

From Thrace to Bengal: Greek Merchants in Early Colonial Bengal*

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Introduction

Calcutta has long been considered a mosaic city with residents of various ethnicities and religions.¹⁾ Among them are Armenian, Jewish, Parsi, and Chinese peoples who travelled from other Asian regions to settle. People from other South Asian regions, including Gujaratis and Rajasthanis (“Marwaris”), have been considered “Calcuttans” alongside with local Bengalis as well.

Greek people played a part in the formation of this multi-ethnic city. The most renowned Greek merchants who succeeded in business in India were the Rallis (Ralli Brothers); they accumulated fortunes in India—specifically through the jute trade in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁾ After entering the trade of British cotton textiles based out of London and Manchester in the early 19th century, the Rallis began trading in Bengal in the 1850s, by which time external trade and large business in Bengal had been dominated by the British and migrant mercantile communities such as Marwari, Parsi, and Jewish merchants.

The focus of this article is not on Ralli Brothers but on the Greek merchants who settled and successfully traded in Bengal from the mid-18th to the early 19th century, the period just prior to the prominence of Ralli Brothers.³⁾ These merchants have not been well documented thus far; this may be due in part to their withdrawal from mercantile activities and movement of fortunes to landholding and other non-mercantile operations by the time when Ralli Brothers began trading in Bengal. Who were the Greek merchants of earlier period? Why did they come to Bengal? In which specific commodities did they deal? Why did they withdraw from mercantile activities by the mid-19th century? This article traces the history of Greek merchants in Bengal during the period in which the English East India Company (hereafter the Company) began to rule the region and Bengal underwent significant political, economic, social, and cultural changes. Furthermore, it elucidates the socio-economic transformation in Bengal under the Company in relation to the

changing fates of Greek merchants.

The Migration of Greek Merchants from the Ottoman Empire

From the mid-18th century onwards, Izmir (Smyrna), a city along the coast of the Aegean Sea, developed as a trading hub, superseding Aleppo, which was formerly the major trade centre of the region. In tandem with this development, Ralli Brothers chose Izmir as their trading base, taking advantage of the city's proximity to their birthplace, Chios Island, and expanding their network to include the Balkan Peninsula, Egypt, and Syria. During the 18th century, the Chios islanders were the most commercially oriented of the wider Grecian community, and merchants from the island ventured throughout and beyond the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁾

During the mid-18th and early 19th centuries, when Ralli Brothers expanded its business activities, commerce and trade in the Middle East and India underwent major transformations. European powers began building inroads into the Ottoman Empire, and independent movements from a variety of ethnic communities flourished under the Ottomans. In the late 18th century, the Ottoman Empire ceded its territory on the Black Sea coast to Russia, which was expanding southwards in an attempt to gain territories around the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire faced further territorial losses in the early 19th century, when Greece achieved independence following the Greek War of Independence and Egypt achieved *de facto* independence. In addition, independence movements began strengthening throughout the Balkan Peninsula during this period.

Against the backdrop of the increasingly unstable Ottoman rule, European powers began to advance into non-European regions and expand trade on a global scale, which prompted the movement of not only goods and money but also people. This development influenced the business activities of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, such as Greek, Jewish, and Armenian merchants. In the Ottoman Empire, European merchants who were not Ottoman subjects were treated as *müste'men*. As such, their lives and property were protected, and the custom tariffs they paid were lower than those of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. The new capitulation granted to France in 1740 allowed Ottoman subjects to work in foreign embassies and consulates as interpreters and consular agents; these positions granted them the privilege of being treated as protected citizens (*protégés*) of their host countries. In tandem with the expansion of trade in the mid-18th century onwards, increasing numbers of non-Muslim merchants, seeking the same privileges as the *müste'men* merchants from

Europe, began to work in foreign embassies and consuls, thereby gaining *protégé* status.⁵ This led to the emergence of a class of merchants with privileges granted by official charter. Ralli Brothers exemplified this trend. The group received the protection of Russia after the country was granted a capitulation in 1774. This capitulation was based on the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which was signed after the Russo-Turkish War. As Russia's *protégé*, Ralli Brothers began to export grain from the Black Sea coast and expanded its business outside the Ottoman Empire.⁶ The firm opened a branch in London in 1818 and another in Manchester in 1828, and expanded the export of machine-made British cotton textiles to Germany and the Levant.

There were a number of merchants who, similar to Ralli Brothers, expanded their operations from the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions northward to Europe, whereas others advanced southwards through the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Diverse strata of merchants developed vibrant commerce between the ports in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and India. However, from the mid-18th century onwards, Britain started increasing its political and economic presence in the region. This situation prompted many Jewish merchants, particularly those based in Iraq, to leave the Ottoman Empire for India.⁷ In Iraq, Jewish merchants in Basra would work with Jewish merchants in Baghdad to transport goods by cargo boats along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In this way, they played a major role in the trade between the two cities. With the burgeoning of trade routes to Indian ports, such as that between Basra and Surat, Jewish merchants in Basra began to become involved in commerce and shifted the centre of their operations from Basra to Surat.⁸ Soon, an Arabic-speaking Jewish community emerged in Surat that was composed of Jews not only from Iraq but also from other areas in the Ottoman Empire, such as Syria. The community grew to include Sephardic Jews who did not speak Arabic and came from places outside the empire, such as Afghanistan and Iran. After Surat's importance as a trading port declined and the Company shifted its commercial base to Bombay and Calcutta, the Jewish merchants in Surat moved to these emerging port cities under Company rule in India.

The first of the Jewish merchants to migrate from Surat to Calcutta at the end of the 18th century was Shalom Aharon Obadiah HaCohen, who was born in Aleppo.⁹ HaCohen and other Jewish merchants aimed to expand commerce between London and Shanghai, and they dealt in a range of goods, including indigo, cotton, jewels, coffee, and opium. In the early 19th century, fear of persecution prompted mass emigration of Jewish merchants living in Iraq under Dawud Pasha's rule, leading in turn to a Jewish inflow to Calcutta.¹⁰

As was the case for HaCohen, Calcutta and Bengal became some of the areas to which non-Muslim merchants in the Ottoman Empire headed. One of these merchants was Alexios Argyree, a Greek from Philippoupolis (present-day Plovdiv, Bulgaria) in Thrace.¹¹⁾ The Grecian community in Bengal traces its history back to 1750, when Argyree arrived in Calcutta.¹²⁾ It is unclear why Argyree migrated to Calcutta, but he was joined by many Greek merchants from various parts of the Ottoman Empire who were engaged in commercial operations inside and outside the empire. Having traded in coarse blankets after leaving his Greek school in Philippoupolis, Argyree, upon his arrival in Calcutta, became involved in trade between Calcutta, Basra, and the Levant. Subsequently, amidst the political upheaval that occurred in late 18th-century Ottoman Empire and India, he succeeded in building a foothold in Calcutta through his commercial and diplomatic contributions, as will be discussed below.¹³⁾

