

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Faculty of Science

Department of Geography

THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S TRADE  
WITH AN IRANIAN PORT AT THE END  
OF THE 18TH AND BEGINNING OF  
THE 19TH CENTURY:  
A GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

GEOGRAPHY

Doctor of Philosophy

THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S

TRADE WITH AN IRANIAN PORT AT

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by Jila Sajadi

A review of the literature on the economic history of Iran reveals the lack of historico-geographical studies on trade. This thesis goes some way towards remedying the situation. It uses the records of the English East India Company and concentrates on the period 1763-1810. The period was a critical one in the history of Iran, whilst the English East India Company was a major element in the trade of the country. Its long history and methods of business have left a rich deposit of archival material for study. During much of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries its major point of contact with Iran was the port of Bushehr. The thesis examines the trade (imports and exports) carried on through this port and discusses the various factors which appear to have influenced its character, organisation, fluctuations and spatial pattern. The role of distance is shown to be crucial, both between London and Bushehr (either direct or through Bombay) and between Bushehr and the source and market areas in the interior of Iran. This affected costs and above all the flow of goods and information. Partly as a result of distance, the policy of the Court of Directors was often ill-adjusted to the circumstances of Iran. In any case, as time went on, The East India Company's policy changed from being purely commercial to one which was overtly political, though in fairness the change was related to the basic need to protect the movement of ships in the Persian Gulf. In Iran itself, the attitude of successive governments was an important influence on commercial activity. However, the pattern of trade in the hinterland of Bushehr was affected not only by distance decay, but also by the spatial and hierarchical organisation of the settlement pattern. The model of a dendritic mercantile system, characteristic of an under-developed and exploitive economy, seems to fit the situation in Bushehr's hinterland remarkably well.

### Abbreviations and note on maps

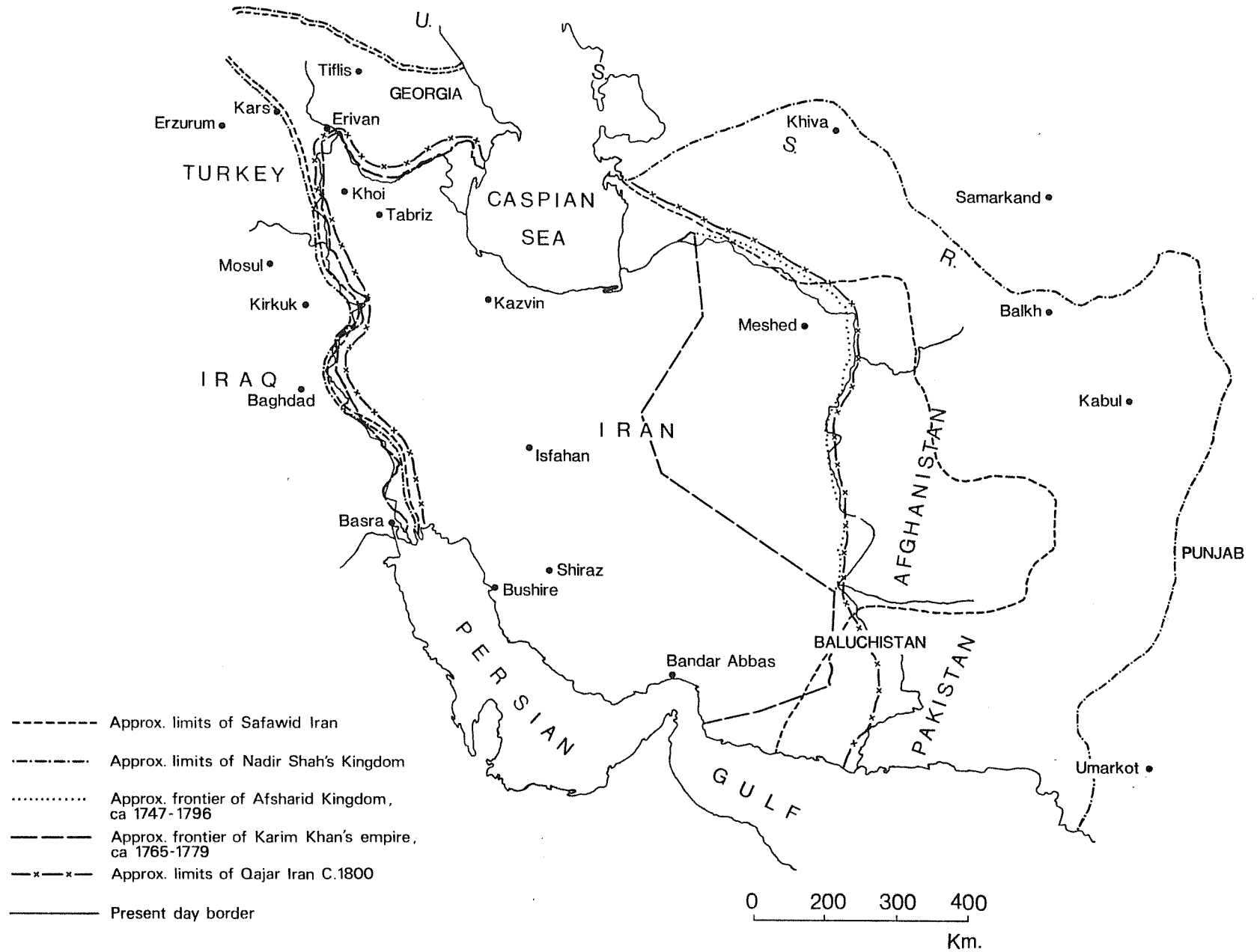
|          |   |
|----------|---|
| BCP      | Bombay Commercial Proceedings   |
| BPP      | Bombay Public Proceedings   |
| CD       | English East India Company's Court of Directors                         |
| CIO      | French East India Company (The Compagnie des Indes Orientales)          |
| DB       | Despatches to Bombay  |
| EIC      | English East India Company (also referred to as Company in this Thesis) |
| ELC      | English Levant Company  |
| FR       | Factory Records   |
| FLC      | French Levant Company (Compagnie du Levant)                             |
| GD       | Gombroon Diary  |
| G,Sh.    | <u>Gaz Shahi</u>  |
| I.O.L.R. | India Office Library and Records  |
| LRB      | Letters received from Bombay  |
| Mah.     | <u>Mahmudi</u>  |
| MC       | Muscovy Company   |
| MR       | Marine Records  |
| M.Sh.    | <u>Mann-i Shahi</u>   |
| M.T.     | <u>Mann-i Tabrizi</u>   |
| OIC      | Dutch East India Company (Oost-Indische Compagnie)                      |
| PG       | Percian Gulf  |
| PPG      | Persia and Persian Gulf Records   |
| RC       | Russia Company  |
| RRPGB    | Resident Records Persian Gulf Bushehr                                   |

### NOTE ON MAPS

The maps used for this study are based on the present border, but for the sake of historical accuracy an attempt has been made on the following page to depict the fluctuating borders of Persia during the eighteenth century.

Political boundaries of Iran during the 18th and early 19th centuries

(vi<sup>a</sup>)



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## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 : Aims of the study

The subject of this thesis is the trade of Iran at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Its overall concern is to contribute to the understanding of Iran's foreign trade over the period 1763-1810 which has previously been little studied. Even so the major sources for this subject and period are not Iranian but are the records of the various European companies involved in the country's trade. This documentation is so diverse and scattered, however, that a selective approach has been necessary. Accordingly, research has been based upon the records of the English East India Company (EIC) now housed in the India Office Library and Records in London. Generally this proved a fortunate choice of data source because study of the material soon suggested that the Company dominated the trade of the Persian Gulf (PG) during the period concerned. On the other hand, the study's dependence on EIC documentation has meant that attention was focused mainly upon the single Iranian port, Bushehr, which was the principal base of the Company's operation in the region during these years, so that Iran's trade for the period studied is viewed very much from the standpoint of this one port.

Within this general field the particular aim of the study is to examine the EIC's trade based on Bushehr and how the market forces of supply and demand were mediated through real geographical space where distance, terrain and the hazards of the sea imposed serious constraints on the EIC's activities. This involved an examination of the types of commodities traded, their sources within Iran, the imports into Iran through Bushehr and the scale of this commercial activity, as well as consideration of the geographical influences on the trade. On this basis an attempt has been made to model the

operation of the Company's share of Iran's foreign trade using the dendritic central-place model proposed by Kelly.<sup>1</sup> Also included in this study is an examination of the policies of successive Iranian governments, as well as to some extent that of the EIC's Court of Directors, (in respect to their trade in Iran), since these introduced important limitations on the unbridled operation of supply and demand.<sup>2</sup> The role of the port itself is a key element in any consideration of overseas trade so that use has been made of the port-geographers' distinction between foreland and hinterland, as well as the notions of a dendritic mercantile system. That is throughout the study the intention has been to understand, in an integrative way, the geography of the EIC's trade with Iran by relating patterns and changes in the pattern to possible causes for those changing patterns.

The period 1763-1810 was one of critical importance to Iran, for which reason it provides the historical limits for this study. The period is marked by the development of a clear and overriding political dimension to the long-standing commercial relationships between Iran and various European states. This political dimension arose partly because Iran was crucial to Britain's expanding interest in India, and to Russian expansion into the Caucasus and Central Asia, and partly because of the continuous rivalry between Britain and France and the global aspects of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815). As a result, trade increasingly became a means by which the European<sup>s</sup> maintained a political presence in the area.

There is a second reason, however, why the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was an important period for trade between Iran and Europe. After considerable activity by the Iranians in the seventeenth century anxious to trade silk, for which there was a demand in Europe, and to use it as a political weapon for gaining European support to weaken Turkey, the eighteenth century appears to have been a quiescent period. Indeed, the commercial relations

between Iran and Europe, especially through the PG generally declined during the century. Even so, English woollens continued to be imported into Iran, sometimes paid for by silk and Carmania wool (wool from the province of Kirman), but mostly paid for in specie. This imbalance of trade had a weakening effect upon the largely land-locked Iranian economy as specie left the country. Indeed, the role of the EIC in protecting Iranian trade with India via PG may have contributed significantly to the economic decline of Iran. This in turn strengthened the Company's financial and political position in Iran. The late eighteenth century, then, might be said to constitute a kind of turning point in the history of Iran's trade, with trade expanding after several quieter decades and with a growing British and foreign interest, mainly for geopolitical purposes, operating within a weakened Iranian economy. The change of rule in Iran from the Zand Dynasty, with a more aggressive policy towards the EIC, to that of the Qajar Dynasty with its pro-western policy, certainly helped the British in their desire to expand their influence in the Court of the Shah and further marked these years out as different.

The geographical interest of the period is as important as the political. While Iran remained a largely independent and land-locked kingdom throughout the eighteenth century, it did maintain important commercial contacts with neighbouring regions. The PG coast with its ports (mainly Bushehr) may be regarded as the major interface between the interior commercial system of the country and the trade system of the rest of the world. The organisation and the operation of the two systems were conditioned by the basic facts of distance, terrain and the hazards to shipping, as well as the purely commercial considerations of supply and demand.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to examine the various components of the trading structure which began to revive and reshape itself in the late eighteenth century against a background of the

increasing geopolitical importance of Iran to the European powers, particularly the British. The study focuses on the trading activities of the EIC because its activities were central to the expansionary period in trading relations and because the Company records housed in London provide a ready data source with which to detail the evolving trade patterns. Further reference is made to this main data source and its limitations later in this chapter and at other points in the thesis.

The thesis is arranged in seven chapters commencing, in this chapter, with an historico-geographical outline of English contact with Iran from the sixteenth century onwards, as well as a review of related studies and data sources. The second and third chapters of the thesis examine the composition of the EIC's trade with Iran in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in terms of commodities imported (chapter 2) and exported (chapter 3), their origins, quantities and destinations. It seems sensible to attempt to establish at that point in the thesis the value of this trade both to the EIC and, less certainly perhaps, to Iran. Chapter 4 elaborates this theme by examining the Company's role in the cabotage (coasting) trade of Bushehr. This also involves a discussion of the volume of Iran's trade with its neighbours and more widely via the PG. Chapter 5 examines the organization of the EIC's trade, particularly the physical and other constraints that limited it, leading on to an examination in chapter 6 of the spatial structure of the Company's trade through Bushehr. On this basis an attempt is made to establish how characteristic this structure was generally for the export trade of Iran. The final chapter offers an overview of the whole study with an emphasis on the geographical aspects of Iran's PG trade.

## 1.2 : Previous studies

Interest in the activities of the EIC is not, of course, new and the following pages review the studies that have been made ever since the second half of the eighteenth century. They fall into two categories. First there are those which cover the Company's activities in the East in general. These studies are varied in their nature and coverage, but are mainly concerned with the commercial, political and administrative history of EIC's involvement generally with its settlements in the East. Although it is not the concern of this thesis to mention each of these studies specifically, the more important ones which cover the period of this research are Stevens (1766), Bruce (1810), Robinson (1912), Parkinson (1937) and Philips (1940).<sup>3</sup> These studies, however, make few references to the EIC's connections with Iran and PG, though they proved useful in providing historical background to this thesis. The second category are those studies which specifically deal with one region like India, China, and the PG and the EIC's activities there. It is necessary here to mention only those referring to the PG and more specifically Iran. Many of these are studies in history, economic history or political history - and for periods after the early seventeenth century it is almost inevitable that they should use the records of the EIC. Some, of course, have relied on the records of the other foreign companies trading with Iran. All have also used the accounts left by western travellers. Seven studies stand out as being of particular reference to this thesis. They are by Wilson (1920), Hambly (1964), Amin (1967), Kelly (1968), Lambton (1970), Rick (1974), and Perry (1979). The studies by Wilson and Kelly are specifically interested in the historico-political aspects of the EIC's involvement with Iran but whilst providing useful overview for the wider region, they contain little material bearing directly on the commercial aspects of the relationship.<sup>4</sup>

Amin, for his study of British Interests in the PG 1747-1780, worked closely with the various EIC records.<sup>5</sup> Although the emphasis in this study is economic, the result is, in effect, a largely political history of EIC. His seventh chapter and Appendix 1 contain useful information on the EIC, Dutch East India Company (OIC; "Oost-Indische Compagnie") and Indian trade with PG in general and Iran in particular, and this material has been drawn on in the appropriate parts of the thesis. Nevertheless he does not seem to have used the full range of available EIC materials. He chiefly relied on the Gombroon Diary (GD), The Bombay Commercial Proceedings (BCP), Despatches to Bombay (DB) and Factory Records or Persia and Persian Gulf Records (FR or PPG), and does not appear to have used the Resident's Records Persian Gulf Bushehr (RRPGB) even though, for most of the period he studied, the EIC maintained an important base at Bushehr.

Perry, in his study of the history of Iran, 1747-1779, also worked with the EIC records because they proved a rich source for Iranian history.<sup>6</sup> A section of his study is devoted to Iran's trade and foreign relations, but, like others, he treats the EIC's relationship with Iran mainly from the historico-political viewpoint rather than a commercial one. The Company records he used included the Bombay Public Consultation/Proceedings Series (BPC and BPP) FR, GD, European travellers' accounts and other contemporary sources, but, like Amin, did not use the RRPGB for his study.

Rick, for his doctoral thesis on Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf, 1745-1765, also used the EIC's records. In view of the title of his thesis its emphasis is, rather surprisingly, on the political rather than the commercial dimension.<sup>7</sup> Rick's main sources of commercial information on EIC woollen trade in Iran, 1753-78, were the GD and Amin's statistical summaries, but as the present study shows, the DB, on which Amin relied, is really of little value in studying the supply and demand aspects of the PG trade in general and

Iran in particular.

Hambly's study of the economic organization of early Qajar Iran (1797-1813) really is a study in economic history.<sup>8</sup> His major source was Sir John Malcolm's report on the commerce of Iran, originally written after his first visit to the country on diplomatic business for the EIC. Malcolm's own sources are not clear, but might well have included the EIC's records.

Lambton's study of Iran's trade under the early Qajars (1797-1850) is also concerned with the economic history of Iran. The two sets of commercial information to which she refers are taken, in the first place, from Hambly (see above) as originally derived from Sir John Malcolm, and, secondly, from Fraser's account of his visit to Iran (1820s).<sup>9</sup>

Amongst the Iranian studies which cover the period under study mention may be made of the work of Hedayati (1334/1955), Faramarzi (1346/1967), Rajabi (1970) and Rosthanzami (1970). Hedayati for his study of the Zand period,<sup>10</sup> used the rather meagre Iranian sources for the period, as well as those of European origin, the French East India Company's Records (C10; The Compagnie des Indes Orientales). His section on commerce is brief, but in it he puts the emphasis on the commercial policy of Karim Khan which was mainly to encourage merchants and mercantile affairs.

Faramarzi's Karim Khan Zand va Khali-j-i Fars is a study of the political policies of the Khan in the Persian Gulf region.<sup>11</sup> Using Iranian, Arabic and European sources, he deals at length with the power struggles in the region, some of which led to the piratical activities referred to in chapter five of the present thesis.

Rajabi's, Karim Khan-e Zand va Zaman-e and Roschanzami's Die Zand-Dynastie are two published dissertations which deal with the



political history of Iran under Karim Khan, and use European travel accounts and other contemporary sources for the study of Iran's relations with foreign countries.<sup>12</sup>

No study in historical geography has been found dealing specifically with the region at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The present thesis is to that extent a pioneering work. In the same way past uses of the EIC records have been for studies in political and economic history, though even in economic history the political aspect has often been stressed. Accordingly, this thesis seems to be the first to exploit the riches of the EIC archives for historico-geographical purposes.

Study of the literature currently available reveals the importance of the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century in the trading and political history of Iran. Within that broad period, the year<sup>s</sup> 1763-1810 were chosen for specific study. There are three main reasons for this. First, these years were of critical importance in the history of Iran because they were a time of great upheaval, in which the unity of the Safavid State had disappeared and regional interests asserted themselves. But the period also saw the first steps being taken towards building a new political unity under the Qajars. Second, the period 1763-1810 was significant because the Iranian authorities began to turn outwards again and build relationships with foreign interests, initially with the foreign trading companies but subsequently with foreign governments. In this respect, 1810 is an appropriate year to end the study period because by then Iran was in formal treaty relationship with Great Britain as a result of this policy. Thirdly, 1763, the starting date of the study period was of similar significance. It was the year in which the EIC re-established itself in Iran after the closure of Bandar Abbas factory and opened a factory at Bushehr. This meant the beginning of a new set of Company records, somewhat separate from those dealing with the Company's previous relations with Iran.

Basically, then, the reasons for choosing the terminal dates are their political significance and politics, in fact, loom large over the trade of Iran at this time. To understand what happened to the EIC's trade it is necessary to be aware of these political and other developments. They are perhaps best reviewed with a long perspective, beginning in the sixteenth century. It will then be clear that the EIC's dealings with Iran were never entirely commercial.

### 1.3 : An Historico-Geographical Outline of English Contacts with Iran

An historical perspective can be thrown on the character of EIC's trade with Iran after 1763 by outlining the earlier attempts by English companies to penetrate the country and its markets. This will then lead on, in a later part of this chapter, to a discussion of the activities of EIC in the region immediately before and after 1763.

#### 1.3.1 : The Russia or Muscovy Company (MC)

The history of English trade with Iran might be said to begin in the middle of the sixteenth century. This was an age of maritime enterprise, when the English began to search actively for new markets for their main national export, woollen cloth, and to seek direct and secure access to spices.<sup>13</sup> Both desires focused English attention on the East, which was not easy to reach because of the distances involved and because of the monopolistic power of Spain and Portugal on the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope. As a result, the possibility of discovering a new approach to the East, either north-west around the American continent or north-eastward along the northern shores of Europe and Asia, was examined. The latter route looked more promising initially because it would not only provide a shorter route to Cathay, but might also be enjoyed exclusively by England.<sup>14</sup> The advocates of this scheme affirmed with confidence that Cathay, with its cool climate and wealthy population, offered a suitable market for English woollens.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, in the Spring of 1553, an association, later called the MC, was formed in London for the purpose of opening up trade with Cathay by the north-eastern route. This immediately mounted an expedition (Fig. 1.1) for the discovery of Cathay and "divers other regions", consisting of three ships under the command of Sir Hugh Willoughby, as captain general, with Richard Chancellor, as pilot-general. On the expedition, Chancellor gained an interview with the Tsar Ivan IV, "The Terrible", which led to the establishment of the Russia (or Muscovy) Company in 1554.<sup>16</sup> The achievements of this expedition were considerable. Not only had it found a sea route which, for the first time gave Russia an alternative outlet to those through the Baltic and Black Seas, but the MC opened the Moscow (Moskva) market to the English. The great market of Moscow was in turn an entrepot for various goods from different parts of Russia, as well as goods coming from Northern and Central Asia.<sup>17</sup>

It was not until 1557, however, that the MC recognised the potential for trade with Iran rather than China. In that year, Anthony Jenkinson became one of the Company's leading directors and a commander of its fleet to Russia. He made a journey to Bukhara on which he discovered the disadvantages of opening up a direct route to China via Russia. He found that a journey from Moscow to Peking would take more than one year to complete and that the inhabitants of Bukhara were too poor to buy European products.<sup>18</sup> The MC's interest, therefore, switched to opening up commercial contact with Iran where there were two major attractions:

- a) Iran's silk producing areas (Shirvan, Mazandaran and Gilan) lay to the north, close to the border with Russia. These silk areas were also far from the Portuguese controlled port of Hormuz through which some silk was exported to Europe, even though it lay hundreds of kilometres from the producing areas, so that Iranian silk seemed to be an accessible commodity for the MC.



FIGURE 1.1 The Muscovy Company's expedition routes to Russia, Bukhara and Iran After Foster (1933)

- b) Once a trade route had been established through Russia to Iran, the possibility was offered of procuring not only the Iranian silk but the products of India which were imported into Iran by overland caravan routes.<sup>19</sup>

To develop this new trade route, Jenkinson set out from Moscow to Iran in April 1562. In August of the same year his vessel arrived at Darband (Fig. 1.1) which was then under Iranian control,<sup>20</sup> and he set out overland for the Court of Shah Tahmasp, which was then at his capital, Qazvin. Jenkinson, however, did not succeed in securing the Shah's interest in opening up trade with England and had to leave the country,<sup>21</sup> but, during his stay in Qazvin he contacted some Indian merchants who agreed to provide the Company with a regular supply of spices for England, if they could be certain of a market.<sup>22</sup>

This encouraged the MC to send a second expedition to Iran two years later. This was led by Thomas Alcock and Richard Cheney. On his return, Cheney reported favourably on the prospect for trade in Iran and gave an encouraging account of the silk-producing areas of Gilan.<sup>23</sup> He was also hopeful that, when the English had become established in Iran, merchants might be motivated to bring spices to them from Hormuz.<sup>24</sup> On the Company's third expedition to Iran, in 1565, its representatives were better received than on previous trips.<sup>25</sup> Shah Tahmasp was now eager for the importation of woollens in large quantities, and gave the Company a letter granting privileges, including exemption from tolls and customs and free way-leave throughout the country.<sup>26</sup> During the Company's fourth expedition in 1568, its representative explained in his interview with the Shah that, if the Company opened up trade with Iran, English goods imported via Russia would be cheaper than those brought through Turkey, a Turkey that was also hostile to Iran. Impressed by this suggestion, the Shah gave the company new privileges, including specific permission to go to the silk-producing area of Gilan.<sup>27</sup>

Now things started to go wrong. After visiting Gilan, the Company's representative reported that neither of Lahijan's two neighbouring ports offered suitable harbours, and its inhabitants were too poor to buy the English cloth in exchange for silk.<sup>28</sup> The fifth and sixth expeditions were also unsuccessful in getting the Company properly established in Iran. This was due to the Shah's death in 1576, which was followed by political instability in Iran, and to Turkish invasions of the outlying portions of the area which Iran dominated. As a result after twenty years of probing and six expeditions, the MC had failed to establish any trading links with the Iranian territories, a failure that can be attributed specifically to the following reasons:

- a) The Company lacked sufficient information about the country it was penetrating and consequently failed to undermine the established trade routes and trade links of the Turks, Armenians, Portuguese and Venetians who had a longer standing control over the Iranian market.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the Company underestimated the risks involved from the navigation of the Caspian Sea, Iran's climate and the insecurity of its land routes during troubled times.<sup>30</sup>
- b) The extreme length and complexity of the sea, river and overland routes used by the MC made it impossible for goods to compete for price with those shipped on the more direct overland and sea routes via Turkey and the PG.<sup>31</sup>
- c) Additionally, there was little demand for English goods in Iran, and at the same time, with little silk manufacturing occurring in England, Iran's raw silk could not have found a ready market there.<sup>32</sup>

### 1.3.2 : The English Levant Company (ELC)

A second attempt to establish an overland trade route to Iran in the

late sixteenth century, an attempt which was almost as fruitless as the MC's route, was made by the Levant Company. English commercial involvement with the Turkish Empire dates from the early sixteenth century, but it was not until 1578 that William Harborne went to Turkey to negotiate with the Sultan and to try to secure permission to establish a trading settlement in the area under Turkish domination.<sup>33</sup> The consequence of this was the establishment of the Levant (Turkey) Company in 1583. Its main purpose was to export Iranian silk by way of Aleppo to the Mediterranean.<sup>34</sup>

While Harborne was still negotiating with the Sultan to establish the Levant Company, John Newbery, a London merchant, set out independently to visit Syria and Iran to explore possible new trade links. Fig. 1.2 illustrates Newbery's first and second journeys in 1579 and 1580.<sup>35</sup> The specific destination of Newbery's second journey was the city of Hormuz on the south coast of Iran which took him nearly ten months to reach from England.<sup>36</sup> He found that the Portuguese who controlled the island freely allowed merchants of other nations to trade there and that most of the trade was in the hands of Venetians who directed it towards Turkey and Europe.<sup>37</sup> On his return journey to England Newbery crossed Iran, visiting its main commercial centres (Fig. 1.2). Back in England he found that during his absence the ELC had been established. On contacting the company, he then arranged a second journey to Hormuz Island in 1583, this time on behalf of the ELC who wished to make use of his knowledge of the area.<sup>38</sup> On this visit to Hormuz, however, Newbery was imprisoned by the Portuguese and sent to their island of Goa off the east coast of India from which he was later able to escape.<sup>39</sup>

While little trade directly developed between Iran and England as a result of the activities of the ELC and of Newbery, the information he gathered, especially as the first Englishman to visit Hormuz,<sup>40</sup> and several centres in Iran undoubtedly aided in the development of the ELC and also became important in the establishment of the ELC which was to

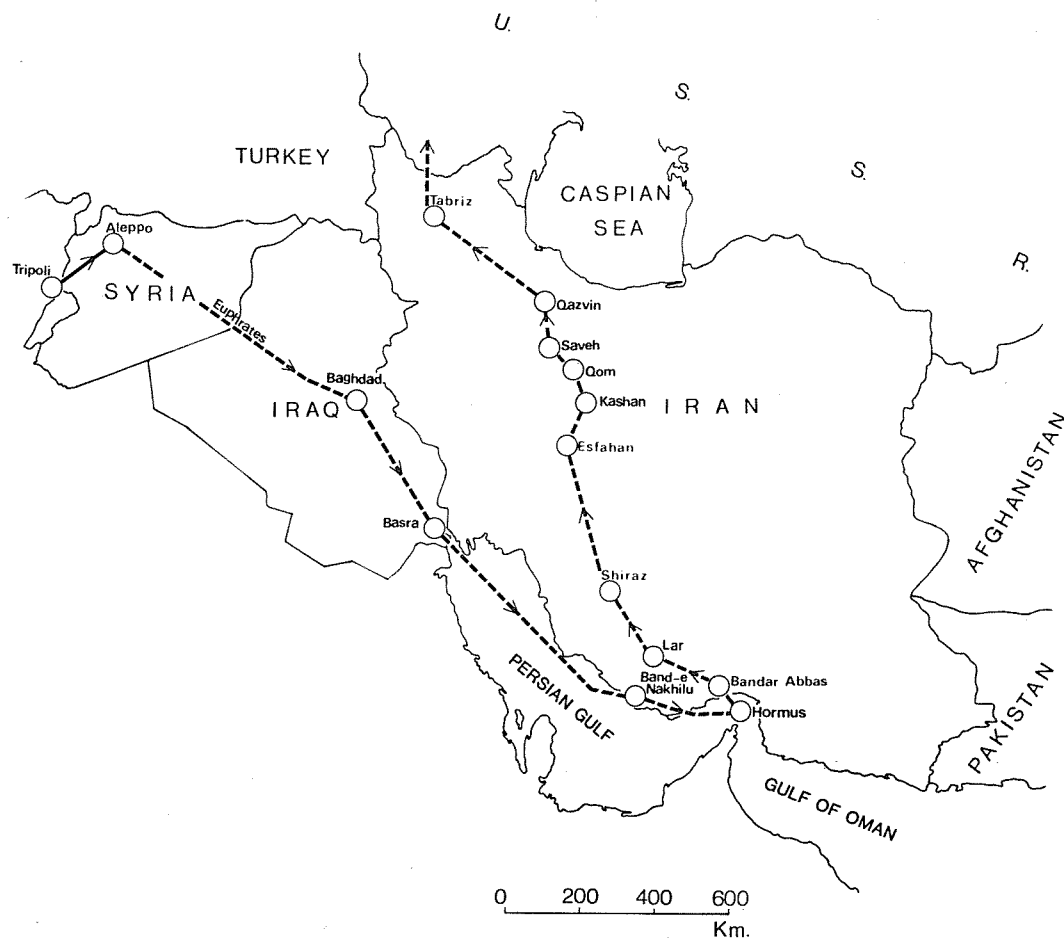


FIGURE 1.2 Newbery's first and second journey to Iran in 1579 and 1580  
After Foster (1933)



become the main agent of English contact with Iran from the seventeenth century.

### 1.3.3 : The English East India Company (EIC)

#### 1.3.3.1 : Development in the Seventeenth Century

Despite these attempts to open up trade with Iran overland, either through Russia or the Levant, it was the EIC's exploitation of the sea route via the Indian Ocean which ultimately proved successful and brought the English into the ports of the PG. The EIC grew out of a series of exploratory ventures after 1600 by which the company, granted English monopoly rights in the area, was able to break into the trade of the Indian Ocean. Though challenged by the Dutch, this trade area had been a Portuguese monopoly for much of the sixteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

The EIC had been initially concerned with opening up trade with the Spice Islands and India, but once established on the west coast of India by 1613, the restless mercantile enterprise of the East India merchants took them into the PG. Their activities there were stimulated by the difficulties they encountered in disposing of woollen cloth in India and the potential market perceived for it in Iran. This had been revealed by the reconnaissance trip to Iran by Richard Steel in 1614.<sup>42</sup> Steel, when travelling across Iran to India in 1614, was particularly impressed by the fact that during the winter people were in need of woollen clothing.<sup>43</sup> Hence in 1615, Steel was sent back to Iran overland from India, to investigate the market potential for English woollens and the possibility of opening up trade of a general nature with that country.<sup>44</sup> Because Shah Abbas (The Great) wanted an English presence in the Gulf to challenge the Portuguese, Steel succeeded in obtaining a Firman (royal grant) from the Shah by which the EIC was allowed to establish trade at any port that it might think suitable in the kingdom.<sup>45</sup> After examining a number of ports (Bandar Abbas, Jask, Rishahr and Bahrain), Jask was chosen as the most suitable both physically

and politically.<sup>46</sup> Following this, the first Company ship "The James" was sent with a considerable cargo to Iran from Surat in January 1616.<sup>47</sup> Edward Connock, Commander of "The James", succeeded in securing a fresh royal grant by which the Company was allowed to have factories at Shiraz and Esfahan, as well as being empowered to send factors and agents whenever it chose within the kingdom for commercial purposes.<sup>48</sup> Shah Abbas also promised to supply the EIC each year with between 36,000 and 54,000 mann-i shahi (= 450,000 and 675,000 lb.)<sup>of silk.</sup> an amount equivalent to his total monopoly.<sup>49</sup> Despite the distance from the main silk-producing areas on the Caspian Sea, this silk was to be shipped from Jask free of all the duty normally incurred on goods going overland. Accordingly, the EIC was to pay for three-quarters of the silk in goods and the remaining quarter in money.<sup>50</sup>

When fresh negotiations were carried out for the Company by Thomas Barker and Giles Hobbs with Shah Abbas in 1617 he further agreed to grant a monopoly of the silk trade and promised not to sell any silk to Spain and Portugal.<sup>51</sup> He also undertook to prevent the export of this commodity to Europe by way of Turkey. The Shah had for long been in dispute with the Turkish Empire and was anxious to halt the export of Iranian silk to Europe through Ottoman territory because of the considerable revenue which the Sultan received from its passage.<sup>52</sup> Barker's agreement to stop this trade led to a protest, however, from the Armenians in Julfa who were the main exporters of Iran's silk to Europe via the Turkish Empire. The Armenians were ready to pay more than the English and Spanish for Iranian silk, and Shah Abbas continued to sell some of his silk to them.<sup>53</sup> At the same time the Shah's intention in permitting the English to open up trade with Iran was partly to entice them into the Gulf where their strong naval force would be able to threaten the Portuguese based on Hormuz.

As a result of these agreements within a few years of its establishment the sphere of the Company's commercial operation in Iran had reached as far as Esfahan and Shiraz and over the next few years

was further extended. In 1622 Shah Abbas succeeded in destroying the Portuguese supremacy in Hormuz Island with the assistance of an English naval force. In recompense for this help the EIC benefited in four main ways:

- a) The Shah gave the EIC permission to buy as much silk as it wanted from the silk-producing areas and this could be transported to Esfahan free of any duty.
- b) Although the Company had a factory at Jask, it always seemed to have wished to establish itself at Hormuz. After the expulsion of the Portuguese from that port, the Shah allowed the Company to have a factory at Bandar Abbas, which now replaced the island entrepot.<sup>54</sup>
- c) The Company was exempted from customs and any ship trading under its protection would have like exemption.<sup>55</sup>
- d) The Company was to receive half the total customs of Bandar Abbas.

The Company for its part undertook to maintain two warships in the PG, in order to prevent any action or retribution by the Portuguese.<sup>56</sup>

So wide-ranging were the privileges granted to the EIC in Iran that the English soon became unpopular, particularly because of their refusal to pay road-taxes and because the Company's silk monopoly deprived many Iranian officials of the revenue which they previously obtained for their involvement in this trade.<sup>57</sup> Having become established at Bandar Abbas, however, other problems faced the EIC in the first part of the seventeenth century. Most notable was the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (OIC) in the PG.<sup>58</sup> In 1623, about the same time that the EIC's privileges were gained, the OIC were also granted privileges by Shah Abbas to settle at Bandar Abbas, and were exempted from any customs, apart from road-tax.<sup>59</sup>

This move was particularly damaging to the EIC since it eroded one of its major trading advantages.<sup>60</sup> Soon the OIC settled at Esfahan as well and became the master of that part of Iran's trade passing via PG. They maintained their dominance in that area for the most part of the seventeenth century, and thus threatened the position of the EIC. More than that, not only did the OIC undersell its imported goods, but it also paid higher prices for Iranian goods.<sup>61</sup>

Despite fresh privileges being granted to the EIC by Shah Safi (who succeeded Shah Abbas in 1629), it was now too engaged with its affairs in England to enjoy them fully. The consequences of civil war in England, the effects of the Commonwealth of Cromwell and of war with France and Holland had to be contended with. The EIC's prestige was weakened further by the threat to its monopoly from merchant adventurers and English interlopers in its traditional trading areas, and from an Act of Parliament in 1698 which gave the right to all English companies to trade in the East.<sup>62</sup> The appearance of CIO was also a cause of anxiety for the EIC and its trade, although the commercial activities of the CIO were not large.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, the EIC's relations with the Iranian government deteriorated. This was due to a dispute between the Iranian government and the Company over the customs' revenue of Bandar Abbas where it had a factory. The government claimed that the Company did not carry out its undertaking to maintain two warships in the Gulf, as was agreed after the overthrow of the Portuguese at Hormuz.<sup>64</sup> However, the dispute ended with the Iranian government agreeing to pay only an annual amount of 1,000 tuman to retain the services of the two ships, rather than allowing the Company to take half of the very considerable customs of Bandar Abbas which had been agreed before.<sup>65</sup>

A recovery in the EIC's trade and an expansion of its woollen markets in the centre and north of Iran coincided with the accession to the throne of Shah Sultan Husain in 1697.<sup>66</sup> By his royal grant, the EIC was allowed to purchase as much Carmania wool as it required; it obtained

the right to export wine, and was provided with guards for all the Company's caravans travelling through dangerous areas.<sup>67</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, Bandar Abbas and Esfahan had become the Company's permanent establishments, and early in the new century the Company had factories at Shiraz, Esfahan and Bandar Abbas, all subordinated to Bombay. The main residency of the Company's Agent remained, however, in Bandar Abbas, through which the trade was maintained with the inland markets. The Company's attempt to extend its woollen market northwards in Iran was mainly due to its new more vigorous commercial policy which rated Iran as one of its principal markets for woollens. Part of the reason for this was that, under its new charter from the English government received in 1693, the Company was obliged to export a considerable amount (£150,000 worth) of English manufactured goods to its settlements.<sup>68</sup> As a whole, however, the Company's plan to extend its Iranian market at this time was not at first successful. Even the destruction of one of the ELC's fleets carrying woollens for the Turkish and Iranian market by the French in 1693 did not immediately help the EIC to extend its market.<sup>69</sup> The reason was that the Armenian merchants, who were receiving woollens through the ELC, had refused to purchase any of the EIC's woollens with the result that a large quantity of woollens remained in the Company's warehouses and had to be sold at a greatly reduced price.<sup>70</sup> Then, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, new problems arose.

#### 1.3.3.2 : Trade developments of the EIC from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the removal of its base to Bushehr in 1763

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the EIC had only partly recovered its previous position in Iran by gaining new privileges from the Shah. Nevertheless, it was hoped that the Company would now be able to go forward to achieve a secure and favourable position in the country. However, the first half of the eighteenth century was a period of great upheaval and instability in the internal affairs of Iran, particularly after the overthrow of the Safavid Dynasty and before the reign of Nadir Shah. All this crippled the EIC's progress. From

1722 to 1729, the country was occupied by Afghans, whilst Russia and Turkey both took advantage of Iran's weakness to make considerable territorial encroachments. During the Afghan invasion in the 1720s (which extended as far as Shiraz, Esfahan, Kerman and Bandar Abbas), the trade of the EIC almost came to a standstill, because their main trade networks were overrun. About the same time, the Russians took over the northern provinces of Iran, including the silk-producing province of Gilan, and held them until 1732.<sup>71</sup> These events were followed by the rise of piratical acts in the PG perpetrated by the Arabs of Masqat.<sup>72</sup>

A certain measure of internal stability and order was restored with the succession of Nadir Shah in 1736 but this gave little help to the EIC. Although a year before his accession he had granted the Company commercial privileges according to which it was exempted from 1000 تومان of customs duty, during the early part of his reign as Shah he was generally hostile to the English.<sup>73</sup> Relations did improve later but Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1747. This led to a period of anarchy and civil war until a degree of order was regained during the 1750s by Karim Khan. Another problem facing the EIC during the first half of the eighteenth century was competition from another English company. This company had been established in 1741 for the purpose of communicating with Iran through Russia and importing Iran's silk in return for woollens.<sup>74</sup> This new Russia company (RC) established a factory in Mashhad for the sale of woollens.<sup>75</sup> Although its activity lasted only for a few years (1741-1749) it represented for a short time a serious threat to the EIC's trade in woollens to Iran.

As a result of these problems the EIC's operation in Iran had become mainly centred on Bandar Abbas by the 1750s but with factories at Esfahan and Kerman teetering on the edge of closure.<sup>76</sup> That at Kerman had only a native broker in charge of the Company's affairs although it was visited by the members of the Company's base at Bandar Abbas for a few months each year. This arrangement ended by 1750 and Bandar Abbas became the Company's sole permanent establishment in Iran. Ives,

who visited Bandar Abbas on his way from England to India in 1754, made the following remark about the commercial state of the port:-

*"...At present it is a place of no kind of consequence, except what it receives from the English and Dutch factories, besides whom no other European nation has any settlement here. The two factory houses are the only buildings remaining of any importance; the whole city besides is almost one entire scene of ruins, which served indeed to convince us of its once flourishing state..."<sup>77</sup>*

From 1751 the question of removing the Bandar Abbas Agency was discussed, and in February of the same year the Agent was ordered by the Company's presidency at Bombay to evacuate Bandar Abbas.<sup>78</sup> But the Agent persuaded the presidency that it was worthwhile for the Company to stay in that port. However, following the French attack on the Company's factory in that port in 1759, the CD ordered the Agent in April 1762 to move to Basra in Turkish Arabia where the EIC already had a residency.<sup>79</sup> The evacuation took place in February 1763.<sup>80</sup> Due to the eagerness of both the Company and the Iranian government (with reservations) for commercial relationship, followed by the report of Agent Douglas about the commercial state of the port of Bushehr (on the Iranian coast of PG) as a favourable site for a new factory, the Company re-established its settlement at Bushehr in April 1763.<sup>81</sup>

#### 1.3.3.3 : EIC's establishment at Bushehr, 1763-1810

There are a number of factors which may indicate why the Company shifted back from Basra to re-establish its base in Iran, and chose Bushehr this time. These included the importance of the Iranian market for EIC's woollens; the Company's anxiety concerning the possibility of losing out to the OIC for the supply of woollens to Iran's markets; and the decline in the trade of Bengal with Iran which had been an

important source of Company revenue.<sup>82</sup> As a result the Company's CD expressed its desire in 1762 to see the Company settled in Iran once more,<sup>83</sup> so that Mr William Andrew Price (a member of the Bombay Council) made an agreement with Shaykh Sa'dun of Bushehr in April, 1763 which permitted the Company to open up a trading post there.<sup>84</sup> Three months later Price obtained a royal grant from Karim Khan to foster this trade.<sup>85</sup>

At this point in time where the period being studied in this thesis begins, it is necessary to digress slightly to outline Karim Khan's commercial policy. Karim Khan, the first monarch of the Zand Dynasty after the overthrow of Nadir Shah, pursued a policy to encourage progress, notably in the fields of agriculture, industry and commerce.<sup>86</sup> Karim Khan was well aware of the fact that the only effective measure for increasing the receipts of the royal treasury was to invite foreign merchants to settle in his dominions.<sup>87</sup> Therefore in several ways he encouraged the trade of his kingdom and this was mainly carried out along a variety of the northern, western and southern routes. Figure 1.3 illustrates schematically (as far as the information permits) those routes used at this time for the export of goods from and import to Iran. <sup>The</sup> Khan's encouragement extended to granting the Russians privileges for the export of silk northwards from Iran, whilst considerable amounts of other articles were also traded between Iran and Russia and various routes.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile trade between Iran and Turkey continued to flourish during Karim Khan's lifetime with silk a major Iranian export to Turkey.<sup>89</sup> Although Mashhad (the capital of Khorasan province and one of Iran's major commercial entrepôts) was not under the Khan's jurisdiction, the fact that it maintained commercial communications with the rest of Iran would suggest that the country was still in commercial contact with its eastern and north-eastern neighbours (Fig. 1.4).

However, the Khan was anxious to encourage trade in the south as well. Although he was worried over the re-establishment of European



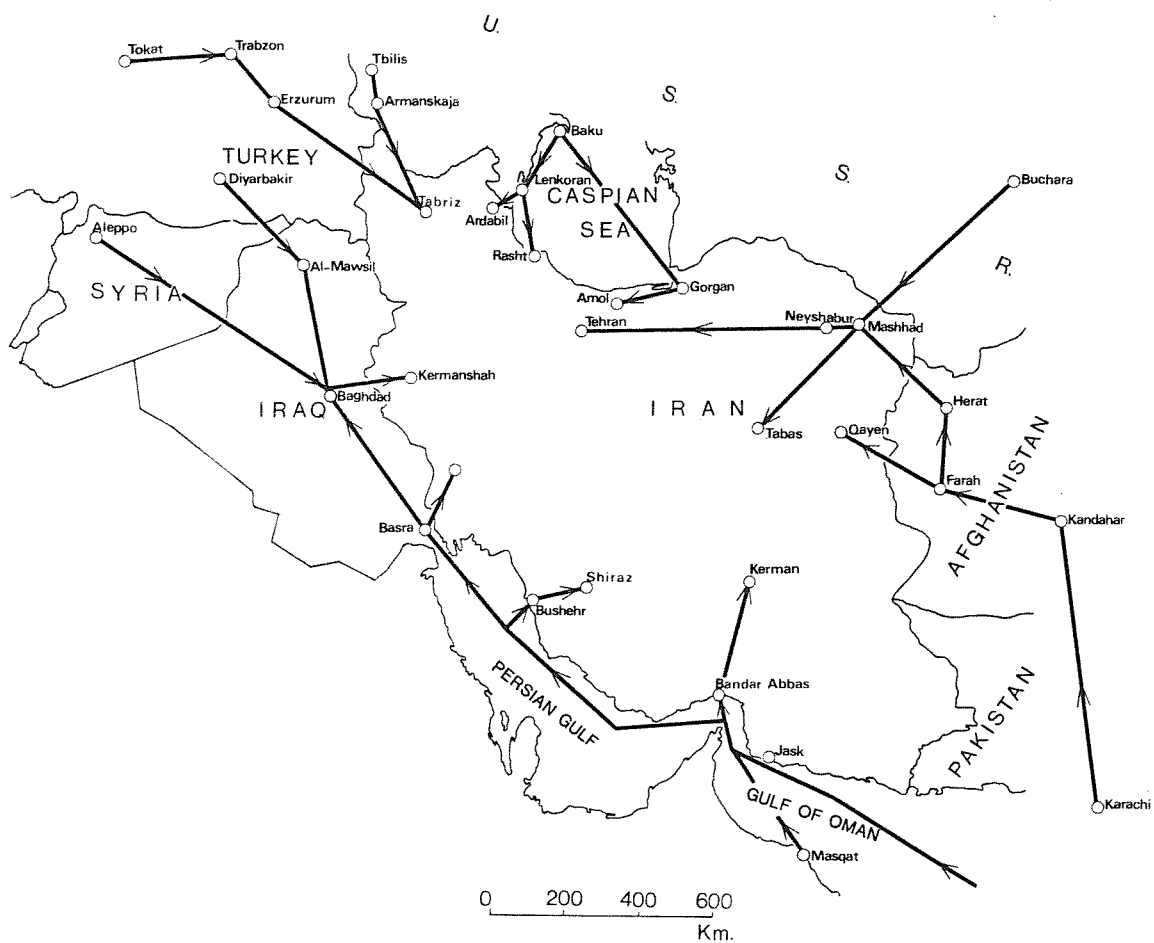


FIGURE 1.3 Points of entry into Iran for commerce during the study period  
Sources: Research In PPG vol.25 (1790) and other sources

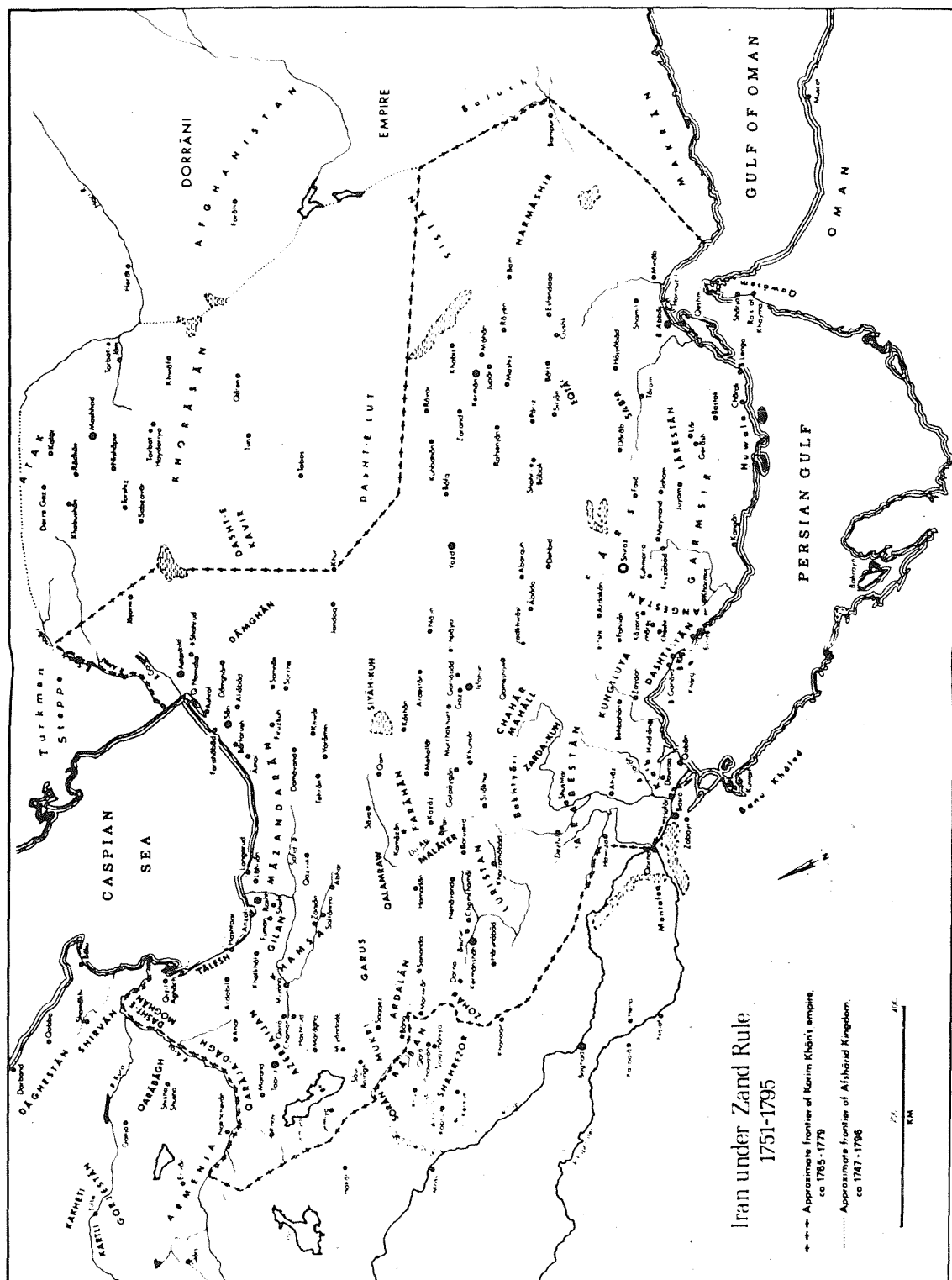


FIGURE 1.4 After Perry (1979)

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this Thesis

in the PG during the reign of Shah Abbas (The Great) and succeeding rulers to show the rising importance of Bushehr under Karim Khan.<sup>96</sup>

The EIC's activities in Bushehr which developed from 1763 can be classified as:

- a) The export and import of goods on the EIC's own account
- b) A role in the cabotage trade
- c) A role as protector of the country's trade

When the EIC began its commercial activities at Bushehr, the port's external trade was mainly with India and was shared chiefly by Iranian and Indian merchants. The main goods traded were Indian manufactured cotton goods and copper, horses and medicinal drugs from Iran.<sup>97</sup> The full range of goods traded between Bushehr and India are listed in chapter 4 (section 4.2.1, 4.3 and Appendix 4.1 and 4.2).

