mecca, Indian trade extended northwards to the port of Jeddah, which, as the French traveller Didier remarks, was inhabited by Indians 'in great number', and was said by Wellsted to have been visited by no less than 2,000 Indian pilgrims who went on to Mecca each year. Jeddah was commercially important in that it handled a large proportion of India's trade with the Red Sea area, and supplied a vast quantity of Indian goods to Africa and Arabia. This Red Sea port was visited each year in the 1830's, according to the Belgian envoy Édouard Blondeel, by 20 to 25 boats from India, with an average of 700 tons, though Rochet d'Héricourt a few years later quoted the lower figure of 15 to 18 boats, each of from 400 to 500 tons. Most of these vessels entered the port, but some of the larger ships from Bombay were obliged to remain outside as the British traveller Mansfield Parkyns noted.

Jeddah's imports from India, much of which were destined for Africa, came according to Wellsted, Blondeel, the Frenchmen Arnaud d'Abbadie and Vice-Consul Fresnel, mainly from Bengal and Calcutta, Surat, Bombay, Java, Malaya, and Indochina, in that order of importance.

Supplies shipped from Bengal and Calcutta were, in Wellsted's view, 'more varied than those coming from other Indian ports'. Some ships, he says, arrived direct from Calcutta, freighted solely with rice, sugar, and Dacca muslin, while others brought coarse and fine blue cloths, cambric and indigo, and touching on the Malabar coast, filled up with teak-timber, coconuts, nut oil, black pepper, dried ginger, turmeric, etc., and then sailed direct to the Red Sea. The principal supplies shipped from Calcutta were however rice, sugar, cambric muslin called *rhassah*, muslins embossed with silk and cotton called *aghabani* and *kassideh*, cotton prints, indigo, coconuts, and musk from Thibet.

Merchandise from Surat and Cambay, according to the same observer, comprised red cotton prints called *souli*, blue cotton cloth called *safayeh*, large coverlets called *melayeh*, cloth of silk and cotton called *cotton* and *choli* of much better quality than of Egypt or Syria, red brocade with golden flowers called *zari* or *moksab*, shawls of muslin embossed with unbleached silk, cheap cashmeres, muslins and cornelians.

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24. Ibid.: 70.
26. Wellsted, II: 270.
Ships from Bombay, Wellsted declares, seldom left that port direct for the Red Sea unless they were small and intended for the coasting trade. If they obtained a sufficient number of pilgrims to defray the greater part of the freight they would balast with sugar, but the usual practice was to proceed to the Malabar coast where they took in cargoes of the same articles as the Bombay ships, in addition to which they brought from four to five hundred tons of pig-lead which was landed at Mocha, and afterwards disposed of to the Somalis at Berbera.\textsuperscript{30}

Goods from Bombay thus included pepper, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, galanga, cloves, turmeric, cambric, muslin, unbleached silk dyed blue, yellow or red, cotton prints, calicoes, a small quantity of silk stuffs and scarlet red cloth originating in England, coconuts, iron, tin, lead, chinaware, bracelets of glassware and false pearls, tea, inferior rice, sugar candy, ginger preserves, coconut oil, liquid perfumes (cinnamon extract, cloves, sandal wood, acacia flowers), ropes called \textit{kubar}, coconut string, cashmeres, small nuts called \textit{bezret kham}, sandal wood for making chaplets, timber chairs, wood for beds and other furniture.

Ships bringing supplies from lands further east, notably from Java, the Malay area and Indochina, started their journey, according to Wellsted, with a large proportion of spices, but completed their cargoes on the Malabar coast with rice,\textsuperscript{31} and reached Jeddah with a wide range of articles including sugar, tin called \textit{temsah} or \textit{saumons}, wood of aloes, benzoin, nutmeg, pepper, betel nuts, longwood, timber, white and blue cotton cloth and cheap chinaware.\textsuperscript{32}

Such imports from India and adjacent areas of the East in the 1840's made up roughly a third of the total imports of Jeddah, i.e. a value of 1,012,462 Maria-Theresa dollars out of 3,830,011 dollars according to Blondeel, 989,900 dollars out of 2,228,090 dollars according to d'Abbadie, and 989,000 out of 2,210,890 according to Fresnel. The breakdown by region of origin is as follows:\textsuperscript{33}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Blondeel</th>
<th>D'Abbadie and Fresnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>452,912</td>
<td>432,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surat and Cambay</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay and Malabar coast</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>114,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Java and Indochina</td>
<td>34,550</td>
<td>42,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,012,462 MT $</td>
<td>989,900 MT $</td>
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The above-mentioned ports, Aden, Mocha and Jeddah, were all intimately connected with Indian trade with Africa, for many articles of commerce sent via them to or from the East, or indeed other areas,

\textsuperscript{30} Wellsted, II: 274.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.: 275.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.: 272-275; Ferret & Galinier, II: 326-327; Lefèvre et al., II, Part II: 25-26; Rochet d'Héricourt, 1841: 17, 29; Parkyns, I: 66; France, Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue France Nouvelle Acquisition, No. 21,300, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{33} Blondeel, Appendix 28; Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,300, pp. 413-414, 419; Ferret & Galinier, I: 326-327; Parkyns, II, Part II: 9.
were transshipped across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Much of the trade of the Arabian ports was thus based on those of the African coast such as Massawa or Berbera, as noted by Valentia who declares: ‘Arabia itself consumes only a small proportion of its imports, the residue, after paying a duty of three per cent on the import, and seven on the export is sent, by dows, to Masowah, Jidda and Aden, for the fair of Berbera.’\\(^{34}\) A generation or so later the French traveller Lefebvre likewise noted that Massawa was in ‘close contact’ with Jeddah and Mocha, as well as with Suakin and Bombay.\\(^{35}\)

**Berbera, Zeila and Tajurah**

The African ports, like those of Arabia, were much visited, and in some cases actually colonised by Banyan traders, whose commercial skill, and remarkable organisation, was described by Rochet d’Héricourt who called them ‘a religious community applied to commerce’ and added:

‘Each of them originally brought in a share of the capital for which he has right to a proportionate share of the general profits. They live in common. The law of the division of work regulates the organisation of their society. To each member is assigned a special function, a precise task. Some occupy themselves with the internal administration, and, among them, there are those who descend to the meanest details of domestic economy, as for example the care of the apartments and the preparation of food. Of those upon whom mercantile business has devolved some conduct the great operations, make voyages, supervise the fishing for pearls of which they have the exclusive trade. Others are charged with the retail sale, they sell their merchandise in bazaar shops and even in their own houses. However, an organised hierarchy determines the distribution of functions among the members and the dignity of ranks. At the summit of the association is the treasurer who is chosen by the members of the society. The Banyans employ much competency in their trade, and I would add even much wile, but their sweet and inoffensive character makes them loved by the natives.’\\(^{36}\)

Probably the most important commercial centre on the African side of the Gulf of Aden in the early nineteenth century was Berbera where, according to Wellsted, ‘the Banians of Mokha, Hodeida, etc. have each a partner residing here, to whom the various articles are consigned’.\\(^{37}\) The presence of such traders at the port is confirmed by another British observer, Charles Johnston, who stated in the 1840’s that the population of Berbera included a ‘few foreign merchants, principally Banians and Arabs’ whose houses had ‘some pretentions both to appearance and convenience’, a statement confirmed by Rochet d’Héricourt.\\(^{38}\)

34. **Valentia, 1811**, II: 361.  
35. **Lefebvre et al., II, Part II**: 25.  
37. **Wellsted**, II: 368.  
Berbera’s resident population of foreign merchants was joined in the cool winter months by crowds of visiting traders, including many merchants from India, as well as Banyans established in the Gulf of Aden, who came to attend the great annual fair from October to March which is said to have yielded immense profits. Valentia, the first traveller to discuss this commercial event, declares:

‘From the fair of Berbera, Arabia draws her supplies of ghee, and a great number of slaves, camels, horses, mules and asses; but the profit on these articles is much less than on the sale of India goods, which is the return made to the inhabitants of Africa, for the whole produce of the country thus brought to Berbera. Many chiefs of the interior, and particularly the sovereign of Hanim, who lives twenty days journey west of Berbera, send down caravans of their own, to purchase, with gold and ivory, the manufactures of India.’

On such imported goods, he explains, ‘the Banians demand what profit they please’. The noble lord, who, it should be noted, hoped to open up British commerce in the area, and in consequence regarded Indian trade with disfavour, emphasised the exploitive character of the latter trade, observing: ‘It is much to be regretted, that the sale is at present clogged by the unreasonable profits of the Banians, which, of course, greatly diminish the consumption.’ Arguing that ‘the different articles of hard-ware, which are much wanted by every uncivilised nation, at present, only reach the eastern coast of Africa, by way of Bombay and Mocha’, he added that if the profits were ‘reduced to about forty or fifty per cent the consumption would probably increase ten fold’.

Around the middle of the century Berbera fair is said to have been visited each year by a goodly number of Indian merchants: Rochet d’Héricourt writes of 10 to 12 large vessels, while d’Abbadie put the figure at 30 to 40 ‘small boats’, many of which, he says, later returned to Bombay laden with ivory. In exchange for this article, and the ‘various commodities furnished by Africa’, the Banyans, as Wellsted notes, supplied such goods as iron, lead, cotton cloth, rice and durrah.

Traders at Berbera included merchants from all parts of India who did a lucrative business and were a familiar sight at the fair. The British explorer Speke told of the presence there of ‘Banyans from Cutch and Aden’, while his compatriot Cruttenden reports that ‘the fat and

40. Valentia, 1811, II: 358.
41. Ibid., III: 256.
42. Ibid., II: 358.
43. Ibid.: 358-359.
44. Rochet d'Héricourt, 1841: 340.
46. Wellsted, II: 369.
wealthy Banian traders from Porebunder, Maldavie and Bombay’, who ‘rolled across’ the seas in ‘their clumsy kotias, and with a formidable row of empty ghee jars slung over the quarters of their vessels’, were the last to arrive but ‘elbowed themselves into a permanent position in the front tier of craft in the harbour, and by their superior capital, cunning, and influence, soon distanced all competitors’.49

The Indian traders at Berbera seem to have been careful to avoid unnecessary friction with the local population. The Banyan, as Cruttenden explains, spent his time ‘prudently living on board his ark’, and would lock up ‘his puggree [turbant] which would infallibly be knocked off the instant he was seen wearing it.’ Anxious to avoid displaying too many of his goods the merchant would exhibit but a small portion of his wares at a time, under a miserable mat spread on the beach.50

The Banyans, coming as they did with so much imported goods from the East, were a source of constant fascination for the local Somali population. Harris records that

‘... the curious stalls of the fat Banians from India were thronged from morning until night with barbarians from the adjacent districts, who brought pelties and drugs to be exchanged; and the clamour of haggling and barter was hourly increased by the arrival of some new caravan of toil-worn pedlars from the more remote depths of the interior, each laden with an accession of rich merchandise to be converted into baubles and blue calico, at a clear net profit to the specious Hindoo of two hundred per cent. Myrrh, ivory, and gum-arabic; civet, frankincense, and ostrich-feathers, were piled in every corner of his booth, and the tearing of ells of Nile stuff and the counting out of porcelain beads, was incessant so long as the daylight lasted.’51

The commercial importance of these Indian traders at Berbera, and the wealth they earned, was often remarked. Thus Wellsted observed that the Banyans held ‘in their hands [. . .] the whole of the trade of the port’,52 a statement echoed by Rochet d’Héricourt who stated that ‘the greater part’ of the trade of Berbera ‘passes through their hands’,53 while the British explorer, Richard Burton, says of the Ogaden area that ‘the principal trader of this coast is the Banyan from Aden and Cutch’.54 Wellsted, therefore, seems to have been on firm grounds in declaring that the Indians had long ‘enjoyed silently and unnoticed’ the ‘enormous profits’ of the Berbera trade,55 an observation echoed by

48. The kotia, according to Hornell, ‘is built in India for Indian owners, in great measure it is the native craft of the coast of Kutch and Kathiawar [. . .] Koitias are the oceanic tramps of Indian craft, willing to go wherever remuneration offers’ (J. Hornell, ‘The Origins and Ethnological Significance of Indian Boat Designs’, Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal VII (1918): 142 and plate III).
49. R. Burton, First Footsteps in East Africa (London, 1894), II: 72. See also Abir: 17.
50. Burton, II: 73.
51. Harris, I: 277.
52. Wellsted, II: 368.
54. Burton, II: 95.
55. Wellsted, II: 369.
Harris who remarked that the Banyan, ‘during many years, has enjoyed, silently and unobserved, the enormous profits accruing from the riches annually poured out from the hidden regions of Africa’. The same highly prejudiced observer goes on to describe the Berbera fair as frequented by ‘rapacious Banians from India’, and remarks that though ‘religious prejudices on the part of the wily Hindoo’ prevented the latter form dealing in the export of live-stock, ‘all other trade [...] is engrossed by the subtle Banian, who divides the adductor pollicis of the right thumb, in order to increase the span by which his wares are measured’.