The Company, which began ruling eastern India in 1765 from its base in Calcutta, was growing increasingly frustrated with London's inability to procure an official permit to trade with the Red Sea region. At that time, Britain was gaining the upper hand in its global power struggle with France, but in the Levant, it was trailing behind France in terms of trade and diplomacy.¹⁴⁾ The Company, despite its monopoly on trade between Britain and Asia, could not manage this situation, and it lobbied British consuls to act. Having lost patience, the Company's government in Calcutta took matters into its own hands and, in 1770, dispatched Captain Cudbert Thornhill, who had extensive connections with Red Sea ports, particularly Jeddah.¹⁵⁾ Argyree was brought along on this important mission as both an Arabic interpreter and envoy. During the mission, he visited the ports of Mocha and Jeddah. The vessel that carried the party was the *Alexander*, which was also Argyree's alternative name. In 1771, Capt. Thornhill docked at Mocha, where he acquired coffee cargo for Madras and waited for the monsoon winds to change direction to Jeddah. During this interval, he dispatched Argyree overland to Cairo. From the *beys* (chieftains) of Cairo, Argyree succeeded in procuring a *firman* (royal mandate) permitting British trade in the Suez region. The influence of Argyree's success remains unclear, but France's diplomatic and commercial dominance in the Levant was weakened.¹⁶⁾

Warren Hastings, who was appointed as the Governor of Bengal in 1772, was reportedly impressed by Argyree's success, and he permitted the latter to establish a church for the Greek congregation in Calcutta (Greek Church of the Transfiguration of Mount Tabor).¹⁷⁾ The church was constructed on Amratollah Street and consecrated in 1781 after Greek merchants (including

Argyree) and British settlers made generous contributions.¹⁸⁾ Hastings himself was among the contributors. There were other Christian churches along and nearby Amratollah Street, including the Armenian Church of St. Nazareth and the Portuguese Church of the Virgin Mary of the Rosary as this area was already home to vibrant communities comprised of various ethnic groups. While a minister had been brought over from Alexandria by sanction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the protector of the church was declared to be “the Crown of England”.¹⁹⁾ In this way, the church was poised to play an important role as a focal point of the Grecian community in Calcutta.

In the early 19th century, approximately 120 Greek families resided in Calcutta. The multiple wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire had encouraged Greek merchants from Philippoupolis and other war-torn parts of Thrace to migrate to India. The flow of migration was further accelerated by the Greek War of Independence. Many more Greeks migrated to Bengal from areas outside the Thrace region as well—for example, from the Ottoman territories of Caesarea (now part of Israel), Magnesia ad Sipylum (present-day Manisa, Turkey), Greek islands such as Rhodes and Crete, and Moscow.²⁰⁾

Many Greek merchants, including Argyree, ventured further toward eastern Bengal in pursuit of new business opportunities; this phenomenon is explored in more detail later.

The Production and Trade of *Chunam* in the Sylhet-Khasi Region

In 1777, Alexios Argyree died in Dhaka without ever having seen the completion of the Greek church in Calcutta. By this time, Argyree had moved his commercial operations to eastern Bengal and owned numerous properties in both Dhaka and Bakerganj Districts in Bengal’s southeast regions.²¹⁾ In 1821, forty years after the church in Calcutta was built, another Greek church (St. Thomas Church) was built in Dhaka, which became a centre for the Greek community in eastern Bengal. Following Argyree’s death, his properties and business were inherited by his eldest son, Alexander Panioty.²²⁾ Alexander Panioty was born in Philippopolis in 1750, migrated to Bengal in 1771, and participated in his father’s business for a few years prior to Argyree’s death. He was also recognized as the chief merchant of Greek congregation in Bengal.²³⁾ The Paniotys and other Greek merchants began to engage in commerce in Sylhet in Bengal’s north-east regions as well.

Sylhet was a *sarkar* (district) in the Bengal *Subah* (province) of the Mughal Empire, but its military presence was limited to an outpost unit. When the Company acquired the *diwani* right (the right to collect revenues) in 1765,

Sylhet became a district in the Company's territory of Bengal; however, for the Company, Sylhet remained "a frontier populated by peoples barbarous and hostile to the government."²⁴⁾ According to David Ludden, Sylhet's topography and, the flooding of its rivers specifically, were the primary factors for the area's continued status as part of the Indian frontier and restriction of the flow of colonists.²⁵⁾ The large Surma and Kushiara Rivers flow to Sylhet, and they are fed by waters from India's north-eastern highlands in Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, and Assam. Flooding caused by frequent earthquakes and the silting of rivers used to occur in unexpected locations. The Brahmaputra River, which originates in the Tibetan plateau, used to submerge large areas including Sylhet for half of the year until its course shifted south in 1787.

Although Sylhet was a topographically challenging region, the trade in various highland products was brisk in northern Sylhet, which was situated on the boundary of highlands (the Khasi Hills). Northern Sylhet and the southern part of the Khasi Hills formed an integrated region comprised of lowlands and highlands and was characterized by a society with high social mobility. Robert Lindsay, who served as Resident of Sylhet (1778–1787) and Collector of Sylhet (1787–1790), reflected on the region's wealth as follows:²⁶⁾

... The lower part of the province, as I have already said, was miserable in the extreme, being only capable of bearing coarse rice. The districts contiguous to the hills were of a different description, with a proportion of high and low lands, producing sugar, cotton, and other valuable crops. The high country had also other resources, well deserving the attention of the enterprising merchant: —for example, the mountain produced wood of various kinds, adapted to boat and ship building, and also iron of a very superior quality, and description little known in this country: it is brought down from the hills in lumps of adhesive sand, and being put into the forge, produces excellent malleable iron without ever undergoing the process of fusion, the hammer and fire discharging the dross and coarser particles at once, thus producing what is called virgin iron, superior to any made in Europe by charcoal. Silks of coarse quality called *moongadutties*, are also brought from the frontiers of China, for the Malay trade; and considerable quantities of copper in bars, and a small quantity of European goods, are carried up to barter for these commodities. —The adjoining mountain is also an inexhaustible source of the finest lime, and lower down the river there is abundance of fuel for burning it, ... —The country under the mountains, where the ground undulates, but is not precipitous, furnishes abundance of elephants of the best description. —...

Exclusive of larger branches of commerce already mentioned there are minor articles bought to a considerable amount, such as coarse muslins, ivory, honey, gums, and drugs for the European market, and in the fruit season, an inexhaustible quantity of the finest oranges, found growing spontaneously in the mountains. ...

Cowries were also imported to Sylhet on a large scale and used as a currency, which clearly demonstrated that the Sylhet-Khasi region had developed its own trading connections to the Indian Ocean coastal regions.