It is sensible at this point to say a little about each of the EIC activities at Bushehr since they are the basis of several of the chapters which follow. The Company's chief item of import into Bushehr on its own account was woollen cloth (broad cloth and perperets) but in addition the Company imported quantities of metals, although this never became a regular and considerable item of the Company's imports. In all this trade, the Company suffered from Russian and Dutch competition. A brief history, as well as a more detailed examination of the Company's import trade into Iran immediately before and after the EIC's establishment at Bushehr, is given in the next chapter of this thesis. The Company's main interest in the export of Iranian goods was limited to silk and Carmania wool, although the EIC experienced considerable problems in both these trades, and neither was large in the period under study. Chapter 3 deals with the Company's export trade from Iran and the relevant problems of both a geographical and a political nature.

In the PG in general, and at Bushehr in particular, the EIC was also concerned with the coastal trade and with protecting the country trade. In fact, these activities were often of a greater benefit to the Company than its own trade. Chapter 4 is devoted to illustrating Bushehr's share of Iran's coastal trade and the Company's role as protector and carrier. Chapter 5 also partly deals with these latter aspects.

After six years of operations at Bushehr, the Company abandoned its residency there in 1769. This was due to the deterioration in trade, as well as to a dispute between Karim Khan and the Company. Among the reasons for this was that it is obvious that the Khan was neither satisfied commercially nor politically with the Company's activities within his dominions. The EIC's resident had continued to sell English woollens for money and did not pay any attention to the Khan's desires about exchanging woollens for Iranian products, which had been a major point in the Khan's agreements with the Company. This, therefore, led to the export of considerable amounts of specie from Bushehr. The Khan's attempt to exchange his silk tribute for the EIC's woollens can be assumed to have been his effort to bring the Company's commercial affairs more under his control, but it was not a success. To stop the damaging export of specie, the Khan introduced several measures. In particular, he tried to prevent Iranian merchants going down to Bushehr to trade. To this end, the amount of roaderage was increased by opening more toll-houses and the export of specie was prohibited.<sup>98</sup> "Severe penalties" were to be imposed on merchants who carried any specie to Bushehr and in May, 1767 merchants and their families in Bushehr were ordered to leave within the space of 20 days.<sup>99</sup> It also seems possible that the Khan prohibited the wearing of English cloth.<sup>100</sup>

Notwithstanding all these measures, the Iranian merchants were still allowed to deal with the Company's resident, so long as the trade was based on the exchange of goods for woollens.<sup>101</sup> The Company's failure to assist the Khan fully against Mir Mohanna, a PG pirate, had

further increased the Khan's anger toward the EIC. In 1763-4, the EIC's resident had requested Karim Khan to take action against Mohanna who had disturbed Iran's trade on both land and sea, and promised to assist him in this.<sup>102</sup> In August 1764, Karim Khan agreed to act against Mir Mohanna, and requested the Company to provide two cruisers to protect the trade in the PG, offering the Company 20,000 rupees (Rup.) for each of them.<sup>103</sup> The Bombay president instructed the resident at Bushehr on 4th December to offer one of the Company's armed vessels to the Khan since action against Mohanna was also in the Company's interest.<sup>104</sup> The Khan's attack against Mohanna's stronghold at Bandar-e Rig in 1765 was not successful, however. Mohanna escaped and the Khan blamed the English for this, since he believed that if the Company had provided a stronger naval force, there might have been more chance of blockading Bandar-e Rig.<sup>105</sup> The purpose of chapter 5 is to provide further illustration of these types of problems which affected the Company's communications both by sea and land.

Another reason for the Khan's dispute with the Company was the EIC's cooperation with the Turks against the Arabs of Banu Ka'b, whom he considered to be his subjects. The Ka'b Arabs had been disturbing and attacking the EIC's trade in <sup>the</sup> Shatt al Arab.<sup>106</sup> In October 1766 the Khan sent an envoy to the Turks fighting against the Ka'b requesting that the English and Turks withdraw from Iran's territory and leave the Ka'b alone, as they were his subjects.<sup>107</sup> The Company's problem with the Ka'b became more serious after Mr Henry Moore succeeded Mr Wrench as a Company Agent at Basra at the end of 1766.<sup>108</sup> The Khan's displeasure with the English went so far as a refusal to negotiate with the Company's envoy (Mr George Skipp) who was sent to Shiraz from Basra to enter negotiations with the Khan about the Ka'b and other problems.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to these problems, there was also a dispute between the Khan and the governor of Bushehr which further destabilised

the position of the Company's trade in that port. Little is known of the cause of this dispute but available data suggest that it might have resulted from either the growing connection between Mir Mohanna and the governor of Bushehr or the governor's interference in the Khan's dispute with the EIC.<sup>110</sup> That the governor was concerned at the dispute between the Khan and the Company was to be expected because the trade of Bushehr was certainly the governor's major source of revenue and he did not want that trade harmed. He not only benefited from the duty charged on the value of imported goods, but, according to Waring's account, he also took one piece of chintz from each bale imported to Bushehr.<sup>111</sup> Evidently, from the beginning of the Company's establishment at Bushehr, any merchant who purchased woollens from the Company's resident had to pay a duty of 3 per cent to the governor.<sup>112</sup> At one point, this was raised to 4½ per cent but, due to the gaps in the records, it is not known exactly when this occurred but it was certainly in force during the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the governor was also personally engaged in the woollen trade with the Company's resident. From the Company's viewpoint, good working relations were essential with the governor of Bushehr because of his influence upon the merchants who dealt with the Company, as well as his own commercial engagement with it. However, the Khan's dispute with the Company went so far as to leave no choice for the Company but to close its residency in Bushehr, an event which happened in 1769. In May 1770 the EIC's Basra Agent wrote in regard to the Khan that the Company's servants had received disgraceful treatment from the Khan who did not want the Company's trade since it only "impoverishes" his kingdom.<sup>114</sup> The results of these disputes was lack of confidence between the Company and the Khan.<sup>115</sup>

In February 1769 the Company moved to Basra and was to stay out of Iran until 1775 when it reopened up its residency at Bushehr again. During 1769-1775 the EIC's Agent at Basra managed to carry out quite a lot of trade with a few Iranian merchants<sup>116</sup> who travelled to

Basra but in 1773 there was an outbreak of plague at Basra and the members of the Company were withdrawn to Bombay. One of the ships engaged in this withdrawal 'The Tyger' was captured by the governor of Bandar-e Rig and two members of the Company's agency at Basra (John Beaumont and George Green) who were sailing in her were imprisoned by the Iranians and sent to Shiraz.<sup>117</sup> Relations with the Khan reached a new low. Although the EIC's settlement was re-opened in 1774, Basra was besieged by the Iranians in 1775. In consequence, the future of the port as a commercial centre appeared to the CD to be so gloomy that they ordered the government of Bombay not to re-establish the agency there unless the Iranians withdrew. Until then the Company's settlement in that port should be reduced to the level of a residency.<sup>118</sup>

Different interpretations can be put on the reasons for the Khan's invasion of Basra. The ill-treatment of Iranian merchants at Basra by the Ottoman Government is one explanatory reason, but most historians believe that Karim Khan was not happy with the commercial growth of Basra and used the ill-treatment of Iranian merchants only as a pretext.

The Khan needed to threaten Basra because he was aware that the trade of his own southern ports, especially Bushehr, was handicapped without the presence and protective role of the EIC, and he needed to threaten Basra until the EIC returned to Bushehr.

This seems a reasonable interpretation. During 1769-1775 the Company boycotted Bushehr and hardly any Company's ship touched there. Mr Moore, the Company's Agent at Basra, knew that Iran's trade at Bushehr was heavily dependent upon the EIC and other English shipping, which was also protected by the Company's cruisers. Without the EIC's protection, considerable damage was being done to that part of Iran's trade which passed through Bushehr. This in turn deprived the central and local Iranian governments of the revenue they had previously



derived from it. At the same time, the increase in the commercial importance of Basra was due to the absence of the EIC's trade from Bushehr during 1769-1775. During the six years, 1770-1775, the amount of the Company's woollens sold to Iranian merchants through Basra was more than that sold at Bushehr in the 15 years between 1775-1789.

It can be assumed that the Khan was also under pressure from Iranian merchants whose trade demanded the EIC's re-establishment at Bushehr. Because of the commercially inactive condition of Bushehr, by September 1774 Iranian merchants were taking their money out of Iran to Masqat and India and this alarmed the Khan as well as Shaykh Naser of Bushehr.<sup>119</sup> Aware of the consequence of this act, particularly where there was already a scarcity of money in Iran, Karim Khan thought that the invasion of Basra would be a solution to this problem.<sup>120</sup> Thus with the decline of the EIC's trade at Basra because of the outbreak of plague, the Iranian invasion of Basra, as well as the Iranian government's terms for releasing the two Company's servants, the EIC was finally forced to reopen its residency at Bushehr in 1775.<sup>121</sup> In spite of the disagreement of <sup>the</sup> Basra Agent, the re-opening of the Company's trade at Bushehr by the CD seemed to be mainly aimed at securing the release of their servants from Iran. There were other more tangible advantages.<sup>122</sup> For the EIC the commercial or political benefits from the Company's return to Bushehr included the possibility of combating French commercial development in Iran.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, there had been a general decline of trade at Basra during 1768-74 due especially to the Russo-Turkish War which reduced the demand for Indian goods.<sup>124</sup> In any case the EIC's trade at both Bushehr and Basra in general was small from 1775 onward so that a major reason for maintaining its establishment in these ports was less to trade than the importance of the stations for overland communication between India and England. This reduced level of trade continued through much of the period under study. The Khan's death in 1779 did not bring about any improvement in the commercial state of the EIC within Iran. In January 1788, Ja<sup>C</sup>far Khan, who succeeded Karim Khan, made an agreement

with the Company by which the EIC was free to exchange goods for money but, as Ja<sup>C</sup>far Khan's domination of Iran was limited to only a few provinces in the southern part of the country, it had a limited impact on trade.<sup>125</sup> Although Ja<sup>C</sup>far Khan's purpose in this was to encourage the EIC to maintain its commerce between the two countries, the Company took advantage to stabilise and if possible increase its influence.<sup>126</sup> Perhaps this was the reason for Ja<sup>C</sup>far Khan's change of attitude toward the Company, from giving the EIC commercial privileges to that of later prohibiting the export of Carmania wool which was the most favourable item of EIC export from Bushehr.<sup>127</sup>

When the Zand Dynasty came to an end in 1794 the state of Iran grew unsettled. After Ja<sup>C</sup>far Khan's assassination in 1789, Aqa Muhammad Khan succeeded in extending his area of domination southwards. He generally supported the merchants and mercantile affairs during his reign (1789-97) so that commerce revived in the country.<sup>128</sup> Despite this, the trade of the EIC was at a low ebb. The Company had lost its woollen market in Iran to "Russian cloth" and after 1775 hardly any raw silk was purchased by the company. Before the end of the century trade with Iran through Bushehr and with Turkish Arabia, through Basra, was running at a loss. This depressed state of the EIC's trade was not only the result of the disturbed condition of southern Iran during the last years of Zand rule, but was also due to a loss of interest by the Company in its trade in the Gulf. The loss of interest was related to the Company's expansion of its trade with China during the 1770-1780s, as well as to the effects of events in England on its affairs.<sup>129</sup> In 1773 Parliament had passed a Regulating Act which gave it, for the first time, control over the affairs of the EIC.<sup>130</sup> This was followed by Pitt's India Bill (1784) which created a Board of Control to superintend the EIC's affairs in India.<sup>131</sup>

With trade with Iran at a low ebb, by the 1790s, the Company had commenced a serious investigation into the advantages and disadvantages of its trade there to consider the possibility of

increasing the demand for, and consumption of, English manufactured goods, whilst increasing the profit margins of the Gulf trade through the export of drugs to India,<sup>132</sup> partly to replace the trade which had largely disappeared. One reason for the decline in the co-Iranian trade was that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the responsibilities of the EIC's servants in India had been increased particularly in the political sphere. This in turn affected British involvement in the Gulf, although the political dimension there was complicated. Trade was now only of peripheral interest. Political, rather than purely commercial interest meant that the British tried to keep the peace in the PG, on the grounds that any element which could disturb the peace of Iran and the PG could easily threaten the British territories in India. Consequently British intervention in the political affairs of Iran and Turkish Arabia increased.

The Company was helped in this by the establishment of the Qajar Dynasty from 1794 onward. It brought about more stability for the Company both in regard to its political and commercial concerns in Iran. In 1798 Mehdi Ali Khan was sent to the Court of Fath Ali Shah by the British government in India to conclude political and commercial treaties.<sup>133</sup> In 1801, Sir John Malcolm became the first official British diplomat to visit Iran since the sixteenth century and he concluded further political and commercial treaties with Fath Ali Shah. Nevertheless, the political stability of the PG was threatened again by the emergence of the Wahhabi movement in Arabia which had a profound effect upon the social and political affairs of the entire region. As a national and religious movement, Wahhabism considered the Koran to be a sufficient guide for all purposes of policy and morals and its general power in the PG reached its highest point in 1809.<sup>134</sup> The Wahhabis' success seriously alarmed the Company, especially when its vessels were attacked by the followers of this sect.<sup>135</sup>

Another serious problem which threatened the peace of the PG, was the action of the Arabs of Ra's al-Khaimah (Jowasim) who were struggling for the maritime supremacy formerly held by Masqat.<sup>136</sup> The Jowasim attacked both native and EIC's vessels, and the Company's policy was to extend the Sultan of Masqat's power in the PG against them, and as part of this policy EIC re-opened its residency in Masqat in 1803 and sent several expeditions against the pirate ports. The conflict did not end finally until March 1820 when a peace treaty was signed with the Shaykh of Ra's al Khaimah.<sup>137</sup>

Not only were the early years of the century difficult for the English in the Gulf but various developments also directly threatened the British territories in India. This included Zaman Shah's ambitions in the Punjab, and Napoleon's eastern ambitions actualised in his invasion of Egypt in 1798.<sup>138</sup> As a result, Mehdi Ali Khan (acting as the EIC's resident at Bushehr) and Sir John Malcolm were sent to the Court of Fath Ali Shah in 1798 and 1800 to obtain political and commercial treaties. Under these treaties, Fath Ali Shah was to attack the Afghans if Zaman Shah should invade India. He also agreed to prevent the French from establishing themselves in Iran. However, the treaty of Finkestein concluded between the French and Iranian government in 1807 caused a major alarm to the British government because under it, Iran was meant to sever all political and commercial relations with Britain.<sup>139</sup> However, in 1809 Sir Harford Jones went to Iran as British envoy to persuade the Shah to break his treaty with the French. He was successful and Britain and Iran were allied again.<sup>140</sup> In 1811 Sir Gore Ouseley succeeded Harford Jones as the permanent British envoy in Iran.<sup>141</sup> Now the government of Bombay suggested that, with the transfer of the control of British affairs in Iran to the British Crown, the status of the Bushehr factory should be reduced to that of a commercial residency,<sup>142</sup> reflecting its declining value as a trading centre for the EIC.

#### 1.4 : Sources for the Study

Although various sources could be used to study the trade of Iran during the period 1763-1810, one of the most important collections are the papers of the EIC now preserved in the India Office Library and Records in London.<sup>143</sup> Their importance rests in the long-standing interest of the Company in Iran and the lands bordering the PG, as well as in the commercial nature of the Company's activities. It should be noted that after the removal of the OIC resident from Kharg in 1766, only the Russians and English had direct commercial contact with Iran during the period under consideration, and these English contacts were represented by the EIC.

The Company's records used for this study are mainly the papers collected together as the Resident Records Persian Gulf Bushehr (RRPGB) and these consist of correspondence exchanged between the Company's resident in Bushehr, the Agent in Basra, and the Bombay Presidency. For the most part they deal with the Company's commercial and other affairs (based on Bushehr) but they are also a good source of information about events in the hinterland for the period 1763-1810.

Use of the EIC's records presents real difficulties and these have shaped the course of the study reported in this thesis. In the first place, the Company's papers refer almost exclusively to its own commercial activities, so that it is not possible to learn much about the activities of either European rivals or local merchants, whether Iranian, Arab or Indian. Secondly, as the papers for the period of interest consist (as mentioned above) mainly of correspondence exchanged between the Company's resident in Bushehr, Basra and Bombay, this means that Iran's trade must be studied very largely through the experience of just one port and its pattern of contacts within Iran. Even so, the papers do contain information

on the Company's activities within Iran and the difficulties of maintaining trade with the interior and along the length of the PG. A third difficulty is that much of the correspondence deals with the EIC's imports into Iran via Bushehr and there is hardly any information (quantitative and qualitative) about the cabotage of that port. In addition, the papers which survive contain very little in the way of systematic discussion of Iran's complete trade pattern and very few statistical series.

All of this means that information relevant to the study is often fragmentary in character and many tiny pieces of material must be sewn together to produce a rather incomplete patchwork. Even the most skilful sewing, however, cannot fill the gaps left by the sources. For example, during the course of the research the RRPGB for the period 1789-1800 were said to be missing from the series. However, toward the end of the research a photocopy was found which had been made from a microfilm and which contained a volume of the RRPGB for the period 1789-98. The original volume had strayed from the series and was held by the Secretariat Record Office, Bombay. Nonetheless its investigation did little to alter the picture already built up from the other records. It must be added, however, that before finding these records an attempt had been made to fill gaps like this and similar, but smaller, gaps by examining despatches to Bombay (DB), letters received in London from Bombay (LRB), Bombay presidency's correspondence with its settlements in PG (Bombay Commercial Proceedings; BCP and Bombay Public Proceedings; BPP) and so-called Persia and Persian Gulf records (PPG; letters from Basra). Each of these sources has presented particular difficulties in its use. As already mentioned, before finding the records missing from the RRPGB for the period 1788-1799, other EIC records were also examined. A particularly attractive set of records were the DB which mainly deals with EIC's consignments to Bushehr, but the study will show that they are not an entirely reliable source for studying the demand for and consumption in Iran of EIC's exports. Several scholars

have used the DB as their principal source when investigating EIC exported trade to Iran because their main attraction is the statistical information they present on imports, often in the simple form of lists, so that data are easily extracted. But experience gained whilst working on this thesis shows a very imprecise record of consumption, of Iranian demand, and indeed of actual imports. The reason for their imprecision was that they recorded consignments at a point far removed from the PG and covered consignments destined for several different points. The DB normally recorded the quantities of goods being exported at the time of the fleet's departure from London and bound for various ports, so that the use of such data for studying the trade of Bushehr alone is risky. The hazards of the sea voyage meant that not all the goods reached the destination, while the quantities destined for Bushehr from London might have been piled up in Bombay warehouses for years because the CD did not properly estimate the real needs of the Iranian market. Losses of goods at sea and to pirates on the voyage between Bombay and the PG similarly make it difficult to rely on the Bombay despatches in regard to the EIC's actual imports to Bushehr.

As a result the RRPGB, in spite of the many problems involved with their investigation and other shortcomings, appear to be a better source for data on demand and consumption, since they also contain information on the actual amounts of goods requested and sold. Like similar data sources RRPGB compiled over a long period, suffer from a lack of standardisation in the weights, measures and currencies used to express the quantities and values of the goods concerned. Many different weights, measures and currencies were used by the EIC residents for conducting their trade at Bushehr. No doubt they were skilled in manipulating the various units, but they hardly ever tried to standardise for the benefit of their colleagues, let alone posterity. The writer attempted to standardise the measures as much as possible, but this proved extremely difficult and the results were unsatisfactory. In the end, it seemed more honest to use the measures employed in the

records themselves, although this hinders direct comparison. For further information and discussion the reader is referred to Appendix No.1.1. Further problems are presented by the different terms used by the resident to describe his transactions at Bushehr. Some of these terms are obscure and confusing. For example, terms like "offered", "agreed", "order", "supply" and "contracted" call for a thorough examination of the papers and even then have a note of uncertainty about them. For this reason the more reliable terms like "sold", "purchased", "consigned", "received" and "sent" were looked for in the attempt to establish just what was imported and exported. Even so, ambiguities still existed and these will be reported during the course of this study. The other difficulties in using the RRPGB for the study of EIC trade with Iran arise because the information needed is highly scattered and fragmented amongst more general comment. This meant that each letter contained in the records needed careful reading to recover the smallest pieces of information, particularly of a statistical kind. In fact much of the initial research for this study involved the creation of a data base through the painstaking search for snippets of data contained in the Diaries. (APPendix 1.2)

Some additional information about conditions in Iran itself is available from the accounts written by European travellers, but they are relatively few in number for the period 1763-1800.<sup>144</sup> Whilst the better ones contain quite an amount of useful economic and social information,<sup>145</sup> most of them are not very informative on these matters. Travellers were frequently not particularly interested in these topics and they generally lacked any knowledge of the local language to make satisfactory enquiries. Even those who could speak Iranian were often unable to obtain reliable information from local people.<sup>146</sup> Repetition between different travellers' accounts is also a problem, partly because many of them followed the same routes and partly because they plagiarised each other. That more accounts, and more useful ones do not exist is probably due to the internal instability of Iran at the time as well as to the unpopularity of



Europeans in general and of the English in particular in Iran under the Zand Dynasty (1750-94). By contrast there is a relatively larger number of accounts for the Qajar period (1794-1925) but mainly for the period after that covered in this study.

Original Iranian sources have not been used in this study. No major collections of relevant documents appears to exist in Iran today, most of the more generally available sources being standard histories and chronicles. Modern studies of the history of Iran and of the historical geography of Iranian cities mostly rely on the accounts of European travellers and other foreign sources. Where appropriate, these have been drawn upon.

### 1.5 : Procedure

The fragmentary and often indirect nature of the data available meant that much of it could be made intelligible only if it could be fitted into some coherent theoretical model of a trading system. Preliminary reading on the socio-economic system of eighteenth century Iran,<sup>147</sup> together with that on trading systems in general,<sup>148</sup> suggested that the dendritic mercantile marketing model, showing the concentration of export goods at nodes successively higher in a hierarchy of settlements, might provide an appropriate framework to direct the research. As such the dendritic model helps to the understanding of the spatial pattern of economic relations in<sup>a</sup> region and it is particularly appropriate to a regional economy containing features of backwardness, where the 'surplus' products of communities were often small in quantity and had to be bulked before being exported and where political and economic power coincide.

The model has two particular advantages in this study. First, it enables one to identify and isolate the key factors helping to shape a trading system which stretches from the interior of a region to a

point of export. Once identified these factors could be searched for in the available sources. Second, the model allowed snippets of information to be set in a total trade pattern so that their relationships could be better understood. While the model provides a viable research strategy, it was also hoped in the end to demonstrate whether or not the model is fully applicable to the trade of Iran at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It is the writer's contention that the EIC's trading system within Iran was to some extent structured, and the thesis will attempt to explain the constraints which appear to have determined the system's actual configuration, shaped its operation and its level of efficiency.

It is first necessary to detail the composition of the EIC trade with Iran for the period under consideration which is the subject of the next two chapters.

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13. FOSTER, W. (1933) England's Quest of Eastern Trade (London: A & C Black Ltd.), p.6
- YAPP, M.E. (1970) 'The India Office Records as a Source for the Economic History of the Middle East', in Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, ed. M.A.Cook (Oxford: University Press), p.501
14. FOSTER, op. cit., 6
15. Ibid.
16. FOSTER, op. cit., 10
- SCOTT, W.R. (1910) The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720, vol.2 (Cambridge: University Press), pp. 36-38
- WILLAN, T.S. (1956) The Early History of the Russia Company 1553-1603 (Manchester: University Press), pp. 5-10
17. FOSTER, op. cit., 10-11
18. PINKERTON, J. (1811) General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World, vol.9 (London: Longman), p.374
19. CURZON, G.N. (1966) Persia and Persian Question, vol.2 (London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd.), pp. 532-533
20. Ibid.
21. WILLIAN, op. cit., 58
22. FOSTER, op. cit., 28
- WILLIAN, op. cit., 58
23. FOSTER, op. cit., 31-32
24. Ibid.
25. This was due to a new dispute between Iran and Turkey and the possibility of closing the western frontier, which would put a stop to import and export via Turkey, so that Iran would need an alternative outlet for its goods. Foster, op. cit., 32

26. CURZON, op. cit., 534  
WILLIAN, op. cit., 60
27. CURZON, op. cit., 535
28. FOSTER, op. cit., 38
29. CURZON, op. cit., 537
30. Evidently pirates were active on the Caspian Sea during the time of the Russia Company's (Muscovy Company's) interest at the end of the sixteenth century. Scott, op. cit., 43-44
31. CURZON, op. cit., 537
32. Apparently at this time Iranians were consuming Venetian cloth which was imported via Aleppo and bartered for Iranian silk. Bruce, op. cit., vol.3, 142
33. FOSTER, op. cit., 68-69
34. CURZON, op. cit., 545
35. The route used by Newbery to go to Hormuz was most in use at the end of the sixteenth century. Steensgaard, N. (1973) Carrack, Caravan and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European Asian Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century (Copenhagen: The Institute of History at the University of Copenhagen), p.37
36. FOSTER, op. cit., 83
37. BRUCE, op. cit., vol.3, 198  
FOSTER, op. cit., 83
38. FOSTER, op. cit., 90
39. FOSTER, op. cit., 94
40. Hormuz was the heart of the Portuguese maritime empire in the PG and its importance to them dated from their first appearance in Asian waters. It became a well known Portuguese fortress. Physically one of the world's driest islands, commercially it was described as a "Jewel for a ring", with the world as the ring. Pinkerton, op. cit., 407; Steensgaard, op. cit., 193-194
41. CHAUDHURI, K.N. (1965) The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company 1600-1640 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), pp. 3-22
42. AMIN, op. cit., 2
43. LOCKHART, L. (1958) The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty (Cambridge: University Press), p.360
44. Ibid.
45. The role of Robert Sherley in persuading Shah Abbas the Great to grant the EIC privileges should not be under-estimated. Robert Sherley and his brother Anthony arrived in Iran in December, 1598. The purpose of their journey to Iran

was to fulfil an order which they had from the Earl of Essex to encourage the Shah to join in an attack on the Turks. Then, in 1599, Anthony Sherley was sent to various European countries as the Shah's Ambassador for the purpose of opening up commercial and political relationships with them, as well as forming an alliance against the Turks. He never returned to Iran but his brother remained there as the Shah's Ambassador in his contacts with Europe. Foster, op. cit., 296-297; Mehd'vi A.H. (1349/1970) Tarikh-e-Rawabit-e Khareji-e Iran (The History of Iran's Foreign Relations) (Tehran: Amir Kabir), pp. 37-54; Steensgaard, op. cit., 212-217

46. Physically, Jask was said to be suitable as an anchorage by the EIC's representative at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and, politically, as it was near to the entrance of the PG, it was not in danger from the Portuguese. Falsafi, N. (1353/1974) Zandegani-e Shah Abbas A'val (The Life of Shah Abbas the Great), vol.4 (Tehran: University Press), p.255
47. AMIN, op. cit., 5
48. FALSAFI, op. cit., 257-58  
LOCKHART, op. cit., 360-61
49. Mann-i Shah was equal to 12½lbs. Steensgaard, op. cit., 368, 415
50. BRUCE, op. cit., vol.3, 140  
CURZON, op. cit., 547
51. In fact Steensgaard had stated that the Portuguese exports of Iranian raw silk were not significant during the whole of their settlement in Iran. Steensgaard, op. cit., 158
52. Before the EIC's establishment in Iran, Shah Abbas sent twelve missions to Europe with the object of extending the silk market. The countries to which these missions were sent were England, Spain, Netherlands, France and Italy. Apparently, the Shah also tried to tranship his silk to Europe on Portuguese ships via Hormuz. Steensgaard, op. cit., 103-11, 264-70, 284-85.
53. FALSAFI, op. cit., 266  
FERRIER, R.W. (1973) 'The Armenians and The East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', Econ. Hist. Rev. 2nd series, 26, 44-45
54. After the capture of Hormuz from the Portuguese it was decided to discontinue its use as a port and instead to use the small village of "Gamru", "Camron" or "Combron" (Bandar Abbas) which was situated on the mainland 16 km. to the north west and also had a good sheltered anchorage. Up to that time Combroon has been used as the port through which all mainland goods in transit to or from Hormuz had to pass. Lockhart, op. cit., 372-375; Steensgaard, op. cit., 398-401.

55. There was a duty of 10 per cent on imports, whilst on exports it was 5 per cent. Lockhart, op. cit., 362
56. LOCKHART, op. cit., 362
57. FALSAFI, op. cit., 267
58. The OIC was founded in 1602. Their first appearance in the PG was in 1607. Shah Abbas, thinking that they might be able to help him against the Portuguese, sent an envoy to them in 1607 but there was no outcome from this mission. Lockhart, op. cit., 362-364
59. MEHD'VI, op. cit., 62
60. AMIN, op. cit., 10
61. The OIC's success is related to the support which it enjoyed from its home government, but the OIC's import of spices to Iran also contributed to their success. Ferrier, op. cit., 47; Glamann, K. (1958) Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740 (Copenhagen: Danish Science Press), p.115
62. Due to the burden of the war with the Dutch, the English government needed money and thought that the best method for improving the financial situation was to offer the monopoly of the East India trade to any body of capitalists that would assist most in relieving the necessities of the state in forwarding foreign interests. Ultimately, these various groups were all absorbed into the United Company of the Merchants of England trading in the East Indies. Scott, op. cit., 130-133
63. The CIO was formed in 1664. Amin, op. cit., 13
64. AMIN, op. cit., 9  
LOCKHART, op. cit., 366
65. According to Fryer, who visited Bandar Abbas towards the end of the seventeenth century, the annual revenue to the Shah paid by the Customs Master of Bandar Abbas was 22,000 tuman. Fryer, J. (1968) A New Account of East Indies and Persia (London: R.Chiswell), p.222
66. It should also be mentioned that the decline of the EIC's trade towards the end of the seventeenth century was another convincing reason for the EIC's plan to expand its market in Iran. Amin, op. cit., 11
67. LOCKHART, op. cit., 388
68. Ibid., 369
69. BRUCE, op. cit., vol.3, 160  
FERRIER, op. cit., 54
70. BRUCE, op. cit., vol.3, 170  
LOCKHART, op. cit., 389
71. LOCKHART, op. cit., 238-273
72. LOCKHART, op. cit., 51, 398

73. Nadir's hostility toward the EIC was due to their assistance to the Ottomans during Iran's invasion of Basra in 1733, but after his accession he began to encourage the commerce of the country. He saw that the Turks were prodigiously rich due to the passage of Iran's silk via their country. Nadir's attempt to find a passage to the Black Sea for a direct passage to Europe avoiding Turkey indicates that his aim was to prevent the carriage of Iran's silk via Turkey. Amin, op. cit., 17; Pinkerton, op. cit., 180
74. HANWAY, J. (1753) An Historical Account of British Trade over the Caspian Sea, vol.2 (London: T.Osborne), p.113
75. Ibid., 37-39
76. AMIN, op. cit., 42-45
77. IVES, E. (1773) A Voyage from England to India in the year 1754... also, a Journey from Persia to England in 1758 and 1759 (London: E & C Dilly), p.158
78. PERRY, op. cit., 258-259
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. AMIN, op. cit., 49  
RICK, op. cit., 313-315
82. AMIN, op. cit., 68-71
83. Ibid., 71
84. Shaykh Sa'dun was acting as a "deputy" to Shaykh Naser while he was imprisoned by Karim Khan. The latter, who was Sa'dun's eldest brother, was also the governor of Bushehr. RRPGB vol.1(2), letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 3 November 1766
85. AMIN, op. cit., 72  
PPG vol.25 Report on British Trade with Persia and Arabia by Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones 15 August 1790, pp. 243-245  
(This Report can also be found in MR; Marine Records, vol.891)
86. MALCOLM, J. (1815) The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time (London: J.Murray), p.146
87. Probably Karim Khan's most important measure for improving the commerce of his kingdom was to maintain security on the inland routes by which the merchandise had to pass. According to the EIC's servant (who went to Gilan to investigate the silk market) in 1765, so long as Karim Khan was in power there was not the least risk from Rasht to Bushehr. Other measures which indicate the Khan's encouragement of trade included: the establishment of bazaars and caravanserais at Shiraz and the moderate



- duty (2 per cent) charged at the Shiraz custom house on the imported goods. Francklin, W. (1790) Observations Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia 1786-7 (London: T. Cadell), pp. 48-49, 172-173; PPG vol.25, op. cit., 243-247; RRPGB, vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March, 1765
88. The goods imported to Iran from Russia consisted of hides, indigo, cochineal, furs, metals, mirrors, paper, sugar and woollen cloth. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March, 1765
  89. Turkey's exports to Iran consisted of European manufactured woollens from both England and France, cochineal, indigo, dyestuffs, jewels and gold specis. Iran exported to Turkey gum amoniac, cotton prints, cloth of gold, lambskins, tobacco, saffron, rhubarb and Khorasan carpets. Perry, op. cit., 252-55; PPG vol.25, op. cit., 255
  90. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 243-245
  91. Neither the EIC nor the OIC was allowed under Shah Abbas to make a direct purchase from silk producers in Gilan. Silk was normally packed in Gilan and conveyed at the Shah's expense to Qazvin, thereafter the English had to pay for further transport themselves. After the death of Shah Abbas and because of the rebellion which broke out in Gilan, Shah Safi (Shah Abbas' successor) had to remove all the restrictions imposed on the silk trade. Notwithstanding this, it was still expected that the foreign companies would make their purchases from royal stock; otherwise they were not exempted from duty. Steensgaard, op. cit., 377-387
  92. Ibid.
  93. Although there is no specific evidence to clarify whether some of the merchants who dealt with the Company were royal agents or not, it can be assumed that amongst the purchasers of the Company's woollens there were a few who might have had connections with royal enterprise.
  94. Apparently, one of the Khan's conditions for granting privileges to the EIC was that the Company, in their sales of imported goods, should deal with the principal merchant or men of credit. Rick, op. cit., 314
  95. When the EIC established its settlement at Bushehr, Bandar Abbas and the surrounding areas had not yet been submitted to Karim Khan's authority. The town was captured in August of 1766. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 August, 1766
  96. BELMONT, F. (1969) Les villes del' Iran (Paris: Fabrc)
  97. KELLY, op. cit., 44
  98. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Shiraz dated 28 April 1767

99. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 May 1767 and letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 1 August 1767
100. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 29 July 1767
101. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 May 1767
102. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 30 September 1763 and letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 4 December 1764
103. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 28 August 1764
104. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 4 December 1764
105. AMIN, op. cit., 77-78
106. AMIN, op. cit., 73-77  
FARAMARZI, op. cit., 28-34
107. AMIN, op. cit., 89
108. This was due to Moore's hostility toward the Khan and Iranians in general, and his jealousy for the commercial state of Bushehr in comparison with Basra. Amin op. cit., 94
109. RRPGB vol.1 and 2 (various letters)
110. Another reason for this dispute could have been the governor's refusal to pay his annual tribute. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Shiraz to Bushehr dated 20 July 1767 and letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 21 July 1767
111. WARING, E.S. (1807) A Tour to Sheeraz (London: Bulmer), p.75
112. PPG vol.20 (3) letter from Basra dated 23 July 1770  
RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 12 July 1776
113. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 17 August 1803
114. PPG vol.20 (3) letter from Basra to CD dated 24 May 1770
115. Despite the warnings from CD and the Bombay presidency dating from the beginning of the Company's establishment, the resident interfered in the political affairs of the Khan's kingdom. RRPGB letter from Bushehr dated 20 April 1763 and extract from CD's Command dated 2 March 1765
116. PPG vol.20 (1,2 and 3)
117. PARSONS, A. (1808) Travels in Asia and Africa (London: Longman), pp. 183-184
118. KELLY, op. cit., 53
119. PPG vol.21 (1) letter from Basra to CD dated 25 September 1774
120. In October 1774 the Basra Agent wrote to the CD that both the Khan and the governor of Bushehr looked on Basra with "jealousy" and would gladly "ruin" it in order to oblige the EIC to resettle at Bushehr. In another letter, the EIC representative stated that he believed

the Khan went so far as to permit the local governors of Kharg Island and Bandar-e Rig to disturb the EIC's trade in the PG. PPG vol.21 (1) letter from Basra to Karim Khan dated 16 January 1774 and letter from Basra to CD dated 1 October 1774

121. PPG vol.21 (1) letter from Basra to CD dated 10 October 1774
122. PPG vol.21 (1) letter from Basra to CD dated 8 April 1774
123. During the EIC's absence from Bushehr (1769-1775) a French linguist was sent to Shiraz by their Council at Basra to negotiate with Karim Khan for commercial privileges. Apparently the Khan did not enter into any contact with the French linguist. PPG vol.20 (3) letter from Shiraz to Basra dated 9 May 1770
124. PERRY, op. cit., 252
125. The northern and central provinces were under the control of Aqa Muhammad Khan who was a founder of the Qajar Dynasty. Nevertheless, the two rulers both mutually agreed to permit caravans of merchandise to pass in safety. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 244
126. MEHD'VI, op. cit., 104
127. BCP Range 414, vol.47 letter from Bombay to Basra dated 14 August 1788
128. MALCOLM, op. cit., 429
129. AMIN, op. cit., 109
130. Ibid.
131. PHILIPS, op. cit., 27
132. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 267
133. LAMBTON, op. cit., 223
134. KELLY, op. cit., 45-50  
WILSON, op. cit., 196-199
135. WILSON, op. cit., 201
136. SWEET, L.E. (1964) 'Pirates or Politics: Arab Societies of the Persian or Arabian Gulf, Eighteenth Century', Ethnohistory 11, 274
137. WILSON, op. cit., 201-207
138. WRIGHT, D. (1977) The English Amongst the Persians (London: Heinemann), pp. 3-4
139. This treaty was concluded when the British government in India ignored the Shah's appeal for assistance against Russian attacks on the Caucasian provinces. Wright, op. cit., 4-5
140. Ibid., 5-7
141. TUSON, P. (1979) The Records of the British Residency and Agencies in the Persian Gulf (London: India Office Library and Records), p.15

142. Ibid.
143. Other European and Asian sources for the study of Iranian trade are the records of OIC, French Consular Correspondence and Russian Consular Reports and Intelligence Despatches. Perry, op. cit., 310-311
144. The following are those traveller accounts which are available in English and have been referred to for this study.
- CAMPBELL, D. (1795) A Journey over Land to India (London: Gullen & Co.)
- FORSTER, G. (1798) A Journey from Bengal to England, through the Northern Part of India... Persia and into Russia, by the Caspian Sea, 2 vols. (London: R.Faulder)
- FRANCKLIN, W. (1790) Observation Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia 1786-7 (London: T.Cadell)
- NIEBUHR, M. (1792) Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East, trans. R.Heron, 2 vols. (London: Longman)
145. FRASER, J.B. (1826) Travel and Adventures in the Persian Provinces on the Southern Banks of the Caspian Sea (London: Longman)
- MORIER, J.J. (1818) A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople between the years 1810-1816 (London: Longman)
- WARING, E.S. (1807) A Tour to Sheeraz (London: Bulmer)
146. For example Fraser, during his visit to Northern Iran in the second decade of the nineteenth century, attempted to procure some information about the commerce of the country. In this regard he wrote that:
- "I cannot flatter myself with having succeeded to any great degree in this; because though it was not difficult to learn what were the articles of export and consumption, it was so, in almost every case, to ascertain with any precision the actual amount of demand or supply; and quite impossible, from any procurable data, to estimate what might be looked forward to in future".*
- Fraser, op. cit., 352
147. ALGAR, H. (1971) Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period (Berkeley, California: University of California Press)
- ENGLISH, P.W. (1966) City and Village in Iran: Settlement and Economy in Kirman Basin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press)
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- LAMBTON, A.K.S. (1970) 'Persian Trade Under the Early Qajars'; in papers on Islamic History: II Islam and the Trade of Asia, ed. D.S.Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassier Ltd.)
- LAPIDUS, I.M. ed. (1969) Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium on Ancient Islamic and Contemporary Middle Eastern Urbanism (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press)
- NOMANI, F. (1972) The Origin and Development of Feudalism in Iran 300-1600 A.D. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Illinois)
- SAVORY, R.M. (1964) 'Some Notes on the Provincial Administration of the Early Safavid Empire', Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 27, 114-128
- SAVORY, R.M. (1974) 'The Safavid State and Policy', Iranian Studies 7: nos.1-2: Studies on Isfahan, ed. R.Hold Pt.1, 179-212
148. JOHNSON, E.A.J. (1970) The Organisation of Space in Developing Countries (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press)
- JOHNSON, G.A. (1973) Local Exchange and Early State Development in Southwestern Iran (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology)
- SMITH, C.A., ed. (1976) Regional Analysis Vol.1: Economic System: Vol.2 Social System (London: Academic Press)
- VANCE, J.E. (1970) The Merchant's World: the Geography of Wholesaling (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall)

## CHAPTER 2 : THE EIC'S IMPORT OF GOODS INTO IRAN, 1763-1810

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### 2.1 : Introduction

This chapter examines the EIC's record of imports into Bushehr, Iran, during the period 1763-1810. In addition to examining the quantities of goods imported, the chapter throws light on the organization of the trade, and some comment can be made on the state of the internal market of Iran. During this period the EIC imported into Iran a variety of items, the most important being woollen goods. The list also includes metals, satin, tabby cloth, embossed cloth, velvet, carpets and camblets.<sup>1</sup> The greater part of this chapter is concerned with the EIC's main trade in woollens. Most information is available on this trade and it shows a general pattern of decline and missed opportunities throughout the period under study.

It is worth noting, though, the few records available on the Company's second major import item - metals - shows a pattern of trade decline paralleling that in woollens. A start is made with metals as the less important of the two major imports.

### 2.2 : Metal trade

The EIC had been exporting quantities of metals including iron, steel, lead and tin to its eastern markets throughout the eighteenth century, but the few scattered references to the sale of metals in Iran during the period under review mainly relate to tin which also seems to have been the Company's most important trade metal for the Iran market during most of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> While there appears to have been a considerable demand for tin in Iran at the end of the eighteenth

century - the market was estimated at 600 tons even in 1617 - the Company seemed unable to create a constant demand for its own supplies of tin, or indeed for any other metal.<sup>3</sup> This was in spite of profits as high as 100 per cent on metals landed at Bandar Abbas in the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1754 only 2 cwt (<sup>1</sup>/<sub>10</sub> ton) of English tin was imported into Iran.<sup>4</sup>

The main reason for the EIC's failure to exploit the metal trade was competition from other sources, so that by the latter part of the century the EIC found the trade was scarcely profitable. The lower prices of OIC metals, particularly tin, as well as supplies of iron, lead and tin available from India and iron and lead from Russia and Turkey, clearly contributed to the EIC's failure to exploit the market.<sup>5</sup> The OIC, for example, was able to sell tin imported via Kharg Island at 2½ rupee (Rup.) per mann-i Tabriz (M.T.)<sup>6</sup> which underpriced EIC tin at Bushehr, and so prevented the profitable development of this branch of their trade.<sup>7</sup> It was not, in fact, until the removal of the OIC resident from Kharg in May 1766 that the EIC's resident could hope for bigger sales and could even consider raising his price for tin to 3 Rup. per M.T. to give a more acceptable profit.<sup>8</sup> The removal of the OIC from Kharg, however, was not the end of the competition for this trade, because even after 1766 the OIC continued to send tin and other metals to Masqat from where they were imported into Bushehr.<sup>9</sup> As a result, tin sales by the EIC remained small, even though a larger stock appears to have been built up by the Company in anticipation of bigger sales. In April 1765, for example, 2,500 M.T. (around 17,500lb.) of tin was stored in the Company's warehouse at Bushehr, but the records suggest that only 270 M.T. (around 1,890lb.) of it was sold - at over 2 Rup. per M.T. in the following year.<sup>10</sup>

The metal trade became no more profitable for the EIC later in the century. The volume of sales probably did increase somewhat,

although the two main sources of metals imported into Iran via the PG remained India and Masqat.<sup>11</sup> Even so rather more frequent consignments of metals for the Bushehr market by the CD in 1790-1804 followed the resident's request for an annual shipment after 1788.<sup>12</sup> As Fig. 2.1a shows, the Company's Bushehr resident in 1788 requested an annual supply of 10,000 M.T. (around 70,000lb.) of iron and much smaller quantities of lead and tin. His demand for these supplies was presumably based on an estimate of what he believed could be disposed of on the Iranian market.