Cheating among the merchants was often alleged, but does not seem to have been restricted to any one community. Burton declared that ‘the African cheats by mis-measuring the bad cotton cloth, and the Indian by falsely weighing the coffee, ivory, ostrich-feathers and other valuable articles which he receives in return’. Rochet d’Héricourt, on the other hand, writing specifically of the Banyans, claims that they covered their operations ‘in the greatest mystery’ and drew from it ‘no doubt important advantages’, but adds: ‘They invent no frauds to cover their cheating so that, doubly cheated, the Bedouins take them for very honest people.’ The Somalis were, however, probably well satisfied with the trade as it brought them imported goods for which there was no other source of supply, with the result that the Banyans, as Burton records, were ‘facetiously termed by the Somalis their “milch-cows”’.

The presence of Indian traders at Berbera made them familiar to the vast numbers of Somalis who flocked to the fair. Cruttenden notes that even the ‘savage Gidrbeersi’, i.e. tribesmen from the interior, were in contact with ‘the smooth-spoken Banian from Porebunder’, while Harris, ever writing in contemptuous vein, declares that ‘rapacious Banians’ traded with ‘caravans of wandering savages from all parts of the interior’. Berbera was thus a cultural melting-pot, for, as Johnston notes, it ‘brought together the Hindoo Banyan, the Mahomedan Arab, and the Pagan Soumaulee’.

Though the overwhelming majority of Indians visiting Berbera came for purposes of trade, there is record of at least one Indian fakir making his way to this part of the Somali coast. Speke, who saw him, states that the holy man, having visited the shrines and temples of India, determined ‘to see what other countries were like’. Begging all the way, he had accordingly sailed from Bombay to Muskat and travelled

56. Harris, I: 38.
58. Burton, II: 95.
60. Burton, II: 95.
61. Ibid.: 73.
62. Harris, I: 38.
hence by land to Aden, whence he ‘again set out, in the name of Allah, to see what the Somali land was like’.  

The Indian traders at Berbera maintained their position throughout the greater part of the century. In the early 1880’s, the Italian explorer Cecchi reported that there were still very few Europeans at the port, and that ‘all the trade was in the hands of the Banyans’. This assertion is confirmed by the German scientist Paulitischke, who records that some of the Banyans remained on at the port after the close of the annual fair when the other traders departed, and were responsible for the imports from India which besides textiles included no less than 200,000 to 300,000 kilos of rice and 50,000 kilos of tobacco a year, while the 2,500 to 3,000 kilos of ivory exported annually went entirely to India, and there is also record of some export of camels to India. The Italian researcher Alamanni, a decade or so later, likewise opined in 1890 that the trade of Berbera was still ‘entirely in the hands of the Banyans’ who, he explains, came from Port Bender, Madras and Bombay, though the British, Greeks, Egyptians and Italians were then beginning to make their appearance on a small scale.

The financing of Berbera’s trade seems likewise to have been mainly under Indian control, the only credit acceptable at the port being, according to Paulitischke, that based on Bombay.

The port of Zeila likewise had close commercial ties with India, as well as a small resident population of Banyan traders. Some of these Indian merchants seem to have adopted the unusual practice of settling with their womenfolk, for Burton tells of an Indian girl with ‘chocolate-coloured skin, long hair, and parrot like profile’ who was ‘much admired by the élégants of Zayla’, and ‘coquettes by combing, dancing, singing and slapping the slave-girls, whenever an adorer may be looking’.

Trade with India was of considerable magnitude, for a British observer, Stuart, noted in 1810 that in the previous three years the port had been receiving 200 bales of ‘coarse cloths’ from Cutch, while a generation or so later Burton recorded that on visiting the port he found there ‘about twenty native craft, large and small’, and adds: ‘They trade with Berberah, Arabia, and Western India, and are navigated by “Rajput” or Hindu pilots.’

64. Speke: 143.
65. A. Cecchi, Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa (Roma, 1886), I: 7.
70. Paulitischke: 378.
71. Burton, I: 19. See also Abir: 15.
72. Salt: lxx.
73. Burton, I : 16.
which was termed *kash* and an inferior kind *hurmia*. Another observer of this period, the British traveller Beke, likewise stated that some of the coloured cloths worn at the port were 'imported from India'.

A further indication of the port's close ties with Indians was, as Burton notes, that the 'citizens and more civilised' were fond of a board-game called *bakki* which, he explains, was of unmistakable Indian origin, and linguistically 'a corruption of the well known Indian Pachisi'.

This game, we may add, continued to be played in the coastal areas of Somaliland throughout the century as indicated long afterwards by the British big-game hunter A. E. Pease.

Most if not all of the Indian traders of Zeila subsequently abandoned the port, as the French historian Douin asserts, in favour of Berbera, though a number of them re-established themselves at the former port towards the end of the century as recorded by the Italian traveller Robecchi-Brichetti. Paulitischke reported in the late 1880's that there was by then an 'extensive commerce' in Indian cotton goods and rice. Much of the cotton came from the Colaband mills of Bombay and was known as *hindi* (in distinction to the import from America which was referred to as *amerikani*), while rice imports amounted to 1,200,000 rupees a year. Imports of both commodities were dominated by the Indian merchant Menahim Messa who had a large storehouse at Zeila for these articles, and also purchased ivory brought in by the caravans from Ogaden and Shoa.

Indian influence in the British Somaliland Protectorate, which came into existence in 1884, was intensified when the territory was placed under the British government of Bombay from 1888 to 1898. A garrison of Bombay infantry was established in the colony, and Indian currency based on the rupee was made the official medium of exchange. British Somaliland rapidly became a virtual dependency of British India, with the result, noted by Powell-Cotton, that by the turn of the century 'most Somalis' at Zeila understood Hindustani 'better than English'.

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78. Douin, III, Part II: 185. See also Abir: 16.
81. Ibid. See also: 54; L. Robecchi-Bricchi, *Somalia e Benadir* (Milano, 1899): 617.
85. Ibid.: 6.
Tajurah in the first part of the nineteenth century also had its share of Indian trade, and, as several travellers noted, was largely dependent on cloth imported from India. Beke reported that the menfolk wore ‘a cloth, generally a white cotton one from India, wrapped round the loins’, with ‘a second cloth woven over the upper part of the body in the same manner as in Ethiopia’,

and that many of the coloured cloths seen at the port were also imported from India, though others were brought there from Ifat in central Ethiopia,

while Johnston confirms that the clothing of the inhabitants was ‘principally imported by Indian vessels’.

‘The usual dress of the males of Tajourah,’ he adds, ‘was the fotah, or waist-cloth, and the sarree, which is an Indian term for part of a woman’s dress, exactly corresponding to it in use and shape. It is a long robe, worn round the body, generally of white calico, with a red or blue border at the extremities.’

Wood from India was also sometimes imported. Beke noted that a ‘native from Mocha’ was then building a good-sized boat with wood brought from India as there was none suitable at Tajurah. Rice from Bombay, according to the French traveller Revoil, was likewise a major import.

The result of such commercial contacts with India, as well as with Aden which then made use of Indian currency, was the unofficial adopting of the rupee at Tajurah where, as Beke reported in the early 1840’s, the coin had ‘begun to show itself’. It was ‘considered as equal’ to half a Maria-Theresa dollar, though there was a loss on the exchange of about 10%.

Ports of the Eastern Horn and Benadir and Mijertain Coast

To the east of Berbera the smaller Somali ports on the Gulf of Aden, such as Bender Kassem, Bender Khor, Bender Merayo and Alula, all had Indian as well as Arab merchants. Such traders, as the French traveller Revoil noted in the 1870’s, sent their agents even to places of the least importance, and exported the produce of the area to Bombay and other ports. These merchants, he believed, were largely able to dictate the price at which the Somalis sold their gum and other produce, and, because of their firm commercial hold on the area, had little to fear from the coming of the Europeans to the coast.

The Mijertain, or northern Indian Ocean coast of Somaliland, also had well-established commercial links with the east, as well as a number

86. Beke: 43.
87. Ibid.: 64.
89. Ibid.: 48. See also Harris, I: 36.
90. Beke: 46.
92. Beke: 46.
of resident Indian merchants. Guillain, a French voyager of the middle of the century, states that the exports of this region included gum which was sent to Bombay, dried fish which was shipped to the Indian coast, and shark fins and tails which were sent via India to China, while many of the imports were similarly brought in by Banyan traders. Such merchants continued to play a prominent rôle in the decades which followed, Revoil noticing that there were numerous Banyans at the coast in the 1870’s.

Further south the Benadir coast also had its Indian presence. Guillain states that Indian merchants resided at Mogadishu for several months each year, while later in the century Revoil mentioned one of them by name, Hadji Indi, whom he calls ‘an inoffensive Indian merchant’, and records finding a small Hindu statue in the city, yet another indication of a well-established Indian presence. Imports from India according to Guillain, included Kutch cloth, cottons from the Gulf of Cambay and Gujarat, and a small quantity of cloth from Bombay, Indian rice and molasses, and iron bars and wire for manufacture by the local blacksmiths.

Further south the ports of Merka and Kismayu also had their Indian traders, some of whom, according to Revoil, were Muslim agents of Zanzibar and Bombay houses. The merchants of Merka, he observes, were insistent salesmen, though it was ‘curious to see the faithful of the Banian caste, believing in metempsychosis, eating neither meat nor fish, using leaves as plates, never drinking in your glass, and never using foodstuffs except those prepared by themselves, acting as farmers of the customs of the Benadir and Zanzibar litoral’. Though these Indians spent most of their time, he says, in their own abodes, and scarcely ventured out ‘even under the protection of a good escort’, Set Lackmidas, a local Banyan, was so important as to be considered ‘in reality the true governor of Merka’. Holding his status as a British subject in high esteem he displayed in his shop portraits of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, declaring with emphasis that he was their faithful servant and that were it not fact that his religion prevented him from killing a fly he would have conquered the entire Webi valley with a handful of men.

The Indian community of the Benadir was indeed so large as to have at least one Hindu priest, a picture of whom is reproduced by Robecchi-Bricchetti in his book Somalia e Benadir.
There was extensive trade between the Benadir and India throughout this period. Large quantities of textiles and rice were imported from the sub-continent. Towards the end of the century Indian cottons were, however, beginning to come under strong competition from America. To counter this attack the factories of Bombay, Robecchi-Bricchetti explains, began to produce a cloth called ‘country American’ which resembled American shirting, but was markedly inferior, the Somalis being able to distinguish the difference, though the effort ‘demonstrated the enterprising spirit of the manufacturers of Bombay who perhaps could one day compete advantageously with the Americans in the production of this much prized cloth’.\(^{105}\) Printed cloths from India, notably the danga and kaniki varieties, were nonetheless fully competitive with those of Europe, and were very cheap, well starched and of very bright colours.\(^{106}\) Rice imports from India were also ‘considerable’, amounted to over 100,000 kilos a year, and came from Patna, Rangoon and Ballam. The best quality was called donthan, while a poorer type was known as rali.\(^{107}\) In return for such imports the Benadir despatched to India were significant quantities of myrrh and ivory.\(^{108}\)

The entire Indian Ocean coast of Somalia thus had strong commercial contacts with India and a crucially significant Banyan community which, as Alamanni noted towards the end of the century, supplied the inhabitants of the area with such important commodities as grey cotton cloth, muslin, coloured woolen cloth, blue and other silks, and silk thread.\(^{109}\) This situation continued to our own times, the present-day Italian anthropologist Grottanelli observing that Banyans still constitute a ‘rich section’ of the mercantile community of Benadir,\(^{110}\) and that many of the boats in the approaches of this littoral are often owned by Indians.\(^{111}\)

**The Dahlak Islands**

Indian commercial activity was also extensive much further north in the Red Sea area, particularly around the Dahlak islands, Valentia reporting that ‘Surat cloth’ was popular on these islands, as well as along the African coast.\(^{112}\) An interesting export of the area was saw-fishes, which, according to the same observer, were caught for their fins, constituted ‘a large article of export to India’, and found ‘a market in China with those of the shark, where they are used, like the birds nests, to give

\(^{105}\) Ibid.: 615-616.
\(^{106}\) Ibid.: 618.
\(^{107}\) Ibid.: 625-626. See also: 639.
\(^{109}\) Alamanni: 418.
\(^{110}\) Grottanelli: 50.
\(^{111}\) Ibid.: 192.
\(^{112}\) Valentia, 1811, II: 35, 251.
a glutinous richness to the soups'. This commerce continued to be reported for several decades, Wellsted noting in the 1830's that 'a lucrative trade' was carried on in sharks' skins and fins 'which Indian ships take from Jeddah and Mocha for the China market'.