Among various products of the highlands, “the only great staple and steady article of commerce, is *chunam*, or lime”.²⁷⁾ *Chunam* is powdered slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) produced by slaking burnt lime (calcium oxide). In this region, lime was quarried from the mines in highlands and carried through the rapids to *chunam* factories at the foot of hills. It was then exported to large cities such as Calcutta and Dhaka by boat. *Chunam* has been widely used as a building material as it is a primary ingredient of lime mortar and plaster. Moreover, it was and still is used in a common stimulant mainly made from areca nut and betel leaf, known as *paan*. According to Lindsay, the quality of lime was extremely high, and the highlands had large reserves.²⁸⁾ Thus, *chunam* trade was expected to be profitable; for Lindsay, it “in fact became the foundation of [his] fortune”,²⁹⁾ although the private trade of Company servants were prohibited in 1773. Alexander Panioty and other Greek and Armenian merchants had begun manufacturing and trading *chunam* before Lindsay entered the market in the late 1770s. In order to drive them away from this lucrative trade, Lindsay met and entertained hundreds of Khasi chieftains who possessed lime mines in the highlands and their retainers at Pandua, which was situated on the boundary of lowlands and highlands. He successfully obtained permission to work in a large number of the quarries in the hills.³⁰⁾ He described his commercial success as follows: “Fleet[s] of boats now covered the rivers, and the trade increased so rapidly as to keep five or six hundred men in constant employ”.³¹⁾

As Ludden has described in detail, Lindsay’s entry into the *chunam* trade put Sylhet in a state of chaos. As trade in highland products, mainly limestone, increased, conflicts emerged involving the complex interaction of numerous interests surrounding the trade routes linking the highlands and lowlands and the resources located in the highlands. These conflicts involved the Collector of Sylhet, whose aim was to accumulate wealth; the Company, which sought to establish its power in this “frontier” region; highland Khasi chieftains and retainers; Bengali settlers and merchants; Greek, Armenian, and other

European merchants; Bengali-Khasi people born from years of mutual exchanges; and zamindars of the lowland forest areas.³²⁾ Indeed, Pandua was a centre of both lucrative trade and conflict.

Alexander Panioty had to address this situation. Along with fellow Greek merchants, he occasionally complained about Lindsay's actions to the Governor-General through the priest at the Greek church in Calcutta (Father Constantine Parthenios).³³⁾ While Hastings was tenured as Governor-General, the Company's government acted favourably towards the commercial operation of Greek merchants as they had established close relationships. However, once Cornwallis assumed the office of Governor-General in 1786 and Hastings was impeached by the House of Commons for crimes against the people of Bengal,³⁴⁾ the government's attitude towards Greek merchants began to change. When Lindsay was replaced by John Willes as the Collector of Sylhet in 1788, Willes and Alexander Panioty found themselves in conflict.³⁵⁾ Panioty, who usually resided in Dhaka, placed his agent Paulee Straty, also a Greek immigrant, in charge of his *chunam*-related operations in Sylhet in 1787.³⁶⁾ Straty rented a property at Tehlee Khal by paying Rs. 16 per annum from a local zamindar, Sree Ram Naum, the Raja of Puroa, and obtained permission to quarry limestone and produce *chunam* with hired workers as well as to cut woods for this purpose.³⁷⁾ Straty employed approximately one hundred workers there. When the workers of his factory were detained by Willes, Panioty expressed his grievances to the Governor-General through the Greek priest once more. According to Panioty, Willes had given permission to a specific group of European merchants only—Robinson, Rait, Luke, and Smith—to trade in limestone as well as produce and sell *chunam* in Sylhet. He had also forced other merchants out of the area using the Company army. Willes maintained that the Mughal government had handed over Tehlee Khal to the Company, but it was being illegally occupied by the Khasis of the highlands. It is unclear exactly how the conflict was resolved, but Straty was ordered to leave Sylhet, which resulted in significant losses for Panioty.

The Collectors of Sylhet were particularly aggressive towards the Greek merchants as a result of the latter's close trading relationships with the Khasis, who possessed limestone mines. Greeks, Armenians, and other Europeans of unknown origin ("low Europeans") had received permission from the Khasi chiefs to conduct trade along the foot of the mountains. They leased the limestone mines and produced *chunam* for sale in the lowlands. The Collectors suspected that the traders would transfer guns and other weaponry to the Khasis and encourage them to attack areas under the control of the Company.³⁸⁾ Indeed, on a number of occasions, the Collectors had prevented European

merchants carrying arms from heading for the highlands. The Company—fearing that any incursion by the Khasis would likely reach Dhaka—could not overlook the actions of the Greek merchants. The Company feared that the merchants would attempt to establish a colony in the Khasi territory outside its own authority and observed them closely.³⁹⁾

In 1788, the Company's fear became a reality. Ganga Singh, a Bengali-Khasi zamindar, together with other Khasi chieftains and Bengali-Khasi zamindars, attacked the Company's outpost in Pandua.⁴⁰⁾ The Governor-General sent a strong force to quell the disturbances, and arrested him in 1789. According to Ludden, this caused fundamental changes in the region. In 1790, the Company decided on the northern limit of Bengal and partitioned the highlands and lowlands according to a "modern" border.⁴¹⁾ As a result, the highlands became the domain of the Khasis and the lowlands (Sylhet) that of the Company; this also resulted in the separation of the Bengali and Khasi "ethnicities".⁴²⁾ Although the Company mitigated the risks inherent in such a fluid society, the society lost its ethnic diversity and social fluidity due to the establishment of modern borders.⁴³⁾

Furthermore, the establishment of new borders significantly influenced the merchants' activities. Willes sought to place commercial trading in Sylhet under the authority of the Company; as a result, from 1790 onwards, all private business operations by Europeans were prohibited in the Khasi highlands, whereas all business activities in the Sylhet lowlands now had to be registered with the Collector.⁴⁴⁾ For the production and trade of *chunam*, European traders were obliged to obtain licences issued by the Collector, thus allowing them to purchase limestone acquired by the Company in the Khasi domains at two locations only: Sunamganj and Companyganj, which refers to the wholesale market ("*ganj*") of the Company ("Company"). It seems that Companyganj was developed in order to control trading with the highlands. Nonetheless, merchants in the lowlands continued to lease quarries within Khasi areas.⁴⁵⁾ Illegal operations by some British merchants who had been given licences to produce and sell *chunam* were also given tacit approval. With the enforcement of new regulations in 1799, the production and sale of *chunam* was reopened to all traders, including the Greeks, although the British oligopoly over limestone quarrying in the highlands and production and sale of *chunam* continued.

The Salt Trade at Narayanganj

Salt was one of the major investment items in the 18th century for Bengalis, European merchants, and the Company officials, by which many of them

accumulated enormous fortunes as it was both a major trading article and the second largest revenue sources for the Company after its monopolization of the industry in 1772. Notable among those Bengalis were Cantoo Baboo (Krishna Kanta Nandy), the *banian* of Hastings, Gokul Ghosal, the Motilals of Bowbazar, the Mitras of Bagbazar, and the Malliks of Barabazar. Those families settled in Calcutta, thus forming new elites known as *bhadralok*.⁴⁶⁾ Robert Lindsay, the Collector of Sylhet, gained large profits from the salt speculation at Dhaka in the late 1770s even after the Company's private trade of servants were prohibited in 1773. Unlike other Company officials, he claimed that his profits were made "without injury to the public" by cooperating with a wealthy native.⁴⁷⁾ According to Lindsay, his method of trading salt was not approved by the Company officials; thus, he was removed from Dhaka to Sylhet, where he invested in *chunam*.⁴⁸⁾

Greek merchants had begun trading salt by the early 1780s. The Company's salt sale records show that Alexander Panioty occasionally purchased salt.⁴⁹⁾ After withdrawing from the *chunam* trade, he seems to have concentrated on the salt trade based on Narayanganj, the largest salt market in eastern Bengal.