It is worth noting that these estimates are partly confirmed by another estimate of the potential of the Bushehr market made two years later, in 1790, by Mr Manesty, the Basra resident. His estimates are shown in Fig. 2.1b. While Manesty judged the market for metals landed at Bushehr to be much larger than did the Bushehr resident, much the same pattern is seen, with tin reckoned to be of highest unit value but with the total demand for iron dominant. The fact that the 1788 and 1790 estimates differed markedly in total size from each other is of interest, however, and shows that local market needs were not well understood by the Company representatives, a feature also noted later for the Company's wool imports. It appears, however, that these estimates little affected the actual consignments of metals made by the CD to the Company's Bushehr resident. Between 1790 and 1804 he received 50 tons (around 16,000 M.T. valued at approximately 12,000 Bombay Rup.) of lead and 20 tons (6,400 M.T. value at approximately 13,970 Bombay Rup.) of tin as well as a very small tonnage of copper.<sup>13</sup> Recalculated on an annual basis the amounts of lead and tin imported were adequate to meet the estimated demand.

Apart from the metal trade conducted by the EIC to Bushehr, during the first decade of the nineteenth century iron, steel, tin and lead all became permanent items among the goods exported to the PG (Bushehr and Basra) from Bombay by private merchants.<sup>14</sup> The records



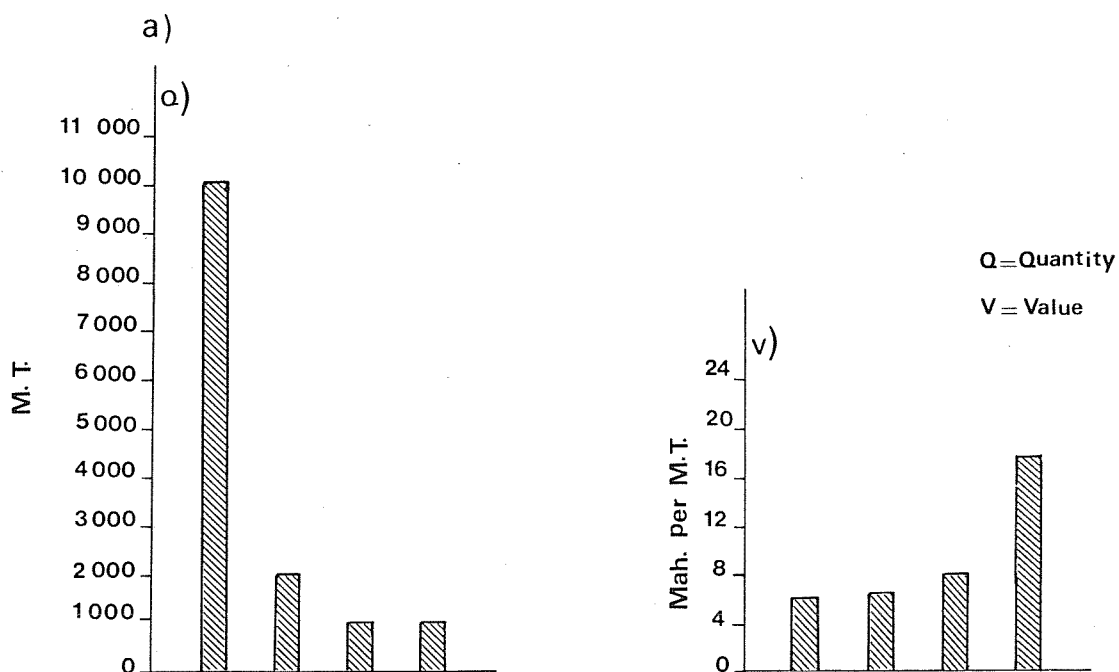


FIGURE 2.1a The Bushehr resident's request for metals, and their estimated value (based on his estimates of market demand, 1788)  
Source: BCP Range 414 vol.47 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 August, 1788

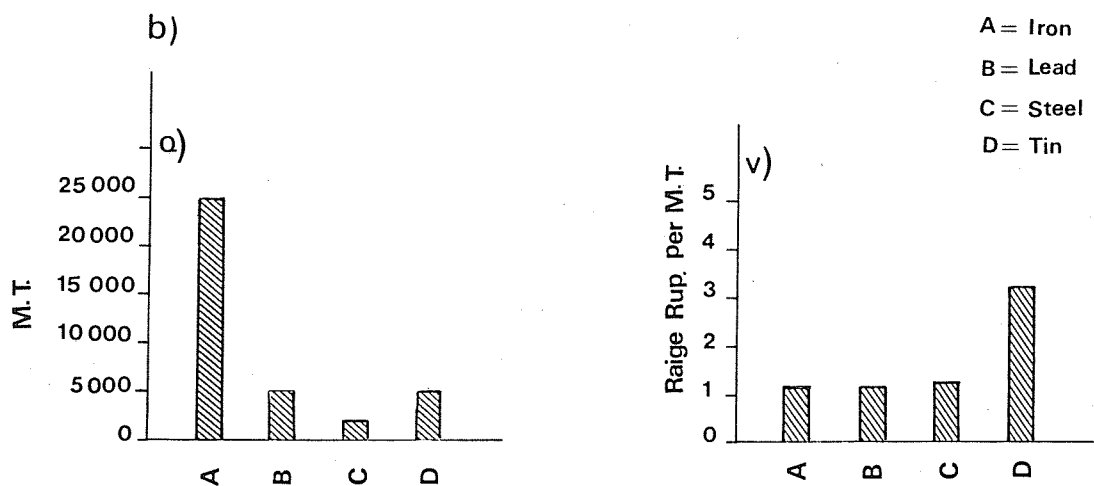


FIGURE 2.1b Mr Manesty's estimates of market demand at Bushehr for metals and their values, 1790  
Source: PPG vol.25 (1790)

show that the iron exported to the Gulf by these merchants totalled 339,546 Bombay Rup. in value, compared with 200,000 for tin and 133,459 for lead.<sup>15</sup> These exports also included a small amount (58,660 Rup.) of steel.<sup>16</sup> It is possible neither to specify from the available records the amounts of metals represented by these cash values nor to distinguish between the exports to Bushehr as against Basra, but it does seem that they greatly exceeded EIC imports. It seems likely that at least half of this trade passed through the Bushehr market. In addition, some of the metals sent to Basra went overland into Iran via Shushtar, which may suggest that there must have been a considerable demand for metals in the country as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

These metal imports may indicate the inability of Iran's mines to meet quite a strong internal demand, possibly because of insufficient exploitation. It should perhaps be mentioned in explanation of this that Shah Abbas the Great and Nadir Shah were the only Iranian monarchs who paid serious attention to using the mineral resources of the country.<sup>18</sup> By contrast with the eighteenth century, serious development in exploiting the mineral resources of the country did not take place until the next century.<sup>19</sup> It is not possible, from the data used to compile Fig. 2.2 showing the mineral producing areas of Iran, however, to say which areas developed first. Nor do records make any mention of the destination of the imported metals within Iran for the period under study, but one might assume that they went to those areas known to have possessed metal works such as Shiraz, Kerman, Yazd, Esfahan, Gilan, Maragheh and Khorasan<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 2.2a). There they were largely used for the manufacture of household utensils and arms (Fig. 2.2b). It is clear, then, that there was at this time, a considerable demand for imported metals although the EIC consistently failed to capture a major share of this trade, and the records fail to give details on this.

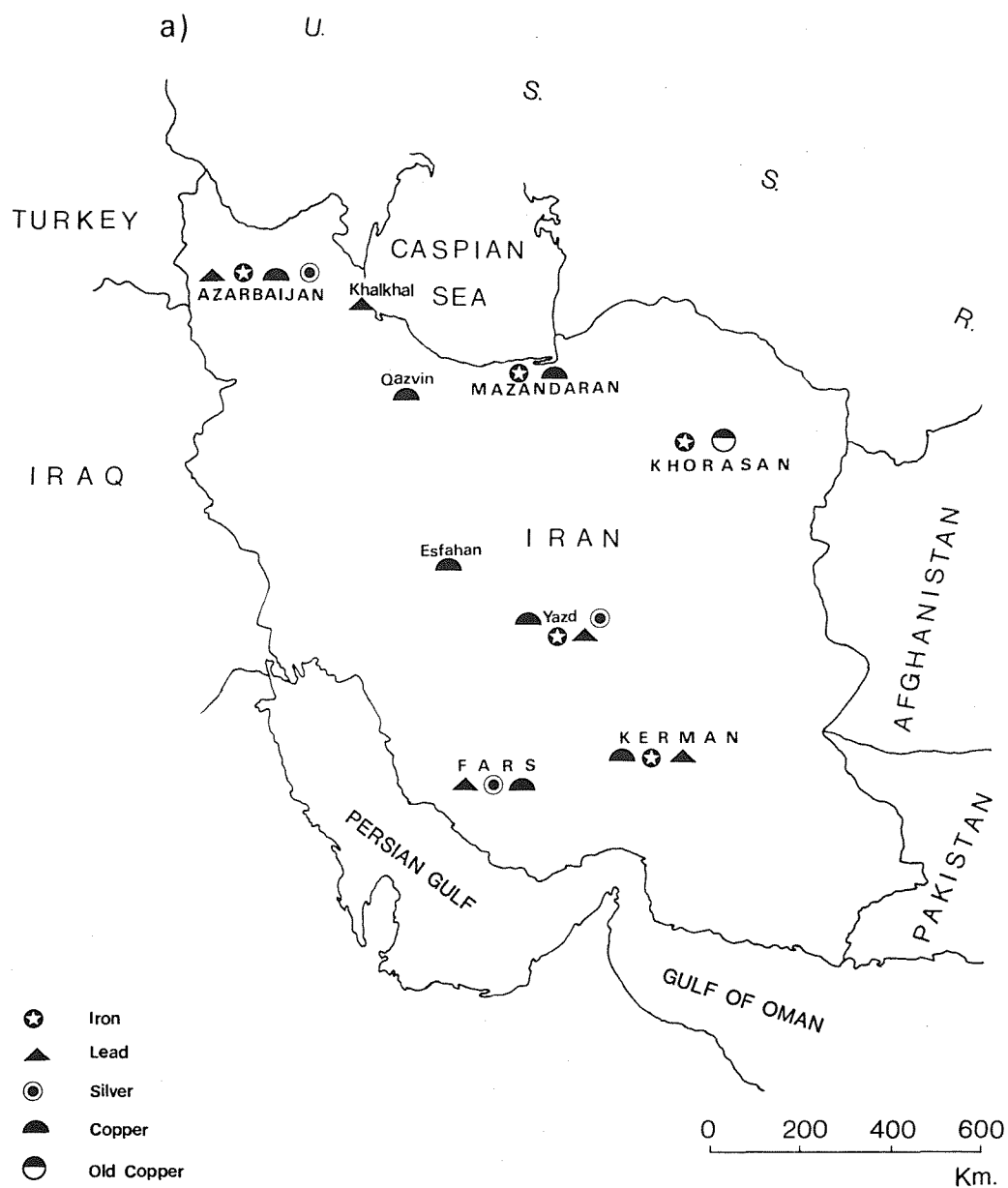


FIGURE 2.2a Iran's principal metal mines according to the information of travellers, in 17th, 18th and 19th centuries  
 Sources: Alexander (1827), Curzon vol.2 (1966), Fraser (1826), Hambly (1964), Holmes (1845), Morier (1818), Perry (1979), Pinkerton (1811), PPG vol.25 (1790), Waring (1807)

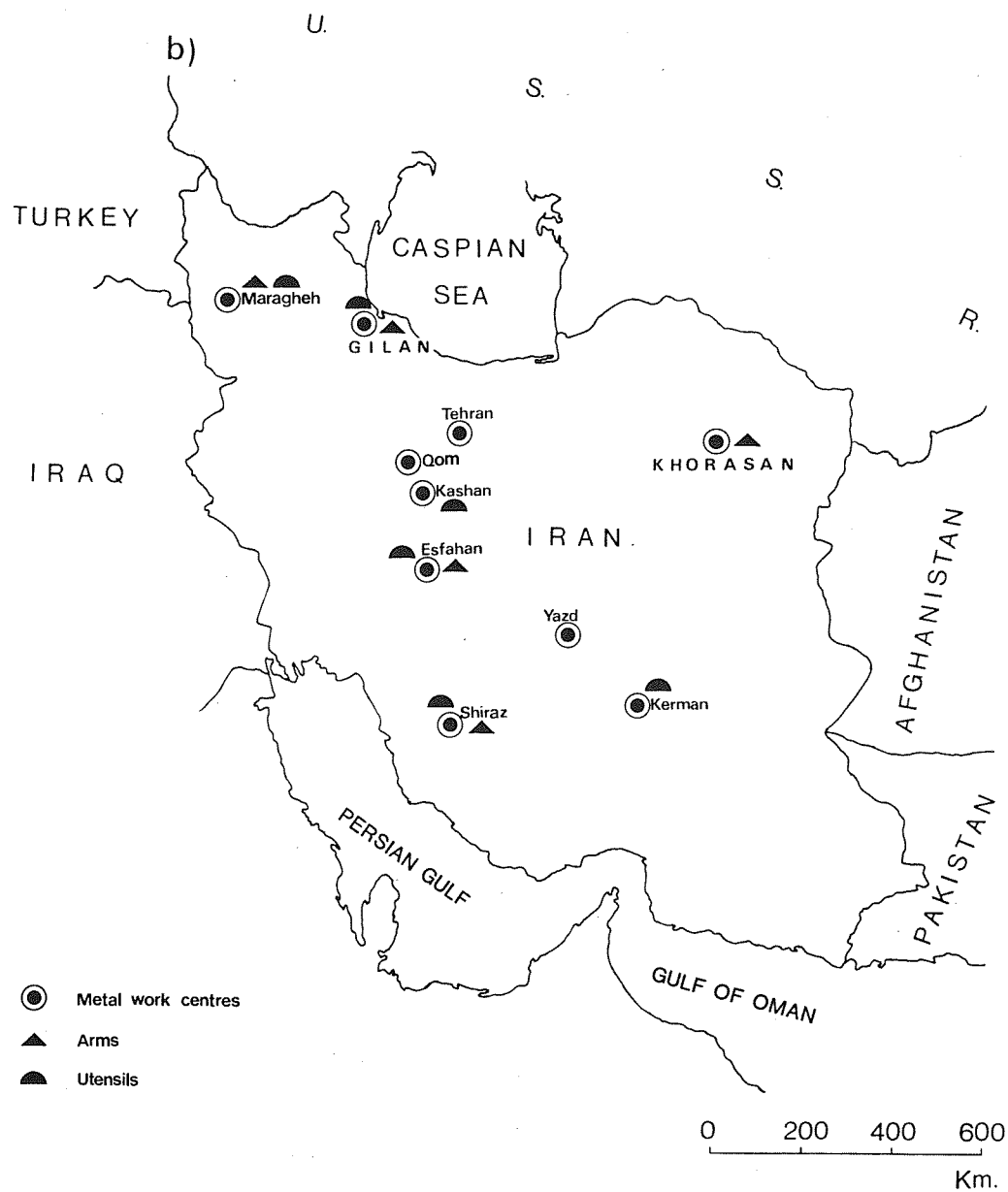


FIGURE 2.2b Iran's metal working centres according to the information of travellers in 17th, 18th and 19th centuries  
Source: As above 2.2a

### 2.3 : The EIC's woollen trade

Much more information is available about the EIC's imports of woollen cloth. Indeed, English woollen cloth seems to have been the most important commodity imported into Iran by the EIC throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the remainder of this chapter is concerned with an examination of this aspect of the EIC's trade, where, as with its metal trade, total Company sales were greatly restricted by competition. The greater amount of detail in the records of the woollen trade, however, allow one to demonstrate other difficulties that faced the trade - such as the Company's relative lack of interest in the Bushehr market because of its uncertainty and the Company's lack of confidence in the Iranian Government, as well as its growing political, compared with its commercial, interests in the area. All of these brought further problems including delay in consignments and the supplying of unsuitable cloth types which not only disorganised the Company's affairs at Bushehr but contributed to the loss of EIC's woollen market to Russian cloth and reduced the scale of its woollen trade.

To begin with the types of woollen cloth sold in Iran need to be described, and the importance of colour, as well as quality and price, to the marketability of the cloth needs to be stressed. An examination is then made, later in the chapter, of the variation in imports over the years 1763-1810. Five periods have been distinguished. The first covers the last decade (1745-63) of the existence of the EIC's original settlement at Bandar Abbas and provides a perspective on the four following periods examined in this thesis. The early years of trading through Bushehr (1763-69), before the EIC transferred to Basra; the Basra years (1769-1775); and the years 1775-1800 and 1800-1810 after the Company's return to Bushehr are examined in turn. For each period the types, quantities and prices of woollen cloth imported by the EIC for the Iranian market are described, as well as

the dominant movements in sales and supply as far as the data allows. The final section of the chapter attempts to summarise the diachronic trends in the EIC's trade in woollen cloth, and to consider the consistent pattern of financial losses the EIC appeared to suffer in this trade.

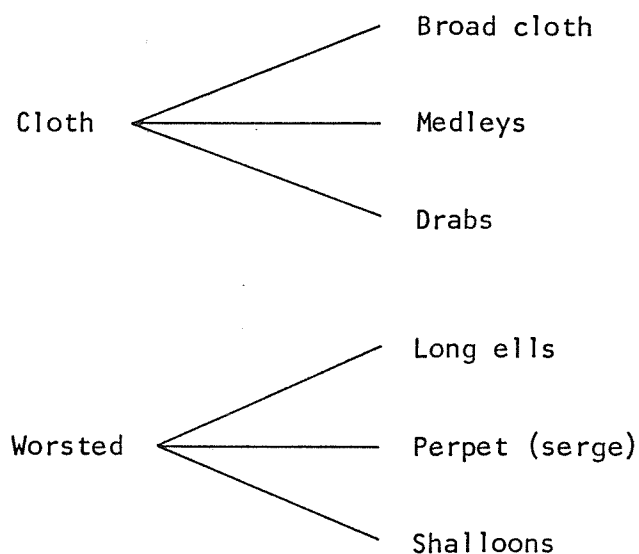
### 2.3.1 : The types of English cloth imported into Iran

Although the EIC seems to have attempted to create a market in Iran for a range of cloth goods including satin, tabby, embossed cloth, velvet, camblet, carpets and woollens during the period 1763-1810, the Company does not seem to have been very successful in most of these activities and there is little evidence for this varied trade, apart from the woollens, in the surviving records. It seems clear, therefore, that the great majority of English fabrics sold in Iran at this time were made of wool, and these became quite well known in the country. For example, the Iranians themselves recognised two main types of 'cloth' in common speech, Londra and Mahoot.<sup>21</sup> Londra was originally a general term for English cloth exported through London, but in time it was used to describe the cheapest kind of cloth, generally coarse in quality.<sup>22</sup> Mahoot was a rather better quality cloth worn by Iranian gentlemen during the winter months,<sup>23</sup> and was associated with no particular place of origin.

The English themselves divided their fabrics between the traditional categories of 'cloth' and worsted but these were further sub-divided in a rather complex way as outlined in Fig. 2.3. 'Cloth' was made from short stable wool which was carded before spinning,<sup>24</sup> and when woven it had to be fullled, or teaseled, to raise a nap, then sheared to produce an even surface. The main type of 'cloth' exported to Iran was broadcloth, originally any cloth made on the broad loom (more than 30 inches wide), but by the eighteenth century

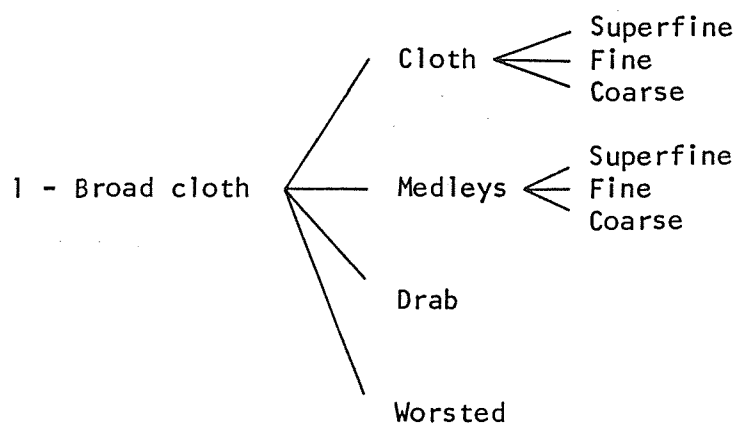
FIGURE 2.3

Conventional classification of English woollen-cloth



Source: Jenkins

Classification of English woollen-cloth imported to Iran, according to the EIC's record



2 - Perpet

3 - Shalloons

Source: RRPGB Vols. 1-10

the term was used to describe a particularly fine, plainly woven and heavily full material.<sup>25</sup> Various qualities of broadcloth were recognised on the basis of the fineness of the yarn and these and other types of cloth are classified in Fig. 2.3. In addition, English 'drabs' or undyed cloth, particularly the quality described locally as Begrest,<sup>26</sup> and 'medleys', or cloths made of mixed coloured wools, were also imported into Iran.<sup>27</sup>

Worsted, or 'stuff', was made from wool which had been combed before spinning and this cloth did not require fulling, teaseling or shearing. The principal worsted types imported into Iran were a coarse variety called 'long ells' and a fine quality called 'shalloons'.<sup>28</sup> 'Perpet' (or serge) featured prominently in the Company's records as well, but it appears that perpet was often equated with 'long ell' worsted, while 'serge' became applied to a kind of worsted cloth characterised by a surface of parallel lines.<sup>29</sup>

While there was much variety in the cloths available and the terms used to describe them, other qualities affected the demand for them. Indeed the EIC classified its cloth into six types - cloth, medleys, drabs, worsted, perpets and shalloons - sub-divided by their quality (Fig. 2.3). Colour, wool, weave quality and price were major influences on the marketability of woollen cloth in Iran. Although Iranians in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries wore cloth of all colours except, usually, black, they preferred light and fresh colours, particularly crimson.<sup>30</sup> It may well be that the EIC's failure to supply the more marketable colours was an important factor preventing its cloth penetrating the northern parts of Iran, including the silk-producing province of Gilan. Certainly, a letter of 16 July 1767 from Bushehr suggests that the failure of English cloths to sell in Gilan was not due simply to the high cost of EIC cloth at such a distance from Bushehr but that the colours available were unsuitable:



*"... our woollens are very improper for that part of Persia, never carried there by any merchants or ever worn by the natives, they preferring those sorts imported via Russia, as they are far superior to ours in colour,..."<sup>31</sup>*

Despite these problems, the imports and sales of English woollen cloth in Iran varied considerably over the eighteenth century. The following sections set out the evidence for this variability and try to indicate the factors lying behind it.

### 2.3.2 : The EIC's woollen trade in the last decade of the existence of their settlement at Bandar Abbas, 1754-1763

The first half of the eighteenth century had not been a generally successful period for English woollen cloth in the Iranian market. The decline in EIC's woollen trade at that time was paralleled by that of the ELC and resulted not only from the unstable state of Iran's internal affairs but also from the competition of the French Levant Company (FLC) which exported its woollens to Iran via the western routes.<sup>32</sup> Around the middle of the eighteenth century however, the EIC woollen exports increased and restored the Company to its previous important position in the woollen market, mainly by taking over the demand left by the decline in the ELC's exports. But then the EIC woollens exports fell markedly again after 1757, largely because of the internal instability in Iran.

The drafts of despatches to Bombay show that an average of 763 bales of woollens were annually shipped by the EIC for Iranian markets in the years 1754-1757 (Fig. 2.4a). At that time, over half of the Company's woollen trade into the PG ports of Basra and Bandar Abbas was still with the latter port. The woollens shipped for this port consisted mainly of broadcloth and perperets with some shalloons,

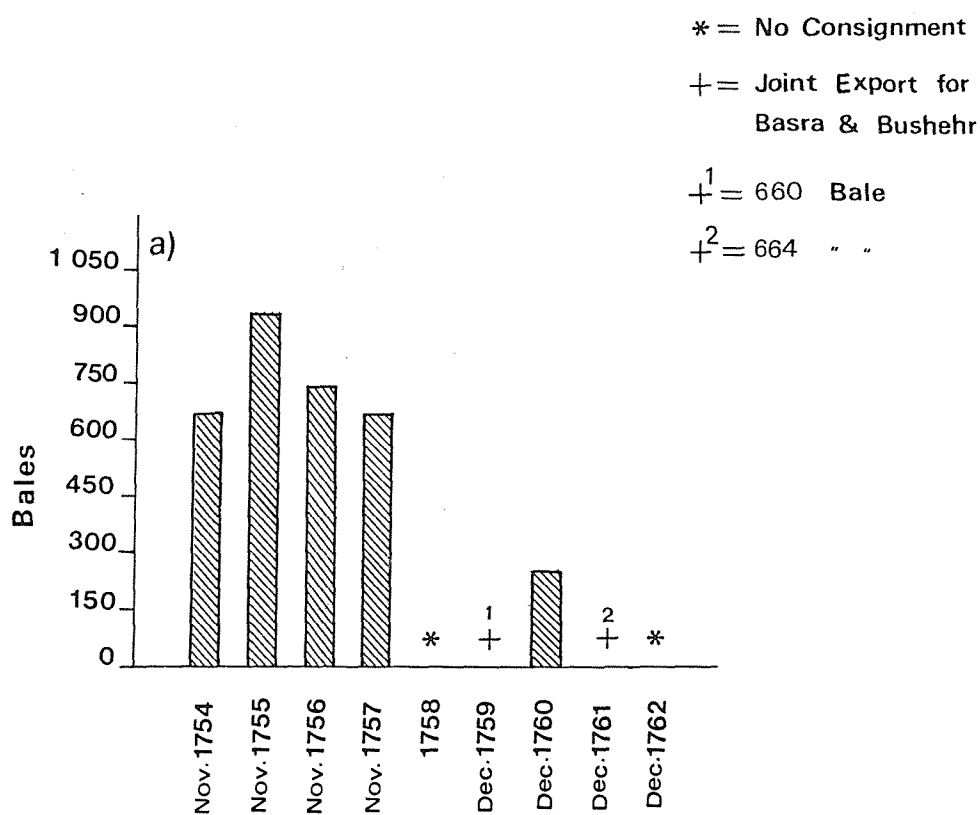


FIGURE 2.4a CD's consignments of woollen cloth for Bandar Abbas, 1754-1762  
Source: DB vol.2

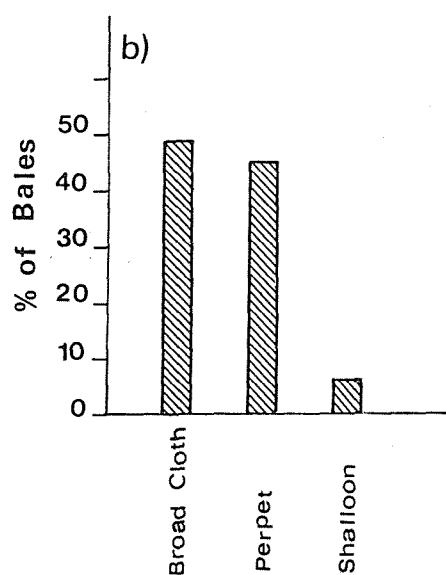


FIGURE 2.4b Percentage of different qualities of woollen cloth for Bandar Abbas, 1754-1762  
Source: As above 2.4a

the percentage of each type being illustrated in Fig. 2.4b. Among the different types of broadcloth shipped, fine and coarse medleys and coarse quality cloth seem to have been more in demand in the Iranian market.<sup>33</sup> The cloth was often sold as assortments and the prices of these and of perperets at Esfahan, Kerman and Bandar Abbas, as shown in Fig. 2.5, generally increased for the years 1745-52. The price increases probably resulted from an increasing demand for the goods in Iran, partly with the return of political stability which, for example, saw an increased number of caravans coming to Bandar Abbas between 1748 and 1750.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.3.3 : The EIC's woollen trade at Bushehr, 1763-1769

In 1763 the EIC relocated its settlement at Bushehr because of the decline in Bengal's trade with Iran, as well as their fear of OIC's attempts to control the woollen trade of Iran via the PG as outlined in chapter one. The decision to move back to Bushehr clearly included a desire to further dominate the woollen trade. This can be seen in the instruction given by Mr Price of the Company's Bombay Council, to their resident, Mr Jervice, at Bushehr in 1763:

*"The honourable the President and Council of Bombay having recommended it to me to fix a residence at Bushire, in order more particularly to introduce the vend of woollen goods into the Kingdom of Persia... ..to invite the merchants from up country, as to discourage the Dutch at Carach and others from bringing woollen into the Gulph to lower those prices .... I must leave it to your discretion to act in the manner most conducive to these ends, observing in general, that a large vend, though attended but with small profit, will always be satisfactory to the Honourable Company,.....*

*I have been informed, that the Russians import into the northern parts of Persia, a sort of medleys, which are much esteemed, it*

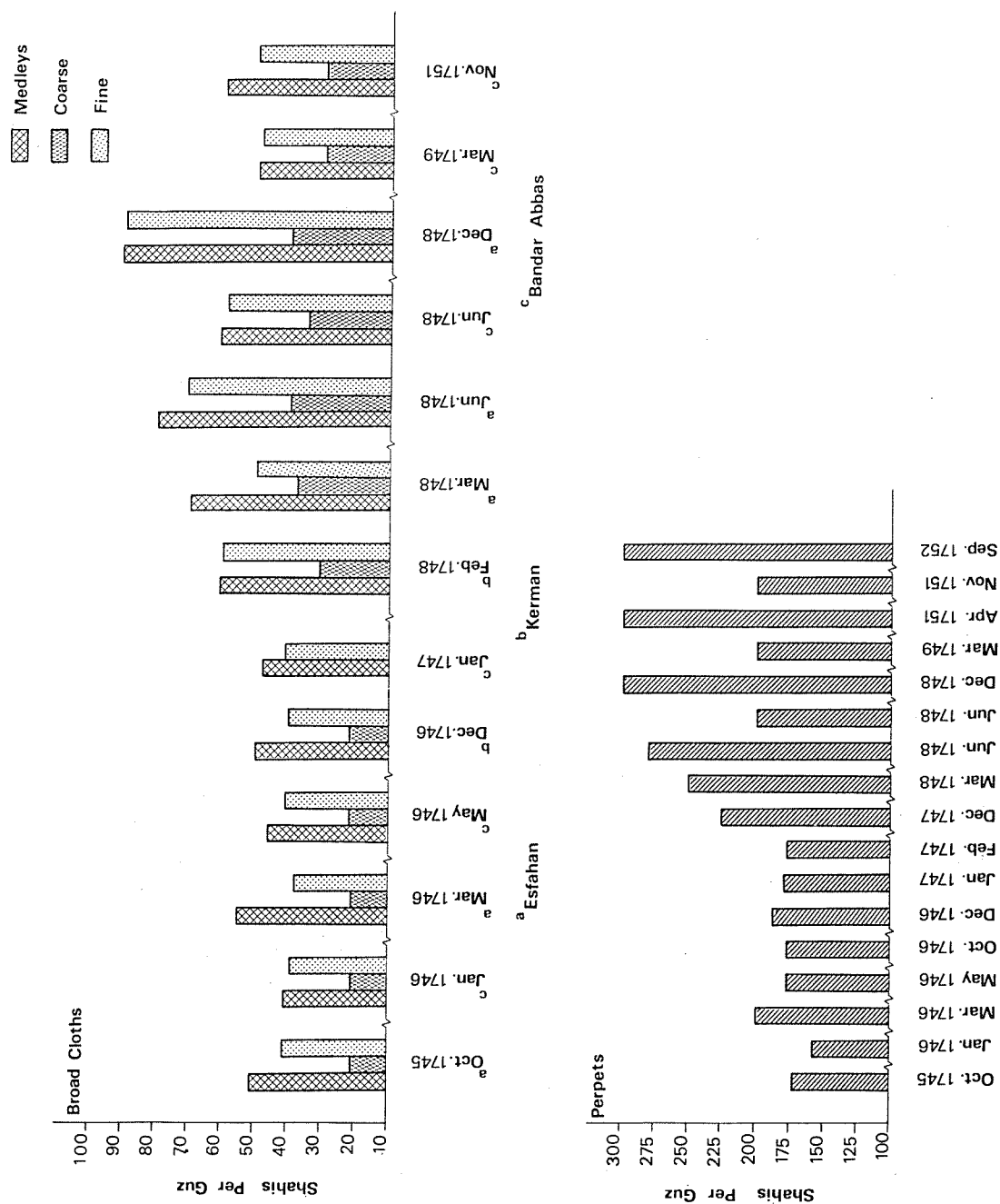


FIGURE 2.5 Imported products and prices of EIC, 1745-1752  
After Rick (1974)

*will be of service to the Honourable Company, if you can procure masters of those goods, which I am led to think you may, by means of the linguist connections at Ispahavm....."*<sup>35</sup>

It is clear from this instruction that Bushehr was chosen as the best port to promote the woollen trade in the face of competition from similar goods imported into Iran by the OIC. Advice was also given to the resident to make enquiries about the annual consumption of all woollens by the Iranian markets.<sup>36</sup>

After the lower shipments of EIC cloth to Iran between 1758-1762, trade revived. An average of 455 bales was sent yearly by the Company to the Iranian market between 1763-67 (Fig. 2.6). The trade had grown so much that the term "Persian markets" had appeared once more in the London list of the EIC's consignments of woollens to eastern countries in 1764, whereas there is no mention of either "Persia", Bandar Abbas or Bushehr in the list of destinations of woollen exports in 1763.<sup>37</sup> The reason for this absence was that the woollens sold at Bushehr in 1763 had been supplied from Bombay and Basra, and it must be assumed that, with cloth exports to Iran so small, these goods were listed simply as part of the total consignment to these company settlements.<sup>38</sup> In any case, the total volume shipped into Iran had probably been small but in 1764 the trade was again growing. Consignments from London during 1764 and the next two years increased over previous years, as Fig. 2.6 shows, but only around 1,500 bales of the 3,100 shipped were actually sold (Fig. 2.7). In fact, it seems that the Company's largest sale during these years actually occurred right at the beginning of the period, when 767 bales were sold.

Sense can be made of these trade fluctuations in this way. While generally shipments grew as sales fell, this mismatch and the declining sales resulted partly from the Shah's policy of restricting

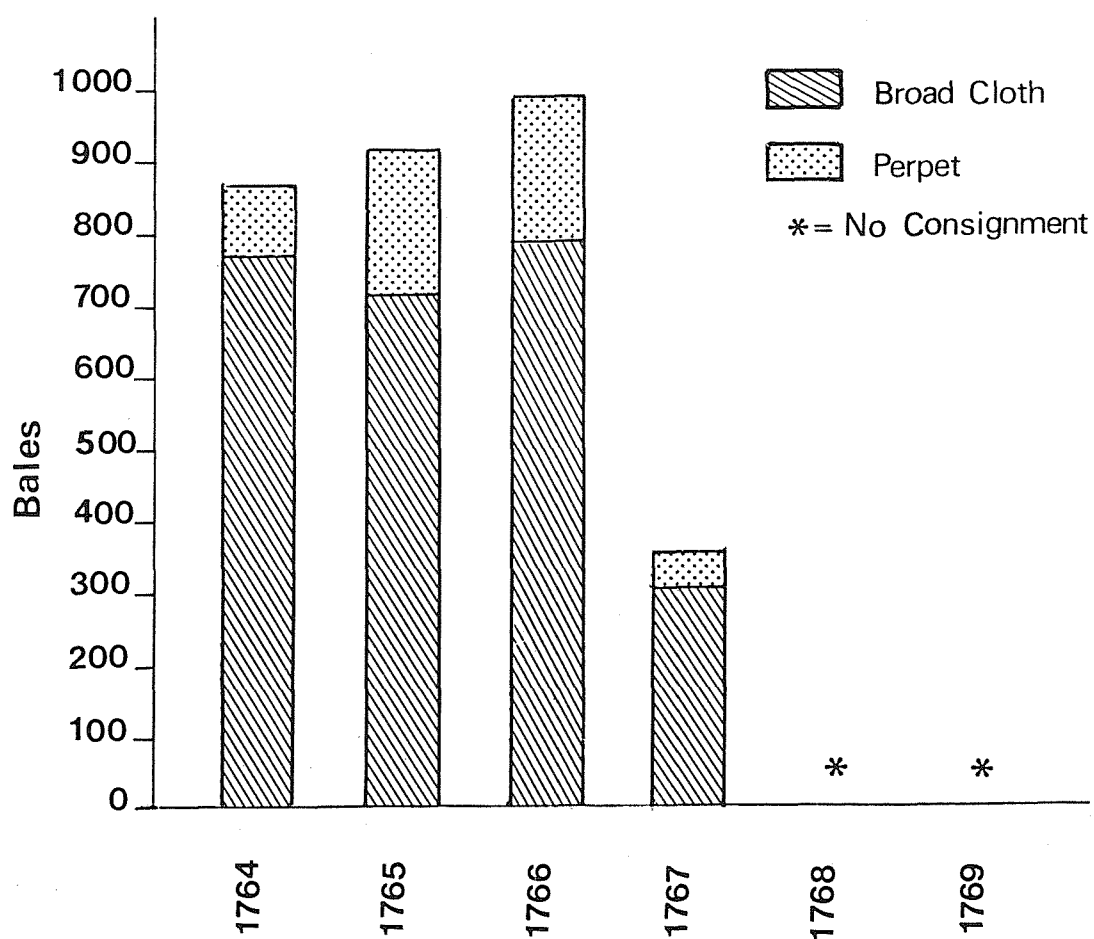


FIGURE 2.6 CD's consignments for Bushehr market, 1764-1769  
Source: DB vols. 2 and 3

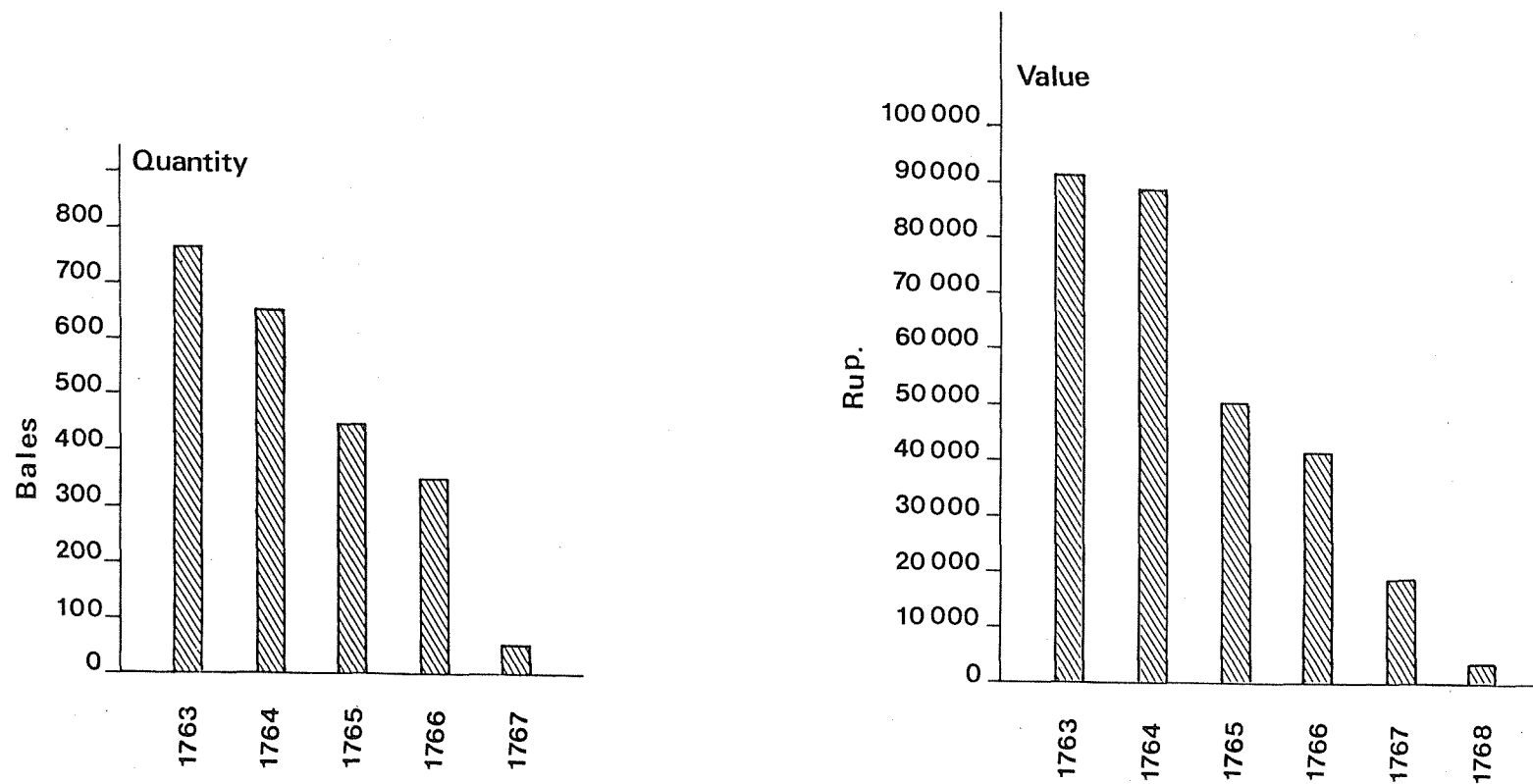
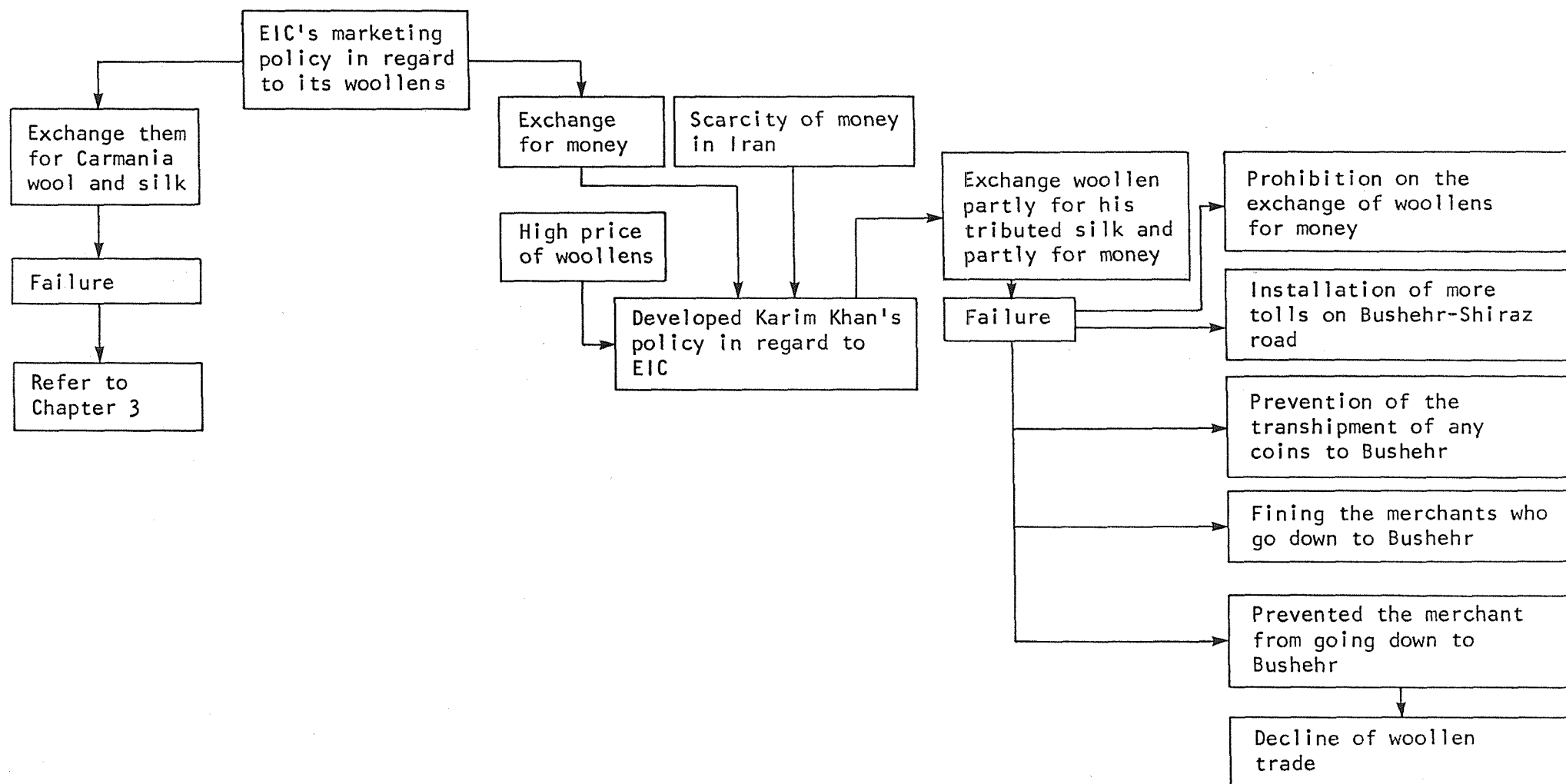


FIGURE 2.7 Sale of EIC's woollens at Bushehr, 1763-1768  
Sources: PPG vol.20 (3); RRPGB vols. 1 and 2

imports by the EIC and partly from the disorganized state of the Company's marketing, rather than from a lack of demand for the goods in Iran. Indeed, the CD's careless attitude in not providing the Bushehr market with goods to meet its real demand for woollens was closely linked to the lack of information on what the market needs were. The mismatch between shipments and sales may even suggest that the CD did not believe it necessary to have information about real demand from Bushehr and there are grounds for believing that the CD's intention was to try to influence the demand of the Bushehr market in the manner they wanted by supplying the market with whichever quantities they thought suitable. It then became the duty of the resident to try to sell the woollens as advantageously as he could. To account for the CD's attitude (of exporting any quantities they thought suitable) one should not under-estimate the role of the Company's self-image as a contributor to the improvement of the English woollen industry by promoting exports of this commodity. This meant that it was better for the EIC's reputation at home to export available woollens to Iran, even if these woollens were unsuitable and only piled up unsold at the Bombay warehouses. Too little information on the nature of the Iranian market made it impossible to fit supply accurately to demand. The factors which contributed to the EIC's attitude to its woollen trade in Iran are charted in Fig. 2.8 where the effect of the EIC's own marketing policy, as well as the commercial policy of <sup>the</sup>Iranian Government (particularly in regard to EIC), in producing a decline in the trade are both indicated. In the EIC's failure to procure raw silk or Carmania wool at the price they wanted in return for its woollens and their reluctance to exchange woollens for any other Iranian goods, except money, were the principal causes of Karim Khan's dispute with the Company. In addition, there were other problems of a political nature, as outlined in chapter one. All of them contributed in some degree to the EIC's failure. The EIC's attempt to exchange woollens for money alone was in conflict with Karim Khan's commercial policy (with regard to the EIC). He thought bartering would be the best



FIGURE 2.8 : Factors which contributed to the decline of the EIC's woollen trade at Bushehr 1763-1769



method of reducing the export of specie, a serious problem since there was a shortage in the country. This may also suggest that bartering was still practised in conducting trade within Iran itself. After the EIC's failure to arrange for the exchange of Karim Khan's silk in return for their woollens, the Khan attempted to stop the Iranian merchants from entering into any business deals with the Company. He used the means illustrated in Fig. 2.8 (far right hand column).