There was also a considerable, and apparently long-established, Indian involvement in the pearl, tortoise-shell and cowrie shell business of the area, as recorded by both Rochet d'Héricourt and Innes, a British trader of the middle of the century, who declared: 'The Banyans have had this trade in their hands from time immemorial.' Discussing this commerce in some detail he explained that the Banyans visited the area once a year, usually in August, to make their purchases of pearls, mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell and cowries. One vessel leaving for Hodeida in 1848 for example carried 100 bales of such merchandise for the Indian market. 'The Banyans', he comments, 'make a good thing of the trade, [...] they barter Indian stuffs of little value for the pearls' which were then taken to India.

Indian participation in this business continued throughout the century, causing the Italian trader Issel to note around 1870 that the Banyans established at Massawa advanced small sums of money to the owners of the boats from which the pearl-divers operated and in return purchased the pearls in advance at a cheap price. The German explorer Heuglin, who confirms this picture, stated that the Banyans had several agents at Dahlak for the purchase of pearls, while the British big-game hunter the Earl of Mayo reported that the Indian traders paid the divers in clothes and such necessities as the latter wanted, and then sold the pearls in Bombay for rupees, thus making 'a good thing' of the trade. The virtual Indian monopoly of the business was little affected by the coming of the Italians to Massawa in 1885, for half a decade later Alamanni noted that the trade in pearls was still 'fairly generally in the hands of the Banyans'. The fishing boats, he states, were open vessels, of from 20 to 80 tons, with a single sail and carried 12 to 15 men who fished with a rod which in most cases came from the coast of Malabar. The Banyans, conducting their business on the seas, were, he adds, free from any kind of customs tax, and most of the pearls continued to be exported to India where the largest market for this produce was held in Bombay in October.

Another Italian, A. Perazzoli, who investigated this trade between 1894 and 1896, states that the Banyans still provided the fishermen...
each year with several months credit as well as *durrah* and rice, thereby obtaining the right to purchase the pearls. Though some were openly brought to Massawa and then officially posted to Bombay, as indicated in postal records, the trade was exclusively clandestine, and based on secret agreements between the Banyans and the fishermen. Neither offers of higher prices nor of interest-free loans at Massawa had enabled him to overcome 'the perseverance and cunning of the Indians in guarding their secrets about this traffic'. Research at Bombay, on the other hand, indicated that packets each worth 80,000 to 100,000 lire were arriving from Massawa, and that traders were sending *durrah* and cotton cloths there in return for pearls. One Bombay broker asserted that pearls arriving directly from Massawa each year were worth 10 to 12 lacs of rupees, or about 2 million lire, while the Italian consul at Bombay, Claudio Boggiano, had observed that so many pearls were coming in from the Italian colony of Eritrea that Indians had exclaimed to him: 'You do not even know the produce of your country!'  

Indian dominance in the trade was in fact so great that the historians of the pearl, Kunz and Stevenson, noted early in the twentieth century that 'the influence of the Hindu traders, who finance the fisheries and most of the catch, [extended] all over the Red Sea coast'.  

*Massawa*

The port of Massawa, site of the largest Banyan community on the southern Red Sea coast of Africa, was also in close commercial contact with India. Valentia, the first nineteenth century observer to describe the port, states that the Indians there were then eighteen in number, carried on 'a considerable trade', and were 'very comfortable'. He goes on to state that since none of the local merchants had sufficient capital to purchase a ship's entire cargo or even a large proportion thereof this would often be done by dealers, one of the two most important being a Banyan, Currum Chund, who would

'... receive the cargo, and consider themselves responsible for the whole; they would dispose of it in smaller quantities to people whom they knew worthy of credit, who would depart with it into the interior, and would, in about three months, return with the value in gold and other articles. A large ship belonging to the Nawaub of Surat', he adds, 'arrived a few years ago, and [...] disposed of her cargo in the above manner.'  

The wealth of Currum Chund is further apparent from the fact that he informed Valentia that he could at a month's notice procure

123. Kunz & Stevenson: *loc. cit.*
124. Valentia, 1811, II: 50.
125. *Ibid.,* III: 258. See also F.O., i/i, p. 9; British Museum, Add. MS. 19,347, p. 4, and 19,348, p. 112.
two thousand waqit, or ounces, of gold to pay for imported goods.\textsuperscript{126} Currum Chund, who was in correspondence with Devagé, the British East India Company's Indian broker at Mocha,\textsuperscript{127} and owned at least one dhow, for the use of which he on one occasion charged the British traveller Henry Salt no less than £12, i.e. 96 Maria-Theresa dollars,\textsuperscript{128} engaged in commercial and financial transactions on both sides of the Red Sea, and was thus able to provide Henry Salt and the latter's protégé, Nathaniel Pearce, with letters of credit negotiable at Massawa and in the interior of Tigre and redeemable at Jeddah.\textsuperscript{129} Currum Chund seems to have made a considerable profit on such business, for Salt records losing no less than £50, i.e. 400 dollars on a bill of 1,005 Maria-Theresa dollars advanced by the Banyan at Massawa.\textsuperscript{130} Salt was of opinion that the Indian may have engaged in not dissimilar financial transactions for Ras Walda Sellasé, the ruler of Tigre;\textsuperscript{131} whether this was the case or not Currum Chund undoubtedly acted as an intermediary between that chief and Valentia, though he seized the occasion to make a good profit, for he charged no less than 30 Maria-Theresa dollars to convey a letter from Massawa to Antalo.\textsuperscript{132} The Indian also served as a messenger for the Naib, or local ruler, of the port of Arkiko,\textsuperscript{133} and for the Kaimahan, or governor, of Massawa,\textsuperscript{134} and was in correspondence with the Bahrnagash, or Christian ruler of the sea province.\textsuperscript{135} The British, who wanted to carry out their diplomacy on the cheap, were by no means satisfied with the Banyan's dealings, and Salt observed on September 17, 1813, that Currum Chund had 'cheated' Captain Rudland, their representative at Mocha, of 'a considerable sum of money'.\textsuperscript{136}

The Banyans of Massawa had, however, on the whole an excellent reputation among foreigners. A generation or so later the German explorer Edouard Rüppell recorded that this small group of Indians were the 'best regarded' of Massawa's traders, and adds that they were persons of property with stone houses and shops near the governor's palace.\textsuperscript{137} Following as far as possible the customs of their own land they wore Indian dress, and were allowed free practice of their religion, but were forbidden, as in Yemen, to bring in their women-folk.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{126} Valentia, 1811, III: 259.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., II: 43.
\textsuperscript{128} Salt: 449; J. J. Halls, The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt (London, 1834), I: 229; F.O., i/i, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{130} F.O., i/i, p. 166. See also p. 227.
\textsuperscript{131} Valentia, 1811, III: 60, 195.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., II: 386, 388; III: 433; Salt: 449.
\textsuperscript{133} Valentia, 1811, II: 42-43, 45-46, 391-392, 429, 440. See also III: 319, 413-414, 416, 421, 423, 425, 429; Pearce, II: 127-128.
\textsuperscript{134} Salt: 207, 209; F.O., I/i, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{135} Valentia, 1811, II: 475, 496.
\textsuperscript{136} British Museum, Add. MS. 19,347, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{137} E. Rüppell, Reise in Abyssinien (Frankfurt, 1835-1840), I: 196-197.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.: 202.
Estimates of the number of Banyans at Massawa in this period vary. Towards the middle of the century Innes put the figure at only six or seven, while d'Abbadie at about the same time wrote of twelve, but a generation or so later the British vice-consul Walker noted, in 1863, that there were then fifteen to twenty Banyans at the port, a figure also cited by Douin.

Though few in numbers these traders controlled a large proportion of the commerce of the port. Walker declared that they 'seem to monopolise the whole of the trade', were 'the only men who possess any money on the island', and owned two vessels 'built similar to the bungalows, but much larger' which traded with Bombay. Rassam, a half decade or so later, remarked that Massawa's trade with India was carried on 'chiefly by Banian merchants', while Douin, summing up the situation at about this time, declared that the port's commerce was largely in the hands of the Banyans who, he says, displayed 'rigid devotion and relative probity', and, 'sustained by the houses of Aden and Bombay', were 'the most enterprising' among the Massawa traders, and controlled 'the import trade of cotton cloths and fabrics'.

Banyan influence in the textile trade was so great that cloth at this time, and indeed throughout most of the century, was often measured at the port by the Indian cubit, locally referred to as the *drah hindasi*, in distinction to the cubit of Constantinople which was also employed, the use of both units being noted, for example, by Rüppell in the 1830's and by the Italian traveller Sapeto half a century later. The Indians' cultural impact is likewise evident from the fact, noted by d'Abbadie, that in the bazaar one could often hear Hindustani as well as the more important local languages.

The Banyans were also great money-lenders, and it was not surprising that in the 1860's Captain Cameron, the British envoy to Emperor Tewodros, and his compatriot, vice-consul Walker, should both have borrowed money from them.

The presence of the Banyans seems to have had impact also in the field of handicrafts, for several Indian craftsmen came to the fore at Massawa in the middle of the nineteenth century when, as Munzinger noted, the port had 'good artisans, above all those of Indian origin'.

139. PARKYNS: 341-342. See also RÜPPELL, I: 195.
140. Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,301, p. 68.
143. *Correspondence—Abyssinia: 230.
147. D'ABBADIE: 9.
148. F.O., 1/17, pp. 55, 57.
and ‘without dreaming of investing anything they easily acquired the arts of the Europeans’. He adds that they built ‘very excellent and strong boats’, and that these masons and carpenters worked with ‘skill and speed’.  

Massawa’s trade with India was at this period very considerable. Early in the century captain Weatherhead reported in 1810 that the port received cotton from Bombay, as well as ‘a few coarse Indian cloths’, while Rüppell recorded in the 1830’s that the Naib, or local ruler, of Arkiko sat on a ‘fantastic chair’ probably from India and that much of the coloured material worn by the women of Massawa was of Indian origin.  

Massawa was visited annually at this time, according to the French scientific mission, by two boats which sailed to and from Bombay.  

Massawa’s exports to India in the first part of the century were based mainly on gold and ivory, which were in fact the principal exports of the port, and were taken to the sub-continent in large quantities. Gold exports, according to the French scientific mission, ran at a minimum of 500 kilos a year, and went entirely to India and Egypt, while the Banyans, according to Innes, were on occasion ‘the only dealers in ivory’, and often purchased supplies on the basis of ‘half cash and half payable in Indian stuffs, such as marawdi, suli, copper pieces, kohl beads, etc.’.  

Other exports to India included civet and gum, which, according to the French scientific mission, were laden on ships bound for Bombay, the kahalé root from Enarya, 1,000 dollars worth of which, Rüppell states, was sent to India each year and several other commodities, notably pearls and to a certain extent hides as mentioned by Rassam.  