After establishing the salt monopoly in 1772, the Company began to sell salt through limited public auctions in order to increase revenues in 1790. The Company controlled the volume of salt supplied to the monopoly area of Bengal and Bihar.⁵⁰⁾ Under the public auction system, the Calcutta-centred salt trading system emerged. All wholesale salt merchants had to attend the sales, which were held only in Calcutta, to purchase salt and obtain a set of bills (*char* and *rowana*) for their salt that were issued by the Salt Department. *Chars* were delivery orders with which holders were able to receive their salt at the Company's warehouses in salt production districts along the Bay of Bengal, known as the Salt Agencies (Hijili, Tamruk, Twenty-Four Parganas, Bhulua, and Chittagong). Then, they exceeded the limits of salt *chokis* (tolls) by showing *rowanas* attached to their salt that proved the holders had already paid for it. Since those who were unable to attend the public sales by themselves or through their *gomastas* had to deal with first purchasers—primarily through brokers known as *dalals*—this auction system strengthened the role of the purchasers in Calcutta and made the majority of *mofussil* (up-country) merchants dependent on them.⁵¹⁾

The majority of new salt merchants were Bengali Hindus who successfully seized commercial opportunities during the early Company period. Table 1 lists the major purchasers of salt at the three sales held in September and October of 1790 and July of 1792. Kishen Panti, the founder of the Pal Choudhuris of Ranaghat, Nadia District, exemplified new salt merchants who

made fortunes by investing in the salt trade; he became a large zamindar and was recognized as a *bhadralok* in Calcutta. Thakurdas Nandi, a noteworthy merchant from Kalna, Burdwan District, was another important purchaser of salt. Alongside Bengali merchants, Greek merchants were also allowed to purchase salt at the Company sales. Mavrody Kyriakos, a Greek, was the largest purchaser of salt in the early 1790s.⁵²⁾ While Kishen Panty and Thakurdas Nandi primarily purchased salt produced in western Bengal (Hijili and Tamruk) and on the coast that was imported from Coromandel and stored government warehouses near Calcutta before exporting to upriver markets, Mavrody Kyriakos had a nearly 30 percent share in the salt produced in eastern Bengal (the Bhulua and Chittagong Agencies). This suggests that Greek merchants developed their own system of purchasing and distributing salt.⁵³⁾ Mavrody Kyriakos, a resident of Calcutta who entered the salt trade in the 1780s, purchased salt at the Company's sales, and, with the salt bills he obtained, his fellow Greek merchants in eastern Bengal received salt from the Company's warehouses and sold it in the market.

Most of the salt produced in Bhulua and Chittagong was first brought to Narayanganj and exported to north and north-eastern Bengal and Assam primarily. Narayanganj imported between 200,000 and 300,000 maunds of salt annually from Bhulua alone,⁵⁴⁾ and for which at least 160 sloops were employed.⁵⁵⁾ During the early years of the public sales, the wholesale trade in salt at Narayanganj was dominated by Greek merchants and local large merchants of Dhaka.⁵⁶⁾ By the mid-1810, the Pal Choudhuris of Ranaghat and the Nandis of Kalna had extended their business at Narayanganj, becoming leading merchants. The Pal Choudhuris and Nandis alone had more than a 53 percent share in the import trade in Bhulua and Chittagong salt at Narayanganj, while Greek merchants had about a 30 percent share in the same trade.⁵⁷⁾ At least twelve Greeks were engaged in the salt trade in the region around that time—among them were Alexander Panioty, Nicholas Demitrius, and Yarnish Antoney Foscholo.⁵⁸⁾ After the death of Mavrody Kyriakos around 1795, it seems that John Lucas, who lived in Chinabazaar in Calcutta and entered the salt business around 1790, replaced Mavrody Kyriakos and began attending public sales for fellow Greek merchants.⁵⁹⁾ For instance, 21,000 maunds of salt was imported into Narayanganj from 8 August to 9 September 1822 by Nicholas Demitrius and Yarnish Antoney Foscholo; this salt was bought at the Company's sales exclusively by John Lucas.⁶⁰⁾ In Narayanganj, there were many Greeks who worked as boat conductors plying between Narayanganj and other stations in eastern and north-eastern Bengal.⁶¹⁾ Andrew Constantine, one of these conductors, regularly exported salt to Goalpara from Narayanganj.⁶²⁾

It was important for them to establish personal ties with Company officials in order to run their business smoothly. As said, a close personal relationship with Hastings enhanced their position in Bengal and facilitated trading activities. However, after his return to England, Greek merchants faced difficulties in continuing the *chunam* business in Sylhet and maintaining good relations with Company officials. In the salt trade, they attempted to establish personal ties with Company officials, especially the Salt Agent of the Bhulua and Chittagong Agencies who would supervise the production and delivery of salt, and the Superintendent of Eastern Salt Chokies who would check any illegal transactions in eastern Bengal. For instance, in 1811 when Superintendent James Irwin was promoted to the Salt Agent, all Greek merchants of Narayanganj, headed by Alexander Panioty, sent him a letter of congratulation and appreciation.⁶³⁾ However, soon after this event, a significant dispute over excess salt found in merchants' boats emerged between principal merchants of Narayanganj, James Irwin, and John Kinloch—the Superintendent who was Irwin's successor. The merchants, including the Pal Choudhuris and the Nandis, petitioned the Board of Trade in Calcutta. Among them were twelve Greek merchants. Irwin was shocked by the fact that the Greeks turned against him, saying that the petition “was replete with the foulest calumny and aspersion”.⁶⁴⁾ The instances suggest that Greek merchants cooperated with Bengali merchants when they shared common commercial interests, but it was no easy task.

Bengali large purchasers established a close relationship with the money market in Calcutta to finance their salt business, but no records show the Greek merchants' relationship with the money market or *shroffs* (banker, money-changers). This suggests that they may have preferred cash transactions and/or developed their own ways of financing their trade.

The Withdrawal from Commerce and New Career

The synergy between the Company's supply control and the ability of purchasers to control market prices allowed salt prices to remain high and promised large profits. However, from the mid-1820s onwards, the profitability of the salt trade began to decrease. The structural deficiencies in the monopoly system allowed for a large increase in the circulation of cheap legitimate Coromandel salt and illegitimate Bengal salt, and this gradually reduced the price of legitimate Bengal salt.⁶⁵⁾ Repeated financial crises in Calcutta from the mid-1820s aggravated the situation of large purchasers who were dependent on borrowed capital from Calcutta's money market.⁶⁶⁾ Thus, large salt purchasers

were forced into a vicious spiral of speculation and loss. As the economic recession in the early 1830s aggravated the situation of large purchasers further, they became unable to keep buying salt. The Company that lost control of the price abolished the sale by public auction in 1836, which was replaced by the sale at fixed prices. During this period, the Company faced severe pressure from the British industrial and shipping interests to abolish the monopoly as it was considered to be an obstacle to free trade. However, the Company, as a state, managed to maintain the monopoly as one of the major revenue sources. Following this reform, the Company became no longer dependent on merchants in tax collection, which was considered to be the exclusive right of a state.