#### 2.3.3.1 : Quantity, price and colour of EIC's woollens exported to Bushehr, 1763-1769

The woollen goods imported into Bushehr during the years 1763-1768 by the EIC consisted mainly of broadcloth and perpets, of which the latter were more in demand in Iranian markets, probably because they enjoyed a wider usage than broadcloth which was only suitable for the winter climate. The Company's third type of woollens, shalloons, sold in only small quantities. As a result, in 1766 the Basra resident instructed his Bushehr colleague, who had difficulty in finding any market for shalloons, to send his surplus to Basra:

*"with respect to the shalloons as you say they cannot be sold at your place, would have you send them up by the first good opportunity...."*<sup>39</sup>

Of the different types of broadcloth sold at Bushehr, medleys seemed to have been most in demand, with the coarse type of medleys and cloth preferred more to the superfine and fine quality types.<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 2.9a)

Part of this variable demand was undoubtedly related to price. Fig. 2.9b illustrates the prices of the different types of broadcloth, and it can be seen that the coarse types of medleys and cloth were the cheapest of all types of broadcloth. On the other hand, drabs were

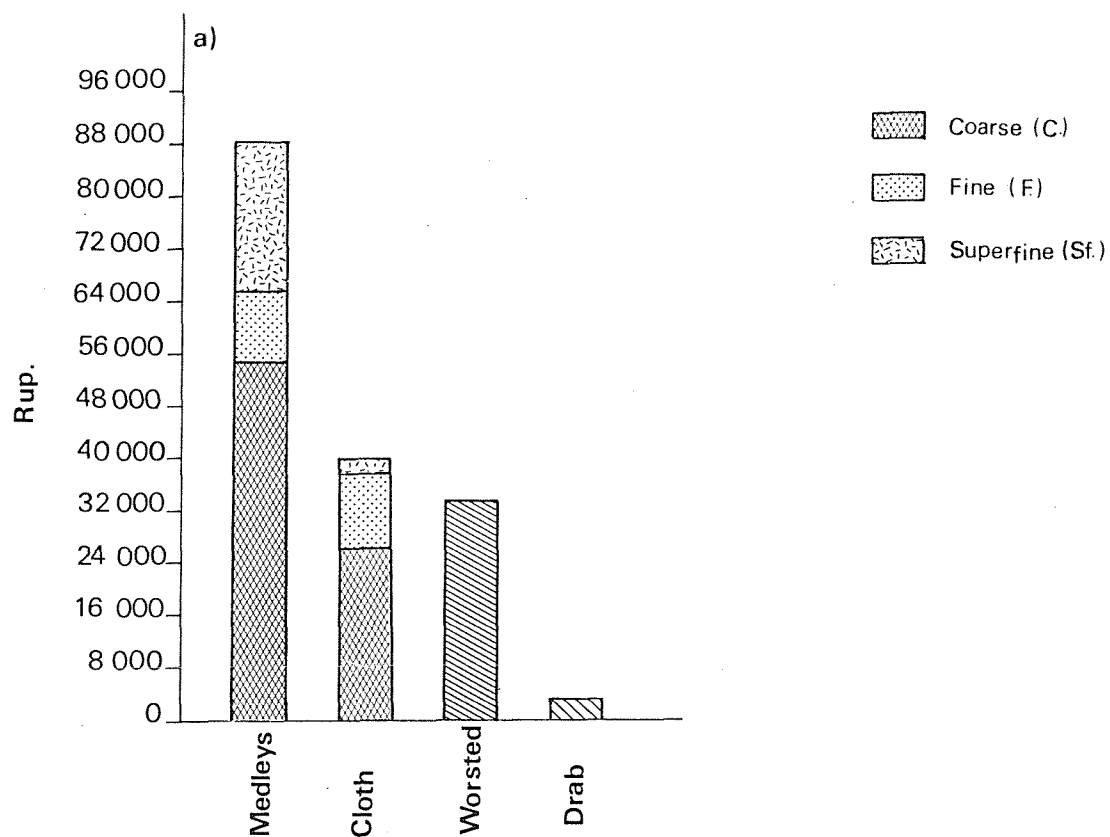


FIGURE 2.9a Total value of broad-cloth assortments sold at Bushehr, 1763-1768  
Source: PPG vol.20 (3)

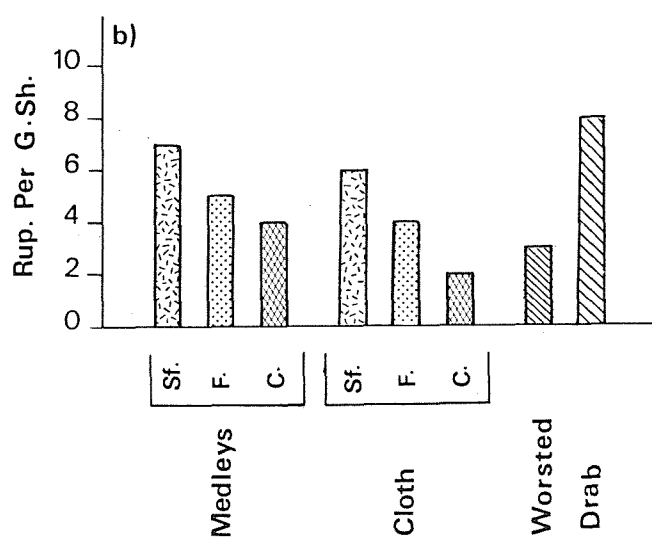


FIGURE 2.9b Prices of different types of broad-cloth sold at Bushehr, 1763-1768  
Source: As above 2.9a

expensive and this contributed to their low marketability.

The colour of the woollens contributed considerably to their saleability. The importance attached by the CD to this aspect of their trade can be seen from the following instruction given to their servant to report on the colours most in demand:

*"Our resident must send us every year by two conveyance musters of the colours best approved of as well as those that are not, this he is never to fail in."*<sup>41</sup>

It seems that the Company's intention was to take advantage of the demand at Bushehr for a few specific colours but to try to arrange sales of goods in batches in such a way that some other colours, not so suitable for that market, could also be sold. As one instruction in 1765 stated:

*It must be a general rule at that settlement never to sell their fine grain colours either in cloths or long ells without a proportion of other colours as near as possible agreeable to the quantity in warehouse...."*<sup>42</sup>

An analysis of the records shows that the following colours of woollens were exported to Bushehr in the period under discussion:

Scarlet, aurora, wine, white, purple, lemon, cherry, emerald green, mazarine blue, orange, French green, red, popinjay, grey.<sup>43</sup>

Among these colours, the so-called "grain colours" (scarlet, wine, purple) and aurora were the most favoured in the Iranian market, and as long as the Company's warehouses at Bushehr contained some proportion of woollens in these colours, the resident could feel confident of making sales:<sup>44</sup>

*"....it is absolutely necessary, that there should be proportion of 20 of 25 bales scarlet or aurora perpet, to one hundred other colours, but without them, the popinjaes will never sell at all, this being a colour much disliked by the Persians in general..."<sup>45</sup>*

Popinjay and red were considered the least suitable colours for the market, but the high demand for the "grain colours" allowed the merchants to enter into agreements that disposed of some of these unfavoured colours.

#### 2.3.4 : The EIC's woollen trade through Basra, 1769-1775

In 1769, the Company's Bushehr factory was closed and the woollen trade was concentrated on Basra. This was the result of the dispute between Karim Khan and the EIC's resident as described in chapter one. Not only did the Company hope that it could at least temporarily continue to command the Iranian market for woollens from Basra until it was possible to resettle at Bushehr, but felt that it could still be well placed there to procure silk from Gilan in northern Iran. A Company letter to the Basra Agent from the Bombay president in March 1770 indicated the Company's recommendation to withdraw:

*".... from Bushire, yet, as in the sequel, they strongly urged the importance of procuring Ghilan raw silk, which can be got no where so well as by having a settlement on the coast of Persia...."<sup>46</sup>*

At the same time, it was clear that the Company thought of the move to Basra as temporary, since a statement was added that it hoped later to re-open at Bushehr:

*"....we could wish to resettle there upon proper terms, and notwithstanding you have been pleased to represent Bussora as the only proper market for woollens which we hope did not proceed from self interested motives...."<sup>47</sup>*

It seemed, then, that Basra was a second choice to Bushehr and was made deliberately to allow a toe to be kept in the Iranian market by disposing of goods already shipped to the area;

*"You have been fully informed that the principal reason of our keeping a settlement at Bussorah has been to sell off the large remains of woollens provided for that market, and also to dispose of a quantity annually, if to be done on reasonable terms,...."*<sup>48</sup>

The closure of EIC's factory at Bushehr and the switch of the woollen trade to Basra evidently led, rather surprisingly, to a considerable increase in woollen sales and enhanced prices for them on the Basra market.<sup>49</sup> The sale of woollens at the Basra Agency for the twelve months from August 1769 until July 1770 is estimated to have been more or less equal to the sales over the six years 1763-1769 at Bushehr.<sup>50</sup> It was also reported in 1770 by the Bombay Committee which was appointed to enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of the PG trade, that one-third of the total sales of woollens at Basra found its way into Iran. Accordingly, it seems clear that the Company's woollen trade to Iran did not suffer from the shift of port. This healthy trade probably resulted from the continued Iranian demand for woollens and the lower duties charged on goods transhipped via Dawarq (in Khuzestan) from Basra to Iran.<sup>51</sup> As well as that, the importance of the beneficial competition between the merchants involved in this trade should not be underestimated.<sup>52</sup>

During the period 1770-1774, the resident at Basra succeeded in disposing of 9,447 pieces of woollens. Sixty per cent of those were perpers which arrived in a regular flow, but all the other cloth was received in only one year, 1771. This was sold to the Iranian merchants both in exchange for silk and also for ready money. This enhanced trade was in spite of increased prices charged for woollens

in 1772, resulting from a higher demand for goods and a restricted supply.<sup>53</sup> The price rises for perpets from 120 Mahmudi (Mah.) in September 1770 to 200 Mah.<sup>54</sup> in 1774, resulted partly from the lack of any woollen consignment being received during 1773, and only small receipts in the other years compared with 1771.<sup>55</sup> Fig. 2.10 shows the small and variable level of these woollen consignments during the years in question. While this would suggest that there were shortages of woollens to meet local demand, considerable stocks appear to have lain in the Bombay warehouses throughout this period, much of it being destined for the PG. In 1770, 3158 bales of woollens were reported in the Bombay warehouses.<sup>56</sup> Broadcloth formed the larger proportion of this quantity, but much of it was of colours unsuitable for the Iranian market. Such a large stock might have been the reason for the lack of any consignment of broadcloth from London for Basra in the years 1772-1775 (Fig. 2.10).

The pattern of demand at Basra in these years for the different types of broadcloth resembled that for Bushehr during the previous years 1763-1769. Coarse types of medleys and cloth were still most in demand, whatever their sale price, although they remained cheaper than other broadcloth.<sup>57</sup>

#### 2.3.5 : The EIC's woollen trade at Bushehr, 1775-1800

The Company's trade through Bushehr resumed in 1775 but available information suggests that sales of woollens there did not reach the level predicted by the Company's resident. John Beaumont had estimated that this market would be able to absorb annually 675 bales of English woollens, with perpets forming about 74 per cent of this total.<sup>58</sup> However, both the CD and the Basra Agent thought Beaumont's estimates optimistic. As the Basra Agent wrote in November 1776 to Bushehr:

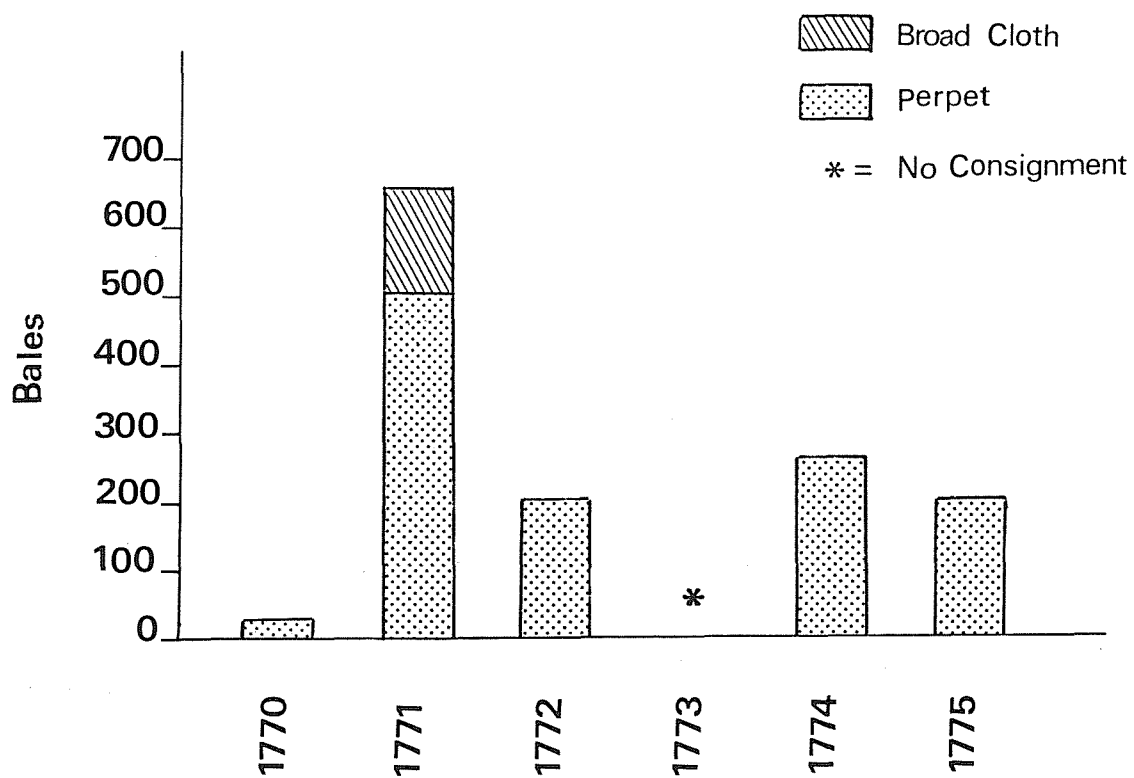


FIGURE 2.10 CD's consignments of woollen cloth for Basra market, 1770-1775  
Source: DB vols. 3 and 4



*"We are glad to find that you have a prospect of disposing of such a quantity of woollens annually at Bushire; we fear however you have been rather too sanguine in your expectations on this head, as at the best times the annual sale at Bushire never exceeded rupees 88,000..."<sup>59</sup>*

Six months later the CD similarly pointed out:

*"We think our resident and council at Bushire have not sufficient grounds for making so large an indent for woollen for that market,...."<sup>60</sup>*

Even so, sales of woollens leapt upwards in 1776 and 1777, sometimes towards the estimated levels, to give the highest levels of sales during the whole period before 1795. This is shown in Table 2.1. The larger sales probably resulted from some slight reduction in the price of woollens in general and of perperets in particular from the middle of 1776 as seen in Fig. 2.11, following the artificially high prices of the previous two years<sup>61</sup> (this is compared with the previous price for perperets of 19-20 Rup. per piece at Bushehr during 1763-1765). These lowered prices were possible since most of the woollens were not in a fresh consignment, but those stored in the Bombay warehouses for many years. They were sent to Bushehr in order to dispose of them at discount prices.<sup>62</sup> Another reason for the high level of sales and the low prices was the introduction of auctions, which the Company normally reserved for the sale of damaged or unsuitable goods. The fact that some of the total sales may have included goods actually sold through the Basra Agent may also account for the increased sales.<sup>63</sup> Although perperets were more favoured than cloth, the next highest demand was for broadcloth (Table 2.1 and Fig. 2.12) particularly the coarse types, which had sold well earlier. Although no information is available in the records, it is possible that the large drop in the demand for medleys

TABLE 2.1

The quantities of woollens sold at Bushehr, 1775-1795

| Date  | Broad cloth |       | Perpet |       | Shalloons |       | Total |       |
|-------|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | Bale        | Piece | Bale   | Piece | Bale      | Piece | Bale  | Piece |
| 1775  | 28          | 247   | 40     | 200   | -         | -     | 68    | 447   |
| 1776  | -           | 458   | -      | 1458  | -         | -     | -     | 1916  |
| 1777  | 64          | 391   | 90     | 2320  | -         | -     | 154   | 2711  |
| 1778  | -           | 95    | -      | 138   | -         | -     | -     | 233   |
| 1779  | 41          | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | 41    | -     |
| 1780  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1781  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | 40    | -     | 40    |
| 1782  | 2           | 186   | -      | 504   | -         | -     | 2     | 690   |
| 1783  | 7           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | 7     | -     |
| 1784  | 70          | -     | 115    | -     | -         | -     | 185   | -     |
| 1785  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1786  | 43          | -     | 28     | -     | -         | -     | 71    | -     |
| 1787  | 22          | 18    | 27     | -     | -         | -     | 49    | 18    |
| 1788  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1789  | 13          | 14    | 67     | -     | -         | -     | 80    | 14    |
| 1790  | 48          | -     | 90     | -     | -         | -     | 138   | -     |
| 1791  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1792  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1793  | -           | -     | 245    | -     | -         | -     | 245   | -     |
| 1794  | -           | -     | -      | -     | -         | -     | -     | -     |
| 1795  | -           | -     | -5     | -     | -         | -     | 5     | -     |
| TOTAL | 338         | 1409  | 707    | 4620  | -         | 40    | 1045  | 6069  |

Sources: RRPGB Vols.2, 3 and 749 (various letters)

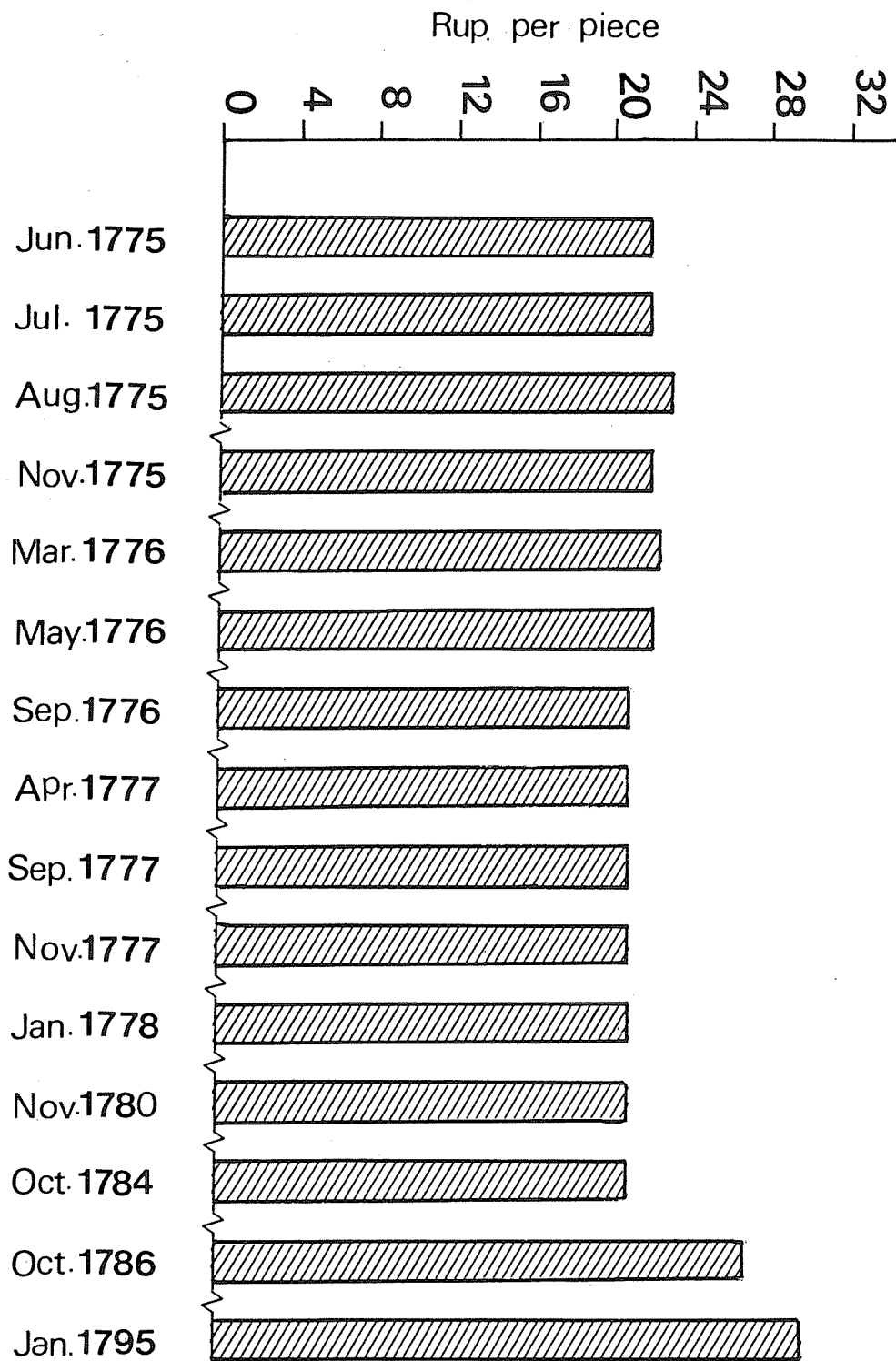


FIGURE 2.11 Prices of percepts sold at Bushehr,  
1775-1795  
Source: RRPGB vols. 2 and 3

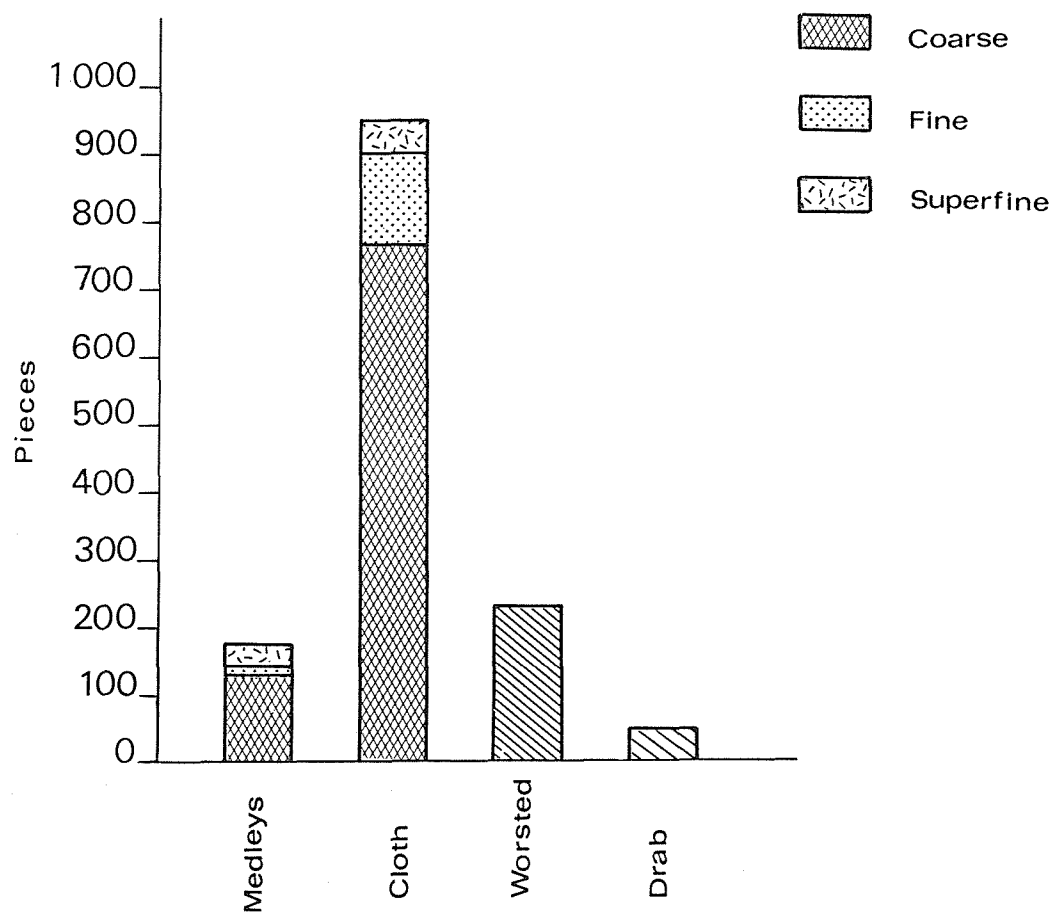
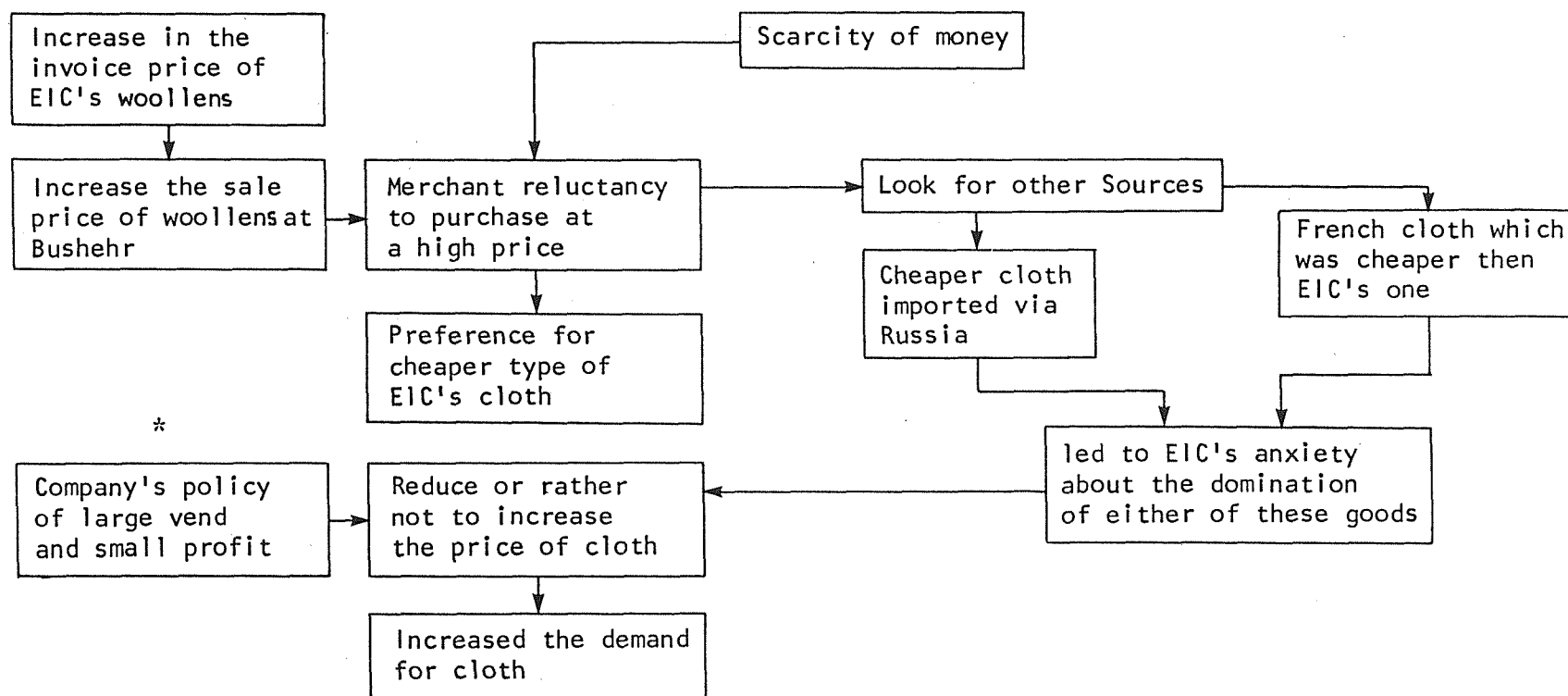


FIGURE 2.12 Quantities of broad-cloth sold at Bushehr,  
1775-1795  
Source: RRPGB vols. 2 and 3 (various letters)

arise from the Company's inefficiency in providing the Bushehr market with the necessary quantities. The change in the demand for EIC cloth probably also resulted from an increase in the invoice price of EIC's woollens which made the Iranian merchants reluctant to purchase EIC's woollens and inclined them to find other sources at a time when money was scarce in Iran. The factors causing this change are outlined in Fig. 2.13. Most important amongst these was the Company's policy of large vend and small profit for that market. This reflected a fear of competition from cheaper French cloth.<sup>64</sup> The records provide no specific evidence that any quantity of French cloth was actually exported to Iran, but, nevertheless, the EIC saw this as a real threat which the French traders from Aleppo could fulfil.<sup>65</sup> When fixing the price of its imported cloth in general and drabs in particular the Company had also to take into account the considerable import of this latter article to Iran via Russia. In response to the CD's request to its Bushehr resident to enquire about this Russian trade, it was reported in 1777 that 20,000 Gaz Shahi<sup>66</sup> (G.Sh.) of this commodity was imported to Shiraz from Russia via Astrakhan and Gilan at a sale price of 6-7 Rup. per G.Sh. of 39 inches.<sup>67</sup> This compared with an EIC sale price of 7 Rup. per G.Sh. of drabs at Bushehr. These differences would help to explain why the EIC resident at Bushehr stated in September 1776 that the only way by which the EIC might compete with these other sources of woollens was to reduce the cost price of its goods to 4½ Rup. per G.Sh.; this would enable the resident to sell it for 6 Rup.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that most of the Company's woollens sold at Bushehr at prices above the cost price, and, since there was no competition for perperets at Bushehr, the EIC's resident was even able to increase their price in 1786.<sup>69</sup> The colours of woollens which were most popular in the Bushehr market between 1775-1800 were similar to those of the previous period: scarlet, aurora, wine, purple, crimson (sky blue, maz blue and light blue) and greens (emerald green, grass green, saxon green and dark green)

Green woollens, followed by blue and scarlet, seem to have been the most preferred, in contrast to the grain colours (scarlet wine and

FIGURE 2.13 : The factors which might have contributed to the change in demand for cloth



\* RRRPG Vol.2 letter from Bushehr dated 15 July 1775

purple) preferred a few decades before. But the popularity of these colours was generally related to a particular type of cloth. For example, green was most preferred for worsted, blue for coarse cloth and scarlet for perpets. Among the bright colours, scarlet and aurora were still favoured, whereas black, cinnamon and popinjay-coloured perpets sent to Bushehr in 1777, were described as "bad" colours for that market.<sup>70</sup> Clearly, the Company frequently misjudged the requirements of the Iranian market for cloth of the right colours. The report of the Company's resident in 1790 stated that:

*"...many of the colours of assortments of woollens, sent by the Honourable Company to Persia are, in the opinion of the Persians, so outrageously 'outré' that no one thinks of wearing them, they being as little adapted to their taste for their upper garments, as a bright yellow would be to that of an Englishman..."*<sup>71</sup>

#### 2.3.5.1 : The EIC's failure in its woollen trade, 1775-1800

In spite of the Company's ability to sell woollens in the period 1775-1798, these years can be considered as one of commercial failure for the Company's trade in woollens through Bushehr. With the exception of the sales in 1777, which produced a profit of 6,389 Rup., sales in most years produced either a loss or only minimal profits, and were insufficient to pay off expenses.<sup>72</sup> Neither the right types of woollens nor suitable colours were sent to the Bushehr market and, in fact, so disorganized were the CD's consignments, that Bushehr was largely treated as a market for the damaged and old woollens which had lain for years in the Bombay warehouses. The EIC's apparent lack of concern for the Bushehr market seems to have stemmed from its uncertainty about the whole of its trade with Iran. That, in turn, was a result of a lack of confidence in the stability of the Iranian Government.

This lack of confidence was demonstrated, for example, by the advice given to the Company's residents not to land any goods at the port unless they were already sold; until then goods were to remain on board ship.<sup>73</sup> Because of this low level of confidence, little attempt was made to gain knowledge of the state of the market. The Company did not want to risk establishing any settlement in the interior of Iran, so the Company's residents at Bushehr had no choice but to rely on their local servants, (such as their linguist and saraf = banker) or the merchants who visited Bushehr for information about the state of supply and demand in the interior markets.<sup>74</sup> Both sources were probably unreliable. The resident's over-optimistic estimate of the likely market for EIC woollens in 1776 probably resulted, at least in part, from relying on this type of information.

Shipping woollens that did not sell, and keeping goods on ships until they sold, were but two ways in which the expenses of the Bushehr residency were increased, but there is no available information with which to calculate the contribution of these extra costs to the Company's losses at Bushehr. Table 2.2 attempts to calculate the levels of these losses throughout the study period on the basis of data in the RRPGB. With Company losses mounting and continued inefficiency in supplying the needs of the market, Iranian merchants often switched to obtain woollens from French and Russian sources and, toward the end of the century, the Company's woollen market was lost almost entirely to so-called "Russian cloth".<sup>75</sup> Several reasons can help to explain the Company's lack of interest in the Iranian market and in the persistence of this inefficient system of marketing. Firstly, with the goods shipped from England to Bombay and then on to Bushehr, there was always a long delay in fulfilling orders. This was exacerbated because consignments of the right woollens had often not even been received in Bombay from England. Such delay did not only cause extra expenses for those merchants who had already come down to Bushehr for woollens and had either to wait until they arrived



from Bombay or even London, but it also contributed to the unreliability of the EIC's woollen market in that country because merchants did not always come back to Bushehr to inspect and purchase a delayed consignment.<sup>76</sup>

TABLE 2.2 : EIC's losses on their sale of woollens at Bushehr

| Date      | Sale of woollens value (Rup.) | Losses on the sale of woollens | Loss as % of total sale value |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1786-1797 | 130,669                       | 39,557                         | 30%                           |
| 1798-1803 | 516,354                       | 39,520                         | 8%                            |
| 1803-1808 | 222,354                       | 44,328                         | 20%                           |

Source: RRPGB Vol.10(2) letter from Bushehr dated 15 September, 1808

The Bombay office of the Company and the Bushehr resident, writing in 1781-3, illustrate the point where a long delay between a request and a reply still did not satisfy the order until years later. On 12 June 1781 the Bushehr resident wrote to Bombay:

*"I now enclose, your Honour, an indent for two hundred bales of woollens, which I beg leave to request you will favour me with by the first opportunity if possible; the late consignment of woollens, as I have in a former letter observed to your Honour, are rather deficient of scarlet, but should your warehouses admit of your complying with the above indent before the close of the next winter in order to mix with them, I have little doubt but the whole will immediately sell..."<sup>77</sup>*

The reply to this letter was sent seven weeks later from Bombay to

Bushehr on 27 July 1781:

*"It will not be in our power to comply with your indent for woollens, until the arrival of our ships from England, and we hope the consignment by the Mercury, which you had not received when you made your last requisition will contain satisfactory assortments."*<sup>78</sup>

As a result about 3 months after making the request to Bombay for scarlet cloth, the Bushehr resident heard he could have none yet. That was not the end of the matter. On 30 April 1782 the Bombay servant wrote again that:

*"It will not be in our power to send you a further supply of woollens till the arrival of our ships from Europe."*<sup>79</sup>

On 28 June 1783, two years after the original request the Bombay servant again wrote:

*"We do not know when it will be in our power to send any woollens for your market as we have not received a single bale since the last consignment or have we advice of any to be sent from Europe..."*<sup>80</sup>

At this news the Bushehr resident replied on 12 October 1783 that:

*"It affords me the greatest concern to hear from your Honour that no woollens have yet arrived from England for this market, the demand for which still continues very great in every part of Persia..."*<sup>81</sup>

Finally, a satisfactory response was received at Bushehr from Bombay on 30 November 1783 that:

*"The Bombay Grab is now despatched to Bussora with packets for the Honourable*

*Company and a consignment of woollens  
for that market and in a short time  
we shall send you the quantity  
indented for, under the 12th June 1781---*

*We have the pleasure to acquaint you that  
since the last despatch, our Honourable  
Masters ships.....have imported direct  
from Great Britain and the.....two ships  
of the fleet of September 1782 have  
likewise lately arrived from.....  
and brought a supply of 334 bales of  
Broad cloth and 644 bales of long ells for  
the Bushire and Bassora markets which will  
be dispatched to the Gulph by the Europa  
appointed for that service as soon as she  
is unloaded and ready for sea....."82*

There were other factors distracting the Company away from the Iranian market. Firstly, at this time it was more interested in the potential of trade with China. Fig. 2.14 shows that China was the major market for the EIC's woollens during 1763-1810 against which Bushehr received only 3 per cent of all the Company's woollen exports to the East. Secondly, the government in England was trying to exercise more control over the Company's affairs in India. As a result, the trade of Iran was becoming of more peripheral interest to the Company in comparison with its political concerns. Even so, as the Company benefited in many ways from the trade between Bushehr and India, it paid rather more attention to encouraging and protecting this branch of trade than some others. Apart from the financial benefits that the EIC could gain from this trade, it certainly created a demand for the EIC's protective role and this gave the Company a strong foothold in the region. In the end, this amounted to a forward policy designed to protect British territories in India from any possible attack from the north-west. For the greater part of the time spent on the research on this topic, the RRPGB covering 1789-1798 were thought to be missing so that little could be said about the Company's woollen trade with Iran during those years. Examination of other sources, mainly the DB, indicated that a further decline in the trade occurred and suggested that it began to

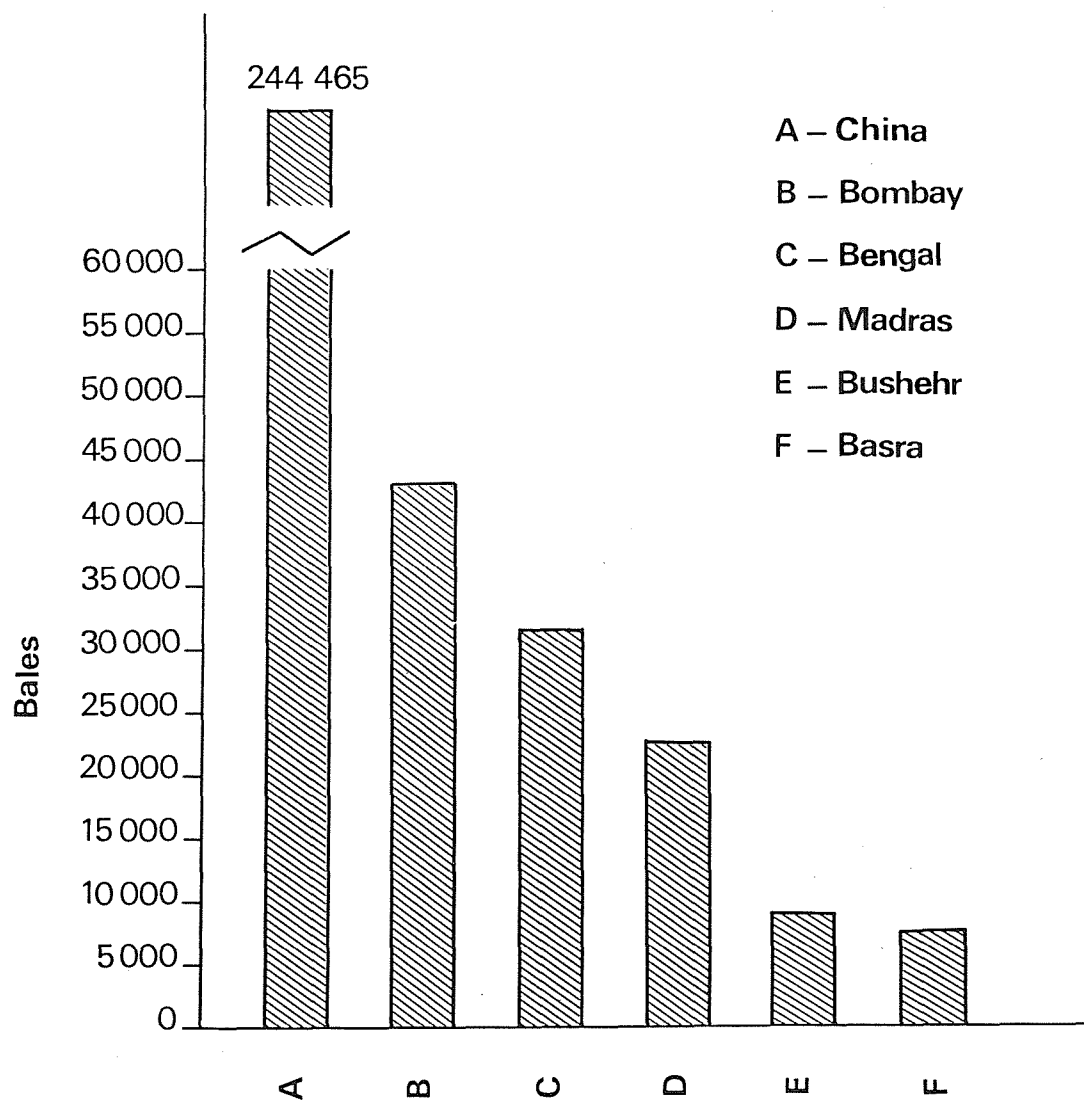


FIGURE 2.14 EIC's export of woollens (broad-cloth and perpet) to its eastern markets ( Bale ), 1763-1810  
Source: DB vols. 1-30

revive only in the last few years of the century. Fig. 2.15 illustrates this decline followed by a sudden revival in the trade. When the RRPGB for the missing years were found, they merely confirmed what had already been suspected. Table 2.1 also shows for part of this period that the trade revival occurred from 1793 onward.

#### 2.3.6 : The EIC's woollen trade at Bushehr, 1800-1810

Even without the evidence of the RRPGB for the period 1789-1798, it seems clear from the DB that trade revived from 1796 as more regular consignments of woollens arrived at Bushehr. While the unreliability of the DB as a data source has already been noted, the RRPGB for 1789-1798, once they were found, yielded little information on woollen sales at Bushehr. In addition, there still remains a gap in the diaries for the years 1798-1800. However, data on shipments given in DB and a known shipment in April, 1797, to Bushehr of 78 bales of broadcloth and 150 bales of perpet would suggest that a more sustained, but limited, revival of trade was underway and that this continued on, at a rather lower level, into the new century.<sup>83</sup>

As Fig. 2.16 shows, 2386 bales of woollens were sold at Bushehr between 1800-1808, though the size of these annual sales varied markedly. The largest sales took place during 1801-1802, probably because the CD's large consignments in the years immediately before allowed the Company to better meet a pent up demand at the Bushehr market. Figures 2.15, 2.16 and 2.17 suggest that in the years 1800-05 the size of woollen sales at Bushehr was strongly related to the scale of the previous years' consignments.