A large portion of Massawa’s imports were similarly of Indian origin. Rüppell declares that they included a ‘considerable quantity’ of raw cotton, blue and red dyed ordinary cotton cloth, raw blue dyed silk, white cambrics, and, in somewhat smaller quantities, glazed silk cloth and light velvet, as well as a large amount of pepper, while the French scientific mission states that Indian cloths, including guineas, sold ‘everywhere, in Abyssinia and in all the ports of the Red Sea’, and that

150. SALT: IXIX.  
152. Ferret & Galinier, I: 364. See also Abir: 7.  
153. Lefebvre et al., I: 39.  
154. Ibid., II, Part II: 30. See also Rassam, I: 16.  
155. Parkyns, I: 341-342, 345. See also Rassam, loc. cit.  
156. Lefebvre et al., I: 39.  
158. Rassam, I: 16.  
159. Rüppell, I: 154.  
160. Lefebvre et al., II, Part II: 48. See also I: 39.
boats from Bombay also brought in construction wood, sugar, tobacco, and rice.\textsuperscript{161} Plowden likewise noted in 1847 that imports from Bombay consisted of "calicos, plain and printed, scarlet cloth, silk, carpets of brilliant colours, red and blue "Indians"—or Indian piece goods—in quantity, velvets and muslins",\textsuperscript{162} and that the dress of the Ethiopians being 'entirely of cotton cloths [...] in some years they purchase the raw material largely from Bombay'.\textsuperscript{163}

Imports from India in fact included the following merchandise:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Merchandise</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raw cotton</strong></td>
<td>Imported from Bombay, valued at 17,500 Maria-Theresa dollars according to Blondeel\textsuperscript{164} and 27,000 dollars according to d'Abbadie.\textsuperscript{165}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cotton cloth of all kinds</strong></td>
<td>Much of it, Lefebvre notes,\textsuperscript{166} of poor quality which was nevertheless 'fairly expensive' even near the coast.\textsuperscript{167} One of the most popular types, called souli, was said by Blondeel to be of inferior quality and a 'horrible' red, but was much sought after, and accounted for an import valued at no less than 45,000 dollars. Innes later confirmed that it was in 'great demand'.\textsuperscript{168} Another much favoured type of material was marawdi kachi, or blue cotton cloth, some of which was locally unravelled for weaving purposes, and resulted according to Blondeel, in an import worth 37,500 dollars.\textsuperscript{169}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thick unbleached calicos</strong></td>
<td>Two types were imported: gham saliti, imports of which were valued, on Blondeel's estimation, at 5,075 dollars, and gham walayti, valued according to the same authority, at 2,250 dollars.\textsuperscript{170} D'Abbadie states that this material emanated from Bombay.\textsuperscript{171}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ordinary cloth</strong></td>
<td>Called sayera, described by Blondeel as of reddish colour, and imported to a value of 2,500 dollars.\textsuperscript{172} D'Abbadie describes it as an import from Bombay.\textsuperscript{173}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cashmeres</strong></td>
<td>The commonest type was said by Blondeel to be imported to a value of 1,250 dollars, while a printed variety, called sora, presumably because it was believed to come from Surat, was valued at 900 dollars.\textsuperscript{174} A significant import of silks, particularly of a red variety from Surat, was later noted by Heuglin.\textsuperscript{175}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Madapolam</strong>, a kind of white cotton cloth locally known as bafia according to d'Abbadie or bafi sagni, according to Blondeel who put its import at 300 dollars.\textsuperscript{176} D'Abbadie states that this material came from Bombay.\textsuperscript{177}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., I: 39.  
\textsuperscript{162} F.O., 1/4, p. 68 A.  
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{164} Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,300, p. 347.  
\textsuperscript{165} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.  
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{167} LEFEBVRE et al., II, Part II: 47.  
\textsuperscript{168} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34; PARKYNS, I: 343.  
\textsuperscript{169} BLONDEEL, loc. cit.  
\textsuperscript{170} LEFEBVRE et al., II, Part II: 47.  
\textsuperscript{171} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.  
\textsuperscript{172} Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,300, p. 347.  
\textsuperscript{173} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.  
\textsuperscript{174} Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,300, p. 347.  
\textsuperscript{175} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.  
\textsuperscript{176} HEUGLIN: 58.  
\textsuperscript{177} BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.  
\textsuperscript{178} Bibliothèque Nationale, F.N.A., 21,300, p. 347.
Other Indian textiles said by d’Abbadie to be imported from Bombay included white muslins, known as chah, melmel and doreas, a twilled muslin called spinati, red cotton prints, cotton handkerchiefs decorated in red, silk handkerchiefs, serviettes with red stripes and blue borders, coverlets of blue cotton or of silk and cotton, called melaya, and cloth marked with nigger’s heads.  

Glass beads from India, called gharas kiste hassal and seyttonna abiah, the imports of which were valued together, according to Blondeel, at no less than 34,700 dollars.  

Tobacco, apparently from Surat, imports of which were estimated by Blondeel at 9,000 dollars. The continued import of this commodity was noted a generation later by Heuglin.  

Pepper, valued, according to Blondeel, at 2,700 dollars, and, Lefebvre says, an article of ‘great consumption in Abyssinia and all the ports’.  

Various other spices, notably cloves, valued, according to Blondeel, at 500 dollars, essence of cloves, 300 dollars, and cinnamon, which, the French scientific mission says, was ‘sold in Abyssinia, as well as in all the ports of the Red Sea’.  

Rice, the imports of which were valued according to Blondeel, at 4,000 dollars. This commodity, the French scientific mission explains, was sold at all the southern Red Sea ports, but was not purchased by the Ethiopians.  

Other imports included chinaware, said by Blondeel to be valued at 150 dollars, nails, valued at 100 dollars, and pewter, which, the French scientific mission reports, was imported in ‘large quantities’ at all the Red Sea ports.  

The global pattern of imports from India was later given by Plowden in 1852 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suli (red bunging)</td>
<td>25,000 pieces</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroodi, Keshi</td>
<td>130,000 pieces</td>
<td>19,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco, Surati</td>
<td>90 bundles</td>
<td>13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroodi, Suradi</td>
<td>30,000 pieces</td>
<td>9,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korjan</td>
<td>475 cases</td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>108,000 lbs</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, Mahazem</td>
<td>500 pieces</td>
<td>6,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico, Seliti</td>
<td>8,000 pieces</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, silk, Surati</td>
<td>5,000 pieces</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth, red</td>
<td>1,800 pieces</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, Kesseer</td>
<td>12,000 pieces</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico</td>
<td>30,000 pieces</td>
<td>2,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, Shawader</td>
<td>5,000 pieces</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, cotton, Surati</td>
<td>8,000 pieces</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

179. Bibliothèque Nationale, E.N.A., 21,300, p. 347. See also BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid.
182. HEULIN: 58.
183. BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.
184. Lefebvre et al., II, Part II: 47.
185. BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.
186. Ibid.
187. Lefebvre et al., II, Part II: 47.
188. BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.
189. Lefebvre et al., II, Part II: 47.
190. BLONDEEL, Annexe 34.
191. Ibid.
192. Lefebvre et al., II, Part II: 47.
193. Correspondence—Abyssinia: 73. See also DOUCIN, III, Part I: 260.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pepper, black</td>
<td>150 bundles</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, Jarro</td>
<td>30,000 pieces</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damask</td>
<td>50 pieces</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, Kesshi Kani</td>
<td>1,500 pieces</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, black silk, Bengal</td>
<td>1,000 pieces</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico, printed</td>
<td>400 pieces</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>100 bundles</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damask, cotton velvet</td>
<td>150 pieces</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen cloth, inferior</td>
<td>20 bundles</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, powder</td>
<td>75 sacks</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc or solder</td>
<td>10,000 lbs</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, cotton</td>
<td>2,000 pieces</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth, coarse printed, Soora</td>
<td>2,000 pieces</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar candy</td>
<td>100 casks</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turbans</td>
<td>500 pieces</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cords</td>
<td>150 bundles</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee cups</td>
<td>8 boxes</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs, red silk, Surati</td>
<td>200 pieces</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvass</td>
<td>100 pieces</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico, Percala</td>
<td>1,000 pieces</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandal wood</td>
<td>4,000 lbs</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk, raw</td>
<td>200 papers</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planks</td>
<td>140 pieces</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damask, silk velvet</td>
<td>10 pieces</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>133,590 MT $</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such imports continued to arrive in the ensuing decades. Walker noted in 1863 that Massawa imported ‘quantities of red damask silk and coarse white cloths called *bafta*, as well as ‘moist sugar candy, printed cottons, coloured beads, and rice’,” while Rassam declared that ‘Bengal supplies rice; Surat silk and tobacco; Bombay, sugar, spices and cotton goods.’

The preponderance of Indian trade is evident from Plowden’s estimate that imports from the sub-continent made up a value of 133,590 dollars, while those from Arabia and Egypt, the other main sources of supply, were together valued at 73,045 dollars, i.e. little more than half. Rassam took a similar view, alleging that India engrossed ‘about two-thirds of the entire trade of the place’, and he adds: ‘The same remark applies to all the ports on the Red Sea, whether on the African or Arabian coast.

The Banyans of Massawa who handled the greater part of the port’s trade were nevertheless by this time beginning to feel that they might not survive the century unscathed. Talk of the projected Suez Canal, and hence of more direct commercial contacts with Europe, was naturally

195. RASSAM, I: 16.
197. RASSAM, I: 16.
a cause of uncertainty for traders based on India. Lejean suggests that
the Banyans in the late 1860's were concerned by the probability of
greater competition after the opening of the bahr jedid, or 'new river'
as they called the Canal.198

The establishment of Egyptian rule at Massawa in 1868 was another
source of worry for the Banyans who were soon complaining, as the British
agent at Aden reported on July 9 of the following year, that they were
'called upon by the Egyptian authorities' to pay 'sumbookeeyeh or
landing fees on all goods', a charge apparently never levied on them
before.199

The Banyans nevertheless maintained their position in commerce
throughout the Egyptian occupation as noted by several observers of the
1870's and early 1880's. The Earl of Mayo for example declared that
the exports of Massawa were 'mostly shipped by the Hindoo Banians,
who have had a monopoly of the trade of this place for many years',200
while his compatriot De Cosson stated that there were 'great numbers
of Banyans' at the port who acted 'as "go-between", through whose
hands passes the greater part of the trade from the interior'.201 Heuglin
likewise opined that the bigger houses at the port still belonged to the
Indian merchants,202 while Hamilton, a British traveller, affirmed that
'whole street was monopolised by these industrious people who are
imbued with the mercantile spirit. They carry on a rich trade in ivory
and pearls', he adds, 'and it is notorious that they are fairer in their
dealings than their Arab competitors.'203

The situation in the early 1880's, on the eve of the Italian occupation,
was later explained by the French traveller Gabriel Simon who states that
there were still 'very great numbers' of Banyans at Massawa, who,
because of their relatively low costs, offered European traders strong
competition,204 while the Italian traveller Pennazzi recorded that the
Banyans were still 'commercially speaking the most important colony'
at Massawa.205

By this time the Banyans seem to have increased significantly in
numbers, for a British report for 1884 stated that there were then fifty
or sixty Banians who have important trade with India, and monopolise
the trafficking in the Bazaar',206 while Mantegazza, a later Italian writer,

198 G. Lejean, 'Voyage au Taka (Haute Nubie)', Le Tour du Monde XL
(1885): 154.
200 Mayo: 8.
also Douin, III, Part II: 531.
202 Heuglin: 53. See also W. Mc Dye, Moslem Egypt and Christian Abys
sinia (New York, 1880): 162.
204 G. Simon, L'Ethiopie, ses mœurs, ses traditions (Paris, 1885): 15. See
also Douin, III, Part III: 1242.
205 L. Pennazzi, Da Po ai due Nili (Milano, 1885): 73.
206 F.O., 403/82, Baring, 7.10.1884.
noted that they were ‘increasing and multiplying without interference’.