As Sayako Kanda demonstrated, one of the key causes for the changes described above was the emergence of *mofussil* merchants whose business was more independent of the Company's monopoly system and less likely to be affected by the vicissitudes of Calcutta's economy.⁶⁷⁾ The salt trade at Narayanganj was once dominated by large Bengali merchants including the Pal Choudhuris of Ranaghat and the Nandis of Kalna, but they had retreated from the market in eastern Bengal. Instead, *mofussil* merchants, such as the Sahas of Baliati, began to dominate the trade in eastern Bengal. The formerly strong presence of Greek merchants in eastern Bengal had also weakened as a result. The decline of Narayanganj from the 1810s onwards, which was replaced by Sirajganj as the centre of the salt trade, was another factor that facilitated this change.⁶⁸⁾ In 1838, the population of Narayanganj was estimated to be 6,252, "three-fifth of whom were Hindoos, who, together with a few Greeks, are the persons solely engaged in the salt trade".⁶⁹⁾ This observation suggests that the number of Greek merchants had declined by that time. Accordingly, John Lucas purchased notably smaller volumes of salt at the Company's sales in Calcutta. For instance, he purchased only 6,000 maunds at the sale of November, 1836.

Under such changes, the relationship between Greek and Bengali merchants began to change in the 1820s. Earlier Greek merchants acted in tandem with Bengali merchants when their common commercial interests at Narayanganj were threatened. However, Greek merchants gradually began to stand by the government. Alexander Panioty facilitated the marriage of his daughter Sultana to John Perroux, the head assistant of the salt department in Calcutta.⁷⁰⁾ Greek merchants even harmed the businesses and honour of Bengali merchants. In February 1829, for example, when the salt belonging to the firm of Issharchandra Umeshchandra Pal Choudhuri (the Pal Choudhuris of Ranaghat) was put up for re-sale by the government because the firm failed to pay within the stipulated period, John Lucas bid for it.⁷¹⁾ This action not only

cost the Pal Choudhuris their business but also ruined their reputation. Having the salt re-sold was regarded as extremely humiliating and shameful for respectable Bengali merchants. Therefore, when the salt of a Bengali merchant was re-sold, other merchants typically united in an attempt “to make all re-sales ... as difficult and disagreeable to this [salt] office as they possibly could.”⁷²⁾ On another occasion, the salt belonging to a Brahman was to be re-sold; the salt office attempted to persuade a Bengali *shroff* to bid for it, but it was impossible for him to do so “openly and in person” at the sale. Instead, a Jewish merchant, Cohen, purchased it. These cases illustrate that a non-Hindu merchant would often become a purchaser of salt at re-sales. Clearly, the notable Bengali merchants and Greek merchants no longer shared commercial interests as their share in the salt trade shrank.

How did the Greek merchants handle the decline of the salt trade, their main source of income? Greek merchants had already diversified their business operations as Bengali salt merchants had. Landholding was one of the most popular methods of diversification. Alexander Panioty began to invest in land in the 1790s—primarily in salt-producing districts in eastern Bengal.⁷³⁾ Unlike the established elites of Calcutta who purchased real estate in Calcutta rather than zamindaris in the *mofussil* until the 1830s,⁷⁴⁾ newly emerging salt merchants, both Bengali and Greek, had begun buying zamindaris and other landed properties soon after the introduction of the permanent settlement of the land revenues in 1793.⁷⁵⁾ For instance, Kishen Panti (Pal Choudhuri), along with his brother Sambhu, began purchasing the estates in Nadia and Jessore Districts around Ranaghat, their birthplace. Thus, they began to be recognized as zamindars. For new zamindars, however, it was not easy to manage the zamindaris they bought because they did not have enough information about their new zamindaris. For example, they might have faced numerous holders of land-related rights or negotiated with former proprietors who had maintained their strong influence on the people there.⁷⁶⁾ Alexander Panioty did find himself in deep trouble. He and his brother George purchased an estate in Bakerganj District in the south-east, but it took years for them to manage it practically because the people of the estate and the former proprietor had strong ties.⁷⁷⁾ The government also had no means to solve such problems until it clarified the rights of landowners by a series of regulations of 1799, 1812, and 1816. Despite such problems, being a zamindar enhanced their social status and promised stable income from rent when commercial prospects could not be expected.

Furthermore, Greek merchants began to seek careers outside commerce. The prolonged economic downturn in the late 1820s and early 1830s strengthened this tendency. Emmanuel Panioty, a great grandson of Alexios

Argyree, moved from Dhaka, which was on the decline, to Calcutta in the 1820s and began to work as a solicitor.⁷⁸⁾ Emmanuel's two sons were employed as writers in the Bengal Secretariat in 1849. In 1853 Demetrius, the younger son, was successfully transferred from the Secretariat to the Durbar Department of the Private Secretary's Office, and he was able to receive a much higher salary. The new job was concerned with "the Governor-General's administration of all the Company's territories in India, its relations with the client Indian princes, his correspondence with the Directors in Leadenhall Street and with the conduct of foreign policy".⁷⁹⁾ He served in this office under a number of Governor-Generals of India from Dalhousie to the Ninth Earl of Elgin for more than forty years.⁸⁰⁾ In 1888, he was awarded the Companion of the Indian Empire, and a memorial fountain was built on the Maidan in Calcutta to praise his career. His two sons, John Emmanuel and Constantine Demetrius, worked as a doctor and a barrister, respectively. As E. Stokes suggested, the growing service sector under British rule was popular among Hindu families of high social status.⁸¹⁾ The cases of Greek merchants presented above show that they too sought new professions in the service sector.

Greeks also began to work in commercial firms in Calcutta. Constantine Panioty, Emmanuel's elder brother, was employed by Eglinton, McClure & Co.⁸²⁾ Nicholas Panioty, Demetrius's elder brother, once returned to Dhaka, but moved back to Calcutta and worked for Jardine, Skinner & Co.⁸³⁾ Some Greeks worked for Ralli Brothers, which began trading in Calcutta in 1852. Nicholas Panioty's eldest son, Gari (Nicholas) began to work for Ralli Brothers' branch at Sirajganj in 1890 and moved to Calcutta to work at its head office in 1894.⁸⁴⁾ Ralli Brothers was the largest and most successful Greek firm in Bengal, but there were a number of other Greek firms, such as Argenti Sechiari, Schilizzi & Co., and Petrocochino Brothers. According to Norris, many of these Greek firms that began trading in Calcutta in the late 19th century were "a close-knit clan of Chiot noble families related by marriage".⁸⁵⁾ These firms moved to Bengal, but their commercial interests and motives behind this action significantly differed from those of their predecessors.

Conclusion

Alexios Argyree and other Greek merchants succeeded in trade in Bengal in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when the political and economic order of the Indian Ocean region including the Middle East and South Asia gradually changed while the British's presence increased. After establishing themselves in Calcutta as merchants, they headed towards Sylhet, which was a "frontier"

region of the newly established Company state, and entered the *chunam* trade. The region had long maintained high social fluidity, and thus, there was enough room for newcomers to explore the region, exploit resources, and profit significantly.