At the same time, large consignments and sales in one or two years sometimes produced a glut of woollens on the market which may explain the drop in sales in other years, such as 1803-4.<sup>84</sup> A further

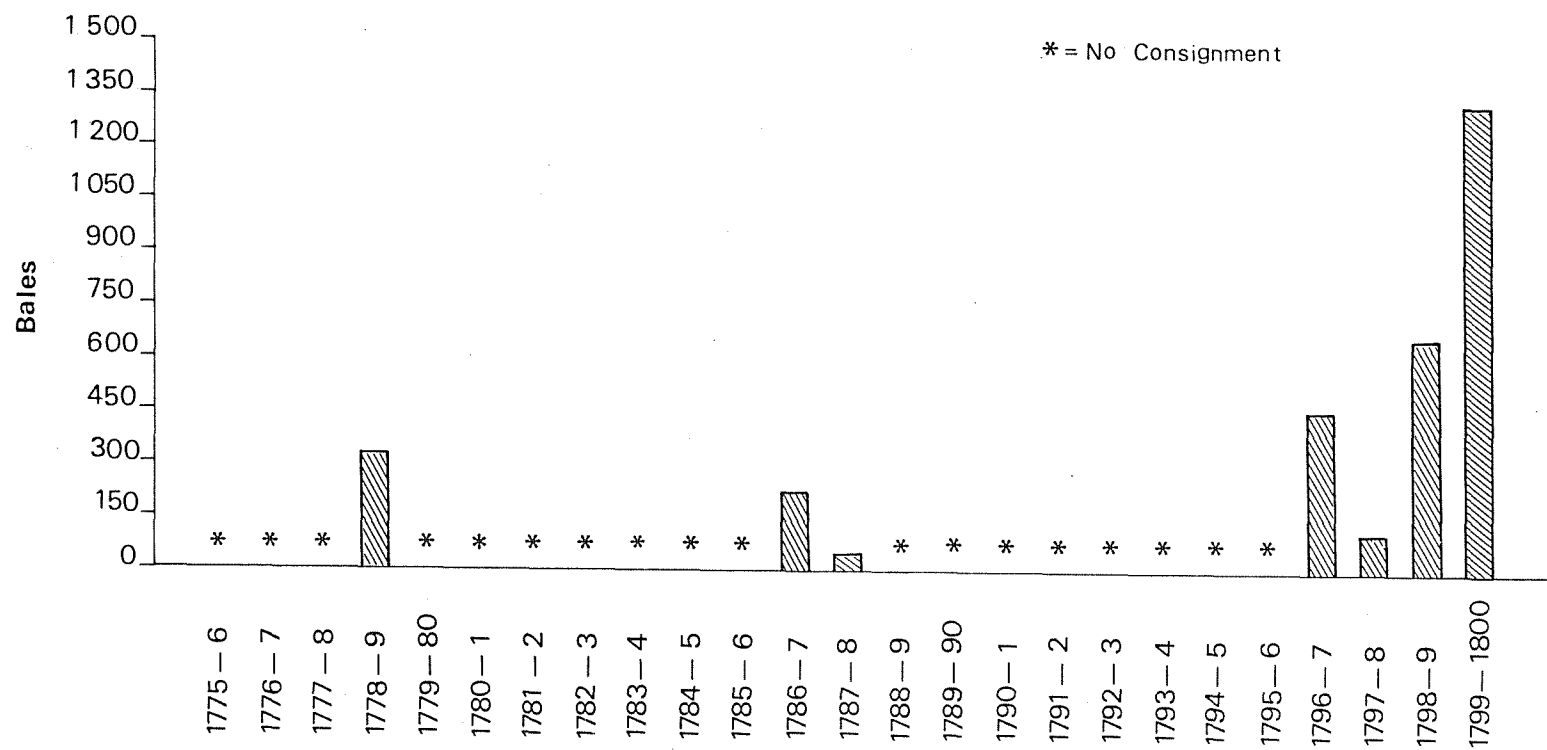


FIGURE 2.15 CD's consignments of woollens to Bushehr,  
1775-1800  
Source: DB vols. 4-20

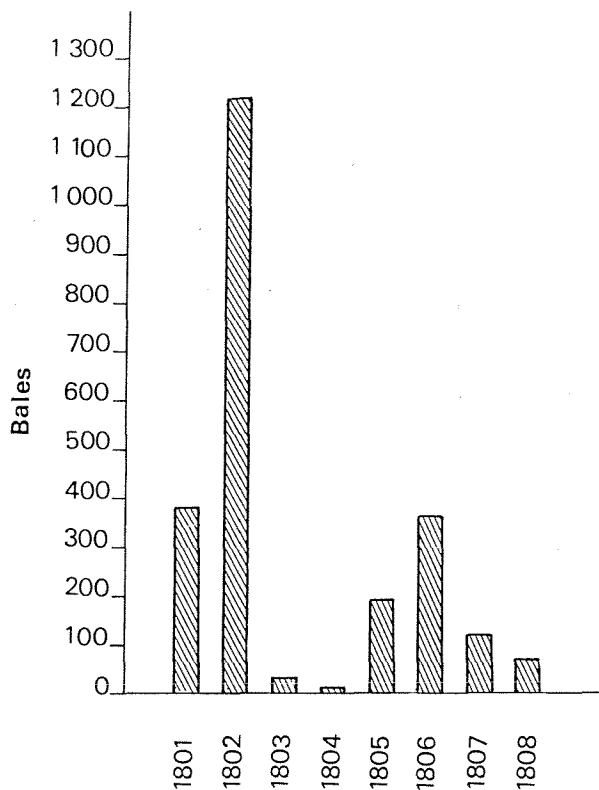


FIGURE 2.16 The quantities of woollens (broad-cloth and perpet) sold at Bushehr, 1801-1808  
Source: RRPGB vols. 5-10 (various letters)

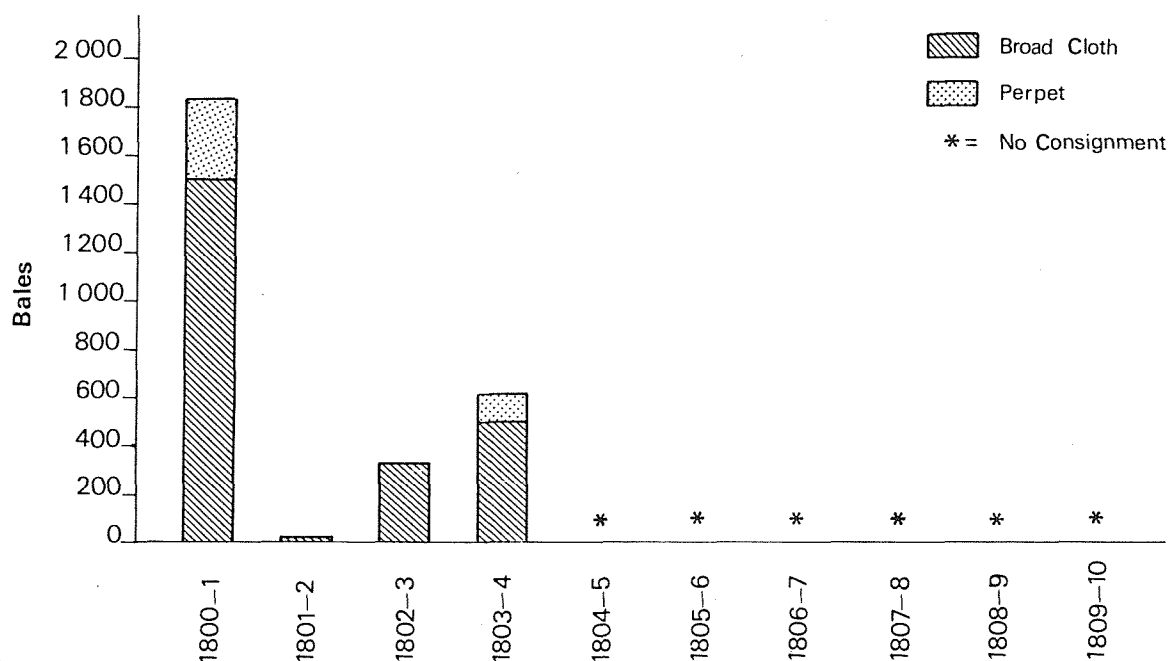


FIGURE 2.17 CD's consignments of woollens for the Bushehr market, 1801-1810  
Source: DB vols. 21-30

decline in sales towards the end of the decade may also be related to the Company's prohibition in 1805 of the sale of woollens on credit. This had earlier boosted sales but now the Company was concerned about the losses which would occur if these debts were not met on time.<sup>85</sup>

It should perhaps be added that the larger sales seen in these years were partly related to the re-exportation of some of these goods from Iran to neighbouring areas in the east (Kandahar, Herat and Kabul), a channel of trade which was opened and encouraged toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> At the same time the interruption of this trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century might have partly contributed to the larger quantities of woollens being dumped on the Iranian markets as other markets closed.<sup>87</sup>

The sudden increase in Company consignments and sales of woollens on the Iranian market also, of course, depended on the existence of Iranian merchants willing to purchase them. Any glut was thus partly the result of the limited information which those merchants had of the demands of the interior markets. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that the sudden glut of sales in the early years of the century should be followed by much reduced consignments and sales soon after. In fact, the Company made no further consignments to Bushehr during 1805-1810. Not only did an oversupply lead to financial losses to merchants who had to reduce the price of their goods in order to pay their debts to the Company;<sup>88</sup> the Company also probably brought in shipments on the basis of the demand estimated from what it had previously sold to the merchants so that it had to sharply curtail shipments because, in 1806, a large surplus of goods remained in the Bushehr warehouses which was said to be enough for five years' consumption.<sup>89</sup>

As in previous decades, perpers had a higher sale than cloth during the period 1801-1810.<sup>90</sup> Among the different types of broadcloth, cloth was most in demand. Coarse cloth outsold other types, but there



are some grounds for suggesting that the finer type (superfine and fine) became more popular towards the end of the decade, possibly because of a change of fashion in Iran which required the finer type of material.<sup>91</sup> However, the finer cloths may have begun to sell better because they were available in more suitable colours, or the Company might have stimulated demand by supplying the market with a particular assortment of better cloth, possibly as a means of competing with the drabs imported via Russia.

The entry of a small but significant amount of a new type of broadcloth, Bagrad, into the Company's records at this time is probably related to the competition created by cheap cloth reaching Iran through Russia which set in train a major change of trading policy by the Company. Russian "Bagrad" was described as a thicker cloth than the broadcloth being imported by the EIC into Bushehr.<sup>92</sup> It is not clear if the Russian "Bagrad" originated in England, France or elsewhere, but it was reaching the Iranian market overland much more cheaply than EIC cloth.<sup>93</sup> The Company resident's report for 1805 simply stated that the Iranian merchants were obtaining "Bagrad" via Russia, although it is possible that this was merely a different term for an assortment of drabs which had been previously mentioned as imported from Russia to Shiraz.<sup>94</sup>

Demand for the "Bagrad" obtained from Russia increased during the decade 1800-1810, and, despite a 10 per cent rise in its price, it still sold more cheaply than the EIC's broadcloth.<sup>95</sup> The Company realised it could only compete successfully against this product by offering its own cloth at comparable prices. This would only be possible if the EIC could cut some of its costs on the export of woollens from London to Bushehr and reduce the price of its cloth. Table 2.3 shows, for example, that in 1780-1 transhipment charges on some bales of EIC cloth destined for Bushehr and the long delay between its purchase and eventual sale by the Company, accounted for

TABLE 2.3 : Charges involved in the transshipment of 81 bales<sup>of</sup> EIC's woollen to Bushehr from London in 1780-1

| Purchase price | Charges in England at $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent | Interest of money 2 years at 4 per cent per annum | Freight at £10 per ton in time of peace | Insurance at 3 per cent | Total | Warehouse charges at 2 per cent | Sale at Bushehr at $\frac{2}{3}$ the Rup. |
|----------------|--|---|---|-------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|---|
| £              | £  | £   | £                                       | £                       | £     | £                               | £   |
| 4245           | 21   | 339   | 101                                     | 127                     | 4,833 | 89                              | 4,478                                     |

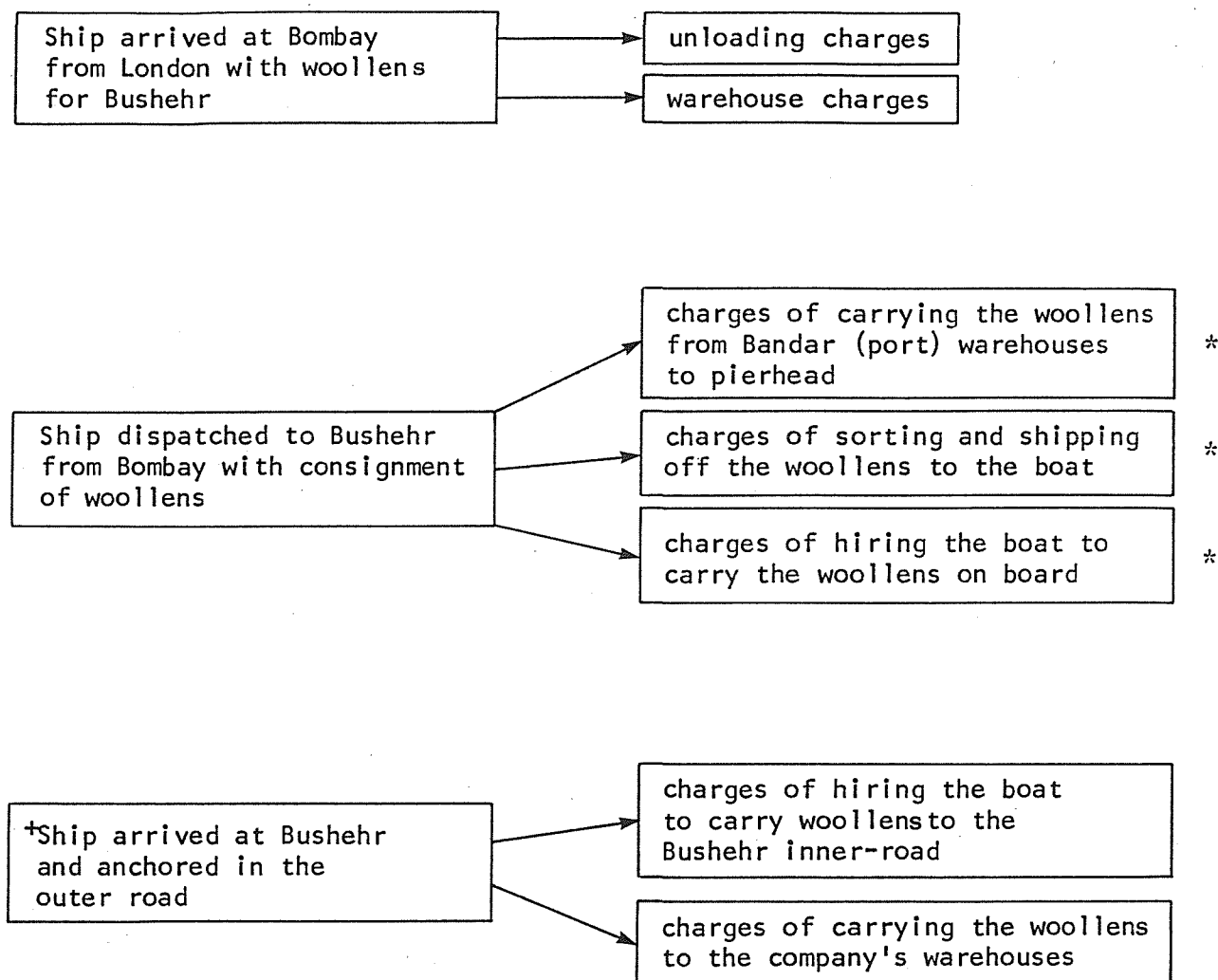
Source: Parliamentary Paper (1793)

16 per cent of its sale price.<sup>96</sup> The Company needed to reduce some of these costs. The most obvious way of doing this was to forward woollens destined for the Iranian market direct to Bushehr rather than via Bombay.

As Fig. 2.18 shows, this would offer savings because the unloading and warehousing charges at Bombay, as well as the reloading charges, would be removed.<sup>97</sup> While it is not known how all these costs were added to the prices charged for EIC cloth at Bushehr, it does help to explain why the Company's cloth was sold at high prices compared with cloth imported by other routes and why the Company often made losses on this trade.

As a result the EIC began to examine more seriously the possibility of direct shipments to Bushehr in 1808, a move also encouraged by the CD's growing confidence about the security of their goods warehoused in Iran.<sup>98</sup> There is, however, no evidence to prove that the Company made any direct consignments to Bushehr within the period under study and without the data it is impossible to judge the effect of change of policy on the prices of EIC woollen on the Iranian market. Further more there is little information on Company woollen sales in Iran after 1800. A little data are available on the sales of EIC woollen by Mehdi Ali Khan, the Bushehr resident from 1798-1802, but these data are often obscure and confusing. Much of the confusion arises from the fact that he sold most of his woollens at Bushehr on long-term credit arrangements stretching over one or even two years and made and recorded most of his sales of cloth in pieces rather than the usual measure of G.Sh.<sup>99</sup> The prices at which he sold woollens also varied according to colour as well as type. For example, perperets sold at Bushehr by Mehdi Ali Khan during 1803 ranged in prices from 35 Rup. for scarlet and purple to 21 Rup. for crimson and popinjay.<sup>100</sup> It is not known, however, if a similar policy had been followed by earlier residents. If almost nothing is known of broadcloth prices,

FIGURE 2.18 : Charges involved with transshipment of woollens from  
Bombay to Bushehr



\*RRPGB Vol.6 letter from Bombay dated 24 February, 1803

+Reader is referred to Section 5.6

a little is known of their qualities and colours. The range of colours of EIC broadcloth sold at Bushehr during the early years of the 1800s continued to be wide and included most of the colours previously found to be popular, but increasingly it appears that dark coloured, superfine cloth, which now sold in a wider range of colours, including black, became more important in the trade.<sup>101</sup> Perpets in bright colours, especially crimson, scarlet, rose and purple remained popular. As before consignments still included woollens in unsuitable colours, like yellow and popinjay, which, according to the resident, depressed total sales.<sup>102</sup> Towards the end of the decade, darker coloured cloth generally became more popular and Morier<sup>103</sup> has pointed out that this change in fashion may have reflected the lead given by the Qajar Dynasty which wished to disassociate itself from the Zand Dynasty, during which time the lighter colours had been favoured.

#### 2.3.7 : The destination of EIC's imported woollens to Iran 1763-1810

Knowledge of the colour and type of cloth exported to Iran by the EIC is all very well, but for a geographical study of trade it is also important to know where the cloth was finally sold to consumers. Information on this question is, unfortunately, scanty. This is because it was not necessary for the Company's residents at Bushehr, who were dealing in the woollens, to record the origin of the merchants with whom they dealt. Sometimes the resident's records show where the caravans came from, or give the home-town of the linguist used by the Company, but these records are very incomplete. In the case of goods sold on credit, however, fuller details of the purchaser were kept, and it is largely on this basis that Fig. 2.19 was constructed, showing places to which EIC cloth is known to have been taken. From it, it is clear that by the close of the study period, the EIC's woollens would have been known in most parts of Iran, but this does



FIGURE 2.19 Areas to which the EIC's woollens were exported  
 Sources: DB vol.2; PPG vol.25 (1790);  
RRPGB vols. 1, 6 and 7

not necessarily mean that people in every part of the country became consumers. The figure indicates that the EIC's woollens were exported as far as Khorasan, and in fact, the merchants of Khorasan made an annual journey to Bushehr for the purchase of woollens. The shipment of goods over such a long-distance (Bushehr to Khorasan) being more than 1000 km. with the difficulties and additional charges involved (transportation charges, tolls etc.), certainly added to the price of woollens. That it was undertaken at all can only be explained by the profitability and degree of demand for these woollens in Khorasan, as well as by the importance of Bushehr as a major port for the exports of Khorasan.

#### 2.4 : Summary and Conclusion

The examination of the Company's records on its woollen trade at Bushehr from 1763 to 1810 has revealed that it was not a financial success. There were several reasons for this, of which the most important were the high prices charged for the goods and the habit of consigning unsuitable colours and assortments to the market. Delays in sending consignments were also important although distance was probably not a major factor so much as the general slowness of communications and the low priority given to the needs of the Iranian market.

High prices emerge as the main obstacle to the development of a regular trade, despite the evidence of a demand for the woollens. High prices eventually meant that the Company lost much of its market to the so-called Russian cloth. These inflated prices were in turn the result of the disorganised state of the Company's commercial affairs with Iran, a disorganization it allowed to persist because of its general uncertainty about the future security of the market, its low profitability and the lack of reliable information. In view

of this uncertainty two questions need to be considered. First, why did the EIC continue to maintain its establishment in Iran when the trade was so small, uncertain and unprofitable? Secondly, having decided to trade there even on a small scale, why did the CD continue to ignore the market's demands for more suitable consignments of goods in terms of woollen types and colours?

There are several probable answers to these questions. The most important relate to the political rather than the financial concerns of the Company in the region. A major purpose of the EIC's presence in the PG appears to have been to protect its postal routes to India and to ensure its strong position there since it believed there was an ever present threat of subversion from the north.<sup>104</sup> There were, however, trading advantages to the Company of a presence at Bushehr, even if they do not appear to be centred on a profitable woollen export business. By having a residency at Bushehr, the Company believed it could benefit from a general flow of trade around the PG, of which the woollen exports to Bushehr were but a minor part. Chapter 4 considers this broader cabotage trade in the PG with which the Company was involved. The Company also believed that, lacking competition from any other European suppliers to the PG, it would be in a strong position to shape the demand for woollens in Iran to suit the goods it had at its disposal. In a sense, the Company believed it could 'dump' goods on the Iranian market. The fact that the Company did little to respond to market demand, as it understood it, suggests that the Company almost followed a deliberate policy of ignoring those demands because it felt that it was in a monopoly position.

Of course, the problems of the Company in responding to local demands were made more difficult by the length of the route via Bombay to England, the delays in sending supplies, and the extremely poor quality of information relayed from the Bushehr resident



about local woollen needs. Nevertheless, there are grounds for believing that the CD did not feel that information on local market needs was important to its activities because the resident's duty was to dispose of whatever goods they could send him. That the CD could take this attitude, may be better understood by realising that the standing of the Company in the eyes of the British government partly depended on its role in helping to expand the British woollen industry by finding export markets for its products. While it clearly did little to promote these exports by finding out the needs of the local market and urging manufacturers to cater for them, the Company probably felt it prudent to ship out what it believed could be sold, even if those goods simply piled up in the Bombay warehouses, rather than disrupt trade by frequently changing orders in an attempt to test the Iranian market. Thus, the Company seems to have relied on what it believed was selling elsewhere overseas to determine the basis of what it felt the Iranian market needed.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It is not known precisely which type of fabric was exported to Iran by the EIC under the name of "camblets". The composition of this fabric changed many times over. It was generally made of wool with either silk or cotton and occasionally with linen yarn. Jenkins, D.T. and Ponting K.G. (1982) The English Wool Textile Industry 1770-1914 (London: Heinemann), p.74; Murray, J.A.H., ed. (1888) A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles; Founded mainly on the materials collected by the Philological Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press), vol.2
2. CHAUDHARI, K.N. (1965) The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint Stock Company 1600-1640 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), p.138
3. Ibid.
4. AMIN, A.A. (1967) British Interests in the Persian Gulf 1747-1780 (Leiden: E.J.Brill), p.112
5. HAMBLY, G.R.G. (1964) 'An Introduction to the Economic Organisation of Early Qajar Iran', Iran 2, 78
6. Mann-i Tabrizi was an Iranian measure for weight. It was used in different parts of the country and varied from one place to another. For further information see Appendix 1.
7. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 15 February 1766
8. Ibid.  
RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 2 June 1766
9. PPG vol.25 Report on the British Trade with Persia and Arabia by Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones 15 August, 1790, p.205 (This Report can also be found in MR; Marine Record, vol.891)
10. PPG vol.20(2) letters from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 April 1765 and 30 January 1766
11. Presumably, the quantities carried to Bushehr (by either English private or native merchants) from India was a market surplus which was first imported to these places from England. During 1782-1790 considerable quantities of metal remained unsold at Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Macpherson, D. (1805) Annals of Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries and Navigation vol.4 (London), p.250
12. In November 1789, the CD wrote to Bombay that they were pleased to hear that there was a proposal for an annual demand for metals at Bushehr, and that they approved of complying with the Bushehr residents' indent. DB vol.11 letter dated 9 November 1789
13. DB vol.12 letter dated 15 December 1790; vol.15 letter dated 5 August 1796; vol.21 letter dated 23 December 1800; vol.24 letter dated 22 May 1804
14. This trade actually comes under the trade of Bushehr with India, and has nothing to do with EIC's own trade. Chapter 4 deals with this aspect.

15. BCP Range 419 vols., 39-46
16. Ibid.
17. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 257
18. CURZON, G.N. (1966) Persia and Persian Question, vol.2 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), pp. 532-533
19. Ibid.
20. ALEXANDER, J.E. (1827) Travel from India to England (London: Parbury, Allen & Co.), p.180  
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21. DAVIS, R. (1967) Aleppo and Devonshire Square (London: Macmillan), p.98  
HANWAY, J. (1753) An Historical Account of British Trade over the Caspian Sea, vol.2 (London: T.Osborne), p.19
22. DAVIS, op. cit., 98
23. ZARRABI, A.R.K. (1341/1962) Tarikh-e Kashan, ed. I. Afshar (Tehran), p.179
24. JENKINS AND PONTING, op. cit., 18-26  
LIPSON, E. (1921) The History of the Woollen and Worsted Industries (London: A & C.Black, Ltd.), p.130
25. JENKINS AND PONTING, op. cit., 334
26. HANWAY, op. cit., 19
27. JENKINS AND PONTING, op. cit., 342
28. Ibid.
29. JENKINS AND PONTING, op. cit., 345, 348
30. Anon. (1822) Persia, Containing a Brief Description, vol. 2 (London: R.Achermann), p.173
31. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 16 January 1767
32. DAVIS, op. cit., 116-133

33. RICK, T.M. (1974) Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and The Gulf 1745-1765 (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Indiana), p.237
34. Ibid., 233
35. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 20 April 1763
36. Ibid.
37. Evidently, the Bushehr indent for woollens was forwarded to Bombay by the Basra resident in August, 1763. However, in the CD's supply list of December 1763 there is no mention of any supply for Bushehr. DB vol.2 letter dated 13 December 1763
38. If the demand for woollens in Iran before 1763 motivated the merchants to travel to Basra for the purchase of these goods, then it is possible that demand was reflected in the annual indent of the Basra market. Therefore after the Company opened up its factory at Bushehr, the Basra resident should have been able to comply with some of their requirements. The size of the CD's supply of woollen for Basra in 1762 and 1763 may support this notion. (Appendix 2.1)
39. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 3 September 1766
40. This was apparently the case within the Company's establishment at Bandar Abbas. RRPGB vol.2 Extract from CD's Command dated 22 March 1765
41. DB vol.2 letter dated 25 March 1765
42. RRPGB vol.1(2) Extract from CD's Command dated 22 March 1765
43. Grey was the colour which was more preferred for French cloth than English cloth among the Iranians. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 20 February 1765
44. RRPGB vol.1(2) Extract from CD's Command dated 22 March 1764
45. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 31 March 1764
46. LRB vol.464 letter from Bombay to Basra dated 1 March 1770
47. Ibid.
48. DB vol.4 letter dated 23 March 1775
49. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 24 May 1770
50. The value of woollen sold at Bushehr in 1763-1769 was 292,663 Rup., whereas the woollens sold to the Iranian merchants at Basra from August 1769 until July 1770 was 79,867 Rup. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 23 July 1770
51. Iranian merchants who purchased woollens at Basra had to pay only 2 per cent on their exports via Dawarq (in Khuzestan), whereas the duty on purchasing woollens at Bushehr was 3 per cent. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 23 July 1770; RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 5 August 1775

52. The most important of these were an Armenian merchant (Gaja Yacoob) with whom the Company entered into a contract for the supply of Gilani silk in exchange for money and woollens, and "Aga Hossien", a considerable merchant of Shiraz, who purchased the Company's woollens through his factor at Basra, mainly for ready money. After 1772, when the EIC instructed its Basra Agent not to exchange woollens for silk, "Aga Hossien" became more successful in dominating the import of woollens to Iran for ready money. PPG vol.20(3) and PPG vol.21(1)
53. For example, in March 1772 in his indent for woollens, the Basra Agent asked for 300 bales of perpets. In reply to this request, the CD consigned only 259 bales. DB vol.4 letter dated February 1774; PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 17 March 1772
54. For further information on currency the reader is referred to Appendix 1
55. DB vol.4 letters dated 12 June 1771 and 28 April 1773
56. DB vol.4 letter dated 12 June 1771
57. Various letters in PPG vol.20(3) and PPG 21(1)
58. From the total amount of 675 bales of woollen estimated for Bushehr, 500 bales were perpets and the remainder were cloth. The latter consisted of 75 bales of Broad-cloth, 80 bales of medleys and 20 bales of Worsted. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 September 1776
59. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 1 November 1776
60. RRPGB vol.2 Extract from CD's Command dated 16 April 1777
61. The invoice price of the EIC's woollens increased during 1770-1775. However, the Company's resident found it difficult to increase the price of woollens at Bushehr, particularly for those merchants who knew the price before. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 15 July 1775
62. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 6 April 1777
63. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 8 October 1777
64. PPG vol.22(1) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 6 November 1784
65. During the 1770s, French cloth was imported to Basra. In 1773, a ship with 300 bales of French cloth for Basra was reported to have sailed from France. The same ship also carried 200 bales of French cloth for Baghdad. In 1770 a French linguist was evidently sent to Shiraz (by the French Council at Basra) to open up negotiations with Karim Khan for commercial purposes. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 9 May 1770; PPG vol.21(1) letter from Basra dated 14 May 1774
66. Gaz Shahi (G.Sh.) was <sup>an</sup> Iranian measure for length. It was used in different parts of the country and varied from one part to another. It is not by any means possible to say how many G.Sh. was in a bale of EIC's imported woollen cloth sold at Bushehr. For further information refer to Appendix 1.

67. This information which was originally recorded in the Book of custom at Shiraz was obtained by the EIC's linguist at Bushehr in 1777. RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr dated 19 December 1806
68. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 September 1776  
RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr dated 16 December 1806  
 It should be noted that it is not known whether the G.Sh. used by the EIC for the sale of its woollens at Bushehr was the same (in regard to its length) as that used at Shiraz for the sale of Russian cloth. It must be assumed that the EIC resident used the local (Bushehr) G.Sh. of 36 inches.
69. PPG vol.22(1) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 6 November 1784
70. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 17 October 1777
71. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 274
72. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 18 May 1777
73. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 5 April 1776
74. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 10 August 1776 and letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 September 1776
75. In 23 June 1779 the Bushehr resident in his letter to Bombay gave the "inability" of Bombay presidency ("your Honour") to supply the Bushehr market with any woollens, as one of the contributory factors to the Company's loss of 12,972 Rup. for the years 1778-1779. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay
76. "...There are at present two or three Gorasaan (Khorasan) merchants in town, who wanted to purchase to a considerable amount, (woollen) but on my informing them, there were no scarlet perpet in ware-house, they acquainted me they had rather remain here until a supply comes from Bombay, than purchase at present, ..." RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 August 1764
77. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 12 June 1781
78. RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 27 July 1781
79. RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 30 April 1782
80. RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 28 June 1783
81. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 12 October 1783
82. RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 30 November 1783
83. RRPGB vol.749 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 9 April 1797
84. RRPGB vol.10(2) letter from Bushehr dated 15 September 1808
85. DB vol.25 letter dated 7 December 1804, p.545
86. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 263
87. RRPGB vol.6 A translated letter from an Iranian merchant to his partner at Bushehr dated 25 November 1803

88. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 30 November 1803
89. DB vol.26 letter dated 30 August 1805; RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr dated 19 June 1806
90. RRPGB vols. 5-10 (various letters)
91. RRPGB vols. 9-10 (various letters)
92. DB vol.26 letter dated 30 April 1805
93. Evidently, French cloth was imported to Iran via the Caspian Sea. RRPGB vol.749 letter from Bushehr dated 15 November 1789; Waring, op. cit., 6
94. It is quite probable that Bagrad referred to Begrest which according to Hanway's account was the Persian equivalent for the drabs assortment exported to Northern Iran by the RC during the first half of the 18th century. Hanway, op. cit., 19
95. RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 16 December 1806
96. Parliamentary Papers, Three Reports of the Select Committee appointed by the Court of Directors to take into consideration the Export Trade from Great Britain to the East Indies, 1793 (Abbot Collection, Account and Papers, vol.38), p.17
97. The available data suggest that the freight of one bale of woollens from Bombay to Bushehr cost 6 Rup. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 January 1803
98. DB vol.26 letter dated 30 April 1805; DB vol.30 letter dated 1 May 1810
99. The prices of woollens sold during the residency of Mehdi Ali Khan (1798-1802) were considered as<sup>a</sup> "very high" price for that market. This was given as a reason for the difficulties which the Iranian merchants had in disposing of these woollens in the interior markets. It also contributed to the Company's losses because of the inability of Iranian merchants to complete their debts on time. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr to Bombay 30 November 1803
100. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 17 September 1803
101. EIC's woollens sold in grass green, saxon, emerald green, dark green, pea green, dark emerald, green, sky blue, maz blue, dark blue, scarlet, deep crimson, orange, yellow, purple, popinjay, gold strip, crimson strip, light stone, white, brown, dark brown, grey, pompador and black. RRPGB vols. 5-10 (various letters)
102. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 26 April 1803
103. MORIER, J.J. (1818) A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople Between the Years 1810-1816 (London: Longman), pp. 243-244
104. LAMBTON, A.K.S. (1970) 'Persian Trade under the Early Qajars', in Papers on Islamic History: II Islam and the Trade of Asia, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd.), p.226  
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### 3.1 : Introduction

Silk and Carmania wool were the most important raw materials produced in Iran during the seventeenth, eighteenth and the greater part of the nineteenth centuries. The former was even described as a gold mine for Iran<sup>1</sup> while the latter, produced by the Kerman (Carmania) goat, was similarly described as the "glory" of that province.<sup>2</sup> These commodities not only had a considerable consumption in the home manufacturing of the country but were also attractive articles for foreign traders. The suitability of these raw materials for the silk and hat industries of England had motivated the EIC to become an exporter of these goods from Iran as far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century, and during the period under study here, 1763-1810, the EIC's exports focussed mainly on raw silk from Gilan and Carmania wool, although the Company was also interested in other commodities notably 'old copper' and drugs.

This chapter deals principally, therefore, with silk and wool, the two main items in the EIC's exports from Bushehr, their factory for much of the period. The study of the Company's exporting activities seems to be as important as its import activities for understanding the spatial organization of the Iranian market and its associated problems. As in the case of woollen imports, the Company found that maintaining a regular export trade in silk and Carmania wool proved difficult for a number of reasons, both connected with supply difficulties and variable demand in England. The considerable distance between Gilan, Kerman and Bushehr, in addition to the unreasonable terms and low prices offered to the



merchants by the EIC for these goods, emerge as the major reasons for the Company's inability to maintain a regular trade.

### 3.2 : The EIC's Silk Trade

#### 3.2.1 : An outline history of Iran's silk trade until 1763

Iranian silk was known in the international trade as Legee or legia<sup>3</sup> and was sufficiently important from at least the sixteenth century to attract the attention of most of the foreign companies which had begun commercial connections with Iran. The origins of silk production in Iran are not known with any detail. Bahrami<sup>4</sup> assumed that Iran might have been an original hearth for silk cultivation, and that silkworm breeding and silk weaving were developed there before or during the Achaemenid period (559-330 B.C.)<sup>5</sup> Issawi, on the other hand, followed the traditional western view and believed that silk cultivation might have been imported into Iran from China during the Sasanian period (A.D.222-651).<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, throughout the Islamic era (after c.650) silk was considered a product of high value to Iran.<sup>7</sup> The first mention of silk cultivation in northern Iran, the main source in the eighteenth century, is found in Al-Istakhari's travel account of the tenth century,<sup>8</sup> but it should further be noted that Northern Iran also played an intermediate role on the export route of Chinese silk to western countries in the early Christian era.<sup>9</sup>

The export of Iranian silk goes back at least to the early Islamic era when it was shipped as far west as north Africa. In the thirteenth century, Iranian silk attracted Genoese merchants to the producing region of Gilan<sup>10</sup>. However, a boom in the export trade of Iranian silk did not take place until the turn of the seventeenth century, as a result of several favourable factors, including, on

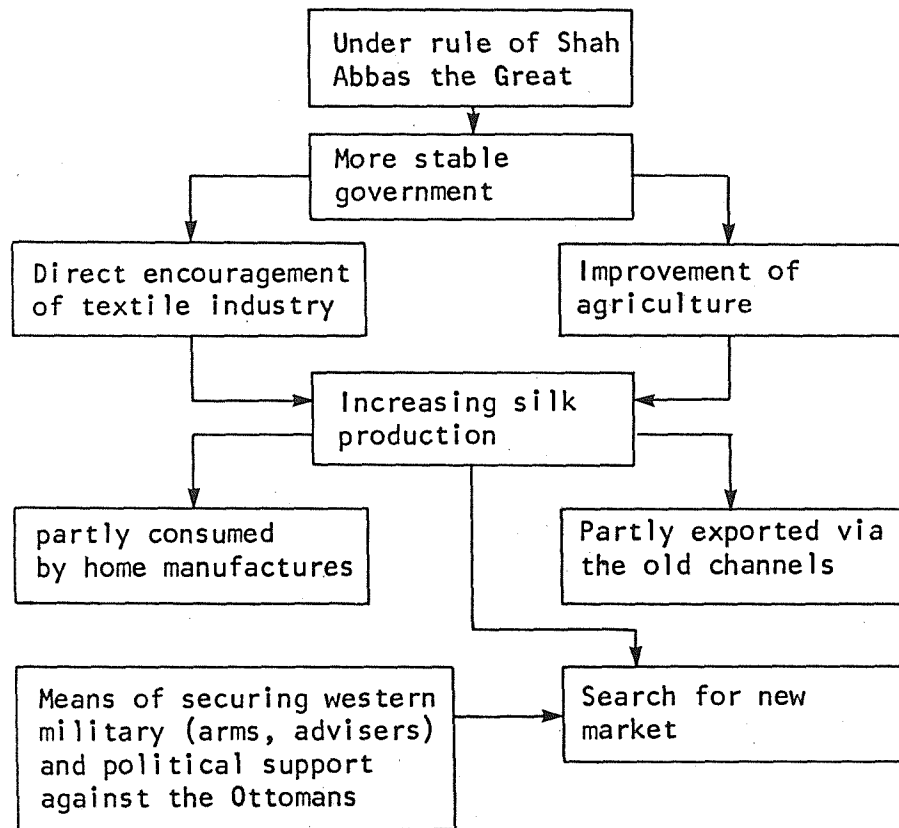
the demand side, the European desire to find markets for their manufactured goods and a search for raw materials which were in demand by their industries. On the supply side can be set the encouragement given by Shah Abbas The Great for agriculture and industry which led to the increase in silk production. The export trade in silk was also used by the Shah as a political weapon for securing military and political support from European countries against the Ottoman. These factors influencing the development of Iran's silk exports are summarised in Fig. 3.1.

Before the EIC and OIC attempted to divert the silk trade to the PG in the seventeenth century, it had already been exported overland to Europe via Turkey and Russia, and Aleppo had become the main centre for it. Smaller quantities were shipped by the Portuguese through Hormuz. What limited information is available on the scale of the export to Europe of Iranian silk in the early seventeenth century shows that about 6,000 bales yearly entered Europe from Turkey<sup>11</sup> (Table 3.1), and this equalled about one third of total Iranian output.<sup>12</sup> As indicated the French and Venetians dominated this trade. The export of only 600 bales direct to England shows that English interest and investment in the trade was not very large at that time.

The EIC's original notion to direct much more of the Iranian silk trade to London via the PG developed after the visit of Mr Connock (the Company's factor) to Esfahan in 1617. But this plan to buy up much of the supply did not materialize, mainly because the Company did not have sufficient funds to purchase and redirect the 6,000 bales of silk which were annually being imported into Europe via Turkey at the time.<sup>13</sup>

FIGURE 3.1 : The Development of silk exportation in the seventeenth century

Factors from supply side



Factors from Demand side

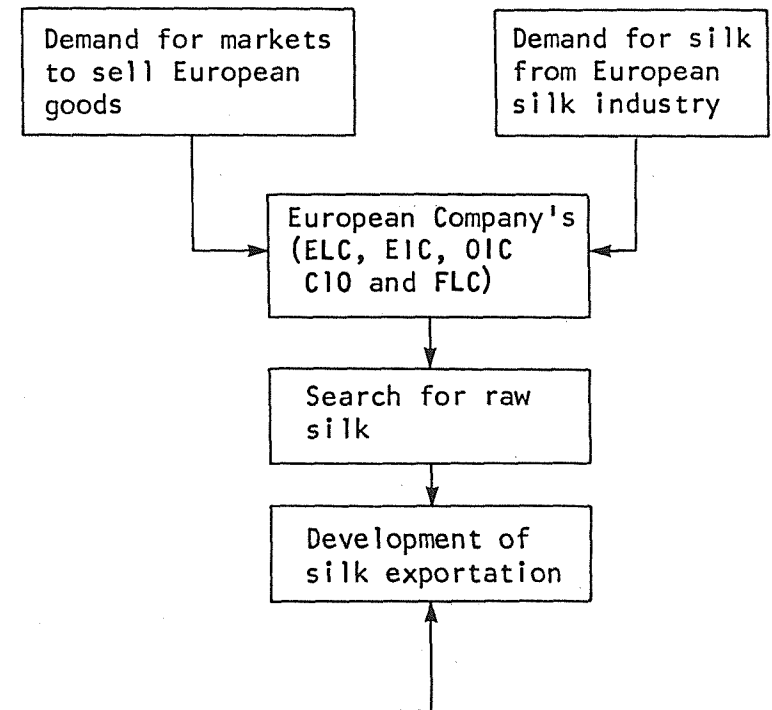


TABLE 3.1 The annual export of Iran's silk to Europe in the first decade of the seventeenth century

| Exported to                           | Number of Bales* |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Netherlands                           | 500              |
| England                               | 600              |
| Venice                                | 1,500            |
| Marseilles                            | 3,000            |
| Genoa, Lucca, Messina<br>and Florence | 400              |

\*One bale was equal to 280 English lb.

Source: Steensgaard (1973)

The annual capital requirement for this number of bales could be estimated at £540,000, a large sum at that time.<sup>14</sup> The Company knew that if it redirected only part of the supply and some of the silk still imported to Europe via Turkey, there would be large price fluctuations which would probably be adverse to its interest.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, therefore, of being unable to monopolise the trade at this time the EIC's chief attitude towards it was one of indecision and uncertainty as to whether it should get involved.<sup>16</sup> A major reason for this uncertainty was the likely effect of the long distance between the place of demand (London) and the point of supply (Gilan). This would delay both market information and shipments and make the Company's planning and investment both costly and risky in the same way as occurred with its woollen trade. Nevertheless the Company did get involved and silk became its most important export to England during the greater part of the seventeenth century, although it declined markedly in the eighteenth century.

Apart from competition from silk exported by established overland routes, the greatest single problem and biggest risk which the Company faced in developing its silk trade with Iran was strong competition from the OIC which also shipped silk via the PG, through Bandar Abbas (Fig. 3.2). The OIC had gained a strong position in this trade as a result of its considerable trading influence generally in Iran, but this power declined during the seventeenth century, possibly as a result of increasing involvement in the Bengal silk trade in the 1650s and growing restrictions on their trading freedom in Iran.<sup>17</sup> This gave more opportunities in the late seventeenth century for the EIC to step in to export Iranian silk. Figure 3.3 shows, for example, that between 1682 and 1690 the EIC purchased relatively large quantities of silk - 10,000 M.Sh. (=125,000 lb.) in some years - and this became possible principally due to the lack of competition from the OIC.<sup>18</sup>

The EIC's role as a major trading Company in Iranian silk via the PG was short-lived and, by the end of the seventeenth century, Iranian silk was no longer the EIC's most important export from Iran. The causes of this decline in the EIC's silk trade, so soon after it had been built up, are complex but an attempt is made to summarise them in Fig. 3.4. The major reason was the increase in the price of Iranian silk. This was due to the decline in production and to the insecurity of trade and transportation which derived from the general instability of Iran. This coincided with a rise in demand for silk from English industry because of the war between England and Spain. England had previously imported quantities of silk for its industry from Spain. Also important was a change in the type of Iranian silk being exported to England. Bengal silk was so cheap for a time that from about 1700 it virtually replaced Iranian coarse silk (Ardasse) on the English markets.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the English markets still demanded the famous and more expensive Sharbafi silk. But the trade in this type of silk, however, did not greatly

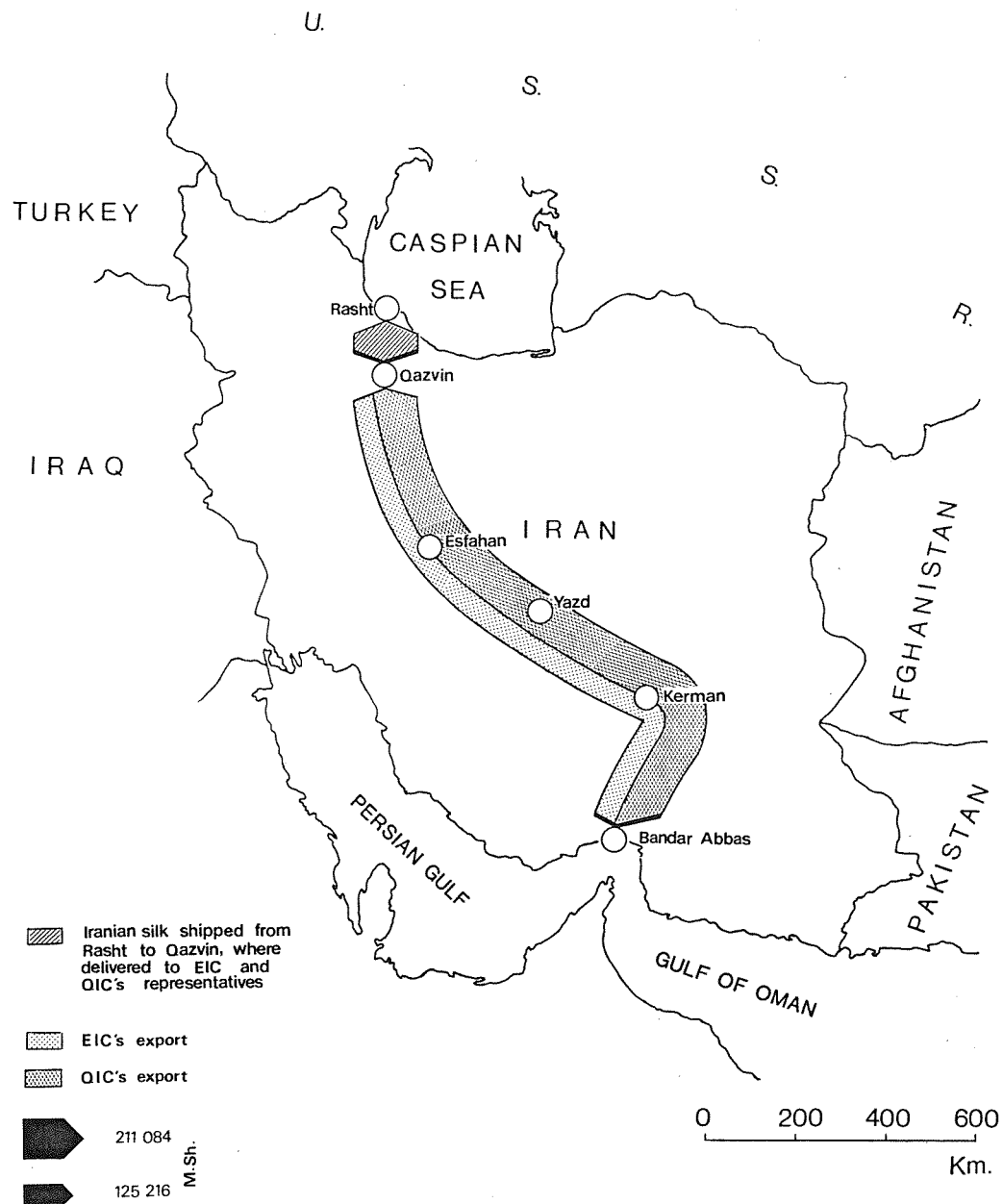


FIGURE 3.2 OIC's and EIC's silk exports from Iran, 1618-1646  
Source: Steensgaard (1973)

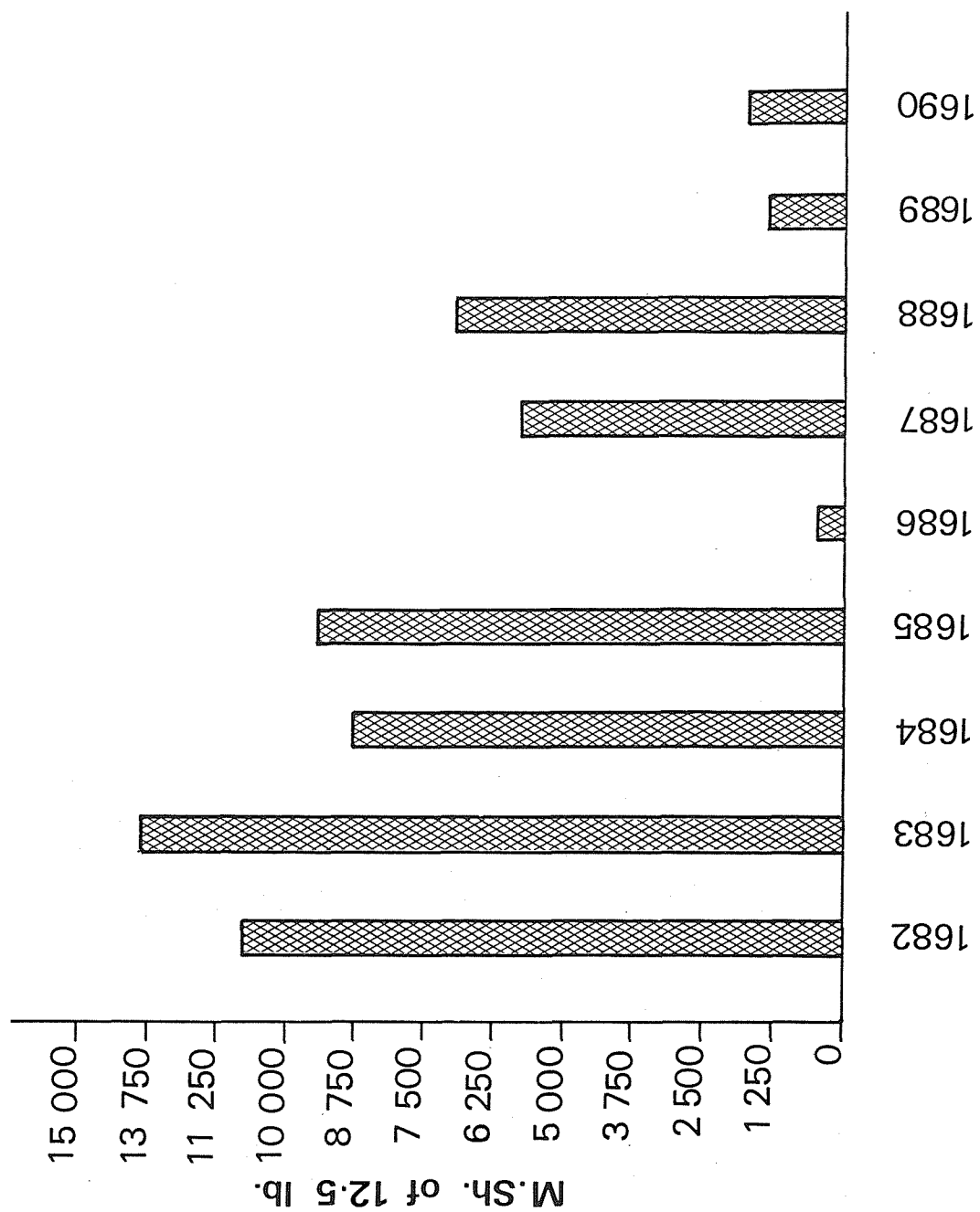
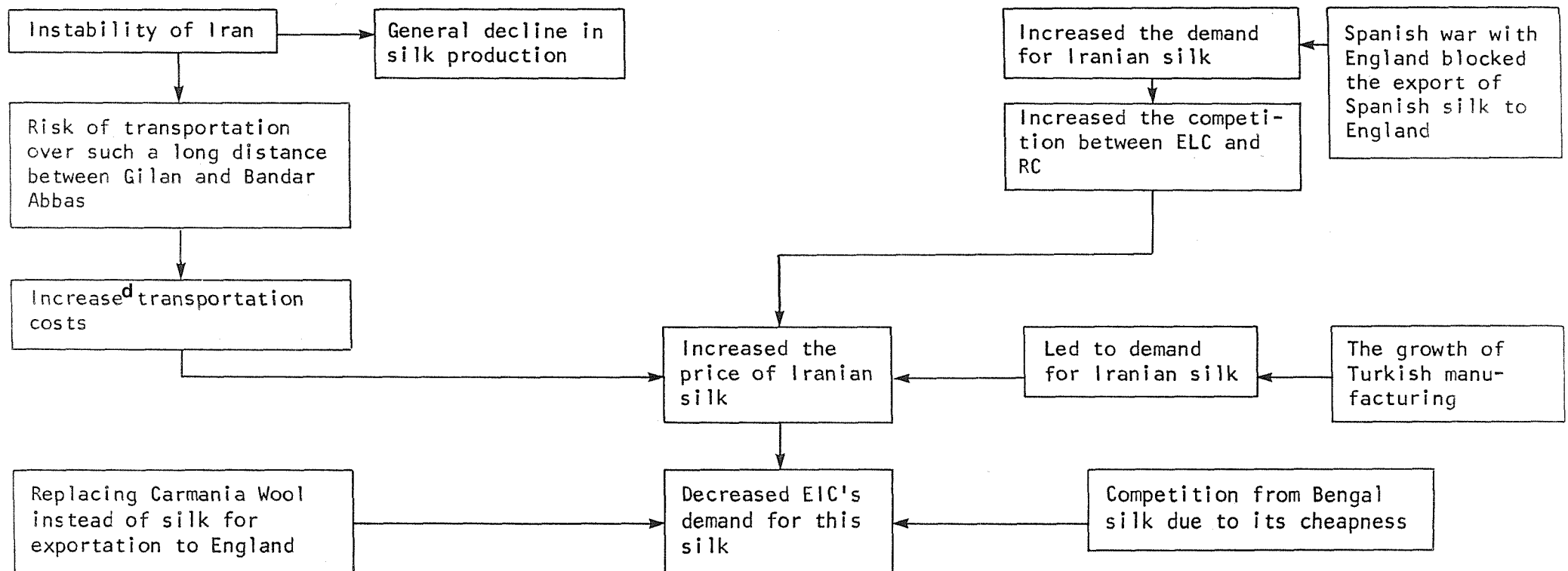


FIGURE 3.3 EIC's silk exports from Iran, 1682-1690  
Source: Glamann (1958)

FIGURE 3.4 : The factors assumed to have contributed to the decline of the EIC's interest in Iran's silk during the first half of the eighteenth century





involve the EIC. It was brought into Europe via Turkey by the EIC or by RC via Russia, with the former Company easily dominant. Accordingly, it looks as if by 1763, the start of the period under study, the EIC had largely lost the commercial battle with its rivals for the Iranian silk trade.