Banyan traders at this time were still to the fore in both export and import business. Pennazzi stated that they monopolised the trade of mother-of-pearl, gold, civet, coffee and other commodities with which they effected their payments and paid for their expeditions to India, while Negri observed that these Indian traders were still largely concerned with the trade in ivory, for which they were in direct contact with London, and imported silks and cottons from India. He also stated that the Banyans of Massawa had at their disposal ‘enormous sums’ furnished by Indian and English houses, and adds:

“They devote themselves to small as well as large-scale trade; their shops are the cleanest and best furnished of the market, and they afforded the other traders successful competition on account of the good quality of their calicoes whose colours, especially the red, are most fast, and of exceptionally low price.”

The Banyans of the 1880's were furthermore still prominent as money-lenders, and, in Mantegazza's opinion, 'exploited the poor people by usury', it being said that it took seven Greeks to make a Banyan. Indian businessmen were similarly important as jewellers, and, according to Mantegazza, controlled the retail sale in jewelry, with the result, he complains, that the ‘natives’ of the port spent ‘all that they earned’ on rings and bracelets for their women, and ‘all the money’ of the ‘natives’ therefore ended in the pockets of the Banyans or more correctly in the money bags which they carried round their waists.

Despite their commercial and cultural significance at the port the Banyans were essentially temporary residents who came to Massawa to earn quick profits before returning home. Denis de Rivoyre stated that gaining such ‘enormous profits each after some years returns home to eat the fruit of his labour, while a brother, relative or friend takes his place to become rich in his turn’, while Negri observed that the Banyans, who came from Bombay and Madras and were representatives of Indian and English firms, were ‘for the greater part very young,’ and ‘do not bring their women to Massawa nor do they themselves remain there long; on average they remain there from 3 to 5 years, and, alive or dead, return to their own country’.

The Italian occupation of Massawa in 1885, though destined in the long run to destroy the former monopoly position of the Banyans, was at first a lucrative affair. Mantegazza claimed that during the sojourn of the Italian troops the Indian traders ‘gained much’, for whenever an

208. Pennazzi: 65, 73. See also Mantegazza: 28-29, 238.
210. Ibid.
211. Mantegazza: 28. See also: 238.
212. Ibid.: 28.
Italian entered one of their shops they invariably asked twice the price at which they were willing to sell, and it was not unusual to pay 20 lire for an object for which 80 or even 100 had been asked. The Indians, he explained, also took great pains to sell their wares. They frequently travelled eight or ten kilometres to the soldiers’ most advanced positions, and while the Italians were at mess would improvise shops in a corner of the barracks and wait with a patience which at times seemed to border on resignation, waiting to discuss prices, and would often show their merchandise ten times before they succeeded in selling it, in many cases only for a few lire. The Banyans were, however, always content, for they invariably made a profit.\footnote{215}

These industrious merchants were now perhaps at the height of their wealth. A British report for 1886, the year after the Italian occupation of the port, stated that they were no less than 70 to 80 strong,\footnote{216} while a subsequent report emphasised that they were still commercially very prominent.

‘The Indians, chiefly Banians and Parsees,’ it declares, ‘send to Bombay ivory, gold and pearls and import muslins, gauze, etc. [. . .] The Banians are the principal exporters of ivory, and they almost monopolise the banking and credit business of the district, from the smallest transactions up to large and usurious loans.’ Emphasising the international character of many such financial arrangements the report adds: ‘Most of the European traders are employed by or have close dealings with large business houses at Genova, Trieste, Marseille, etc., which provide the necessary capital through the Bombay correspondents of some London firm connected with them. The credit is given in Sterling by the London house, converted into rupees in Bombay, and again into dollars (the currency of Massowah) by the Banian bankers. It thus passes through three intermediaries before being brought into active use.’\footnote{217}

The very success of the Banyans nevertheless earned them the dislike of the Italians who were in any case anxious to dominate the commerce of their newly acquired colony, and disturbed by the intense competition created for them by the traders from India.\footnote{218} The Italian writers of this period, therefore, refer to the Banyans with disfavour,\footnote{219} and on occasion expressed chagrin that Italian merchants could succeed only with difficulty in capturing trade from their much longer established Indian competitors.\footnote{220} Another cause for complaint, as voiced for example by Mantegazza, was that the Banyans contributed little to the colony because they consumed ‘scarce anything’ and all that they earned they sent back to their own country, to their families or to the employers who gave them a percentage of their takings.\footnote{221}

\footnote{215} Mantegazza: 238. \footnote{216} F.O., 403/38, Lambton, 21.12.1886. \footnote{217} F.O., 403/38, Beaufort, 12.10.1886. \footnote{218} F. Fasolo, L’Abissinia e le colonie italiane sul Mar Rosso (Caserta, 1887): 112. \footnote{219} Negri: ii. See also Mantegazza: 28-29. \footnote{220} Negri, loc. cit. \footnote{221} Mantegazza: 238.
The Banyans soon found themselves under unfriendly pressure from the Italian administration with the result that in October 1887 Ali Abdoola Dossel, Minahim Missa and some thirty other Indians at Massawa petitioned the British government to appoint a consul for their protection. Outlining the history of the community they declared:

'We are merchants dealing generally with the Indian goods for many years. In the rule of Ottoman and Egyptian governments we were quite happy and prosperous, and they always offered us their possible assistance and encouragement in all our mercantile and private affairs. [. . .] Now, since the Italian government occupied this port, many difficulties and inconveniences have come in our way that are impossible to overcome without a British consul here.' The traders went on to complain of Italian taxes, fines for late registration as aliens, and, somewhat mysteriously, of 'several matters which we deemed not advisable to state here.'

Despite the advent of Italian colonial rule, and the resultant tendency to encourage Italian rather than Indian enterprise, the Banyans maintained their commercial dominance throughout the latter years of the century. Alamanni reported in 1890 that there were then no less than a hundred Banyans at the port, eight of them major traders. All but one of these were described as representatives of Indian firms, wholesale merchants for textiles and 'Indian goods', and dealers in skins and gold. The list comprised:

- Frangi Daramchi, representative of the firm of Nelgh.
- Damchi, for whom no representation is given.
- Juer Santangi, representative of Karranée Premji.
- Demji Cachera, representative of Danasan Rangongi.
- Catamgi Matamsan, representative of Fonto Marangi.
- Tigamgi Randas, representative of Guenci.
- Ali Dassal, for whom no representation is given.

Banyans, Alamanni explains, were thus still prominent in the export of ivory and gold, which they despatched to Bombay in return for the produce of India and other parts of Asia, such as cloths, muslins, printed cottons, as well as cotton cloths from Europe. The importance of the Banyans at the close of the century was likewise recognised by Martini who stated that they held 'the principal part' of Massawa's trade in their hands, while Italian trade figures, which begin to be available early in the twentieth century, indicate that Eritrea's imports from India in 1902 were still running at 3,124,900 lire, or 39.5% of total imports, the corresponding figure for imports from Italy being only 1,582,561 lire, or 20%. By 1907, however, imports from India had

222. F.O., 403/90, Baring, 20.10.1887.
223. ALAMANNI: 177.
224. Ibid.: 191.
225. Ibid.
226. Ibid.: 284.
dropped to 2,091,591 lire, or 19.7% of the total, while imports from Italy had risen to 4,909,594 lire, or 46.3%, the relative importance of Indian and Italian imports having thus been more than reversed in less than a decade. Eritrean exports to India fell even more drastically from 344,911 lire in 1902 to 14,152 lire in 1907, while exports to Italy rose from 284,049 lire to 389,959 lire.228

Banking at Massawa towards the end of the century was also still largely controlled by the Banyans, who with the coming of European traders, acted as intermediaries between them and the commercial houses of both Britain and India. The Banyans, Alamanni explains, were thus ‘if not the sole, at least the principal credit intermediaries between the Red Sea, Europe and Asia, lenders of money, purchasers of cheques on India, and the regulators of currency exchanges’.229

The role of the Banyans and Indian trading houses, as outlined by the same authority was as follows: A European trading concern desirous of obtaining capital to finance its operations at Massawa would request a corresponding firm in London which had relations with a trading house in Bombay to authorise the latter to open a credit for a certain amount with an agent or correspondent at Massawa. The London house would request this credit in sterling and the Bombay house would grant the equivalent in rupees by supplying the agent at Massawa with a book of cheques or assignat for the amount of credit allowed. The dealer at Massawa when in need of money had only to detach the cheques and hand them, or the assignat, over to the local Banyans who would pay him in Maria-Theresa dollars, the money currently used at the port. The Banyans would then send the cheques or assignat to Bombay where they would be refunded, in rupees, by the house which had originally issued them.

Meanwhile with the object of repaying the amount which had thus been made available to him the agent at Massawa would make out a bill of exchange payable by the London house which had originally acted as surety for the credit, in favour of the Bombay house which had actually furnished it. When this bill was honoured by the London house the latter would inform the European house which had originally asked for the credit, and would debit its account accordingly. In this way, with the assistance of three intermediaries, and with the balancing of three different currencies, the credit operation was completed, the Banyans and the Indian trading houses having played a vitally important rôle in the financing of European commercial enterprise.230 In these operations the Banyans, Alamanni concludes, ‘displayed all the proverbial ability of their caste’ in its ‘familiarity with the complicated functions of credit, not disdaining the most insignificant profits, and

228. Id., Allegati alla Relazione sulla Colonia Eritrea (Roma, 1913), III: 1199, 1201, 1203, 1353, 1363.
229. ALTMANNI: 284.
practising usury on those whose lack of guarantee or urgency of need put them in a condition of inferiority in face of the lender’.  

A significant consequence of the Banyans’ banking and financial activity was, as Alemanni notes, that ‘Anglo-Indian money’, i.e. currency based on the rupee, was acceptable at Massawa in the 1890’s.

Assab

Though the coming of the Italians to Massawa posed a threat to Indian commercial dominance, several Banyans took advantage of the Italian development of the more southerly port of Assab. A number of Banyans accordingly made their way to that port where by 1886 they were said by Alamanni to have numbered twenty-one men and two women.

The Ethiopian Interior

The trade above-discussed between India and the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden ports had its repercussions far into the Ethiopian interior which was dependent on the coast for most of its imports. Such merchandise was distributed by caravans from Massawa which, as Plowden observed, brought inland various goods imported from Bombay by Indian traders, while Denis de Rivoyre later exclaimed that it was ‘thanks to their perseverent action and their industrious efforts’ that the caravans from the port made their way into the interior to obtain the country’s exports, as well as to procure the silver dollars which were penetrating the area.

The Banyans though thus exerting significant influence on the Massawa-based caravans do not appear to have often actually travelled inland themselves, though some of them did make their way to Aliu Amba, the principal market of early 19th century Shoa. Johnston reported in the 1840’s that he found there Indians and Persians with both of whom he conversed and ‘gratified’ them with ‘the relation of all the latest news from their respective countries’.

Indian merchandise, mainly textiles, can be discerned in markets in many parts of the country. Combes and Tamisier for example stated that blue cloth from India was on sale at many markets throughout the land, while the extensive supply of such textiles was later confirmed by Plowden who observed that goods from the sub-continent included calicos, plain and printed, scarlet cloth, red and blue Indians, or India

232. Ibid.: 275.
233. Ibid.: 308.
235. Denis de Rivoyre: 47.
237. Combes & Tamisier, IV: 111.
piece goods, ‘in large quantities’, as well as velvet and muslins.238 There was also a significant use of unspun Indian cotton, Plowden observing that the Ethiopians ‘purchased raw cotton from Bombay which they spun at home’.239 and Munzinger that locally produced cotton being insufficient in quantity was hence often mixed with cotton from Surat which the Banyans brought to Massawa.240 Another valuable import from India was silks, mentioned by Salt, Plowden, and later by the Armenian priest Dimotheos who recalled that merchants dealt extensively in Indian silk materials of various colours, the red being, however, the most esteemed.241 Indian velvets were also much prized, the Greek merchant Cossika recording that many of the most sacred church vestments were made of gold-embroidered velvet from India.242 Mention may also be made of Indian carpets, many of which, according to Plowden, were ‘of brilliant colours’,243 and found their way, as Matteucci says, into the houses of many an Ethiopian nobleman.244

Indian furniture was also occasionally imported into Ethiopia as a luxury. The French traveller Soleillet reported that in the southwest of the country, the Moti, or local ruler, of Jema used as his throne a sculptured wooden bed encrusted with silver, and also had beside him a similar large wooden chair, both of which appeared to be of Indian workmanship.245

There was, finally, extensive import of black pepper and other spices from India and the East which played a significant role in the Ethiopian diet throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as mentioned by numerous foreign travellers of the past.246

Indian commerce, which, as we have seen, was at its most important in the field of textiles, seems to have had a significant cultural impact. Imports of cotton cloth into the Amharic-speaking country were so considerable that it became customary in the early nineteenth century to refer to such material as hendaké, i.e. pertaining to India, as noted by Isenberg in 1841 and a generation or so later by d’Abbadie who defines it as a type of cotton cloth ‘which comes from India and is dyed red’, a formula later repeated by the Italian dictionary-maker Guidi.247

239. Ibid.
240. Munzinger: 49.
244. P. Matteucci, In Abissinia (Milano, 1880): 86.
245. P. Soleillette, Voyages en Éthiopie (Rouen, 1886): 177.
Certain types of cloth were also referred to in Amharic as *sorat* or *sorati*, i.e. produce of Surat, the port from which so much cloth was exported. The word was used, according to Isenberg, for 'every merchandise [. . .] which is supposed to come from that city', and in particular for 'a sort of coarse blue or red cotton-cloth known by the name of Surat-cloth'.