However, when the Company's rule extended and Sylhet lowlands were separated from Khasi highlands by a border, the *chunam* trade began to be controlled by the Company and new regulations. The Greek merchants were no longer able to yield profits from the *chunam* trade. After withdrawing from Sylhet, the salt trade under the Company's monopoly became a lucrative new venture. They developed a unique system of purchase and distribution and had a large share in the salt trade in eastern Bengal. However, as the Company's monopoly system failed to work properly from the mid-1820s and large Bengali salt purchasers lost control of the market, the salt trade was no longer as profitable as it once was. Both Bengali and Greek salt merchants gradually withdrew from the trade, and the next generation began to seek other careers. This clearly shows that regardless of whether they were Bengali or Greek, withdrawal of commerce was the most sensible decision for merchants in this period of economic and commercial downturn to maintain physical continuity of family and community. This also denies the assumption that Bengali merchants were unfit for business and thus lost competitiveness against the British and emerging "Mariwaris" from Rajasthan in Bengal's commercial and banking world.⁸⁶⁾

Table 1: Major Purchasers at the Company's Salt Sales in the Early 1790s (maunds)

The Name of the purchasers	Coast Salt	Agencies					Total
		Hijili	Tamluk	24-Parganas	Bhulua	Chittagong	
Mavrody Kyriakos	8,000	7,000	14,000	56,000	101,000	20,000	206,000
Kishen Panti (Pal Choudhuri)	48,000	55,000	63,000	1,000	0	0	167,000
Thakurdas Nandi	37,000	39,000	57,819	19,000	0	0	152,819
Ramhari Khan	3,000	6,000	16,000	62,000	0	0	101,000
Ramkanai Paramanik	45,000	26,000	13,000	3,000	0	0	87,000
Madangopal Bosh & Sambhu Holdar	0	77,000	0	2,000	0	0	79,000
Sartak Shoi	48,000	7,000	13,000	2,000	0	0	70,000
Sambhunath Pal	3,000	18,000	45,000	4,000	0	0	70,000
Oboycharan Chand	34,000	7,000	23,000	5,000	0	0	69,000
<i>Total of top purchasers</i>	226,000	242,000	244,819	154,000	101,000	20,000	1,015,819
<i>Grand total of salt sold at the three sales</i>	549,450	567,000	591,158	612,000	348,000	71,831	2,889,439
<i>Share of top purchasers</i>	41.1%	42.7%	41.4%	25.2%	29.0%	27.8%	35.2%
<i>Share of Mavrody Kyriakos</i>	1.5%	1.2%	2.4%	9.2%	29.0%	27.8%	7.1%

Sources: Appendix for the month of September and November 1790, Bengal

Board of Revenue Proceedings, British Library (hereafter BRP) P/71/34; Bengal Board of Revenue (Miscellaneous) Proceedings—Salt, British Library (hereafter BRP-Salt), P/89/2 (13/7/1792).

Note 1: Those sales were held in September and October 1790, and July 1792.

Note 2: 1 maund is about 37 kilograms.

Notes

- * This is a revised and extended English version of the author's following article: Kanda Sayako 神田さやこ, "Bengaru shakai keizai no henyō to Girisha shōnin: Igrisu Higashi Indo Gaisha senbai ka no shio torihiki o chūshin ni" ベンガル社会経済の変容とギリシャ商人：イギリス東インド会社専売下の塩取引を中心に. *Mita gakkai zasshi* 三田学会雑誌, 108-2, 2015, pp. 61–82.
- 1) "Introduction", in Himadri Banerjee, Nilanjana Gupta, and Sipra Mukherjee (eds.), *Calcutta Mosaic: Essays and Interviews on the Minority Communities of Calcutta*, New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2009, p. 3. This collection of essays addresses various communities of Calcutta, but Greek communities are not included. It is probable that the Greek presence today is no longer as strong as before.
 - 2) For further information on the Ralli Brothers' business, see Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 153–61; Paul Byron Norris, *Ulysses in the Raj*, Putney, London: BACSA, 1992, pp. 109–35. "Ralli Brothers" is used as the name of the firm throughout the article, but it consisted of several companies run by the Ralli families; for details, see Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise*, p. 156.
 - 3) Norris, *Ulysses* is the most well-documented book on the activities of Greeks in Bengal. The Greek monument, which is on the premises of the University of Dhaka, was built in c.1900 to commemorate predecessors in Bengal with financial assistance of Ralli Brothers.
 - 4) Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise*, pp. 154–55.
 - 5) Sakamoto Tsutomu 坂本勉 *Istanburu kōekiken to Iran: Sekai keizai ni okeru kindai Chūtō no kōeki nettowāku* イスタンブル交易圏とイラン：世界経済における近代中東の交易ネットワーク (Istanbul, Iran, and the World Economy: Commercial Networks of Modern Middle East), Tokyo: Keio University Press 慶應義塾大学出版会, 2015, p. 30. Also see, Matsui Masako 松井真子, "Osuman teikoku no naikoku kōeki seisaku to musutāmin shōnin: Mīri zei o tegakari ni" オスマン帝国の内国交易政策とムスターミン商人：ミーリー税を手がかりに (The Internal Trade Policy of the Ottoman Empire and Müste'men Merchants: A Study on Mīri Duty), *Nihon Chūtō gakkai nenpō* 日本中東学会年報, 14, 1999, pp. 197–218.
 - 6) Sakamoto, *Istanburu kōekiken*, pp. 30–31.
 - 7) Joan G. Roland, "The Baghdadi Jews", in Olpa Slapak (ed.), *The Jews in India: A Story of Three Communities*, Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1995, pp. 37–46.
 - 8) Thabit A. J. Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks, and Murder: The Political Economy of Trade in Eighteenth-Century Basra*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 109–15. In Basra, the British formed stronger commercial ties with the Armenian merchants

compared with Jewish merchants. The Armenian merchants had a hostile relationship with the Jewish merchants, and consequently, the Jewish merchants operating in Basra found themselves in an increasingly unfavourable position. This may have been a factor behind their migration.