### 3.2.2 : Areas of production and the output of Iranian silk before 1763

Just as there are few data on the early silk trade, so there is comparatively little information available with which to outline the main characteristics of silk production in Iran before 1763 to support that trade. Contemporary writers noted that the main areas of the specialism were Gilan and Mazandaran by the eighteenth century as few places further south were also important. The pattern of production areas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are shown in Fig. 3.5a.

There are also some estimates of production in the 1600s. In 1637 total output was reckoned to be around 20,000 bales (each bale contained 216 lb.) and in 1670 it reached a peak of about 22,000 bales (each bale contained 276 lb.).<sup>20</sup> Over one third of the output at the beginning of the seventeenth century is estimated to have come from the province of Gilan where, as in the adjoining province of Mazandaran which produced rather less, the producing villages lay in the lowland between the Elburz Mountains and the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.<sup>21</sup> As can be seen in Fig. 3.5b Gilan seems to have been the major source of silk exports from Iran as well as a major supplier to the country's domestic industry around the period under consideration (Fig. 3.6a and b).



FIGURE 3.5a Iran's silk producing areas in the 17th and 18th centuries

Sources: Davis (1967); Fraser (1826); Fryer (1698);  
 Glamann (1958); Hanway, vol.2 (1753);  
 Morier (1818); Pinkerton (1811)

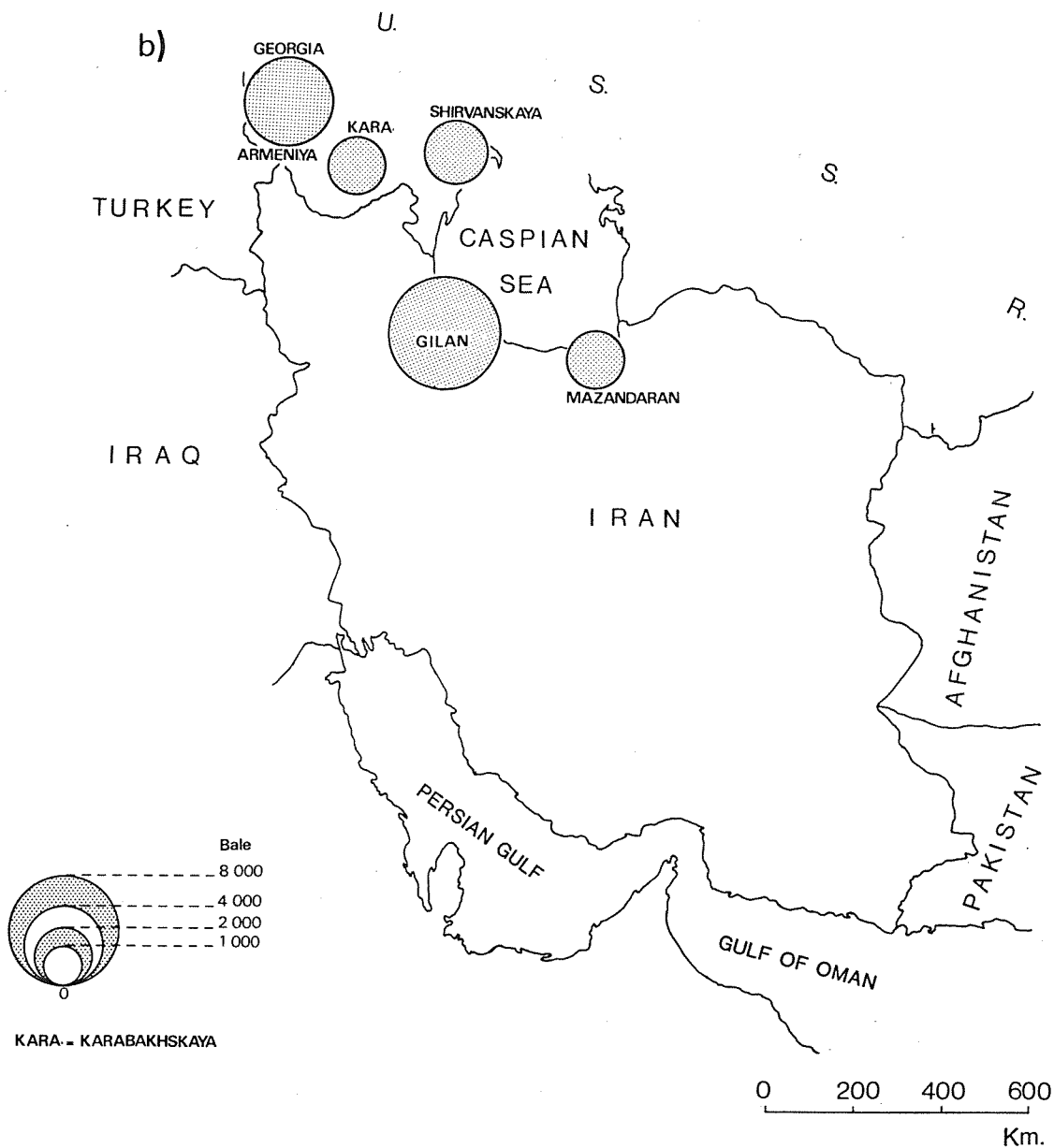


FIGURE 3.5b Output of different silk producing areas of Iran at the beginning of 17th century  
Source: Minorsky (1943)

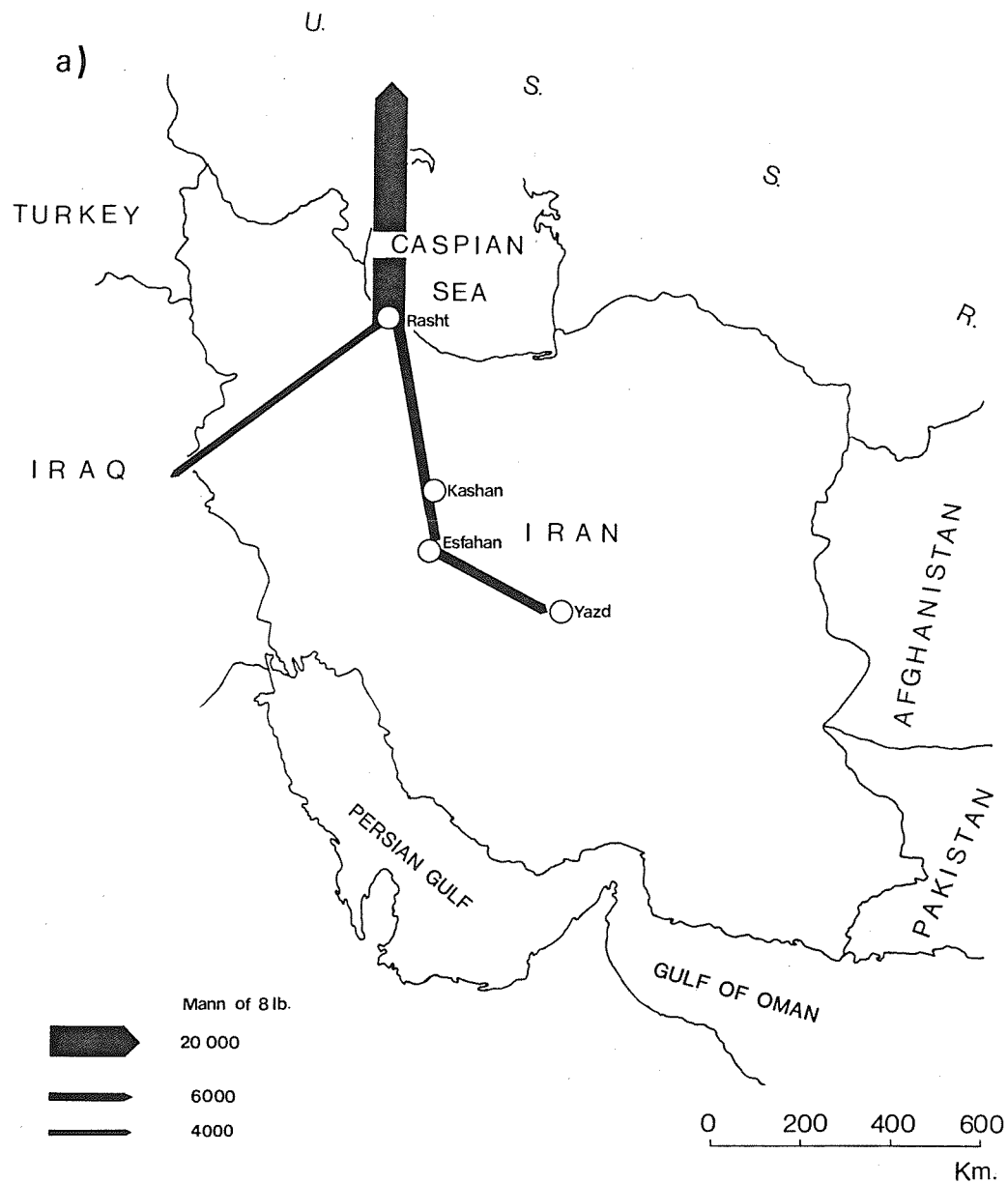


FIGURE 3.6a Silk export of Gilan in 1740s  
Source: Hanway, vol.2 (1753)

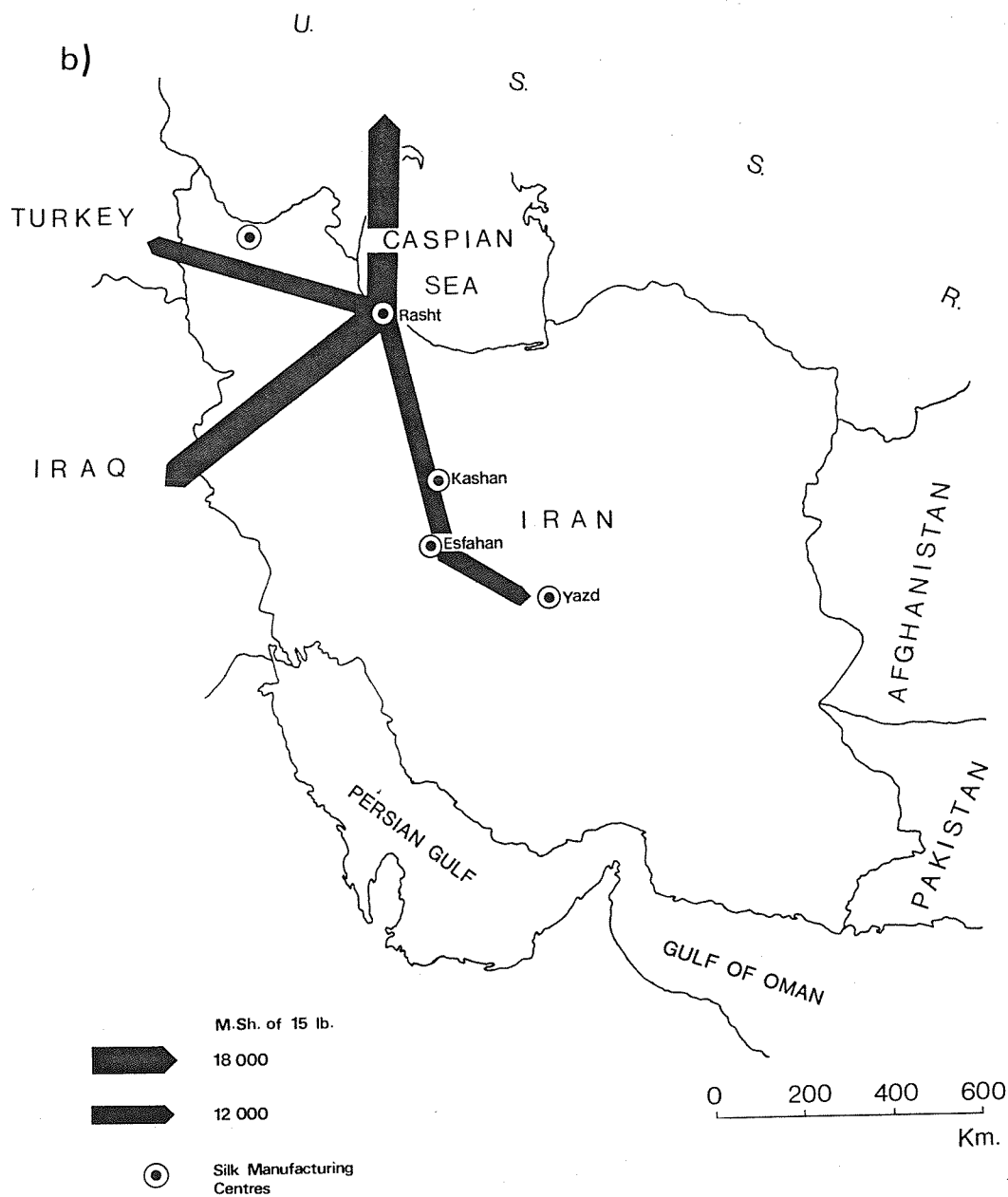


FIGURE 3.6b Silk export of Gilan in 1820s  
Source: Fraser (1826)

### 3.2.3 : Silk manufacturing in Iran during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Iran produced a variety of qualities and types of silk. The different qualities were measured by the fineness of texture, gloss and colour, and these qualities were in part determined by the food of the silk worm.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the various writers are not in complete agreement about the names assigned to the different qualities, although all agree that a white or silver colour was the most esteemed. In spite of the difficulties, an attempt has been made in Table 3.2 to differentiate the various quantities of silk. The main export silk was legee, or brocade, a fine silk mainly produced in Gilan. The inferior qualities of silk (such as Kaj) were usually mixed with cotton and also used more for home manufacture than for export.<sup>23</sup> The finest quality of silk, Kadkhoda-pessend or pearl silk, produced in the Lahijan area of Gilan province, was considered too fine for export and found its way only to local manufacturers in that province.

More raw silk seemed to have been exported from Iran than was used in local manufacture. Much of it went to neighbouring countries for use there or shipment further on. According to Chardin, only about 9 per cent of Iran's total output of raw silk was used by local manufacturers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> By 1765, it was estimated that home consumption had risen but only to 25 per cent of output, and the Iranian manufacturers produced a variety of silk materials, including brocade, velvet, carpets, dereis, satins, cassabs and taffeta.<sup>25</sup> Although some of these fabrics were made of pure silk, notably deries ("darai") which was described as similar to English striped taffetas, a characteristic of much silk cloth made in Iran was the mixing of silk with materials such as gold and silver, cotton and goats' hair.<sup>26</sup> There were several places engaged in these manufactures but Kashan was perhaps the most famous

TABLE 3.2 : Different qualities of Iranian Silk

| Local name   | Internationally known as                  | Other names given by travellers and other sources | Quality    | Colour         | Area of production | Consumption             |
|--|---|---|------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Kadkhoda-pessend<br>"pleasing to the Kadkhoda or headmen of the village" | Ardassina, pearl silk                     | Tradesman silk                                    | Very fine  | White          | Lahijan            | Local manufacturing     |
| Sharbafi   | Legée, legy, Brocade silk and Turkey silk | Weaver silk                                       | Fine       | White & Yellow | Province of Gilan  | Local and foreign trade |
| Shirvan  | Hardass, Ardasse Ardasset                 | -   | Coarse     | Not known      | Shirvan            | Foreign trade           |
| Kaj ("Kedje")  | -   | -   | Rough silk |                | Gilan              | Home manufacturing      |

Sources: Davis (1967); Glamann (1958); Hanway (1953); Issawi (1971); Lockhart (1958); Pinkerton (1811); Zarrabi (1341/1962)

of them all, depending upon working up zarbuff (silk woven with gold).<sup>27</sup>

#### 3.2.4 : The EIC's silk trade from Iran, 1763-1769

There had been a decline in the export of raw silk from Iran by the EIC during the first half of the eighteenth century, as has already been stated, when Bengal had become the major eastern supplier of coarse silk for the English market. From the 1760s, however, the export of this commodity suffered and became unprofitable for the Company, mainly due to rising costs.<sup>28</sup> It was this, coupled with an increased demand in England when the import of silk manufactures was banned in 1764-5, which encouraged the Company to direct its attention again to Iranian silk, following its re-establishment at Bushehr.<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly the Company's resident was instructed in 1765 to make a full enquiry into the quantity and quality of the silk which might be procured and shipped to England from Bushehr. For this purpose, a Company employee (Mr Pilloro) was sent to Gilan in 1765 to study the possibilities of redirecting the trade southward to the ports of the PG.<sup>30</sup> According to these enquiries, together with information from Karim Khan's custom officer, the annual raw silk production for trading purposes from northern Iran at that time, was 80,000 M.Sh. (about 1,040,000 lb.) of this, 50,000 M.Sh. (about 650,000 lb.) came from Shirvan (Shirvanskaya) and Shamakhi (Shemakha), and the rest from Gilan. Various types of silk were reported as making up this 80,000 M.Sh., as seen in Table 3.3, but there is no information on the character of the types identified; any variation was probably related to the quality and colour.<sup>31</sup> In addition, there was reported to be 5,000 M.Sh. of Kaj ("Kedje") - an



inferior coarse quality silk - exported to Turkey, with another 15,000 M.Sh. (about 195,000 lb.) of the same type used in Iran.<sup>32</sup> More than two-thirds of the silk exports of Gilan, Shamakhi and Shirvan were exported via Turkey or Russia.<sup>33</sup>

TABLE 3.3

The Annual Exportation of Raw Silk from Shirvan, Shamakhi and Gilan, as it was reported by Haji Sarkees (Karim Khan's custom officer) in 1765

| Sort * | Quantity | Price          | Exported to                             |
|--------|----------|----------------|---|
|        | M.Sh. +  | Rup. per M.Sh. |   |
| 1      | 10,000   | 50-66          | Yezd                                    |
| 2      | 10,000   | 31-41          | Esfahan, Kerman and other parts of Iran |
| 2&3    | 30,000   | 30-38          | Turkey (mostly to Smyrna)               |
| 2&3    | 30,000   | 30-39          | Russia                                  |

\*There is no mention of what the resident meant in classifying the silk as 1, 2 and 3 sorts, but presumably it depended on gloss and colour.

+M.Sh. = 13 lb.

Source: RRPGB Vol. 1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 2 March 1765

The dominance of Turkey and Russia in the silk trade made its diversion toward the PG extremely difficult for the EIC. This problem was compounded by the lack of demand for English woollen cloth in northern Iran which could have formed part of a two way trade (see the quote in Section 2.3.1), on the one hand, and the considerable distance between the place of demand and the source of supply, with the related transshipment problem on the other hand. Not only were these difficulties likely to raise trading costs for the EIC, but they also made it almost impossible for the Company to maintain a viable settlement or a representative in northern Iran. Without this representation on the spot, the Company was often unable to obtain relevant information about the state of the silk market, which was a particular drawback in such a variable market. As the Company's resident in Bushehr wrote in 1767:

*"By what we lately learnt by some merchants who formerly used the Gillan trade, we have but little reason to expect silk to be provided here, so as to answer either in Europe or India----- The merchant<sup>s</sup> tell us, that no certain dependance can be had on the silk markets at Gillan, seven buzzars for the sale of that article only are held in the week, and that silk rises or falls almost every day, according to the demand for it, which is commercially large, or the produce of the worms, who some years furnish more than others...."*<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, the report from the Company's representative, Mr Pilloro, in 1766 suggested that it was possible to procure silk in Bushehr to ship it to England more cheaply than the silk reaching London via Turkey and St. Petersburg. As a result the CD was sufficiently

impressed in 1766 by the prospects to order their servant at Bushehr to ship a modest 1600 M.Sh. (about 20,800 lb.) of Gilani silk to England at a low price of 70 Rup. per M.Sh., this price to include all charges such as brokerage, customs and weight charges at Rasht.<sup>35</sup> At this price, Iranian silk would cost about 30% less than Bengal silk in the English market.<sup>36</sup>

To comply with the CD's order, the Company's resident in Bushehr had to use rather devious means to obtain the silk so cheaply. He attempted two different approaches, neither of which proved even moderately successful. Firstly, he tried to persuade the local merchants to bring silk instead of money or other products to Bushehr where it could be bartered for English woollen cloth.<sup>37</sup> This would involve less risk to the Company in terms of sending its woollens or money to northern Iran and could also benefit the Company by creating a degree of competition amongst the Iranian merchants. This would allow the EIC to take silk at a lower price and, by attracting more traders from the north, it might sell its woollens at a higher price. During the years 1765-1767, however, only two silk traders took up this arrangement with the Company, a poor response that probably resulted from the merchants being offered too low a price for their silk. The price was unattractive to merchants because of their additional costs and risks of losses, as well as the lack of advanced payments for bringing their silk to Bushehr. This was recognized as a problem in a letter the Company resident in Bushehr wrote in 1767:

*"....an old Mushed merchant and one who has purchased of the company these many years, he declared on Mr Jervis's telling him the price,... that he would not bring to Bushire all of that sort for less than 80 rupee."38*

The additional risks and losses which bore upon the merchants included the security of their silk from robbery and pilfering en route, and its reduction in weight, and therefore value, caused by the evaporation of moisture when carried over a long distance. As the EIC neither offered a reasonable price for this silk nor provided any guarantee of purchasing the produce once it was shipped to Bushehr, most merchants were not interested in taking silk to the EIC's residency. The importance of the distance factor in undermining the EIC's attempts to affect the silk trade can be illustrated by the available information obtained by the EIC's employee, Mr Pilloro, in 1765. Table 3.4 constructed from his information, shows that a journey between Gilan and Bushehr of 1124 km. was made in 43 days. There is no doubt that this time must have varied from season to season and according to the different means of transport. According to Mr Pilloro's estimation, 30 Rup. was the cost of transportation for 16 M.Sh. of Gilani silk from Rasht in Gilan to Bushehr. Other charges involved in getting this silk to the port of Bushehr were as shown in Table 3.5. Altogether the cost of sending one M.Sh. of raw Gilani silk to Bushehr, including transport and other charges, was more than four Rup, but even this covered only the formal charges and did not include other additional expenses a merchant had to absorb. These included the expense of staying over 40 nights at different inns during his journey when transshipping silk down to the port of Bushehr. Of course, to this must be added the security risk and other eventualities such as delay in the journey due to the weather or for other reasons.

Silk is very sensitive to the humidity of the atmosphere due to the evaporation of its moisture on a long journey so that its weight, and hence value, falls. This was especially a problem for the merchants when silk was carried from the damp climate of Gilan to the hot and dry climate of Bushehr, particularly when the EIC

TABLE 3.4

Distance, time and transportation cost involved in the shipment  
of Gilani silk from Rasht to Bushehr in 1765

| From    | To      | Distance<br>(km.) | Time<br>(Days) | Cost of hiring an ass<br>(Rup.) |
|---------|---------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Rasht   | Qazvin  | 154               | 6 )            | 16                              |
| Qazvin  | Esfahan | 384               | 15 )           |                                 |
| Esfahan | Shiraz  | 346               | 12             | 8                               |
| Shiraz  | Bushehr | 240               | 10             | 30                              |
| Total   |         | 1124*             | 43             | 30                              |

\*These distances are originally given in "leagues"

Source: RRPGB Vol. 1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 2 March 1765

TABLE 3.5

Charges involved in the shipment of one M.Sh. of Gilani silk for  
Bushehr market

| Charges                   | Mah.  | Rup. |
|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Weighing charges at Rasht | 6.10  | 1.01 |
| Brokerage                 | 2     | 0.34 |
| Dungaree cloth for bag    | 1.10  | 0.18 |
| Customs at Esfahan        | 6     | 1    |
| Total                     | 15.20 | 2.53 |

Source: RRPGB Vol.1 (1) letter from Bushehr dated 2 March 1765

made no allowance for this in the prices they offered. With all these adverse factors, therefore, it is not surprising that few Gilani merchants were eager to export their silk to the port of Bushehr when, with EIC's prices at 70 Rup. for each M.Sh., the probability of making a loss in sale was larger than that of gaining any profit. This low price at which the EIC's resident at Bushehr would purchase the Gilani silk was determined not by the Bushehr resident himself but by the CD according to the degree of demand for silk in England and the need to keep competitive with silk coming in via Turkey.<sup>39</sup> It took no account of the other costs specified above and was therefore unrealistic from the point<sup>view</sup> of the Iranian merchants.

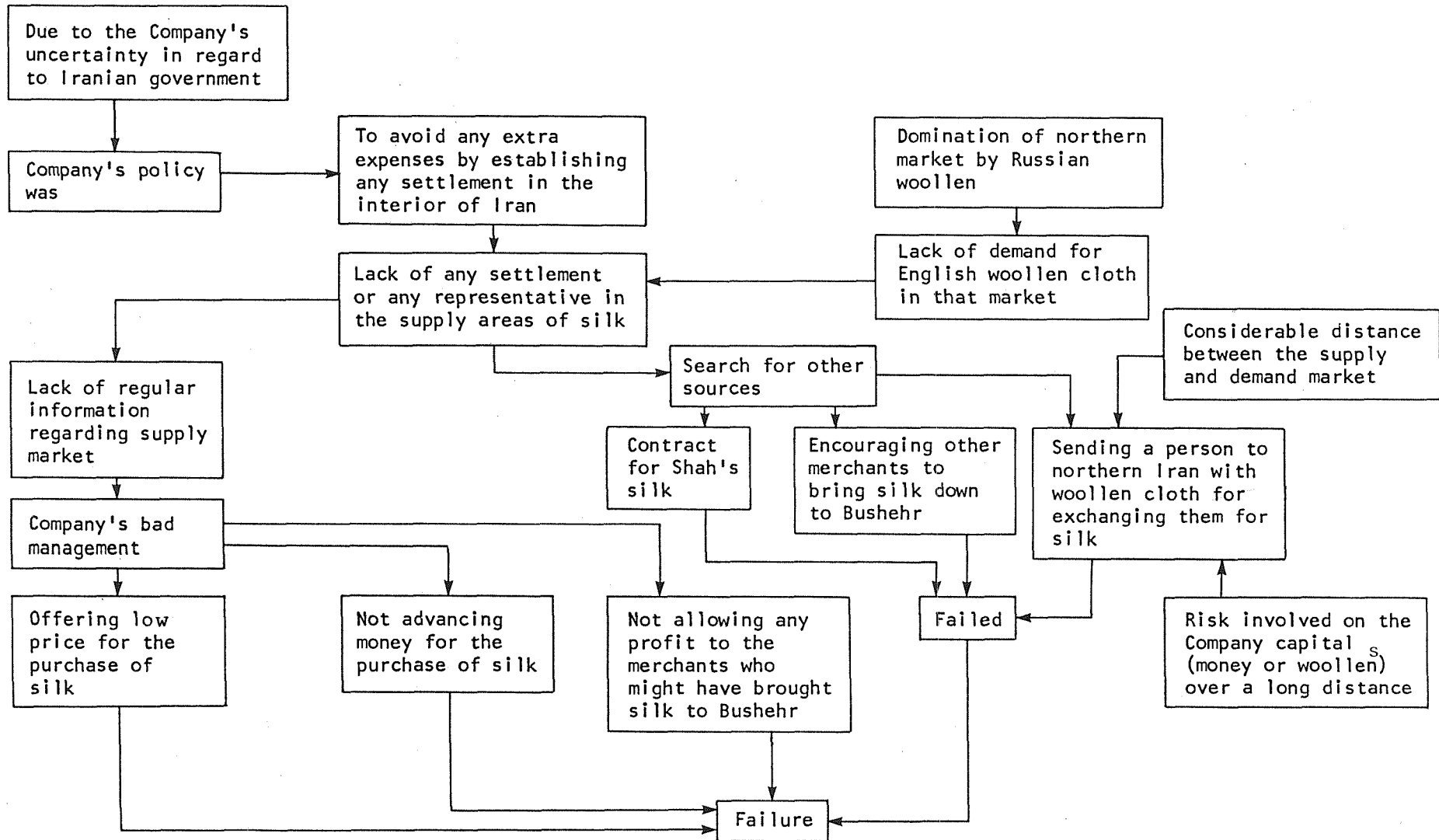
Another approach which the Company's resident took to procure raw silk was to enter into contracts with Karim Khan, the ruler of much of Iran. Karim Khan not only acquired annually some high quality silk (2500 M.Sh. = 30,000 lb.) as his tribute from Gilan but he also regularly required a large quantity of English woollens for his troops.<sup>40</sup> As a result in December 1766 Karim Khan offered to purchase English woollens from the EIC in return for 1000 M.Sh. (about 13,500 lb.) of his tributed silk at the price of 100 Rup. per M.Sh.<sup>41</sup> However, the high price that Karim Khan wanted for his silk led the Company's resident to refer the matter to his supervisor, who discouraged him from making any further approaches for purchasing silk by this means.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the various efforts of the Company's resident in the 1760s, not a single bale of silk had been exported from Bushehr to England by 1769 when the Company had to vacate its base there for Basra. Fig. 3.7 summarises all these factors notably distance, Company's pricing policy, a lack of demand for EIC woollens which contributed to the Company's inability to create a regular trade in this commodity.

### 3.2.5 : The EIC's export of Iranian silk, 1769-1775

In spite of the Company's removal to Basra in 1769, the CD was still eager to obtain Gilani raw silk for the English market and they strongly stressed to their servant in Bombay the importance of finding a possible channel by which this commodity could be procured at Basra.<sup>43</sup> The CD was also now willing to pay rather more, 70-90 Rup. per M.Sh.<sup>44</sup> As a result, several contracts were made with Armenian merchants to supply the Basra market with Gilani raw silk for cash, or in exchange for woollen cloth, or in some combination of the two. The terms of these contracts varied

FIGURE 3.7 : The factors which led to the EIC's failure in exporting raw silk from Iran  
(Bushehr), 1763-1769





from time to time. There is no mention of the actual amount of silk required by the CD, but, during the period 1770-1774 over 2,000 M.Sh. (around 28,000 lb.) of Gilani raw silk was purchased at Basra. (Fig. 3.8a). In spite of the Company's rising demand for Gilani raw silk at this time, the price of this commodity purchased by the EIC's employee at Basra experienced hardly any variation. As Fig. 3.8b shows, its price was the same in April 1776 as it had been in May 1770.<sup>45</sup>

The largest single consignment (940 M.Sh. = 13,160 lb.) was shipped in August 1772 because then the EIC had given instructions to their Basra servant to purchase as much silk as possible.<sup>46</sup> But this 1772 shipment which followed another a few months before, was the only larger one made by the Company after 1763, despite all of their efforts to promote the trade. That this shipment was possible and profitable for the EIC through Basra, whereas no silk had passed through Bushehr, probably resulted from the use of the established trade route through Baghdad from northern Iran, whilst use of water transport from Baghdad to Basra probably further reduced costs (Fig. 3.9).

No sooner had this apparent, but very limited revival in the EIC's silk trade to London taken place than it stopped. The Gilani silk received in London in 1772 was found to be of inferior quality so that the CD ordered their servant at Basra not to receive any more silk in exchange for woollens. They also authorised their servant at Bombay to sell locally the rest of that commodity held in the warehouses in India.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2.6 : The EIC's silk trade at Bushehr, 1775-1810

The EIC's silk trade through Basra was at a virtual halt when the Company decided to re-establish itself at Bushehr in 1775 after the

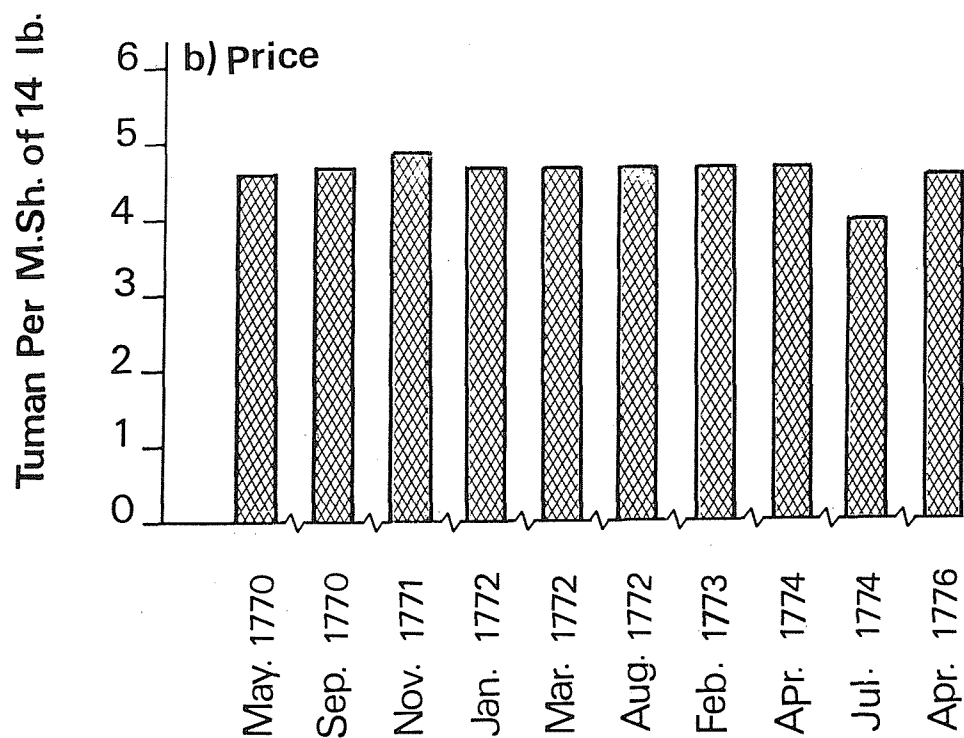
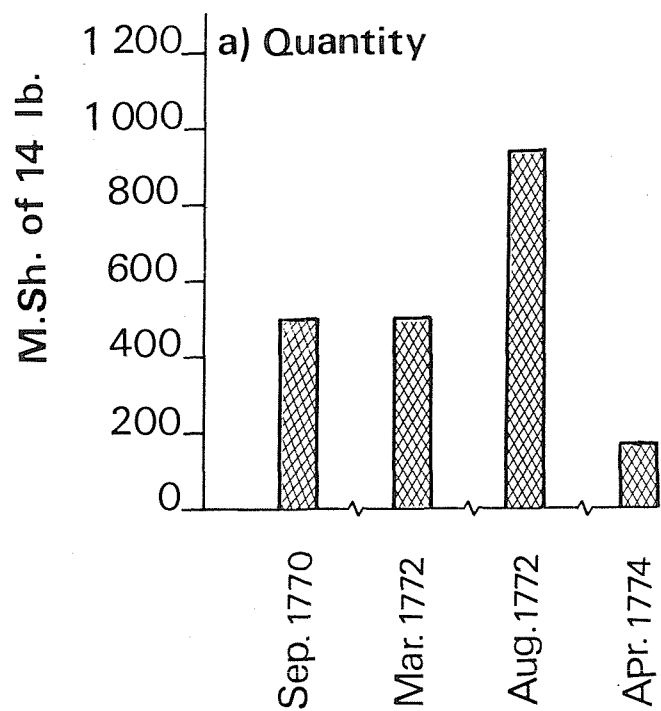


FIGURE 3.8a Quantities of Gilani raw silk purchased by EIC at Basra 1770-1774  
Source: PPG vol.20 (3); vol.21 (1)

FIGURE 3.8b Prices of Gilani raw silk at Basra market, 1770-1776  
Source: As above 3.8a

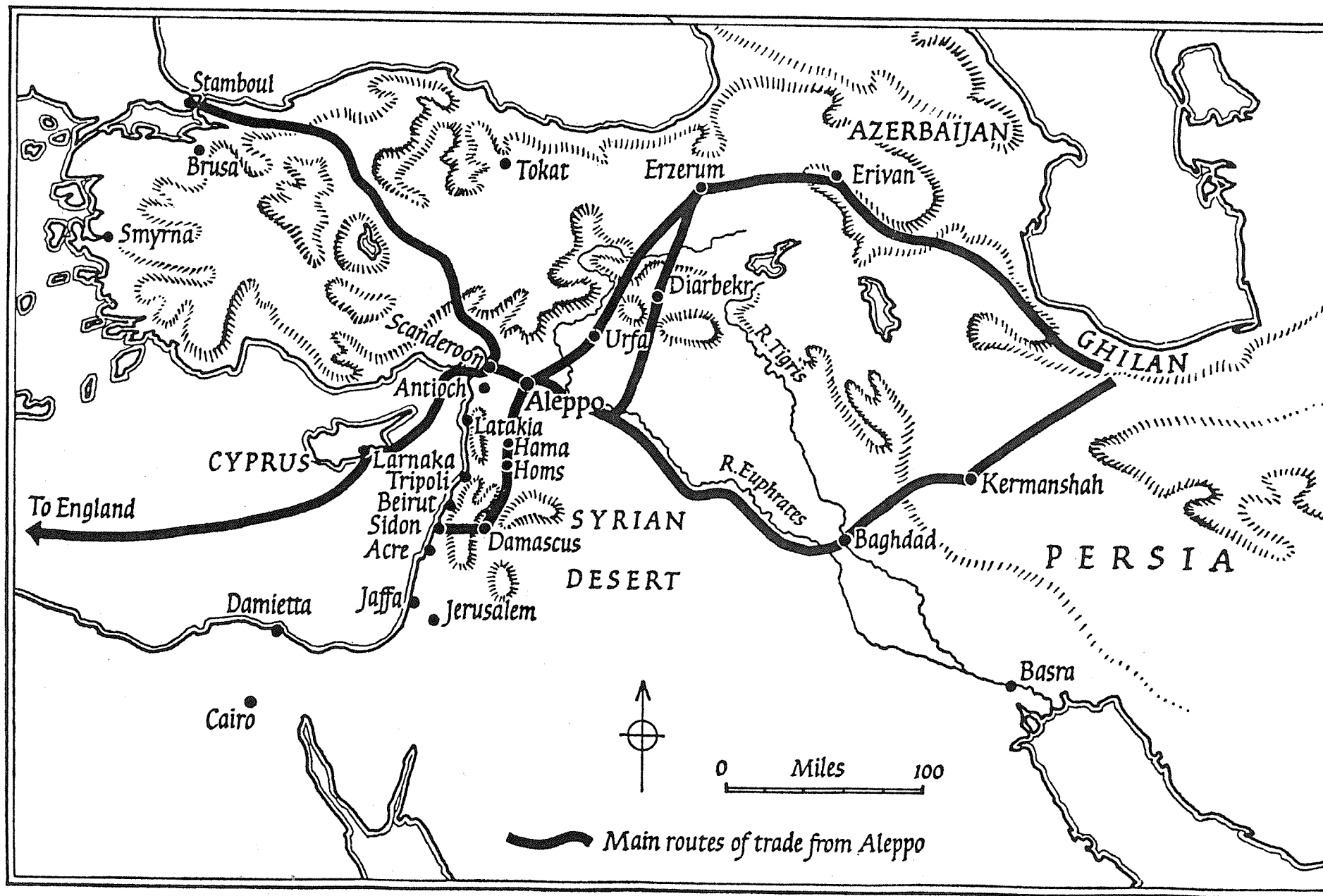


FIGURE 3.9 Iran's western silk routes  
After Davis (1967)

Iranian invasion of Basra, yet at this point, in 1776, the Company's representative in Basra once more entered into a contract to buy raw silk from the Armenian merchant, Yacoob, with whom the Company had previously entered into several contracts for Gilani raw silk. He agreed to supply the Company annually with 100,000 Rup. worth (about 1,300 M.Sh. = 18,200 lb.) of this commodity at a price of 74-80 Rup. per M.Sh. in exchange for woollens.<sup>48</sup> On hearing of this contract Karim Khan's dissatisfaction at the Company's delay on entering into any arrangement with him for the exchange of silk for woollens was increased.<sup>49</sup> Finally in 1778, Karim Khan succeeded in exchanging 200 M.Sh. (about 2,600 lb.) of his silk at Bushehr for the Company's woollen<sup>s</sup> through Yacoob but this was the Company's sole recorded consignment of silk from Iran through Bushehr during the period with which this research is concerned.<sup>50</sup>

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the Company's interest in Iranian silk appears to have lapsed. According to the available data, it was not until 1803-1808 that the CD once again showed any interest in it as a possible commodity for the European market.<sup>51</sup> In 1808 the Company reported that Gilan would be able to supply 4000 M.Sh. (about 52,000 lb.) of two types of silk to the Company.<sup>52</sup> Even so, no evidence has been found that these shipments took place and no evidence was found that any silk was shipped by the EIC on its own account from the port of Bushehr in the entire period 1778-1810, apart from that mentioned.

The decline in interest in silk by the Company reflected a more general decline in the silk market. Not only had the Company suffered losses from the sale of its Bengali silk during 1776-1785 and again in 1794<sup>53</sup>, but these losses were in turn attributable to the sudden reaction in England against silk for both dress and furniture after 1785. Cotton fabrics generally replaced silk in the English market.<sup>54</sup>

It was not only the EIC's exports from Iran which suffered in this way. Silk exports through Turkey, already depressed by competition with Bengali silk, also fell.<sup>55</sup> Another reason for the decline in the export of Iranian silk was the decrease in the number of Armenians, Jews and Indians resident at Rasht who were considered the chief agents in the silk trade of the region. According to Fraser, these people were increasingly ill-treated on religious grounds by the inhabitants of Rasht.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.2.7 : Summary and Conclusion

This section has demonstrated that the EIC never succeeded in establishing a regular trade in silk through Bushehr and never substantially affected the export of silk via the established northern and western routes despite several efforts to do so. The shipments during the study period (generally less than 2300 M.Sh. = 32000 lb.) never rivalled those through Turkey or equalled those that occurred in the seventeenth century. Many factors account for this, including the price the Company was prepared to offer for silk, but the most important was probably the considerable distance between the sources of supply in northern Iran and Bushehr. With such a great distance between Gilan and Bushehr and the EIC's unreasonable terms, the merchants were unwilling to bring this commodity down to Bushehr, where their transactions would most probably end up with no profit or even losses. But even when the Company switched its base to Basra the trade was only a fleeting one. As with silk the effects of distance were also a constraint on the development of the EIC's trade in Carmania wool, the subject of the next section.