Tobacco, which was also largely imported from Surat, was likewise often spoken of in this period as *sorat* or *sorati*. Isenberg translates these terms as applying to 'tobacco-leaves which are ground for snuff; snuff itself', the latter equivalence being also noted by d'Abbadie, and later, at the turn by still another dictionary-maker Armbruster. The word *surati* had an identical meaning in the Gallinya language as recorded early in the twentieth century by Foot and later by Gaetano da Thiene.

Contact with Indian merchants seems moreover to have been the cause of a curious secret method of communication between merchants which was practiced in the first part of the century at Basso market in Gojam as well as in all probability at other commercial centres. This practice was described at the time by Beke who noted that

> . . . the principals or their brokers, seated on the ground, take each other's hand—the hands being covered with their cloths, so that they may not be seen, and then by a peculiar grasping or pressing of the fingers they make known the price which they are respectively willing to give or accept. A few examples,' he adds, 'will best explain this. Having first settled between themselves whether the price in question is to be in gold (ounces), in silver (dollars), or in salt (ámoles), they then, if the price is in ámoles, for fifty grasp the whole five fingers; for forty, only four. For sixty they first grasp the whole five, and say "this", and then, after a momentary pause, add "and this", accompanying the latter words with the pressure of one only. One hundred ámoles would be five fingers and then again five, or simply a single finger; 110, one finger alone, saying "this"—"and this", and pressing it twice; 120 would, of course, be first one finger and then two. If the price is settled in silver or gold, then it will be two, three or four fingers according to the value; and subdivisions of the *wökiet* are made known by pressing the nail of the finger on the forefinger of the other part, the end-joint being one third, the second joint or middle of the finger one half, and the middle of the first phalanx three quarters. As it mostly happens that several persons are interested—or, if not so, at all events take part in the transaction as friends or advisers, its progress is communicated to them by the principals through their other hands, which are in like manner hindered through their cloths; and thus the price can be passed on in succession to an indefinite number of individuals, without its being once openly named. When any of these think the amount offered sufficient, they cry out "sell, sell",

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248. Isenberg, I: 54.

249. *Ibid.* The word Surat does not seem to have had this connotation in Anglo-Indian usage where it was used only for the place. See H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (London, 1886): 664.


and should the conclusion of the bargain be long delayed, the cry is repeated, making a curious impression on the by-stander, who may not happen to be aware of what is going on."

This method of conducting business which Beke found so surprising had in all probability been introduced by Indian traders, for half a century earlier the Scottish explorer James Bruce had been 'much astonished' at seeing 'two Indian brokers' follow almost identical procedure at Jeddah, while the sixteenth century Italian traveller Ludovico Di Vathema indicates that it was already widely employed in his day at Calicut, one of the homes of Indian textiles.

Harar

Harar, the great Muslim trading centre of eastern Ethiopia, also had its Indian commercial contacts. One of its emirs, Ahmad bin Abu Bakr (1852-1866), was described by Burton as sitting on 'a common Indian Kursi, or raised cot, about five feet long, with back and sides supported by a dwarf railing', while several of the leading Harari traders are said to have later travelled to India. Local tradition, as recorded by Yusuf Ahmad, recalls the names of three such merchants, namely Aw Sid Hamo, Aw Abdullah Idris and Nuri Mohammed Murad el-Kurd, the latter having visited Bombay.

Such contacts with India were intensified by Menelik's occupation of Harar in 1887, which opened up the city to Indian commercial enterprise. The ensuing period of Ethiopian rule was followed by the appearance in the city of a rapidly growing number of Indian traders. One of the first to arrive, according to the subsequent Greek historian Zervos, was Rajya Ratna Mohamadally Sharafally who established the important firm of Goolamally Mohamedally and Company in the city as early as 1888 and enjoyed particularly good relations with the governor, Ras Makonnen.

Increasing numbers of Indians arrived in Harar in the next few years, and by 1897 the British envoy Gleichen reported that 'the bazaar was

253. J. BRUCE, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile (Edinburgh, 1870), I: 277-278.
255. BURTON, I: 206.
258. Ibid.: 189-190.
mostly inhabited by Indians of whom there seemed to be a large number in the town, and of whom the chief bankers and merchants are British subjects, and rejoice in the name of Benin and Taib Ali.'

A few years later, at the turn of the century, the French traveller Charles Michel noted that Bombay silk and cheap muslins from India were ‘selling rapidly through the hands of the subtle merchants’ from India and that the only ‘noisy and bustling’ street in Harar was that bordered by the small shops of the Hindoos, whom he described as ‘modest but cunning traders who lived stingily and prospered’.

Baird, a British official, likewise observed that printed cotton handkerchiefs, cloths and turbans were brought to the city from Bombay, while the Frenchman Leymarie stated that the Indians held a good proportion of the trade of Harar in their hands. Another French traveller Hugues Le Roux confirmed that this commerce was largely in the hands of two Indian houses from Bombay, notably Mohammed Ali and Taib Ali-Akbarali, and quoted a European trader as complaining of their competition, declaring: ‘How do you expect us to compete with these Banian Hindoos on the plane of retail trade? They live like birds, without a farthing of expense, without needs, without representation expenses of any kind: they are content with a piastre’s profit on a piece of cloth which they sell by the cubit.’

Other advantages enjoyed by the Indians, according to Le Roux, lay in the fact that the freight charges from India to Zeila were low, and that the customs taxes levied on the route from Zeila inland were not high.

The official use of Indian currency in British Somaliland and the importance of Indian traders in Harar resulted in the latter years of the century in the use of Indian money in the area of that city, where Rennell Rodd noted on April 6, 1897, that though the Maria-Theresa dollar was ‘the universally recognised coinage, [. . .] silver two-anna pieces are current as subdivisions, 13 or 14 being reckoned to the dollar and designated as piastres’. He adds that business with the Indian merchants could also be done ‘to a certain extent in rupees’.

The fighting against the ‘Mad Mullah’ in the early twentieth century had the incidental effect of extending the use of Indian currency far into eastern Ethiopia. Jennings and Assison reported that rupees were at that time accepted at Harar and ‘as far as Gildersa and Jigjiga’, though usually at a discount of two annas per rupee, while two-anna pieces were ‘freely accepted’ as far as Kunna.

263. H. LEYMARIE, Un Dieppois en Abyssinie (Dieppe, 1900): 150.
266. F.O., 1/33, p. 11.
267. JENNINGS & ADDISON: 193.
The advent of the Indian trader was accompanied by the coming of Indian craftsmen, who were used by Ras Makonnen to build his palace as noted by several foreign travellers, among them Wylde, Gleichen, Montandon and the American envoy Skinner who describes it as a ‘most imposing structure’ of ‘Arab-Indian design’. Gleichen, who saw the work in progress, observes that the building was ‘striking, for at each corner of the square roof were wooden figures, larger than life, representing soldiers, and evidently English soldiers, for, although the helmet was replaced by a broad-rimmed hat, they carried rifles over their shoulders, and their tunics were painted red’. Gleichen who saw the work in progress observes that the building was ‘striking, for at each corner of the square roof were wooden figures, larger than life, representing soldiers, and evidently English soldiers, for, although the helmet was replaced by a broad-rimmed hat, they carried rifles over their shoulders, and their tunics were painted red’.269

Harar’s Indian community continued to increase in the first decades of the twentieth century,270 which also witnessed a growing Indian population at the nearby railway town of Dire Dawa after its establishment in 1902. The Belgian Henin reported in 1907 that the principal traders at the latter town included four Indian firms, the ubiquitous Golam Ali Mohammed Ali, Djevadji, Golam Ali Seraf Ali and Menaem Messa of Aden who was locally known as Benin, while a decade or so later, in 1921, the Georgian writer Dr. Méраб noted that the Indians in the Harar area were about fifty strong, and added:

‘At Harar as at Dire Dawa almost all retail trade is in the possession of Indians of the tribe of the Banians, Brahmins by religion, and other Indians of Bombay, of the Muslim religion. Of the latter two houses are above all remarkable, Mohamed Ali and Djevadji who have immense oriental bazaars where one finds everything, even articles of tobacco, gassy lemonade, ivory, skins. [.. .] With their economical and hard working life, their skill as refined traders, I do not say the Europeans but even the Arabs, Armenians and Greeks cannot compete.’271

Little more than a decade later at the time of the Italian invasion of 1935 there were, according to Zervos, no less than about fifty Indian trading houses at Harar, Dire Dawa and Jigjiga.274 Indian contacts at Harar, and in some instances also in the British Somaliland Protectorate led to a significant linguistic impact on Amharic and other languages of the area. Familiarity with Indian coins, most probably at Harar, led to the adopting in Amharic of the Indian monetary term paisa. The word was employed during the reign of Menelik for some of that smaller coins which were referred to fairly indiscriminately as bésa. The term was employed, according to both

269. Gleichen: 56. See also Baird: 18.
270. F. Rosen, Eine deutsche Gesandschaft in Abessinien (Leipzig, 1907): 68.
Montandon and Eadie, for the \(\frac{1}{64}\) of a dollar piece, though Guidi later equated it with one of \(\frac{1}{32}\) of a dollar.\(^{275}\)

Traders handling Indian cloth, in the Harar area for example, often referred to them by Indian names, among them \textit{bengali} and \textit{labatboor} as Barbey reports.\(^{276}\)

Familiarity with India, be it through the Indian traders or Europeans who had travelled to the sub-continent, led to the adoption of the Hindustani word \textit{gari} for the carts which were introduced into Dire Dawa early in the century where they were widely employed by Europeans there as Montandon noted in 1909.\(^{277}\) \textit{Gari} thus became the standard Gallinya word for cart as shortly afterwards recorded by Foot,\(^{278}\) and, during the Italian occupation and afterwards, came into common usage in Amharic as \textit{gari} as reported by the Ethiopian linguist Kasati Berhan Tasama.\(^{279}\)

Similar developments can be seen in the Somali area, where several Indian imports became known by terms related to the sub-continent, Indians themselves being referred to, in almost the same way as in Amharic, as \textit{Baniyil} (i.e. Banians) and \textit{Hindi}.\(^{280}\) Snuff was thus spoken of in Somali, as in Amharic and Gallinya, as \textit{surati}, i.e. a produce of Surat,\(^{281}\) while sugar much of which came from Bengal was called \textit{bengali}, as the German linguist Reinische notes.\(^{282}\) Pepper, another major import from India, was given the name \textit{filfil}, a corruption of the Hindustani, which may well, however, have reached the Somalis by way of Arabic.\(^{283}\)

The Somalis also came to know at least two Indian coins: the rupee which they corrupted in the late nineteenth century into \textit{rubi}, \textit{rubbad} or \textit{rupiyad},\(^{284}\) and the \textit{paisa} which was rendered as \textit{besad}, the equivalent, according to the British linguist R. C. Abraham, of a ‘half-penny’.\(^{285}\)

Several terms connected with the British Somali Protectorate regime


\(^{276}\) BARDEY: 45.

\(^{277}\) MONTANDON: 15-16.

\(^{278}\) FOOT: 22, 67. See also DA THIENE: 25.