- 9) Before HaCohen moved to Surat, he was based in Basra where he engaged in the transport of goods by river between Basra and Baghdad (Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks, and Murder*, p. 94). Apart from Calcutta, Bombay was another place that became a trading base for Jewish merchants who fled Iraq. An eminent example of a Jewish business established in Bombay is David Sassoon & Co. David Sassoon migrated from Baghdad to Bombay and achieved success especially in the opium trade with China, which was on the increase under the Company rule.
- 10) Roland, "The Baghdadi Jews", p. 41. By the end of the 19th century, the Jewish population in Calcutta had risen to 1,800. Many achieved success in the trade of indigo, opium, and later jute, and they actively invested in real estate in Calcutta.
- 11) During the early stages of his time in Calcutta, Alexios Argyree adopted the Anglicised first name, Alexander. Thus, his original name was likely Alexandros. His name is also recorded as Panagiotis Alexiou (which means "Panagiotis, son of Alexios"), suggesting that Alexios was the name of his father. As Norris lamented (Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 19–20), it is extremely difficult to identify Greeks by name, as many of them refer to themselves using their father's first name in place of a surname ("B" son of "A"). Furthermore, owing to their interactions with the British, many of the Greeks adopted an Anglicised rendering of their name. The author sought guidance from Professor Nanako Murata concerning the transcription of Greek names. Nevertheless, any transcriptional errors or other mistakes are solely the author's responsibility.
- 12) This does not deny that his predecessors were trading in Bengal in the 18th century. Rila Mukherjee shows a dynamic trading activities of a Greek merchant (Nicolas Demetrius) in Chandernagore who traded in partnership with French merchants in the early 18th century, and suggested another Greek merchant settled in Balasore (Rila Mukherjee, "Life and Trade in the Indian Ocean World from Eighteenth Century Chandernagor", *Senshu University Institute of Humanities Monthly Bulletin*, 276, 2015, pp. 1–9). In 1999, the grave of Georgjos Ioannis Draskoglou was discovered in the Portuguese Church in Kolkata. Draskoglou, who was from Philippoupolis, died in 1728 (Dimitrios Vassiliadis, "Three Centuries of Hellenic Presence in Bengal", *INDIKA*, Indo-Hellenic Society for Culture and Development, 2005, <https://elinepa.org/en/three-centuries-of-hellenic-presence-in-bengal/> [accessed on 30 June 2019]).
- 13) Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 24–25.
- 14) France's share in the Ottoman trade with the West was more than 60 percent in the mid-18th century. Unlike other European countries such as Britain, France developed its commercial, political, and diplomatic networks over the empire, which covered numerous small trading centres. Thus, France's competitiveness grew in the region. See, Edhem Eldem, "French Trade and Commercial Policy in the Levant in the Eighteenth-Century", *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno 18 (79), 1999, pp. 27–47.
- 15) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 24.
- 16) The decline of French commercial activities in the region was primarily caused by the blockade of Marseille by the British in 1793 during the first coalition war against Revolutionary France. See, Eldem, "French Trade".

- 17) Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 25–26.
- 18) *The Bengal and Agra Annual Guide and Gazetteer*, vol. 1, part. III, p. 119.
- 19) *Ibid.*, p. 119. The current Greek church, the Transfiguration of the Saviour Church, is in Kalighat (in the south of Kolkata), which was consecrated in 1925.
- 20) Helen Abadzi, “Glimpses of the Greek Community from the Dhaka University Gravestones”, *INDIKA*, Indo-Hellenic Society for Culture and Development, 2005, <https://elinepa.org/en/glimpses-of-the-greek-community-from-the-dhaka-university-gravestongr/> [accessed 30 June 2019]; Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 192–202.
- 21) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 26.
- 22) The descendants of Alexios Argyree took on the last name Panioty, which is thought to be an anglicised version of Panageteos (Argyree’s original name).
- 23) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 29; Letter from the Salt Agent at Bhulua and Chittagong, Bengal Board of Trade Proceedings—Salt, West Bengal State Archives (hereafter BT-Salt), vol. 72 (19 May 1812).
- 24) David Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh on Sylhet’s Northern Frontiers”, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, 48-1, 2003 (pp. 1–54), pp. 1, 6.
- 25) *Ibid.*, p. 5. For the details of the geography Sylhet and it changes, see, David Ludden, “Investing in Nature around Sylhet: An Excursion in Geographical History”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38–48, 29 November–5 December 2003, pp. 5080–88.
- 26) Robert Lindsay, “Anecdotes of an Indian Life”, in *Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. IV: Oriental Miscellaneous, Wigan: C. S. Simms, 1840, pp. 37–38; 40–41. Lindsay, a Scot, came to Calcutta in 1772, obtained an assistant job in the Dacca Provincial Council in 1776, and moved to Sylhet in 1778.
- 27) *Ibid.* p. 41.
- 28) *Ibid.* p. 45.
- 29) *Ibid.* p. 38.
- 30) *Ibid.*, pp. 42–44. Also see, Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, pp. 30–31.
- 31) *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 32) Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, p. 46.
- 33) Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 28–29.
- 34) The Greek merchants in Bengal sent a petition to the Court of Directors of the East India Company on 13 December 1788 to help Hastings’s difficulties (*Ibid.* pp. 31–32).
- 35) *Ibid.*, pp. 28–31.
- 36) Paulee Straty was born in Kydonia, north-western Crete. Soon after arriving in Bengal in 1787, he became involved in the limestone trade and in producing and selling *chunam* as the agent of Alexander Panioty. Although it is known that he died in 1826, it is unclear what happened to Straty following the events mentioned in the text. His grave is located in Calcutta (*Ibid.*, p. 31).
- 37) *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
- 38) Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, p. 36; Hargovind Joshi, *Meghalaya Past and Present*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2004, p. 43.
- 39) French traders were also thought to be planning the establishment of their own protectorate in the frontier regions (Joshi, *Meghalaya*, p. 43).
- 40) He was the *shyem* (chieftain) of Shella in highlands and possessed several estates in lowlands too. For details, see *Ibid.*, pp. 38–44; Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, pp. 36–41.

- 41) Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, pp. 47–49.
- 42) Further, following the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Sylhet became part of Pakistan (now, Bangladesh), whereas the highlands, including the Khasi Hills, were included in India.
- 43) The establishment of such modern borders significantly affected the social fluidity of north-eastern India and resulted in conflicts between ethnic groups, some of which continue to this day. Goalpara, for example, though sharing both culture and history with Bhutan, Tibet, Bihar, and Assam, was cut off from these regions in the mid-19th century and repositioned as an economic and cultural frontier. The Republic of India maintains this division. It became yet another borderland that would not be contained within the efficient and compact geographical units of “Bengal” and “Assam” (Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).
- 44) Ludden, “The First Boundary of Bangladesh”, pp. 48–49.
- 45) Joshi, *Meghalaya*, pp. 44–45.
- 46) The story of the Singhas, who appear in Sunil Gangopadhyay’s award-winning novel *Those Days*, was typical of the wealthy *bhadralok* families that settled in Calcutta, succeeded in the salt business, and finally became a zamindar family. Sunil Gangopadhyay, *Those Days*, translated by Aruna Chakravorty, Calcutta: Anand Publishers, 1981 and 1982.
- 47) As to how the Company officials benefitted from the salt sales in Dhaka, Lindsay described that, “In the mode of exposing the lots to sale, I could perceive no small intrigue was carrying on, for I saw that the natives had not that free access to the public sale to which they were entitled, and that the lots fell, as they were put up, to the dependents of the members in council, who by this means gained to themselves a considerable advantage” (Robert Lindsay, “Anecdotes”, pp. 23–24).
- 48) Lindsay, “Anecdotes”, p. 24.
- 49) Copybook of Letters Received by the Comptroller and Deputy Comptroller of the Salt Office, 9 October 1783, p. 73, West Bengal State Archives.
- 50) For the Company’s salt monopoly system and its transformation, see Sayako Kanda, “Environmental Changes, the Emergence of a Fuel Market, and the Working Conditions of Salt Makers in Bengal, c. 1780–1845”, *International Review of Social History* 55 (Supplement), pp. 123–51, 2010; Sayako Kanda, “Consumer Preferences, Markets and the State in Early Colonial Bengal with Special Reference to Salt”, in Raziuddin Aquil and Tilottama Mukherjee (eds.), *An Earthly Paradise: Trade, Politics, and Culture in Early Modern Bengal*, New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 295–324, 2019; Kanda Sayako 神田さやこ *Shio to Indo: Shijō, shōnin, Igrisu Higashi Indo Gaisha* 塩とインド：市場・商人・イギリス東インド会社 (Salt and India: Markets, Merchants, and the English East India Company), Nagoya University Press 名古屋大学出版会, 2017.
- 51) For the details of Bengali salt merchants, see Sayako Kanda, “Family, Caste and Beyond: The Business History of Salt Merchants in Bengal, c.1780–1840”, in Chi-cheung Choi, Takashi Oishi, and Tomoko Shiroyama (eds), *Beyond Market and Hierarchies: Networking Asian Merchants and Merchant Houses since the Nineteenth Century*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 104–32, 2019; Kanda, *Shio to Indo*.
- 52) The Company’s salt sale record show that he purchased 10,000 maunds of Twenty-Four Parganas salt in July 1785 (Copybook of Letters Issued by the Comptroller and