### 3.3 : The EIC's trade in Carmania Wool

#### 3.3.1 : Introduction

As the EIC's trade in raw silk declined towards the end of the seventeenth century and never really recovered, it was replaced by Carmania wool. This remained on the CD's list of orders for most of the eighteenth century, primarily because it was an article which found a market in the English woollen industry. A product of the province of Kerman, Carmania wool is a fine goat's down described as being "as soft as silk curiously curled, of mixed colour, blue and white inclining to grey".<sup>57</sup> Another of its features was the natural way in which it detached itself from the animal.<sup>58</sup> The wool of Carmania was of a very fine quality<sup>59</sup> and as such was suitable for making various fine fabrics, such as shawls and fine felt carpet for which Iran was celebrated.<sup>60</sup> The special qualities of this wool were believed to be attributable largely to Kerman's climate which was hot and arid in summer but intensely cold in winter.<sup>61</sup> Carmania wool actually owes its fineness to the down that grows in winter at the roots of the goat's hair next to the skin.<sup>62</sup> The goats shed their coats naturally between March and May, though the down can be detached with the fingers from the goats at other times.<sup>63</sup> April, May and part of June were the time for picking the wool, with August as the main month for the wool's appearance in the Bushehr market.<sup>64</sup> The chief sources of Carmania wool were certain villages in the northern, central and southern parts of Kerman province, such as the Ravar district, Baft, Dasht Ab, Jiroft and Kahnu.<sup>65</sup> Ravar district was particularly famous for the wool (Fig. 3.10). Because it was worked in its natural colours without being dyed, Carmania wool seems to have been classified according to its colour.<sup>66</sup> These colours were speckled grey (mixed black

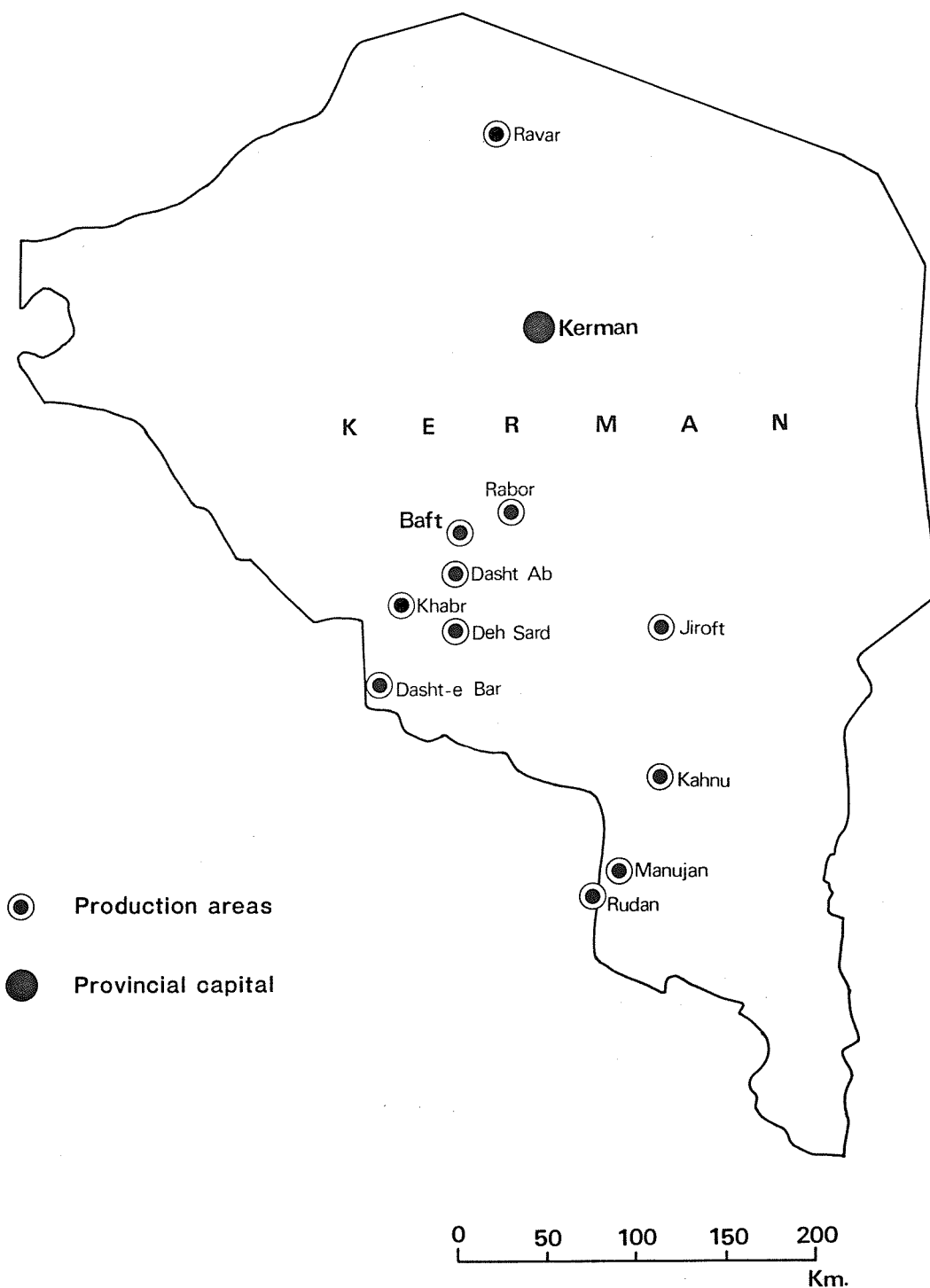


FIGURE 3.10 Production areas of Carmania wool  
Sources: Abbott (1855); Lockhart (1958); Rick (1974)

and white), milk white and brown.<sup>67</sup> White wool was the most esteemed colour and because it was very rare it was expensive.<sup>68</sup> The EIC seemed to prefer white and "red" (brown) for export.<sup>69</sup>

Carmania wool had a large local consumption in Iran, particularly in the manufacture of shawls and carpets, as well as being an attractive export commodity for the EIC and OIC. There is no information about the output of these products, but it has been suggested that in the seventeenth century Carmania wool went mostly into the home industry.<sup>70</sup> The shawls of Kerman had always been admired by travellers for their resemblance to the Cashmere shawls in terms of warmth and softness, if not in fineness and beauty.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, there is no information on the total output of Carmania wool or of the goods made from Carmania wool for the eighteenth century.

### 3.3.2 : The EIC's trade in Carmania wool before 1763

Carmania wool had become both the EIC's and OIC's main export commodity from Iran by the end of the seventeenth century. By then the CD were telling their servants in Iran to obtain as large a quantity of Carmania wool as they could.<sup>72</sup> The EIC met strong competition from the OIC for the wool since the OIC were prepared to offer much higher prices.<sup>73</sup> In 1694-5 the OIC went so far as to send an ambassador to the Court of the Shah of Iran to seek a monopoly in the export of Carmania wool by excluding the EIC. The OIC was largely successful in this for a short time, because the EIC was forbidden by the Governor of Kerman from purchasing more than the relatively small quantity of 700 M.T. (about 4550 lb.) annually.<sup>74</sup> However, in later years larger quantities were exported by the EIC as the OIC's role in the trade declined. Fig. 3.11 illustrates the quantities and the prices of Carmania



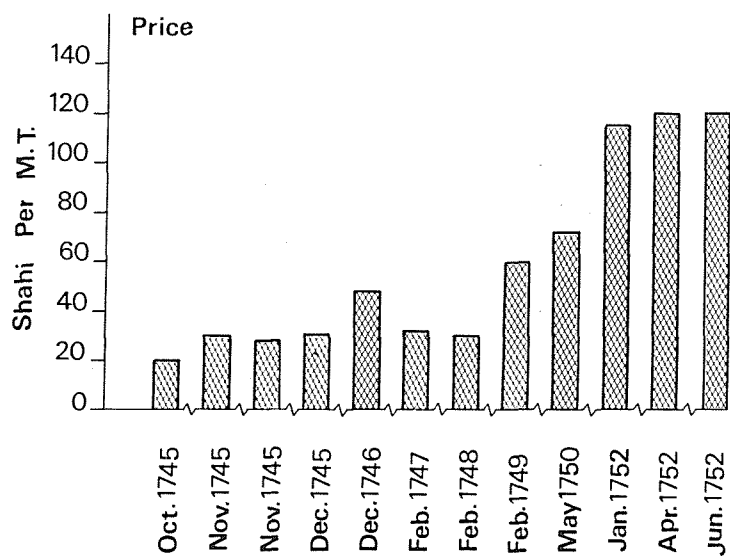
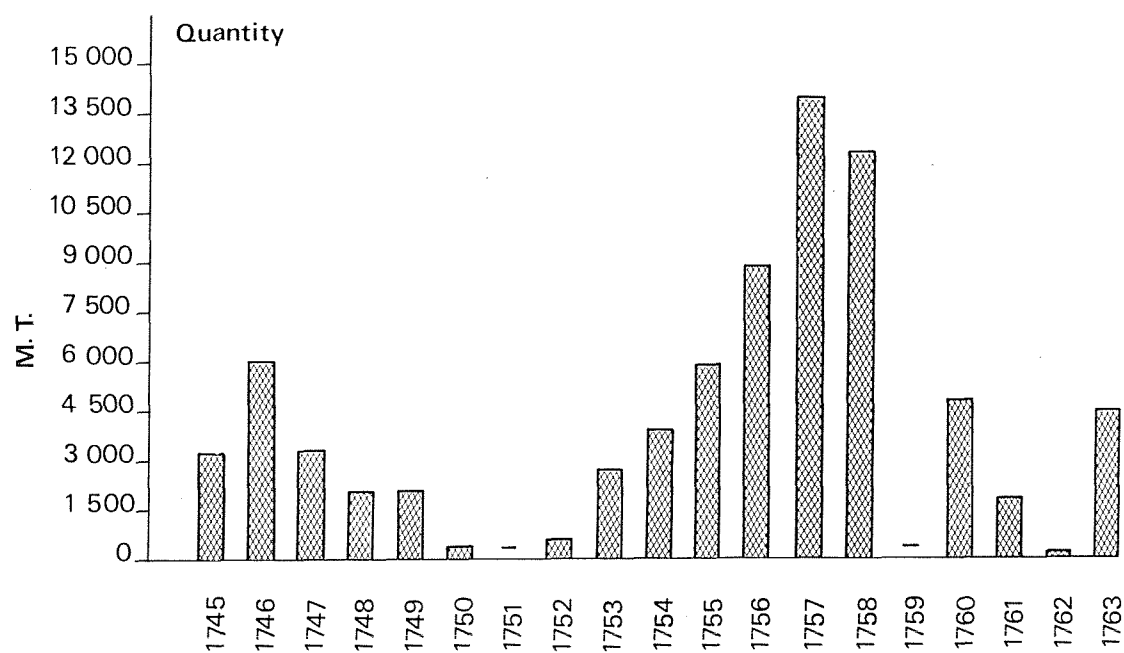


FIGURE 3.11 Quantities and prices of Carmania wool exported by EIC, 1745-1763  
Produced after Rick (1974)

wool exported by the EIC during the period 1745-1763. Generally, this was a period during which declining quantities of wool were being shipped by the EIC as a result of scarcity. This was due to local misgovernment and extortion which led to the early shearing and butchering of the goats.<sup>75</sup> Falling production was the consequence. A recovery in this trade appeared after 1755, however, and exports reached a peak in 1757.<sup>76</sup> As the quantity of wool available fell, its price rose with increased competition for a scarce commodity between Iranian merchants, on the one hand, and the EIC on the other.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.3.3 : The EIC's trade in Carmania wool, 1763-1769

In spite of the greater distance between the producing area of Kerman and Bushehr compared with Bandar Abbas, it was expected that the Company would be able to dominate the export trade of Carmania wool when the EIC established its commercial settlement at the port of Bushehr in 1763. The EIC felt particularly confident of this when its main export competition, the OIC, was removed from Kharg Island in 1766. The EIC's resident had appreciated the possible difficulties of shipping wool all the way from Kerman to Bushehr, but this did not prevent the CD from requesting deliveries of such a valuable cargo via this port.<sup>78</sup> Correspondence for the period 1763-1769 is full of demands for the wool, and mainly for the first or finest grades.<sup>79</sup>

The EIC took advantage of their near monopoly as foreign purchaser to get the wool at very keen prices. In March 1766, on being instructed to make every possible enquiry about Carmania wool, the resident was permitted to purchase up to 20,000 lb. of it at the rate of 70 shahi (or nearly 6 Rup.) per M.T.<sup>80</sup> This price was generally 1 Rup. less than the price of this wool (7 Rup.) in Kerman in September of that year.<sup>81</sup> That the EIC offered such a

competitive price is not surprising. The prices offered by the Company's resident at Bushehr were always at least one Rup. lower than the market price, either at Bushehr or Kerman, because the Company knew that it was the only major purchaser of the commodity.<sup>82</sup> That the EIC played on its monopoly position in purchasing the wool is indicated, for example, in a letter from the CD to its servant:

*"....you will observe by the list of investment that no carmenia wool is to be bought, the present price in Persia being too high to answer at this market, this when known at carmenia we apprehend will reduce the price there, and if the country would enjoy any tolerable degree of tranquility for two or three years, the quantity of wool will increase considerably and the price be lower."*<sup>83</sup>

Another letter from the resident in August 1766 confirms that the EIC was able to influence to a large degree the price of Carmania wool and this meant that, in spite of the Company's demand for the wool in the years that followed, there was a decrease, rather than an increase, in price.

The only real competition for the wool came from local manufacturers. They had the opportunity of buying in advance but, unlike the Company, they could not consider holding back their orders or stockpiling for their future needs. As to the sellers of the wool, they had to dispose of it fairly quickly because stockpiling increased the risk of damage from mice and worms. As a larger purchaser of wool, this put the Company in a strong position to buy on its own terms, as seen in the following extracts from a letter by the resident:

*"A merchant has here about 1000 Mds.  
(maun) of Carmania wool packed and  
cleaned, and which he has pressed  
me much to purchase from him,  
offering to leave it to me, to give  
him what price I judged reasonable,  
and to take the amount, in woollens,  
but having no order on this head,  
I declined his offer. At his  
request now acquaint your Honour  
therewith, I believe he would be  
fully contented with 5 rupee pMds.  
(per maun) tabrizee....."84*

Omitting the doubtful quantities, around 2000 M.T. (around 14,000 lb.)  
of Carmania wool were exported from Bushehr during the period  
1764-1767 as illustrated in Fig. 3.12a.<sup>85</sup>

The slight decline in exports during 1767 was due to local  
political problems in Kerman, rather than to a decline in demand.  
The Carmania herds has been decimated in the siege by the Khan's  
(Caun's) troops as is made clear by the following extract from a  
letter:

*"A servant of our former linguist  
arrived yesterday from Yezd and  
all the Carmania wool he has been  
able to collect amounts to no more  
than two bales. The long seige  
Carmania sustained has consumed the  
greater part of the sheep, and as  
Carmania and adjacent villages have  
been plundered by the Caun's troops,  
we shall not be able to obtain any  
considerable quantity for some  
months,....."86*

In fact, the records suggest that with wool supplies in short supply  
the Company was prepared to purchase Carmania wool which was two  
years old and damaged by worms. This demonstrates that demand was  
still high, particularly as the Company had always followed a policy  
of considering freshness as an important factor in selecting wool.

\*

Indicates quantities about which there is some doubt due to the terms used in the sources. The quantities actually exported are identified by words such as received, exported, sent, consigned. Words like agreement, supply, order, offered, contracted, etc. do not make clear whether the goods were exported or not.

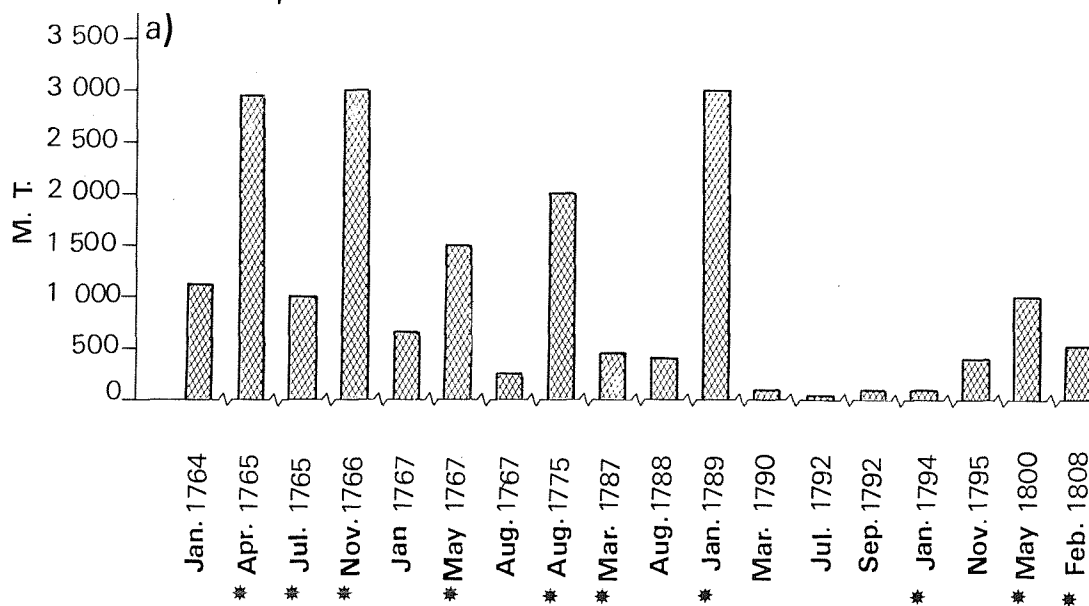
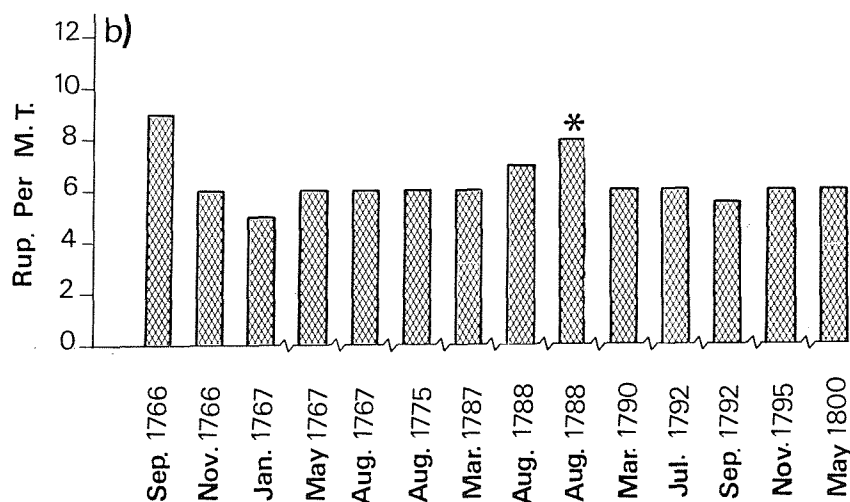


FIGURE 3.12a Quantities of Carmania wool purchased and contracted for by EIC, 1764-1808

Sources: BCP Range 414 vol.47;  
DB vols. 2 and 20; PPG vol.22 (3);  
RRPGB vols. 1, 2, 10 and 749



\* The purchase price of Carmania wool exported from Basra

FIGURE 3.12b Prices at which the Carmania wool was purchased by EIC

Sources: As above 3.12a

Buoyant demand during these years resulted from Carmania wool being a profitable article on the English market.

#### 3.3.4 : The EIC's trade in Carmania wool, 1775-1810

The trade in Carmania wool generally declined after the return of the Company's residency to Bushehr. Although supplies were probably more readily available for export than in previous years, the merchants were reluctant to transport it as far as Bushehr at the low prices offered and with no guarantee of a sale.<sup>87</sup> Little seemed to be purchased by the EIC between 1776 and 1787. It also seems that the EIC itself generated a more variable demand which had adverse affects upon supplies. This resulted especially from the availability in England of wool similar to Carmania wool but obtained from non-Iranian sources, notably Spain. When these supplies were interrupted, as seemed likely in 1797 for example, then the EIC increased its requirements for Carmania wool from Iran again.<sup>88</sup> There was also the complication of a ban on the export of Carmania wool by Ja<sup>c</sup>far Khan in 1786.<sup>89</sup> At other times, there seems to have been little demand for the wool. It is not clear, for example, if the Iranian merchant who had formerly supplied the Company at Bandar Abbas was taken up on his offer in 1775 to supply 800 M.T. (around 5,600 lb.) of Carmania wool immediately and 2,000 M.T. (around 14,000 lb.) annually.<sup>90</sup>

The 12 years of low demand for the wool by the EIC ended in 1787. In that year the Company in London, in a letter to the Bushehr resident, stressed how 'advantageous' the purchase of Carmania wool had been to it, and asked why none had been supplied recently.<sup>91</sup> The reply given by the Bushehr resident, but obtained from an Iranian merchant with connections in Kerman, was that no wool had been supplied because none had been asked for.<sup>92</sup> On this

occasion, the Company was seeking a mere 2-3000 lb.<sup>93</sup> In August, 1788 the Company's residents at Bushehr and Basra were able to export another 415 M.T. but in both instances the residents had to pay a Rup. or two more per M.T. than the 6 Rup. set by the Company in London in previous years.<sup>94</sup> (Fig. 3.12b) Evidence suggests that some export took place between 1788-1795, but, as illustrated in Fig. 3.12a the exported quantities were small.

Pleased with the wool obtained in 1790, the EIC demanded as much Carmania wool, preferably the red wool, as could be procured in 1793 but the total available was probably not very great.<sup>95</sup> Estimates made in 1788-89 suggested that, at the "utmost", only 3000 M.T. (around 21,000 lb.) would have been available for export to the PG.<sup>96</sup> Apparently the unsettled state of the province of Kerman also contributed to the decline of production and small scale of the EIC's export.<sup>97</sup> The Company was convinced, however, that it could get more wool at a favourable price if it had a factor-broker stationed at Kerman, but this post was never created.<sup>98</sup> Having made a loss on wool purchased in 1794, no other demands were made until June, 1796.<sup>99</sup> Thereafter, supplies fluctuated at low levels to the end of the period under consideration (Fig. 3.12a) a pattern which highlights once again the complicated set of factors shaping the Company's trade out of Bushehr. Amongst these it is possible to detect the large delays and problems of distance between Kerman, Bushehr and London which produced a recurrent mismatch between supply and demand.

Before ending this section a point which it is necessary to make is that a rough calculation showed that the value of the exported Gilani silk by EIC during 1763-1810 was much higher than that of Carmania wool. Though as the latter was mostly exported from Bushehr rather than Basra, as in the case of silk, its importance

in the study of the port of Bushehr and its hinterland relationship was much greater than the silk export

### 3.4 : The EIC's miscellaneous exports from Bushehr, 1763-1810

As this chapter has made clear, the Company's main exports from Iran in the period 1763-1810 were raw silk and Carmania wool but it was also involved in the purchase of "old copper" and horses destined for sale in India. Drugs were also purchased and some of these doubtless found their way to England. What information is available about the trade in each of these items can be briefly reviewed.

#### 3.4.1 : "Old Copper"

Despite the existence of large and rich copper mines in Iran in the eighteenth century, the Company only took an interest in the purchase and export of so-called "old copper".<sup>100</sup> This appears to have been only a spasmodic trade and the goods were exported to India not to England. Half a million Mah. worth of old copper was shipped by the Company to India in 1754 and this may indicate the considerable demand for it there.<sup>101</sup> But during the period 1763-1810 there is only one mention of old copper in the Bushehr resident's materials and this was in a letter of October 1763, when a quantity of old copper worth 49,345 Rup. was mentioned but it is not known if this was actually exported from Bushehr.<sup>102</sup> It could be argued that "old copper" from Iran was in constant demand in India and the lack of information on the trade in the EIC's records may result from the involvement of either private English or other merchants (Indian, Iranian etc.) in the trade. This certainly seems to have been the case in the period 1801-10 when 4,851 Rup. of "old copper" was imported to Bombay from the PG, presumably from Basra and Bushehr (Fig. 3.13), but none was traded by the EIC.



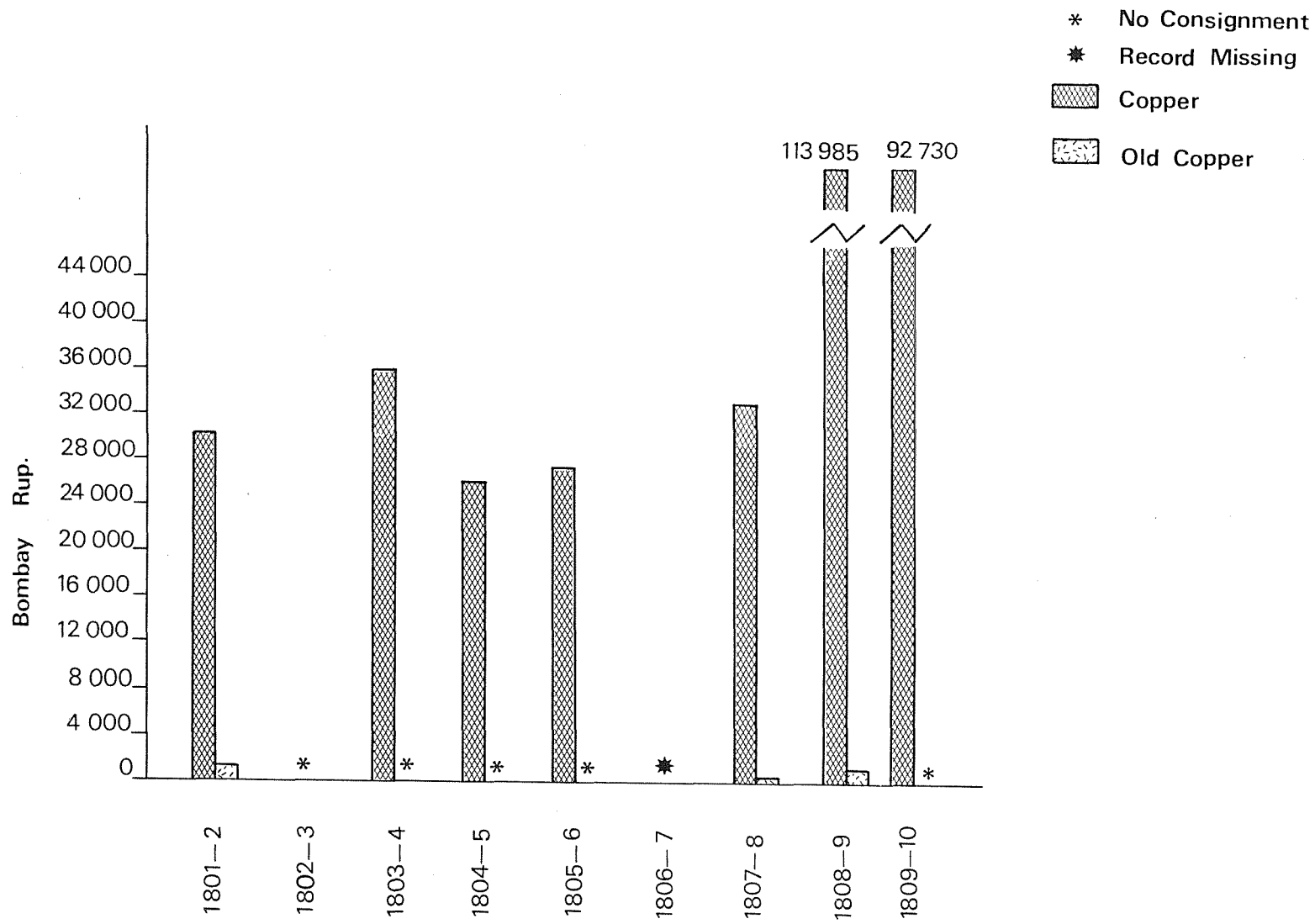


FIGURE 3.13

Copper and old copper exported from PG to Bombay,  
1801-1810

Source: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

### 3.4.2 : Horses

Iranian horses were widely known and sought after throughout countries to the east of Iran and there had for long been a large demand for them in India; this led to a considerable trade from such breeding centres as Azarbaijan, Qazvin, Kermanshah and Khorasan.<sup>103</sup> The export of horses from the PG (Bushehr and Basra) to Bombay in the early nineteenth century by the private English and local traders probably amounted to between 6-14 per cent of the value of all trade between the PG and Bombay<sup>104</sup> (this is referred to again in chapter 4). The EIC had been involved in this trade from at least the end of the seventeenth century, but it is not known whether any of the animals were exported to England.<sup>105</sup> It can certainly be assumed that many were used by the Company's officers in India.<sup>106</sup> The only statistical evidence on the scale of the trade reveals that 84 horses were shipped by the Company from Bushehr on two different occasions in 1803 and 1806 at a purchase price varying according to breed between 100 - 1100 Rup. each.<sup>107</sup> The Company may not have taken large part in this trade probably because of the considerable involvement of private traders.

### 3.4.3 : Drugs

Amongst the various products of Iran in which the Company took some interest as an item of exchange for its English goods were medicinal drugs.<sup>108</sup> Quite a variety were produced in Iran, of which the most important was asafoetida mentioned by every traveller who passed through Iran from the seventeenth century onwards. It was described in 1787 as a "Sort of gum with the smell of garlic".<sup>109</sup> There were

several types of asafoetida, of which the best sort came from Khorasan. It was often called "hing" or "hingra".<sup>110</sup> But, in fact, hing was a juice extracted from the asafoetida plant.<sup>111</sup> These were used for both medicinal purposes as anti-spasmodic and as flavouring.<sup>112</sup> This drug had often been exported to Europe via Aleppo, Izmir (Smyrna) and Istanbul (Constantinople).<sup>113</sup> Some of the drug which reached England via Turkey was actually re-exported to India for the use of the English hospitals.<sup>114</sup>

In the 1780s Mr Jones, the Company's representative in Iran, suggested that it would be advantageous for the Company to get into the drug trade and to export medicinal drugs directly to India rather than re-export them from England, but there is little evidence that this suggestion was properly followed up.<sup>115</sup> Partly because the range of drugs was wide and, as Fig. 3.14 shows, they came from many parts of Iran, it seems likely that the trade was monopolised by Iranian merchants. Asafoetida and hing were more regular items of exportation in the Iranian trade with India and, as Fig. 3.15 shows, considerable quantities of these commodities were exported to Bombay between 1801-1810 mostly by private traders. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that drugs formed a major item in the EIC's export trade.

### 3.5 : Summary and Conclusion

Although the Company had a principal interest in exporting silk and Carmania wool from Iran, it proved incapable of making a decisive impact on the silk trade or of establishing a regular trade in Carmania wool. Nor did the EIC develop regular trading in other products. Several reasons have been advanced to explain these



FIGURE 3.14 Areas which according to travellers and other sources, were producing drugs and natural products used as medicines  
 Sources: Curzon vol.2 (1966); Fraser (1826)  
 Fryer (1698); Ives (1773); Johnson (1818);  
 Pinkerton (1811); PPG vol.25 (1790);  
 RRPGB vol.(1).  
 Refer also to n.109 of the same chapter

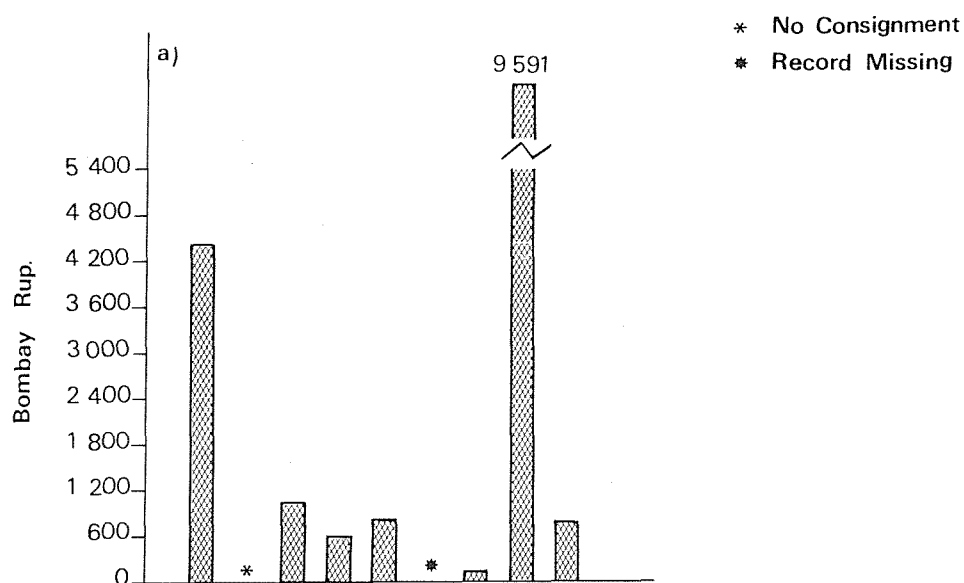


FIGURE 3.15a Gum (asafoetida) exported from the PG to Bombay, 1801-1810  
Sources: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

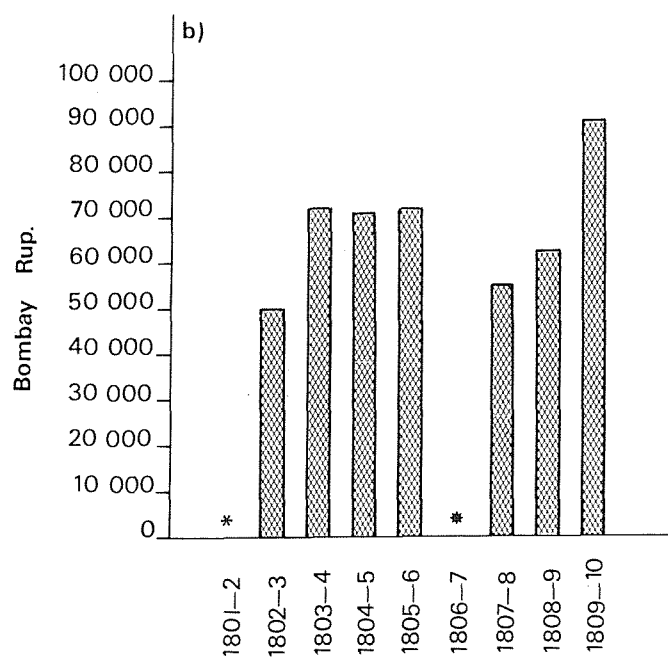


FIGURE 3.15b Gum extract (hing) exported from the PG to Bombay, 1801-1810  
Sources: As above 3.15a

failures. The most important was the reluctance of Iranian merchants to carry wool or silk all the way to Bushehr because of the low prices and the unreasonable terms offered by the EIC. The lack of demand from any other foreign companies for these goods in the south was another factor, for several outlets which could have encouraged Iranian merchants to ship down their products to Bushehr in the hope of a higher price than might have been secured elsewhere. The Company's attempts to reduce the profit of local merchants and its refusal to advance money to those who might have undertaken trade, removed their desire to trade with the Company. The terms offered meant that the merchants were responsible for all the risks and losses which might have occurred on the journey and in the sale of the wool or silk at Bushehr. The Company's terms for the silk merchants were not sufficiently encouraging for them to change from their previous purchasers on the western and northern routes to the EIC. The lack of any alternative foreign purchaser for Carmania wool left a merchant with the choices of either shipping his wool to Bushehr for sale at artificially low prices, or of piling it up at his warehouse where the possibility of its being damaged by mice or worms was high. Whilst he may have been induced to make the first choice, if a guaranteed market had existed, the variation in demand for wool from the EIC virtually removed the Company from the field. Dealers in Carmania wool simply found it too unprofitable to trade in it. The CD's and its agents in the Gulf did not seem to greatly concern themselves about getting better information on commercial conditions in the interior of Iran which would have improved their trade, because what information was available only occurred sporadically and its quality was uncertain. Distance was another important factor. In part it accounts for the paucity of information and it determined the kinds of goods that the EIC considered would be profitable for its trade. This is apparent in the early emphasis on silk, and the various attempts made to divert the trade to the Gulf, but it is also revealed in

the continuing, if uneven interest, in the other high-value product, Carmania wool. Unrealistic ideas can probably be traced to uncertain information and ultimately to the effect of distance.

Another point concerns the relative value of the two principal EIC exports from Iran. The lack of constant reports about the value of the currency used in the transactions of the EIC's residents makes any attempt at comparison and standardisation difficult, but a rough estimation of the total value of silk and Carmania wool suggests that the value of the former was much greater than the latter. On the other hand, smaller quantities of silk were shipped through Bushehr. Apart from the western outlets, silk was also exported through Basra by the EIC itself. Carmania wool, however, was exported only through Bushehr and in larger quantities than silk. Thus, it can be argued that Carmania wool was the more important of the two major exports to the port of Bushehr. It would certainly require more handling. Even so, the EIC seems to have experienced a degree of failure in its trade with Iran. To some extent, this was compensated for by its involvement in the coastal trade of the Gulf. This is examined in the next chapter, again through the experience of Bushehr.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Ibid., 173
3. DAVIS, R. (1967) Aleppo and Devonshire Square (London: Macmillan), p.140
- GLAMANN, K. (1958) Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740 (Copenhagen: Danish Science Press), p.21
4. Iran is said to have been the original hearth of yellow coloured silk, and China the origin of the white colour.  
BAHRAMI, T. (1330/1951) Tarikh-e Keshavarizi-e Iran (The History of Iran Agriculture), (Tehran), p.42
5. Ibid.
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7. ISSAWI, op. cit., 7
8. CURZON, G.N. (1966) Persia and Persian Question, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd.), p.366
9. PROCOPIUS (1914-1935) History of the Wars: The Gothic War, with an English Translation by H.B.Dewing (London: William Heinemann), I.XX:V.VIII-XVII
10. CURZON, op. cit., 366  
ISSAWI, op. cit., 9
11. STEENSGAARD, N. (1973) Carrack, Caravan and Companies: The Structural Crisis in the European Asian Trade in the Early 17 Century. (Copenhagen: The Institute of History at the University of Copenhagen), p.159
12. CURZON, op. cit., 367
13. GLAMANN, op. cit., 115
14. The EIC also made a proposal to the OIC for co-operation by means of a joint investment for this plan, though it was rejected by the latter. Glamann, op. cit., 116
15. GLAMANN, op. cit., 115-116
16. STEENSGAARD, op. cit., 367
17. During 1637-38, the OIC purchased a large amount of Iranian silk (about 28,546 M.Sh.). As they purchased this from the free market, rather than from royal stock, it reduced their popularity in the Court of the Shah, and restrictions were imposed on the OIC's silk trade in Iran. Glamann, op. cit., 118-119; Steensgaard, op. cit., 392-393
18. Iran silk disappeared from the List of Orders of the OIC and it did not re-appear until 1701. Glamann, op. cit., 120



19. DAVIS, op. cit., 140
20. CURZON, op. cit., 367
21. Ibid; Davis, op. cit., 139-140
22. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 16 June 1767
23. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March 1765
24. PINKERTON, op. cit., 210
25. FRASER, J.B. (1826) Travel and Adventure in the Persian Provinces on the Southern Banks of the Caspian Sea (London: Longman), pp.254-361
- FRYER, J. (1698) A New Account of East Indies and Persia (London: R.Chiswell), p.245
- PINKERTON, op. cit., 206
- RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March, 1765
- TAVERNIER, J.B. (1678) The Six Journeys through Turkey into Persia... (London), p.44
26. FRYER, op. cit., 245
- PINKERTON, op. cit., 209
- TAVERNIER, op. cit., 44
27. TAVERNIER, op. cit., 44
28. The silk imported to England was usually used to produce buttons, damasks and silk stockings. Davis, op. cit., 138;  
Hanway, J. (1753) An Historical Account of British Trade over the Caspian Sea, vol.2 (London: T.Osborne), p.16;  
Hertz, G.B. (1909) 'The English Silk Industry in the Eighteenth Century', English Historical Review 24, 724
29. Silk manufactures were banned to encourage English manufacturing centres such as Spitalfields in London, Derby and Macclesfield. Hertz, op. cit., 712
30. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay 2 March 1765
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. The trade with Russia was carried out by Georgian merchants aided by Russian Consuls based at Enzeli and "Saluan" (stated to be 25 leagues from Shirvan and Shamakhi) to protect their traders. The silk trade with Turkey was handled by merchants from Turkey and Shirvan. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March 1765
34. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 16 June 1767
35. Ibid.
36. AMIN, A.A. (1967) British Interests in the Persian Gulf 1747-1780 (Leiden: E.J.Brill), p.125
37. Amongst the suggestions made by the resident for procuring silk from Gilan was to persuade the merchants of Khorasan to bring silk instead of money when coming down to Bushehr. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 11 January 1767

38. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 11 January 1767
39. The transportation cost of Gilani silk exported to England via the western route (Trabzon) was lower than the export of this commodity through Bushehr. Issawi, C. (1970) 'The Tabriz-Trabzan Trade 1830-1900', International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 1, 18-19
40. According to Mr Gmelian, the Russian Traveller, Karim Khan placed Hedyat Khan in charge of the province of Gilan upon paying a contribution of 2,500 M.Sh. (= 30,000 lbs.) of silk besides other less fixed and arbitrary exactions. As far as the records for the period under consideration are concerned, there are mentions of 1,000 M.Sh. (about 12,500 lbs.) as the Khan's silk tribute from Gilan. Fraser, op. cit., 152; RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 25 December, 1766
41. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 15 December 1766
42. The Basra Agent wrote to the Bushehr Resident:  
*"Having duly and materially considered your advices of the 15th we are to acquaint you, that we cannot give any latitude for taking the Khan's silk, as we find by referring to Mr Jervice's letters to the Presidency he made proposals for opening this trade, and sent musters of silk for their observation, but to which our Superior have as yet sent no answer, therefore you must use your utmost endeavours to avoid if possible the taking it in lieu of cloaths, by representing the above in the best manner you can to the Khan informing him that our Superiors have not yet given us any directions to purchase this article, .....but in the meantime in order to appease the Khan as much as possible in our present situation, you are further to assure him that we shall represent his proposal in the most favourable light to our Superior,....."*  
RRPGB vol.1(2) - letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 23 December 1766
43. LRB vol.464 Extract of CD's Command sent from Bombay to Basra in March, 1770
44. AMIN, op. cit., 125
45. Summer prices were generally lower than winter prices. For example the price for the first and second sorts of Gilani raw silk was around 400 Mah. in November but reduced to 350 Mah. in June and July. Gilani raw silk was normally collected at the end of May and brought to market in the months of June, July, August and September. Anon. (November 1886) 'Paper on Silk Production in Persia', J.S.A., 24-27. Hanway, op. cit., 16; RRPGB vol.1(1) Letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March 1765
46. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 16 January 1772
47. PPG vol.21(1) letter from Basra to Bombay dated 28 July 1774

48. The price was originally given in tuman, 4.45-4.80. PPG vol.20(3) letter from Basra dated 16 April 1776
49. His opposition toward the supply of Gilani raw silk to the Basra market by Yacoob can be demonstrated by the following letter from the resident:  
*"Under the 20th Mr Latouche writes, that Vakeels' phirmaund (royal grant) to the gentlemen were very genteel and friendly; that Yacoob was to set out in two days for Schiraz on whose arrival he hoped every thing would be properly settled ----- that Mirsa Jaffier had been advised him the Vakeel wanted Yacoob to make contracts with him for raw silk; and the Vakeel having wrote Mr Latouche to send a linguist with Yacoob, Mr Latouche desired we would order our linguist to stay at Schiraz and act in that capacity;*  
RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 March 1777
50. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 6 January 1778
51. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 30 November 1803  
RRPGB vol.10(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 February 1808
52. The quantity is originally given in M.T. (8000). RRPGB vol.10(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 24 February 1808
53. ROBINSON, F.P. (1912) The Trade of the East India Company from 1709 to 1813 (Cambridge: University Press), p.141
54. HERTZ, op. cit., 720-721
55. ROBINSON, op. cit., 141
56. "...There was a large colony of Armenians, a considerable number of Russians, with many Hindoos and Jews, residing at Rasht.... not one of all these now remains in the place.  
 Fraser, op. cit., 152
57. LOCKHART, L. (1958) The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty (Cambridge: University Press), p.385
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60. *ibid.*
61. BISCHOFF, op. cit., 296  
 SKEYS, op. cit., 106
62. BISCHOFF, op. cit., 297  
 FRASER, op. cit., 359
63. LOCKHART, op. cit., 385  
 PINKERTON, op. cit., 172
64. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 11 January 1767

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     RICK, T.M. (1974) Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and The Gulf 1745-1765 (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Indiana), pp. 157-158, 229
66. PINKERTON, op. cit., 172
67. Ibid.
68. PINKERTON, op. cit., 172
69. The brown colour of this wool was apparently that which the EIC called red Carmania wool
70. PINKERTON, op. cit., 172
71. CURZON, op. cit., vol.2, p.525  
     FRASER, op. cit., 359  
     SYKES, op. cit., 107
72. BRUCE, J. (1810) The Annual of the Honourable East India Company, vol.3 (London: Black, Parry and Kingsbury), p.140
73. AMIN, op. cit., 126
74. BRUCE, op. cit., 160  
     FRYER, op. cit., 222
75. RICK, op. cit., 158
76. Ibid.
77. RICK, op. cit., 158-159
78. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr dated 20 April 1763
79. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 1 August 1767
80. RRPGB vol.2 Extract from CD's Command dated 12 March 1766
81. The original figure number is not clearly legible, therefore can be read as 7 or 9 Rup. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 19 September 1766
82. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 25 September 1766; and letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 1 August 1767
83. RRPGB vol.2 Extract from CD's Command dated 12 March 1766
84. The original figure number is not clearly legible, therefore can be read as 3 or 5 Rup. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 20 July 1765
85. There is no evidence whether the quantities which were agreed or offered between the Company's resident and the Iranian merchants were actually complied with, or resulted in exports from Bushehr.
86. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 23 April 1767
87. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 9 May 1787
88. DB vol.16 letter dated 7 February 1797

89. BCP Range 414 vol.47 letter from Bombay to Basra dated 14 August 1788
90. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 5 August 1775
91. RRPGB vol.1(1) Extract from CD's Command dated 23 March 1787 sent to Bushehr from Bombay in 20 November 1787
92. *"In compliance with your Honour & commands I have made particular enquiry here regarding Carmania wool, and find that none has been brought to this place for sale for several years back. On enquiring of a Persian merchants who has connections in Carmania the cause of this, he informed me there had been no demand for it; on my asking him what quantity he thought the Carmania merchants could send here annually if they were sure of a speedy vend for it, he said he could not tell but he believed a very considerable quantity."*  
RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 9 May 1787
93. RRPGB vol.1(1) Extract from CD's Command of 23 March, 1787 sent to Bushehr from Bombay in 20 November 1787
94. The Carmania wool exported from Basra was red (the largest part of the consignment), white and an inconsiderable quantity of black. PPG vol.22(3) letter from Basra to Bombay dated 1 August 1788
95. DB vol.12 letter dated 4 May 1791  
DB vol.13 letter dated 25 June 1793  
RRPGB vol.749 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 1 May 1791
96. BCP Range 414 vol.49 letter from Bombay to CD dated 11 January 1789  
PPG vol.22(3) letter from Basra to CD dated 22 September, 1788
97. RRPGB vol.749 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 1 May 1791
98. DB vol.14 letter dated 21 May 1794
99. This was despite the fact that in June 1795 the resident already asked for 400 M.T. (around 2,800 lbs.) of this article to be delivered at Bushehr, the quantity which was actually exported to Bombay in November of the same year. DB vol.15 letter dated 1 June 1796; RRPGB vol.749 a letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated June 1795
100. Unfortunately, it is not known what was called "old copper". The only assumption here is that this was a translation from an Iranian term for a copper which looked old i.e. damaged vessels not worth repairing or scrap metal.
101. AMIN, op. cit., 123
102. To convert the amount to Mah., each Rup. was equal to 6 Mah.  
RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 8 October 1763
103. ALEXANDER, J.E. (1827) Travels from India to England (London: Parbury, Allen and Co.), p.95  
BARBARO, J. (1873) Travels of a Merchant in Persia, Trans. G.Grey (London: Haklýt Society), p.227

- CURZON, op. cit., vol.2, 508  
 FRASER, op. cit., 360  
 JOHNSON, J. (1818) Journey from India to England through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland and Prussia in the year 1817. (London: Longman), p.65  
 WARING, E.S. (1807) A Tour to Sheeraz (London: Bulmer), p.77
104. Data is neither available on the scale of the horse exports from Bushehr, nor on the scale of shipments from the main breeding areas in Iran
105. FRYER, op. cit., 222
106. RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr dated March 1806, p.119
107. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 7 October 1803  
RRPGB vol.9 letter from Bushehr dated March 1806, p.119
108. PPG vol.25 Report on British Trade with Persia and Arabia by Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones 15 August 1790, p.267 (This Report can also be found in MR; Marine Record, vol.891)
109. Opium, gum amoniac, cassia, senna, rhubarb etc. Curzon, op. cit., vol.2, 501; Fraser, op. cit., 354-57; Fryer, op. cit., 240; Ives, E. (1773) A Voyage from England to India in the year 1754... also, a Journey from Persia to England in 1758 and 1759. (London: E & C Dilly), p.200; Johnson, op. cit., 93; Pinkerton, op. cit., 173-178; PPG vol.25, op. cit., 250; RRPGB vol.1(1) Extract from CD's Command dated 12 March, 1787; Waring, op. cit., 76
110. FRYER, op. cit., 240  
 IVES, op. cit., 200  
PPG vol.25, op. cit., 267-268
111. CURZON, op. cit., vol.2, 501  
 MURRAY, J.A.H., ed. (1888) A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles; Founded Mainly on the Materials Collected by the Philological Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press), vol.5
112. MURRAY, op. cit., vol.5
113. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 267-268
114. Ibid.
115. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 267-268

## CHAPTER 4 : THE EIC'S ROLE IN THE INDIAN TRADE OF BUSHEHR, 1763-1810

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### 4.1 : Introduction

The Company's sources of revenue in Iran were not limited to the export and import of the goods discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The Company also made a considerable income on its role as a carrier and protector of the native trade between Bushehr and other ports in the region, most notably India. Comparatively, the Company's role as a carrier appeared to be less risky and more profitable in the period 1763-1810 than importing and exporting on its own account. No detailed data is available on this level of profit for the PG but it was estimated, for example, that in the Indies, English goods worth £45,000 were expected to produce a profit of £30,000 or 56 per cent to the Company, whereas the carrying trade in the same area was expected to produce a profit of £125,000 at an expense of only £20,000 in shipping, marine, factoring and other costs.<sup>1</sup> It seems clear that without the carrying trade the Company's losses in the PG would have been larger than they were.