\(^{281}\) REINISCHE: 350; LITTMANN: 416.

\(^{282}\) REINISCHE: 85; LITTMANN, \textit{loc. cit.} In India the term \textit{bengal} was, as Yule and Burnell note, normally used instead for a kind of piece good exported from that area. YULE & BURNELL: 65.


\(^{284}\) Evangelist DE LARAJASSE: 118; REINISCHE: 318; LITTMANN: 416; ABRAHAM: 212.

and its officials, many of whom had connections with India, were also derived from Indian words. The most important included:

- *banger*, for ‘police’, from the Hindustani *pahar* ‘to capture’;
- *tamkug*, for ‘a tent’, from the Hindustani *tambu*;
- *gari* or *gadi*, for ‘a cart’, from the Hindustani, a term, as we have seen, also used at Dire Dawa;
- *bangad* or *bänkad*, for fly swat or ‘fan’, from the Hindustani *bankha*;
- *gando*, ‘a bell’, from the Sanscrit *gahnta*;
- *bangalo* from the Anglo-Indian ‘bungalow’.

*Addis Ababa*

On arriving at Harar shortly after its occupation by Menelik the Indians rapidly made their way to his capital, Addis Ababa, where they appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth century. They were reported at the Imperial Palace as early as 1894, but did not become very numerous until after the opening up of Anglo-Ethiopian relations in 1897 and the subsequent establishment of a British agency in the Ethiopian capital which greatly facilitated their immigration from British India. Michel records that in December 1899 a multitude of Hindoo traders settled on the capital, while Powell-Cotton noted that they soon established themselves, together with the Greeks in their own distinctive quarter to the south-east of the market.

The French commercial community, which was then dominant at Addis Ababa, was naturally disturbed by the coming of the Indians against whom it was unable to compete. The leading French merchant Savouré was described by Baird in December 1899 as ‘gloomy about trade’, which, he complained ‘was all going into the hands of Greeks and Indians’. Referring to the latter Baird adds that Savouré was ‘very bitter against them, and could not understand how they managed to sell the same goods as he at less than their cost price to him’.

This phenomenon was also discussed at about this time by Michel, who, looking at the question from the French standpoint, states disapprovingly of the Indians:

286. Reinische: 85; Littmann, *loc. cit.*
294. Michel: 529.
296. Baird: 42.
Not only did they encumber the market with a considerable abundance of merchandise: cotton goods, cotton prints, muslins, cheap silks, spices, perfumes and varied toys, but they offered their articles to the natives at derisory prices, either because their need of money obliged them to liquidate immediately and at the loss of part of their stock or because the Hindoos did not count their time, lived stingily and obtained from the natives lower transport prices than Europeans. The Abyssinians and Gallas,' he adds, 'will moreover always prefer a Hindoo stall, or even an Armenian or Greek, to a shop held by a European because they will more readily discuss the price with a trader who is similar to them in spirit and habits.'

French trade, Michel complains, was particularly seriously affected by competition from Indian traders supplied from Bombay and above all from Aden, who had much lower transport costs than their rivals importing from Europe.\textsuperscript{298} The Indians, according to same observer, also benefited from the fact that the British minister, Harrington, had persuaded the Emperor that British goods should not be held more than 24 hours in the customs, whereas French goods often had to wait four or five days.\textsuperscript{299} Yet another factor favouring the Indians, according to the British traveller Vivian, was that the Indians derived 'considerable advantage' from a British-operated weekly postal service between Addis Ababa and Zeila, which was available to all British subjects, whereas their rivals had to rely on the French-run service which, he claims, was 'unsafe and irregular'.\textsuperscript{300}

By the turn of the century the triumph of the Indian traders in Addis Ababa was in fact assured. Powell-Cotton, noting that the 'latest arrivals' in the Ethiopian capital were 'several Indian firms', comments: 'Owing to their thrifty habits they are finding a ready sale for articles for which it was thought there would be no ready sale. Instead of sending cash to the coast they lay it out in ivory, civet, and gold, and so secure a double profit.'\textsuperscript{301} Vivian, referring to French complaints about the competition, likewise notes: 'The fact is that an Indian can travel about with one servant, and a minimum of personal baggage, whereas a French merchant travels like a prince, with great retinue and every conceivable luxury.'\textsuperscript{302}

Indian commercial predominance in Addis Ababa was by now overwhelming. The British envoy Rennell Rodd stated that the Ethiopian capital's imports from India in 1897 included white cotton stuffs, coloured muslins, striped printed cottons, yellow cotton linings, coloured cotton handkerchiefs, woollen shawls in gay colours, and braid, one pattern of which was commonly used as a belt,\textsuperscript{303} while a few years later Powell-

\textsuperscript{297} MICHEL: 523. 
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{300} VIVIAN: 179. 
\textsuperscript{301} POWELL-COTTON: 118. 
\textsuperscript{302} DUCHESNE-FOURNET, I: 60; Lord HINDLIP, \textit{Sport and Travel in Abyssinia and British East Africa} (London, 1906): 57. 
\textsuperscript{303} F.O., 1/33, p. 48.
Cotton noted that at Addis Ababa market there was ‘one long alley [. . .] devoted to cotton goods’, a large proportion of them from India, though others came from America and Manchester.304

Early in the twentieth century Lord Hindlip discovered that ‘most of Addis Ababa’s trade was by then carried on by Indians’,305 while Annaratone, an Italian observer, reported that the Banyans were as of yore the principal purchasers of ivory.306

Several large Indian firms had by now come to the fore, notably Golam Ali Mohammed Ali which, according to Martini, held in its hands ‘all the commerce of the capital’,307 as well as ‘almost all the trade of the empire’.308 The firm had obtained a monopoly on the coffee trade from the Emperor, and was known to enjoy good relations with both Menelik and his consort Empress Taytu, to each of whom it was just then presenting two beautiful silver-gilt mule accoutrements to the value of 700 Maria-Theresa dollars apiece. The Emperor, it was reported, had just given the firm an order for 500 skin cloaks, each selling for 300 dollars, i.e. an order worth no less than 150,000 dollars.309 Other prominent Indian firms mentioned by Henin and others, included Djevadji and Menaem Messa, also known as Benin, and a third Indian concern Akbar Ali.310

The coming of Indian traders to Addis Ababa was accompanied as at Harar by that of Indian craftsmen who played a notable role in construction work at the capital. Tradition among the Addis Ababa Indian community suggests that one of the first Indian craftsmen to arrive was Haji Khawas man from Peshawar who was employed in building the church of Raguel at Entoto, Menelik’s first church in the Addis Ababa area, and probably arrived in the late 1880’s.311 He was later described by Gleichen as ‘the chief court carpenter and constructor, and executor of commercial commissions for Menelik, and member besides of a few other trades’. The envoy describes him as ‘a wily and successful merchant’, and adds: ‘In outward appearance he is a big, wild-looking old gentleman, who looked like an Afghan chief, with his hooked nose and hawk’s eye. [. . .] But he treated us with great politeness, and offered to sell us a heap of ivory which had just come in.’312

By the early 1890’s a number of Indian craftsmen were at work building various edifices in Menelik’s palace compound in Addis Ababa. The chronicle of Gabra Sellasé states that the small church of Gabriel at the palace was erected with the help of workers from Hend, i.e. India.

304. Powell-Cotton: 113. See also Gleichen: 165.
305. Hindlip: 57.
308. Ibid.: 469.
309. Ibid.: 426. See also Henin: 136.
310. Henin, loc. cit. See also Montandon: 377.
who 'cut and polished the stones', and that 'the work was exceedingly beautiful, except that the church was a little small'. Gleichen reported in 1897 that there were then 'half a dozen Indians' at the palace, while Lord Hindlip asserted that they 'erected most of the buildings, including the Gibi', i.e. the palace. These Indian craftsmen had a good reputation, one Addis Ababa resident cited by Gleichen going so far as to state that they and the Armenians were 'the only workers of any use' in the capital.

The Indians at the palace were financially quite well off as indicated by the British reporter A. B. Wylde, who relates that at the time of his visit in 1897, 'Arab and Indian masons were dressing stone', and he adds: 'These men had all come from Aden and were getting much higher wages than they could procure there. They told me that they also received rations from the King, and that they were saving nearly all their pay. The blocks of stone they were dressing were intended for the king's private dwelling.'

The craftsmen left a significant Indian imprint on the work. Powell-Cotton observed that the palace was 'distinctly Indian in style', his compatriot Hohler noted that the audience hall was 'painted by Indian workmen in the most brilliant colours', and Montandon that in the palace compound there were 'several buildings of bright colours built by the Hindoos'.

The coming of the Indian craftsmen was, it may be added of great convenience to Menelik, in that it provided him with skilled craftsmen then otherwise most difficult to find, and, as Wylde argues, released the Emperor from his previous dependence on Western missionaries. 'Now that he can procure as many Indian artisans of all sorts as he likes from Bombay via Aden, or Arabs from that port,' the Englishman declared, 'he does not want the missionary as he is more trouble than he is worth.'

Craftsmen from India were also employed in the first years of the twentieth century at Addis Alam, the site of Menelik's projected new capital. They were engaged, as the Italian physician De Castro notes, as foremen and masons in stone and lime work on the remarkable edifice which Menelik first intended as a palace but later turned into the church of St. Mary. These craftsmen at one point incurred the monarch's

316. Gleichen: 166.
318. Powell-Cotton: 94.
322. L. De Castro, Nella terra dei Negus (Milano, 1915), I: 244, plate 114.
anger by holding a strike—the first such event recorded in Ethiopian history. Le Roux reports that they then made a 'great story' of the protection they claimed from the British Legation, and that Menelik, who went down to Addis Alam to superintend the work, being 'accustomed to the obedience of large and small alike, displayed in the face of this infinite arrogance of foreigners, the anger of a lion attacked by mosquitoes'.

The British envoy Harrington nevertheless succeeded in resolving the dispute, and notes in a report of May, 1902, that one of the nobles, Fitawrari Hapta Giyorgis, told him that 'the king had got vexed because one of the Indians whom he particularly well treated wanted to leave him.' Menelik however, was soon placated, and continued to make use of his Indian building workers, the German traveller Kulmer later reporting in 1907 that these masons made a picturesque sight in the capital.

The Emperor also found Indian craftsmen useful in other fields of activity. A number of them early in the century were employed, together with Armenians, at the palace workshop as noted by the French traveller Collat. It is characteristic of the versatility of these Indians that one of them, a Parsee called Edalji, on the arrival of Addis Ababa's first motor car in 1907, became the Emperor's personal chauffeur.

Indian building craftsmen though at first working almost entirely for the Emperor later offered their services to anyone willing to employ them. De Castro indicates that towards the end of Menelik's reign a person of substance wanting a house or piece of furniture constructed would apply to an Indian craftsman, while Mérab explains that Indian craftsmen constructed the palaces of Menelik's nobles, several of whom in consequence lived in buildings of 'oriental' style. Indian craftsmen, he adds, also built a number of churches, as well as 'elegant edifices, and bridges'. Their popularity as builders owed much to the fact that they were able to put up edifices at half the price demanded by Greeks and a quarter of that by Italians.

Besides the building craftsmen there were also a number of other Indian artisans in Addis Ababa. By the time of World War I they included, tailors and jewellers, as well as one of the leading photographers, J. Mody.

Indian commercial dominance in Addis Ababa continued throughout...