- Deputy Comptroller of the Salt Office, May 1785–April 1786, 11 July 1785, p. 53, West Bengal State Archives). He was also from Philippoupolis and the warden of the Greek Church in Calcutta (Norris, *Ulysses*, p.198).
- 53) There were a few non-Bengali purchasers in the early 1790s. Francis Gomez and Peter Gonzeles, and John Sepandro (Sepandrew) were likely to be Portuguese; and Jacob John and Selim Abraham were Armenians (Appendix for the Month of September and October 1790, BRP, P/71/34). However, the presence of Portuguese and Armenian merchants in the salt trade faded quickly owing to the rise of new salt merchants including Greeks.
 - 54) BRP-Salt, P/101/59 (5 January 1830), no. 36A.
 - 55) James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta: G. H. Huttman Military Orphan Press, 1840, p. 99.
 - 56) He was a merchant of salt and betel nuts (Khan Mohammad Mohsin, *A Bengal District in Transition: Murshidabad 1765–1793*, Dacca: The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1973, pp. 29–30).
 - 57) Letter from the Superintendent of the Eastern Salt Chokies, BT-Salt, vol. 70-2 (11 February 1812); vol. 71 (12 March 1812); (7 April 1812); (12 May 1812); vol. 73 (16 June 1812); vol. 74 (14 July 1812); vol. 75 (11 August 1812).
 - 58) Letter from the Salt Agent at Bhulua and Chittagong, BT-Salt, vol. 72 (19 May 1812).
 - 59) Petition of Mr John Lucas, BT-Salt, vol. 103 (4 July 1815); BRP-Salt, P/100/73 (21 December 1824), no. 3. He seems to have been the warden and trustee of the Greek Church in Calcutta (*Bengal and Agra Annual Guide and Gazetteer*, vol. 1, part. III, 1842, p. 119).
 - 60) BRP-Salt, P/100/53 (8 October 1822), nos. 72–97.
 - 61) Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 192–202.
 - 62) Letters from Magistrate of Mymensing, BT-Salt, vol. 70-1 (2 January 1812).
 - 63) Letter from the Salt Agent at Bhulua and Chittagong, BT-Salt, vol. 72 (19 May 1812).
 - 64) *Ibid.*
 - 65) For details, Sayako Kanda, “Competition or Collaboration? Importers of Salt, the East India Company, and the Salt Market in Eastern India, c.1780–1836”, in Sanjukta Ghosh, Ezra Rashkow, and Upal Chakraborty (eds), *Memory, Identity, and Colonial Encounter in India: Essays in Honour of Peter Robb*, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 249–75.
 - 66) For details, Sayako Kanda, “Forged Salt Bills, Speculation, and the Money Market in Calcutta: The Economy of Bengal in Colonial Transition, c. 1790–1840”, *International Journal of South Asian Studies*, 5, 2013, pp. 89–112.
 - 67) Kanda, “Family, Caste, and Beyond”.
 - 68) James Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography*, pp. 99–100; B. C. Allen, *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers: Dacca*, Allahabad, 1912, pp. 187–88. According to G. C. Cheap, the Magistrate of Mymensingh, Sirajganj had become the largest ganj perhaps in Bengal by 1830 (BRP-Salt, P/101/59, 5 January 1830, no. 48).
 - 69) Taylor, *A Sketch of the Topography*, p. 99.
 - 70) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 32. According to Norris, John Perroux was a son of André Perroux, a Savoyard, arrived at Calcutta in 1777 and served as a steward of Barber, Palmer & Co. Norris speculated that John Perroux “had professional dealings with Alexander as a purchaser of salt from the government”.
 - 71) BRP-Salt, P/101/48 (17 February 1829), no. 20.

- 72) BRP-Salt, P/105/17 (1 December 1835), no. 24.
- 73) Miscellaneous Records, Board of Revenue, (b) Registers, etc. relating to Land and Land Revenue: Account Sale or Statement at Lands Sold for Arrears at Revenue (hereafter MR-BR), Dacca, vol. 1 (1793–99); vol. 2 (1800–1802), West Bengal State Archives.
- 74) Ratnalekha Ray, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society, 1760–1850*, Delhi: Manohar, 1979, pp. 256–259.
- 75) MR-BR, Nadia, vol. 1 (1793–1800); vol. 2 (1801–11); Jessore, vol. 1 (1793–99); vol. 2 (1800–5); Durgadas Majumdar (ed.), *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Nadia*, Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1978, p. 289. Some of the estates contained saltpans, which were leased out to the Company (Miscellaneous Records relating to Commerce, Customs, Salt and Opium: Account of Khalari Rents, vol. 12 (1783–84 to 1820–21), West Bengal State Archives.
- 76) Ray, *Change in Bengal Agrarian Society*, p. 259.
- 77) Jon E. Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780–1835*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 41–44, 116–23.
- 78) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 163.
- 79) *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- 80) *Ibid.*, pp. 164–72. Norris described him as the “young Bengal-born Greek was, in his way, an outstanding imperialist”.
- 81) Eric Stokes, “The First Century of British Colonial Rule in India”, *Past and Present*, 58, 1973, pp. 151–52.
- 82) Norris, *Ulysses*, p. 163.
- 83) *Ibid.*, p. 176. The firm, one of the largest firms in Calcutta, was founded in Bombay in 1825 and re-formed in Calcutta in 1844 by David Jardine and C. B. Skinner. It was established in the textile trade, and dealt in silk, opium, and later jute (Chapman, *Merchant Enterprises*, p. 114.)
- 84) Norris, *Ulysses*, pp. 176–77.
- 85) *Ibid.*, p. 122. Also see *Ibid.*, pp. 121–35 for their activities.
- 86) For details of this discussion, Kanda “Family, Caste, and Beyond”.