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324. F.O., I/40, Harrington, 3.5.1902.
325. F. Kulmer, Im Reiche Kaiser Meneliks (Leipzig, 1910): 149.
331. Ibid.: 112.
332. Ibid. See also E. Waugh, Waugh in Abyssinia (London, 1936): 64.
333. Zervos: 202, 211.
the reign of Menelik, and after. Hervey of the British Legation noted in 1908 that the ‘principal merchants at Addis Ababa are Indians, who are in the main law-abiding and peaceable’,\(^{334}\) while De Castro wrote in 1915 that ‘the Indian shops, especially those of Jowanjee and Jussuf Ali, branches of commercial houses of Aden and Bombay, are for these countries first rank emporia—there one finds everything: cloth, carpets, hardware, iron goods, domestic appliances, silverware, perfumes, weapons, saddlery, shoes, articles for travel, foodstuffs and preserves, sweets, biscuits, and even Nuremberg toys’.\(^{335}\) A few years later Mérab declared that it was ‘impossible to supplant the Indians in the field of import business, that the Indian traders ‘monopolised the trade of this country’, and ‘amassed wealth [...] apparently for another life’.\(^{336}\) Turning to the great firms of Mohamedally and Djewedji he explains that they ‘imported everything, even tinned milk, honey and butter in this land of “milk and honey”’.\(^{337}\) The wealth of such firms, notably that of Djivedji, seems greatly to have impressed the Ethiopian public as is evident from a contemporary Amharic couplet, quoted by Marcel Cohen, which puts into the mouth of this Indian merchant the words ber alan, i.e. ‘I have money’.\(^{338}\)

An interesting feature of the large Indian firms of this period was that they kept their workers in cooperatives whereby they lived in communal housing, though others lived in the cheapest of shacks where they existed incredibly cheaply, paying, Mérab states, a rent of no more than one Maria-Theresa dollar month.\(^{339}\)

The Indian merchants, it is generally agreed, were devoted to their businesses, and had distinctive, and most persuasive, sales techniques. These traders, De Castro explains, could be seen sitting cross-legged in their shops besides their thalers and their registers, but on the appearance of a customer, would rise and attempt to please him with the best grace of this world, offering him a cup of tea, biscuits, cigarettes as to someone visiting their own house. Prices, he adds, were considerable, but the great expenses of transport and the impossibility of finding cheaper supplies usually obliged the shopper to make the purchase.\(^{340}\)

Imports from India were now reaching Addis Ababa and the larger markets of the country in considerable quantities and included, as Annaratone noted, all sorts of textiles, among them unbleached and coloured cotton cloth, cotton cambrics and raw cotton, as well as rice and antimony.\(^{341}\)

\(^{334}\) F.O., 401/12, Hervey, 31.12.1908. 
\(^{335}\) De Castro, I: 216. See also Mérab, II: 135, 146; G. Escherich, Im Lande des Negus (Berlin, 1921): 41. 
\(^{336}\) Mérab, II: 111. 
\(^{337}\) Ibid. See also Henin: 136. 
\(^{339}\) Mérab, II: 111-112. 
\(^{340}\) De Castro, I: 217. 
\(^{341}\) Annaratone: 425-431, 435, 438.
Mention must also be made of the import of spices, which, though by no means easy to document for this period, were probably considerable as suggested by a post-World War II study which showed that no less than eight such spices, mainly of Indian origin, were then regularly on sale far away to the south-west of the country in Jimma market. They comprised:342

- Gundo barbaré, or black pepper (Piper nigrum);
- Kamun, or cumin (Cuminum cyminum);
- Grenfud, or cloves (Eugenia caryophyllata);
- Garafa, or cinnamon (Cinnamomum cassia);
- End, or turmeric (Curcuma longa);
- Temez, or long pepper (Piper longum);
- Gawz, or long nutmeg (Myristica argentea);
- Ya hendi kwerarima, or cardamom (Elletaria cardamomum).

All these spices, as the survey showed, were widely used in Ethiopian cooking.343

Two eastern incenses, also found at Jimma market, were Hedychium spicatum which was imported from India and also used with butter to prepare a hair dressing for women, and berguid, or cinnamon bark (Cinnamomum cassia), a rough bark not usable as a spice but burnt in the fire to give off a sweet odour.344

The number of Indian merchants in the capital continued to expand in the years between Menelik's death and the Italian invasion of 1935, traders establishing themselves in this period, according to Zervos, included Nathoo Mooljee, from Porbandar, variously reported to have started business in 1905 and 1914,345 Keshaval Tarakchand, who came in 1913,346 Laxmixhand Bhagvandas and Co., 1914,347 Shab Jamnadas Harakhchand, 1919,348 Vithaljee Mooljee, 1920,349 Vanechand Jechand, 1921,350 Abdulhussain Goolamali, 1924,351 Prabhudas Muldji Doshi,352 Ambalal Lalbhai and Co., 1928,353 Shah Morarji Vachrraj, 1929,354 and at least three other merchants, Mohanlal Kapurchand,355 Rathilal

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344. Ethiopia, Imperial Ethiopian College of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts: 27.
348. Ibid.: 199.
349. Ibid.: 203.
351. Ibid.: 199.
352. Ibid.: 197.
353. Ibid.: 201.
354. Ibid.: 207.
Nallabdas,\textsuperscript{356} and A. Pechdimaldji, for whom no dates of establishment are available.\textsuperscript{357}

The great Indian firm of Mohamedally nonetheless maintained its position, and at the time of the Italian war had branches in India at Bombay and Sidhpur, as well as at Aden, Jibuti and Berbera, and, in Ethiopia, at Harar and Jigjiga, with sub-branches at Jimma, Lekemti, Mojo and Soddo, and an agent at Jigjiga.\textsuperscript{358} The head office in Addis Ababa was admiringly referred to by the British author and journalist Evelyn Waugh as a "huge emporium".\textsuperscript{359}

Indian traders as a whole continued to control a large proportion of Ethiopian trade throughout the pre-war period.\textsuperscript{360} Zervos, who states that there were no less than 90 to 100 Indian trading houses in the capital at the time of the conflict with Italy,\textsuperscript{361} opined that "almost all the textiles, cotton cloth and spices imported into Ethiopia" were then in Indian hands.\textsuperscript{362}

The presence of these Indian traders was thus a distinctive feature of the pre-war Addis Ababa scene, causing the British traveller Nesbitt for example to write of the "greasy fat men from India", and their womenfolk, "pretty Indians with caste marks painted on their foreheads, tall, erect, moving gracefully".\textsuperscript{363}

Indian traders throughout this time were prominent as in former days as money-lenders and changers, and are said to have engaged in speculative practices with many an Ethiopian nobleman. Early in the twentieth century Lord Hindlip noted that the Indians in Addis Ababa "hold the greater portion of the very small sum of ready money to be found in the town",\textsuperscript{364} while De Castro indicated that anyone in need of money would apply to an Indian trader for an advance while someone wishing to change money would likewise do so with an Indian.\textsuperscript{365} The Italian went on to state that for lack of a regular banking services exchange operations were the "monopoly of Indians" who purchased export articles cheaply at a variable discount at Addis Ababa and then converted them into gold at the coast. He adds that the Indians effected such transactions not only with Europeans but also with the Emperor and the richer chiefs,\textsuperscript{366} while Mérab argued that the Indians were particularly skilful in trading with the capital of others, and it was certain, he adds,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{356} Ibid.: 203.
\item \textsuperscript{357} Ibid.: 204.
\item \textsuperscript{358} Ibid.: 189, 202-203, 340, 355, 357, 362, 399, 405, 500. See also Rey: 199.
\item \textsuperscript{359} Waugh: 63. See also Rey: 199.
\item \textsuperscript{361} Zervos: 500.
\item \textsuperscript{362} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{363} L. M. Nesbitt, Desert and Forest (London, 1937): 38.
\item \textsuperscript{364} Hindlip: 57.
\item \textsuperscript{365} De Castro, I: 216-217.
\item \textsuperscript{366} Ibid.: 216.
\end{itemize}
that Emperor Menelik and his heir Lij Iyasu placed many of their thalers with them.\footnote{MERAB II: 112.}

The names of several Indians specialising in financial transactions have been preserved by Zervos. Such financiers included Amilal Bhagvandas and Co., brokers, established 1921,\footnote{ZERVOS: 195.} and two money-changers, Lavchand Vithaldas\footnote{Ibid.: 207.} and P. Chottalal and Co.,\footnote{Ibid.: 196.} while there was also at least one Indian customs transmitter Jagjivan Amarshi Khotari, who stated business in 1926.\footnote{Ibid.: 201.}

There were at this time also several Indian tailors in Addis Ababa, the best known tailor in the period immediately prior to the Italian invasion being according to Zervos, a certain Hadji William M. Azimoulla, who set up business in 1922,\footnote{Ibid.: 194-195} while Waugh later mentioned the presence of several Goanese tailors.\footnote{WAUGH.}

The Indian population of the capital, it may be concluded, increased substantially during the half century or so prior to the Italian war. Mérab states that there were 149 Indians as well as 8 ‘Portuguese or Goans’ in Addis Ababa in 1909,\footnote{MERAB II: 104.} but according to Zervos this figure had increased by 1935 to between 1,500 and 1,700, of whom 1,000 to 1,300 were Hindoos and 400 Muslims mainly Bohra traders.\footnote{ZERVOS: 415, 500.}

The advent of so many Indians in Addis Ababa had its effect on the capital’s urban development, for the immigrants built for themselves many shops and houses, mainly made of wood, which added a distinctive feature to the city in the late Menelik period. De Castro observed that these wooden houses of bizarre architectural style, between a Swiss chalet and a pagoda, decorated outside with gorgeous and many coloured lacquer, were in his day going up every day as if by enchantment,\footnote{DE CASTRO, I: 217.} while Mérab, who was less enthralled by this development, a decade or so later confirmed that increasing numbers of Indians were erecting galleries of shops, thus as he puts it ‘disfiguring the city’.\footnote{MERAB II: 136.}

Another Indian influence, but one which came a generation or so later, after World War II, was the use of the loanword \textit{kuli} derived from the Anglo-Indian ‘cooly’, or hired labourer, as recorded by Kasati Berhan Tasama;\footnote{YULE & BURNELL: 192-193; Kasati Berhan TASAMA: 893.} thus when in need of such a workman it became common practice to call out \textit{‘kuli kuli’}, an utterance which, curiously enough, had previously been used in onomatopoeia to call an animal.\footnote{J. G. AFEWERK, \textit{Grammatica della lingua amarica} (Roma, 1935): 247; GUIDI, 1940, col. 150.}
Indian activity prior to the Italian war was by no means limited to the capital, for a characteristic feature of the Indian trader of the early twentieth century was his willingness to operate in any part of the country, even in the most trying local conditions, for, as De Castro noted with admiration, the average Indian merchant was 'daunted by no difficulty, and was willing to undertake long and disagreeable journeys in the course of trade', even 'as far as Kaffa'. The Indian trader, the Italian concludes, was thus 'the true pioneer of trade in this country'.

Indian merchants, De Castro explains, were thus found throughout the country, and this statement is confirmed by other observers. Thus in the early twentieth century the German scholar Faitlovich reported seeing Indian merchants in Eritrea at Saganeiti as well as at Massawa, while far away in southern Ethiopia the British traveller Boyes found a store kept by an Indian at the village of Allata toward the Kenya frontier. Zervos later wrote of Indian traders making their way early in the twentieth century to such varied regions as Gojam, Jimma, where there were no less than twenty-three such merchants, Lekemti, where there were ten, Gimbi, Soddo, Bali and Ginnir, as well as Dessi, Chercher, Awash, Harar, Dire Dawa and Jigjiga. The modern American anthropologist Herbert Lewis, confirming the arrival of Indians in the Jimma area, states that they appeared there 'especially at the turn of the century'.

The Indian population of the Ethiopian empire as a whole thus grew rapidly in the early twentieth century. Estimated by Zervos at between 200 and 250 at the turn of the century, it had risen, according to the same source to no less than 3,000 in 1935. The Indians were however, unique among foreign communities in having very few children by Ethiopian women, the number of such half-caste, according to Mérab, being countable on the fingers. No change in this respect was apparent in the period which followed, the Indians remaining to a significant extent a community apart until the Italian fascist occupation of 1935-1941 when many of them were finally expelled.

381. Ibid.
382. J. Faitlovich, Quer durch Abessinien (Berlin, 1910): 19, 156.
387. Mérab, II: 112.

R. Pankhurst — Le commerce indien avec l'Éthiopie, le golfe d'Aden et la Corne de l'Afrique au XIXe siècle et au début du XXe. Les courants commerciaux entre la côte occidentale de l'Inde et la «Corne» de l'Afrique, aux mains de «banyans» (commerçants hindous), ont subsisté et se sont même parfois renforcés jusqu'après l'intervention directe européenne, pénétrant très avant dans l'intérieur. Témoignages de voyageurs sur l'importance de ce trafic et le statut de ces commerçants.