The history of the Company's carrying trade in the PG goes back as far as the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Although the subsequent emergence of private English shipowners in India may have reduced the Company's profit from this trade, there are reasons for believing that even in the eighteenth century the Company was still getting considerable benefit from its carrying trade between India and Bushehr. In fact, the insecurity of the PG route because of piracy during the period under research led to the Company increasing its role as a carrier and protector, particularly for high value goods and treasure. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to consider the EIC's role as a carrier and protector of the more local coastal

trade, or cabotage, of Bushehr in the period 1763-1810, a role which offered the EIC another means of keeping a foothold in the PG. But such a role was also equally important for Iran as without it the trade of Iran via Bushehr was handicapped. Before discussing the EIC's role, it is necessary to say something of the little that is known about the character of the trade of Bushehr with other ports in the region.

#### 4.2 : Trade between India and Bushehr in the second half of the eighteenth century, 1763-1800

Iran's overseas trade during the period under discussion was dominated by that with the Ottoman Empire, Afghanistan, Russia and India. As Figure 4.1 shows, at the beginning of the nineteenth century trade in these directions dwarfed more local trade along the coasts of the PG and Red Sea, or overland to Bukhara. Over all, most of Iran's trade went overland rather than via the PG but this included not only trade with Afghanistan, Turkey and Russia but also some of that with India, but what did pass through the PG ports was largely focused on India. That is, just as most of the EIC's trade to and from the Gulf, and to and from Bushehr in particular, was with India, so one finds that in this period Bushehr's other major commercial contacts, by private traders, were also with Indian ports and these were worth more than the EIC's trade. Figure 4.2a and b shows that the trade of Bushehr was chiefly dominated by the ports of India at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The sources do not specify whether the annual value of about 75,000 Rai ge Rup. of the listed European goods (iron, steel, tin, lead and woollens) exported to Bushehr via India in 1780s was the responsibility of the EIC or of private traders, or of both.<sup>3</sup> In any case, they amounted to only 5% of Bushehr's total imports, whereas Indian goods amount to 57% and of goods imported from Masqat to 38% of this trade.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, at



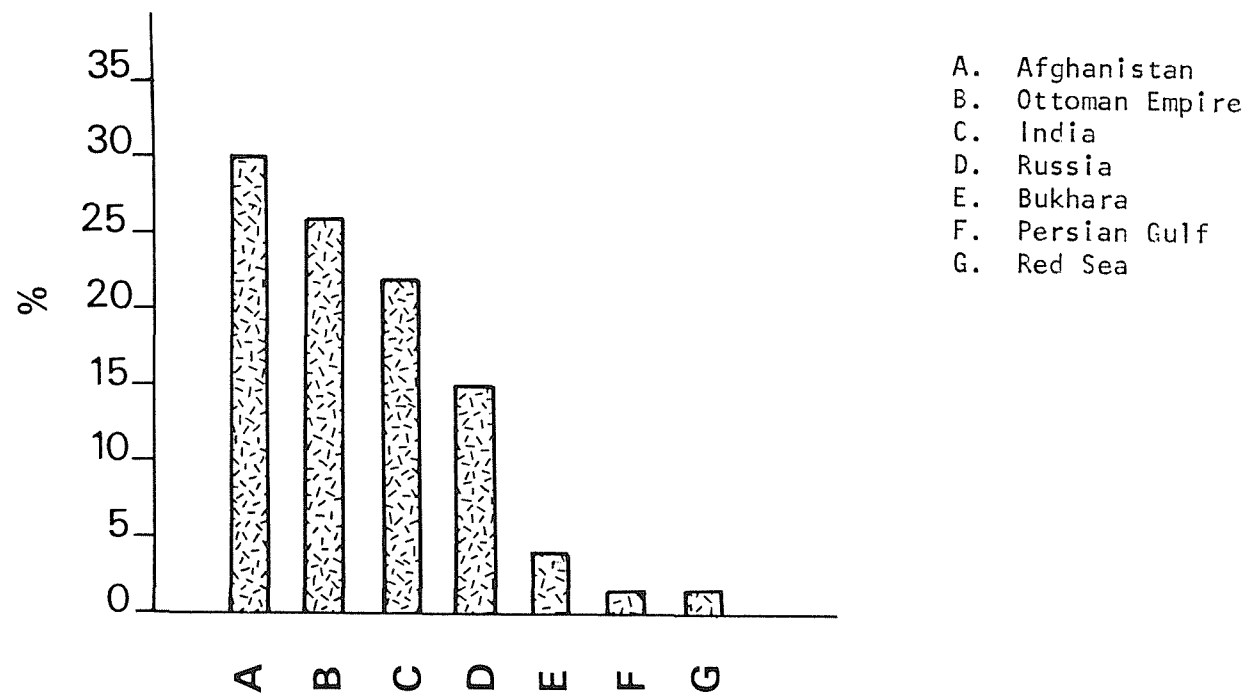


FIGURE 4.1 Iran's trade by destination at the beginning of 19th century  
Source: Hambly (1964)

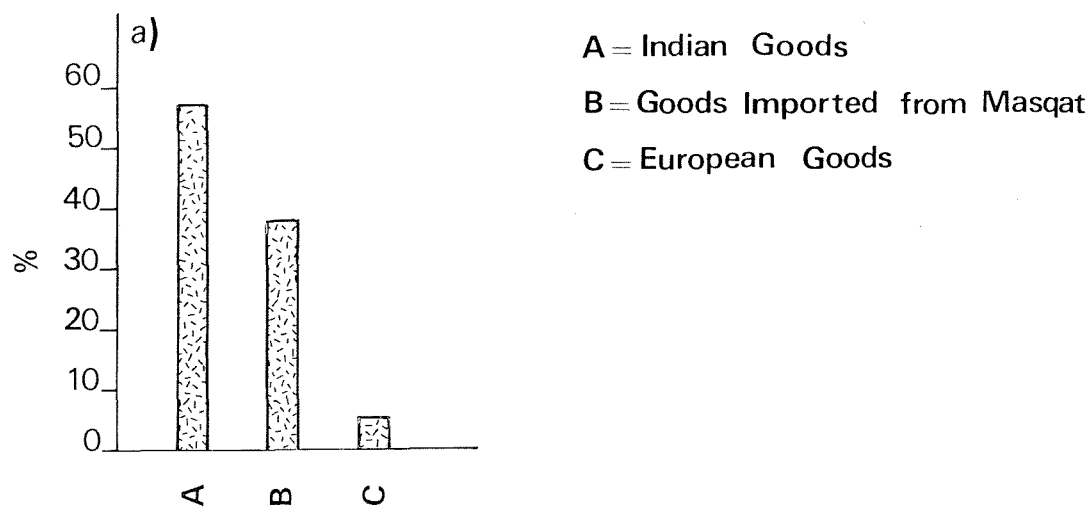


FIGURE 4.2a Percentage of goods imported to Bushehr from different ports, 1780s  
Source: PPG vol.25 (1790)

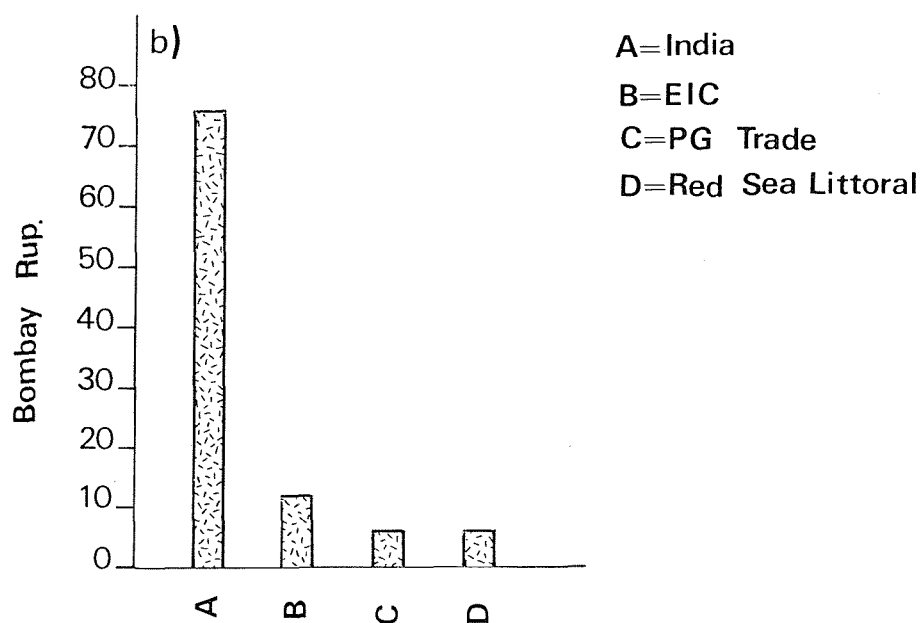


FIGURE 4.2b Percentage of imports to Bushehr from different regions at the beginning of 19th century  
Source: Hambly (1964)

the beginning of the nineteenth century, the EIC's contribution to the trade of Bushehr was only about 12% of the total and again India had the largest share of 76% whilst the Red Sea and PG accounted for only 12% of this trade. That is, the trade between Bushehr and India dwarfed all other trade from the port while the EIC's contribution, also predominantly with India, was small in comparison with that of other traders using Bushehr.

The EIC's trade with the rest of the PG was comparatively small, but a considerable exchange of various commodities had been built up over the centuries along this route.<sup>5</sup> Before the involvement of European private merchants, trade was mostly carried out by local Indian, Iranian and Arab merchants. The establishment of the EIC in India and Iran also led to the introduction of English private merchants in the trade between the two countries. These merchants were either private individuals or employees of the Company who were permitted to improve their financial situation by trading on their own account.<sup>6</sup> In total, this private trade was considerably greater in terms of its bulk, profit and general impact on the Gulf area than the Company's own trade.<sup>7</sup> Similarly English traders, both individuals and the EIC's servants, appear to have out numbered (40%) any other single group, such as Moslems (37%) or Armenians (23%) on this trade route for the period 1775-1780.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.2.1 : The quantities and prices of goods imported into Bushehr from different ports of India in the second half of the eighteenth century

Generally speaking, because so much of the trade was in private hands and was so varied, the information about it is very fragmentary in the RRPGB. It is, therefore, difficult to give a clear picture of it for the period under consideration. This is particularly true for the Iranian exports to India which appear to have been far smaller in value than imports from India.

The information used for this section has been collected from PPG and BCP. Amin's analysis of data for the middle years of the eighteenth century shows that during 1750s and early 1760s the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas had more commercial contacts with Bengal in north-east India than with any other ports of India as well as with other Gulf ports.<sup>9</sup> That so much trade moved over such a long distance would seem to be unusual and perhaps resulted from the location of the English factories in Bengal. Even so, during the last decade of the eighteenth century over half of Bushehr's commercial engagements with India were dominated by Masulipatam, on the east coast of the sub-continent, followed by Malabar - on the south-west coast - and Bengal, with Bombay and Surat being relatively unimportant (Fig. 4.3). This means that by the end of the eighteenth century the Indian ports closest to Iran were not necessarily the most important ones in the trade.

When it comes to Iranian imports from India a little more information is available, perhaps because the volume of trade was greater. The data suggest that the goods imported to Iran were mainly manufactured, particularly cotton products, and foodstuffs with a similar pattern of ports involved as for exports from Iran. In other words, there was a strong two-way trade between these ports. The information suggests that there must have been a large demand for various cotton goods manufactured in Masulipatam or its hinterland. As Fig. 4.4 shows, chintz, a cotton cloth of variegated colours, was the main item. The Malabar Coast was second in importance in this trade.<sup>10</sup> Imports from the area included both cotton products, as well as a range of other goods including coir, or coconut fibre, and cardamom<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 4.5). Quantities of manufactured and other commodities were also shipped to Bushehr from Bengal, Bombay and Surat.<sup>12</sup>

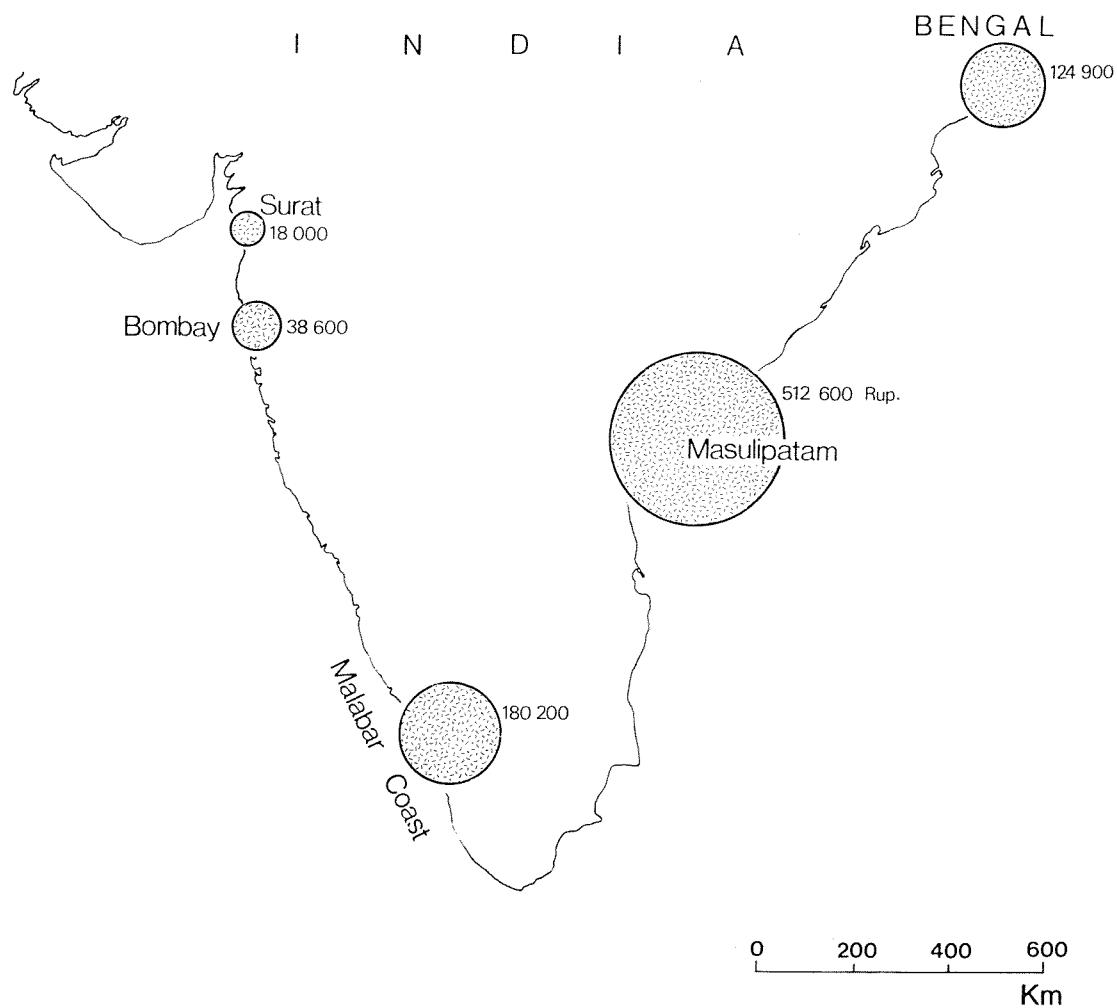


FIGURE 4.3 Value of goods imported to Bushehr from ports of India in 1780s  
Source: PPG vol.25 (1790)

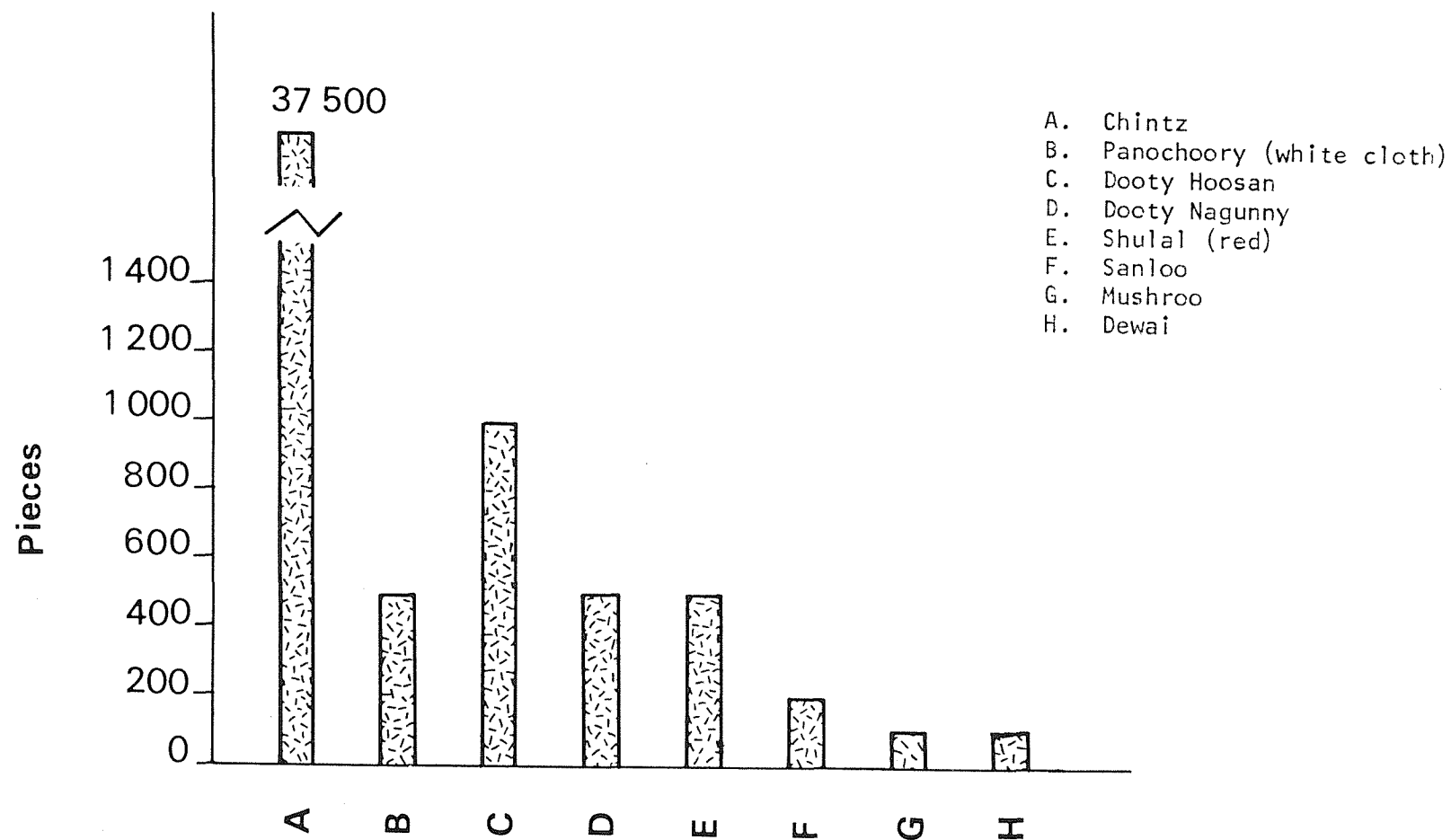


FIGURE 4.4 Quantities of goods imported to Iran from Masulipatam  
Source: PPG vol.25 (1790)

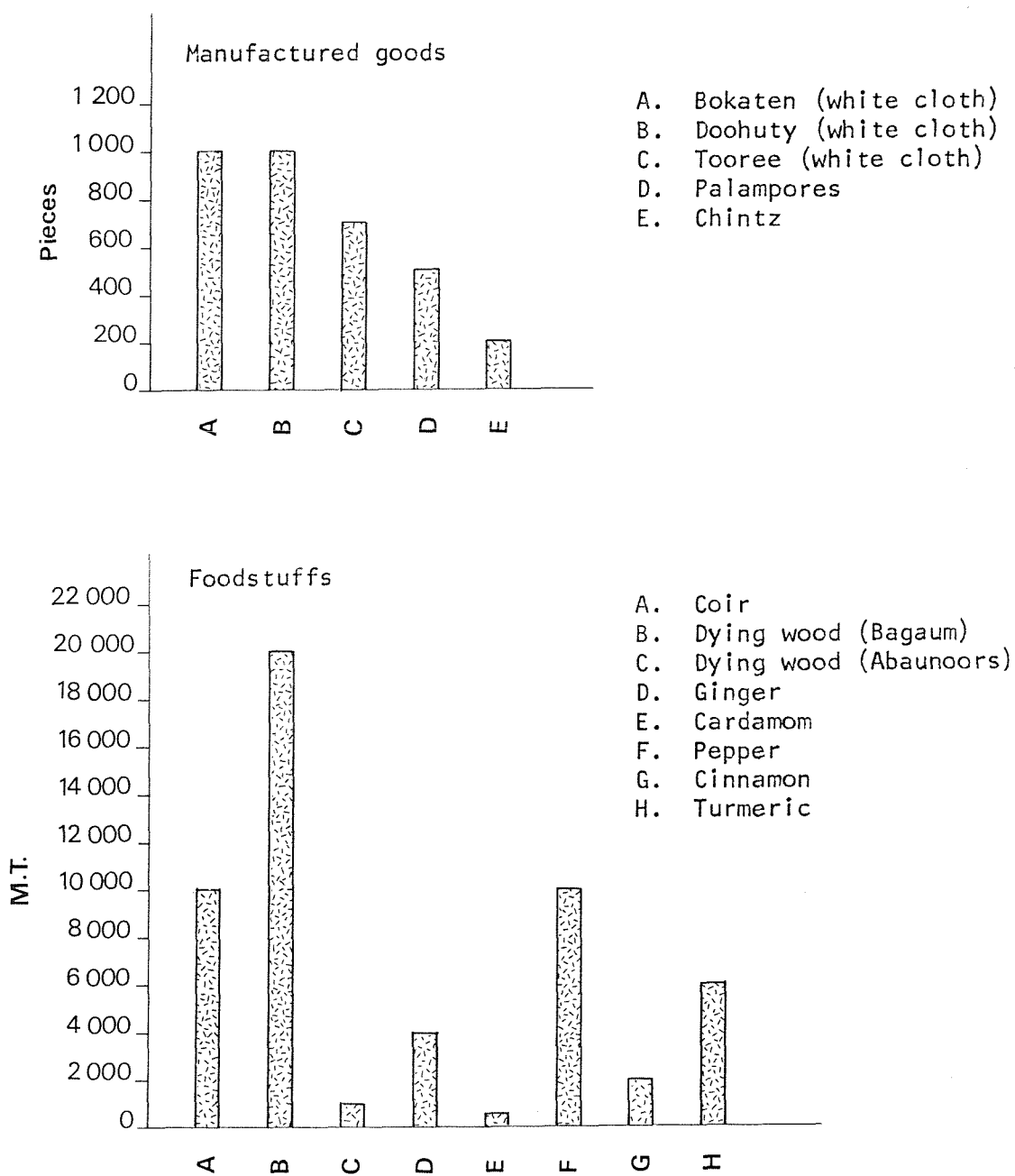


FIGURE 4.5 Quantities of goods (manufactured and foodstuffs) imported to Iran (Bushehr) from Malabar coast  
Source: PPG vol.25 (1970)

The total value of the goods imported to Bushehr from India was about 900,000 Raige Rup. in 1780s, according to an estimate made by Mr Watkins (the EIC's Resident at Bushehr). On the same subject Mr Manesty (the EIC's Resident at Basra) mentioned that the total value of goods imported to the PG (including Basra and Bushehr) from India in 1787 was around 20 lakh (each lakh equal to 100,000 Rup.).<sup>13</sup>

Trade in the opposite direction, from Iran to India was always much smaller. Apparently, Iranian products were not considered suitable for Indian markets.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, as much as 90% of the balance of trade was made up of specie, or, because of variation in the exchange rate for coins, gold and silver bars (treasure).<sup>15</sup> In this respect also the Iranian trade with India was again different from its trade with its other large neighbours. Whereas there was a generally favourable trade balance with Turkey and Russia, leading to a considerable flow of their specie into Iran, the reverse was the case with its Indian trade.<sup>16</sup> This sometimes led to money shortages in Iran. For example, the Company resident's report in 1790 shows that this was the normal situation:

*"It is necessary however to premise and to acquaint the British Government in India, that Persia at present is an exhausted kingdom, that the great influx of wealth, which it received by the expedition of Nadir Shah against Delhi has nearly reverted to India, and that the following circumstances will more or less always tend to increase the scarcity of specie in that kingdom ——— Nine tenth of the imports from India into Persia, are at present purchased with specie, of which not the smallest part ever returns into the country———"*<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the imbalance of trade, it seems clear that Bushehr played a major part in it, though there is no evidence to prove that other ports on the Iranian coasts of PG were not also involved in



this trade. At least 50% of the value of the commodities imported from India into <sup>the</sup> PG (Bushehr and Basra) were landed at Bushehr and since Bushehr was the EIC's port it indicates the likely importance of the cabotage trade to the Company. There is, however, not only a lack of statistical data about quantities and values for goods carried between Iran and India, and especially of traffic to India, but little can be discovered of the distribution within Iran of the considerable quantities of Indian goods imported into the Gulf ports. Fig. 4.6 attempts to show in diagramatic form the general pattern of Indian imports via Bushehr and Basra. It should be noted that half of the Indian goods landed at Basra came into Iran overland via Shushtar and Hamadan,<sup>18</sup> and that Basra served more as an entrepot than did Bushehr. On the other hand, because Indian manufactured goods, like cottons and foodstuffs, came into Bushehr, the port appeared to have a more extensive hinterland across Iran for these than for the EIC's own imports.

Lastly it should be mentioned that this private trade between Bushehr and India suffered as much as the EIC's own trade from internal upheavals in Iran particularly during Karim Khan's reign (1747-1779). This can be illustrated, for example, by the decline in the export of 'treasure' and 'pearl' from Bushehr to Bombay and Surat during 1776-1780.<sup>19</sup> The value of these fell from over 190,000 Rup. in 1776 progressively to 40,000 in 1779 and only recovered slightly to over 95,000 in 1780 the year following Karim Khan's death.<sup>20</sup> Since this was largely payment for goods imported from India, it can be assumed that Indian trade with Bushehr must also have declined at this time.

#### 4.3 : Trade between India and Bushehr, 1800-1810

During the first decade of the nineteenth century the trade between Bushehr and India underwent a revival, and there is some evidence to suggest that it became increasingly centred on Bombay rather than

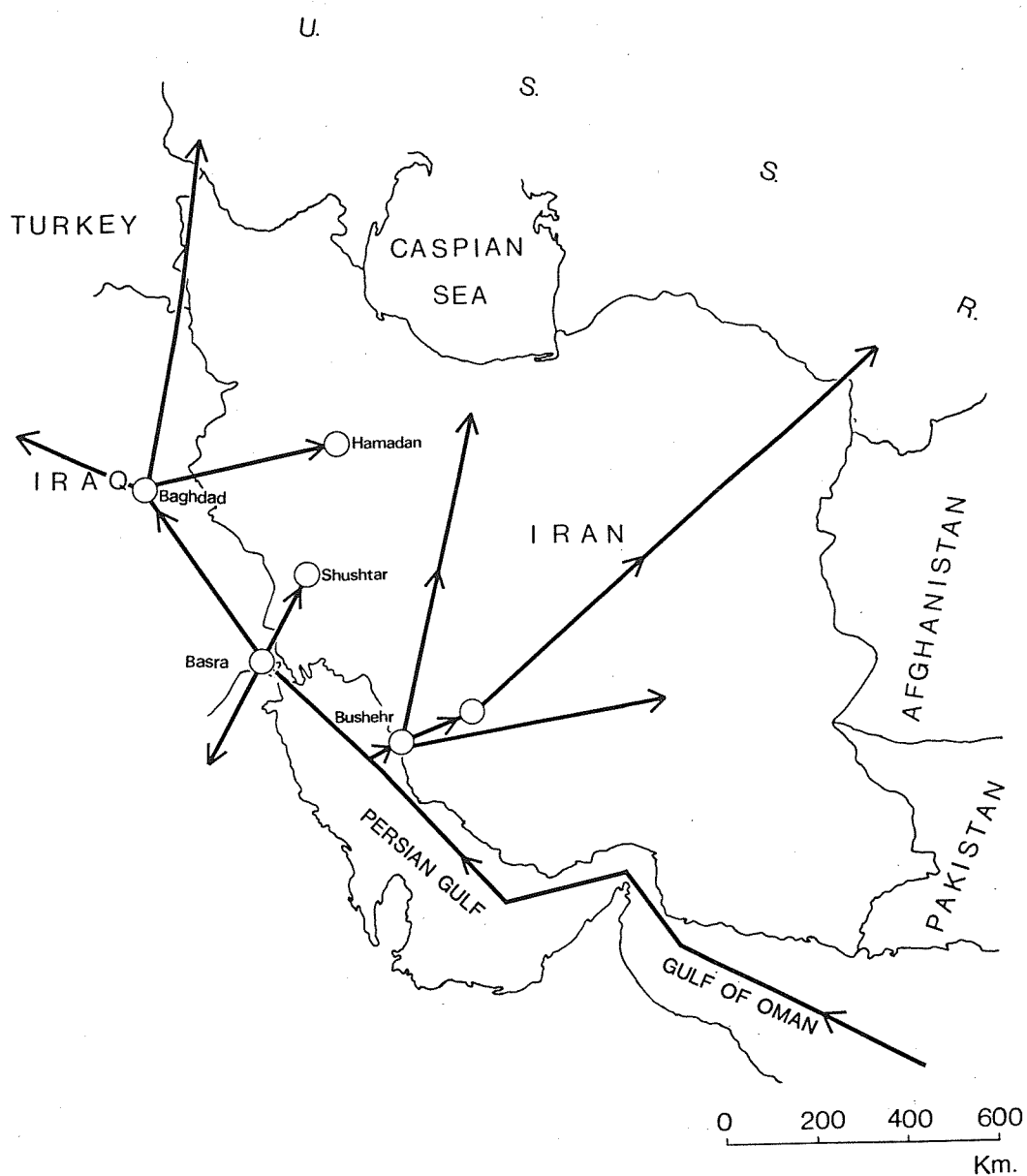


FIGURE 4.6 Distribution of Indian goods  
exported to Bushehr and Basra, 1763-1810  
Sources: PPG vol. 25 (1790)

other ports like Masulipatam. An account written by the English traveller, Waring,<sup>21</sup> who visited Iran at the beginning of the century, suggests that at that time Masulipatam was still a major supplier of Indian goods to Bushehr. Fig. 4.7, based on his estimate of the export of specie from Bushehr to various Indian ports, in return for goods imported from them, shows that sixty three per cent of the total was to Masulipatam. But Bombay had by then clearly become more important than it had been a few years before. Waring appears to have obtained this information, however, from an English broker in Bushehr so that its reliability may be suspect.

The statistical information for the goods traded between Bombay and the PG for the period 1801-1810 suggests more strongly that it had become the chief Indian port linked to Bushehr. Sir John Malcolm (officer of the British government of India) estimated the value of Iran's trade (both export and import) at that time with India at 2,600,000 Rup.<sup>22</sup> At the same time the average annual value of trade between Bombay and the two PG ports of Bushehr and Basra during 1801-1810 was 3,700,000 Rup.<sup>23</sup> If one assumes that half of these goods passing through Bushehr and Basra went to Iranian markets, it seems likely that Bombay came to take a major part in the trade between Iran and India. Probably a half of Bushehr's trade came to be focused on Bombay, with Surat taking another 8%.<sup>24</sup>

Because the available source only lists the total values of trade from the PG to Indian ports (Bombay and Surat), it is not possible to specify the exact value and nature of those goods traded from Basra or Bushehr separately. Nevertheless, it does seem that there was a shift of orientation of Bushehr's market in India from the east coast to the west coast in the first decade of the nineteenth century as its trade generally increased with India.<sup>25</sup> This is further supported by data on the export and import of treasure between the English government presidencies in India (Bombay, Bengal and Madras) and the

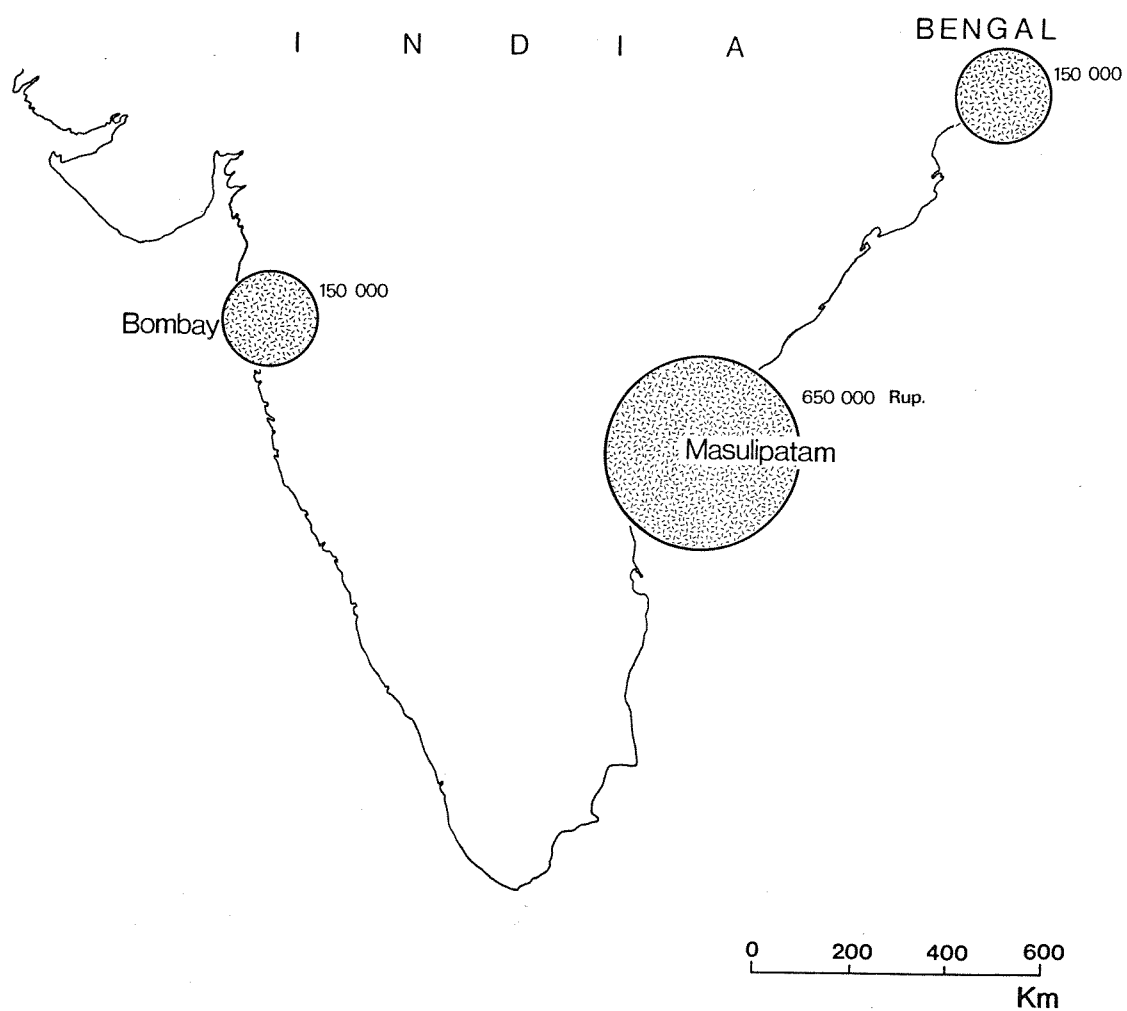


FIGURE 4.7 The value of specie exported from Bushehr to different ports of India in the early 19th century  
Source: Waring (1807)

"Iranian and Arabian Gulfs" during 1810-1820. Bombay became responsible for over 60% of imports and 90% of exports of these goods to and from Arabia and PG.<sup>26</sup> Of course, PG traffic formed a much smaller proportion of Bombay's trade, where she had wide and varied commercial contacts but it can be estimated that it averaged 7% of all her trade between 1801 and 1810, making it her sixth most important trade area after London, China, Goa, Surat and the northern part of Guzerat generally.<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 4.8). Similarly the PG contributed 4% of Surat's trade during 1802-1810.

The goods imported into Iran from India during the early years of the nineteenth century appeared to be a little different from those of the previous decades when cotton goods and foodstuffs dominated. Now some European goods appeared alongside the Indian and their full range can be seen in Appendix 4.1. Important amongst the goods reaching Bushehr from Bombay were increasing amounts of broad cloth and perperets, as seen in Fig. 4.9. It can only be assumed that these were of English manufacture, although it is surprising to see them feature so strongly since the EIC claimed to be virtually their sole importer. Hence one would not expect shipments of them on the private vessels which are included in this data.<sup>28</sup> Even so to keep their importance in perspective the cloth imports from Bombay never exceeded 42,000 Rup. worth a year, so that they formed only a small percentage of the total trade between Bombay and Bushehr.

The goods exported from the PG to India in the decade, 1800-1810, mainly consisted of natural and agricultural products, horses and treasure, as well as a few types of manufactured goods. These are listed in Appendix 4.2. While it is possible to identify some of these goods, such as asafoetida, hing, opium, saffron etc. as being of more definite Iranian origin, it is impossible to determine whether they were exported from Bushehr or Basra. First, as for previous decades,

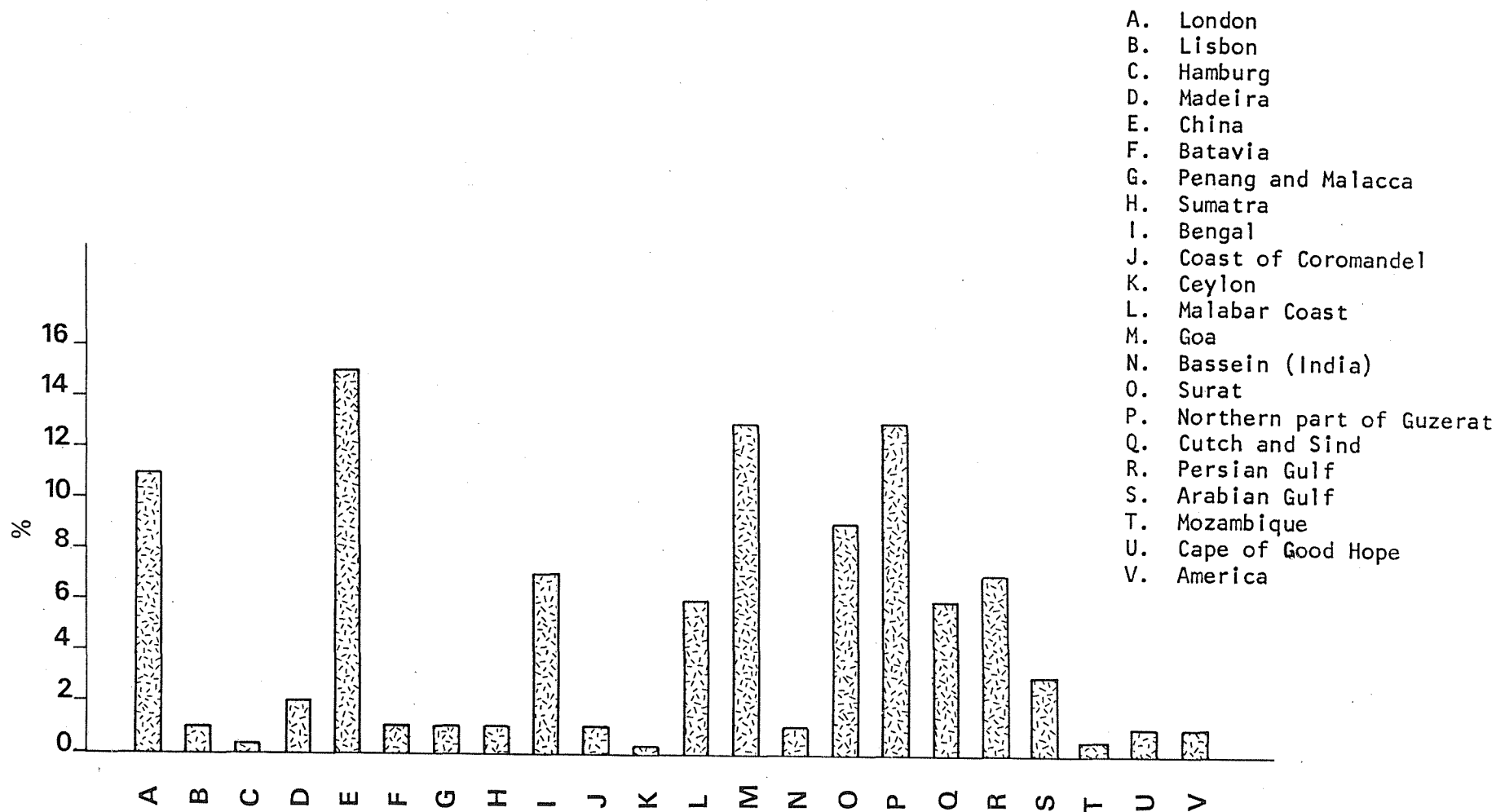


FIGURE 4.8 An example of the percentage breakdown of Bombay total port to port trade, 1801-1802  
Source: BCP Range 419 vol.39

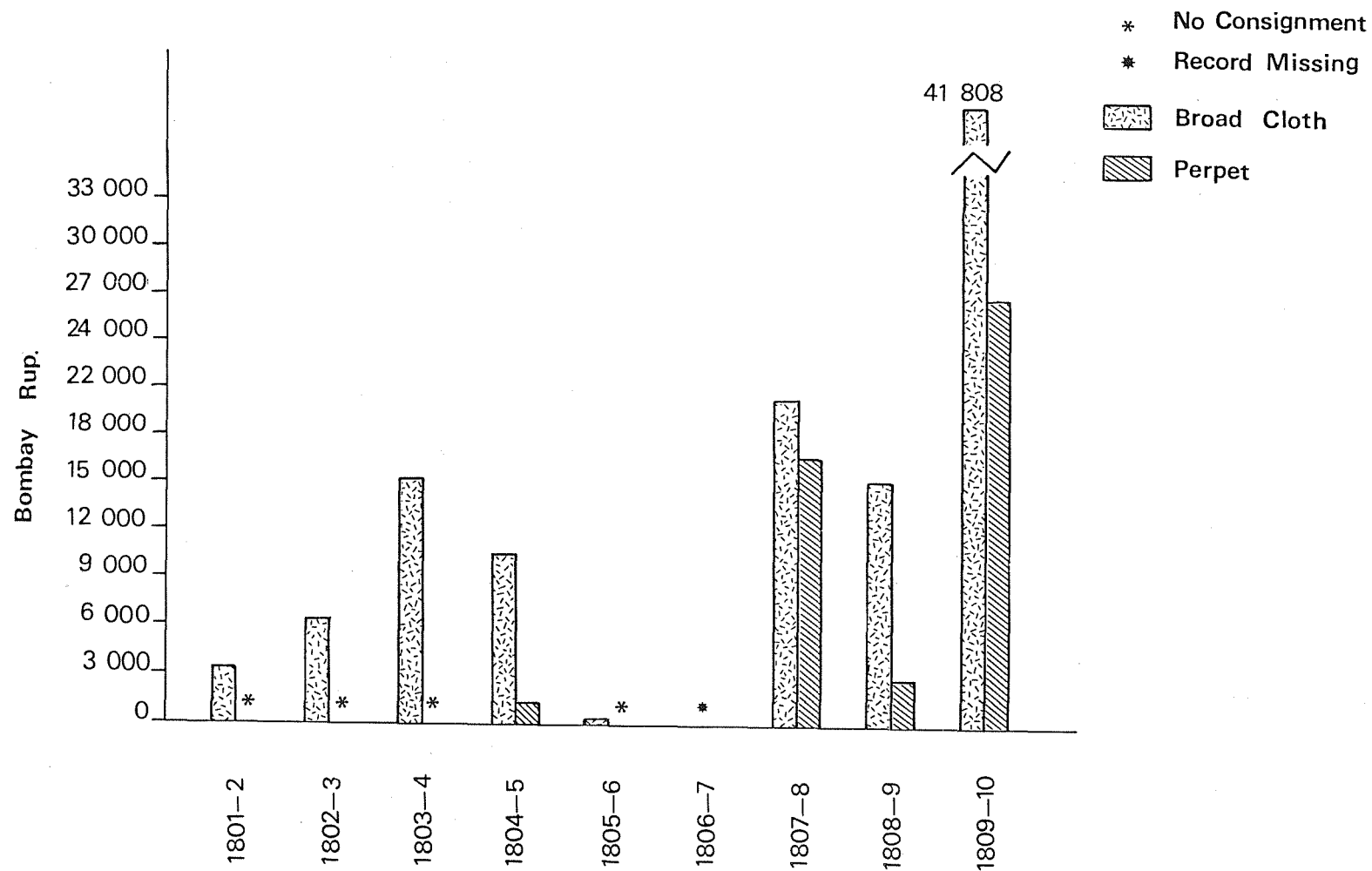


FIGURE 4.9 Quantities of broad-cloth and long ells Imported to PG from Bombay, 1801-1810  
Source: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

treasure formed the largest item in this export trade between<sup>29</sup> 1801-10, as can be seen in Fig. 4.10. The reasons for this were the same as in the final years of the previous century, namely the unsuitability of most Iranian goods for Indian markets, though as this trade was generally concerned with PG (Basra and Bushehr), it is not possible to illustrate whether the imbalance of trade between Bushehr and Bombay was greater or less than that in the 1780s when 90% of Iran's exports to India had consisted of specie and treasure. Fig. 4.11 illustrates the trade imbalance between Bombay and PG for the period 1801-1810.

#### 4.4 : The EIC's role as a carrier and protector, 1763-1810

The previous sections of this chapter have indicated that a considerable amount of trade was conducted between the PG and India during the period 1763-1810 and that much of it was centred on Bushehr. But since the volume of the EIC's own trade with Bushehr was comparatively small, much of the trade must have been handled by private English or native merchants. The proportion of this trade carried in local ships, either Iranian, Indian or Arab, is unknown but some of it was undoubtedly carried on the EIC's vessels and the EIC's involvement in this type of trade grew.

That is, the EIC increasingly acted as a carrier of other peoples' goods. There are several indications of <sup>the</sup> Company's direct and growing involvement. Firstly, a letter from the Company's Agent at Basra in September 1774 to the governor of Bushehr spoke of the Company's ships and other English vessels calling on the Iranian coast to pick up whatever cargoes were available. It also indicates the fact that the trade of Bushehr, without the presence of EIC and private vessels, was seriously handicapped.<sup>30</sup>

The role of the Company's ships in this type of carrying trade probably resulted from the gradual undermining of local shipping



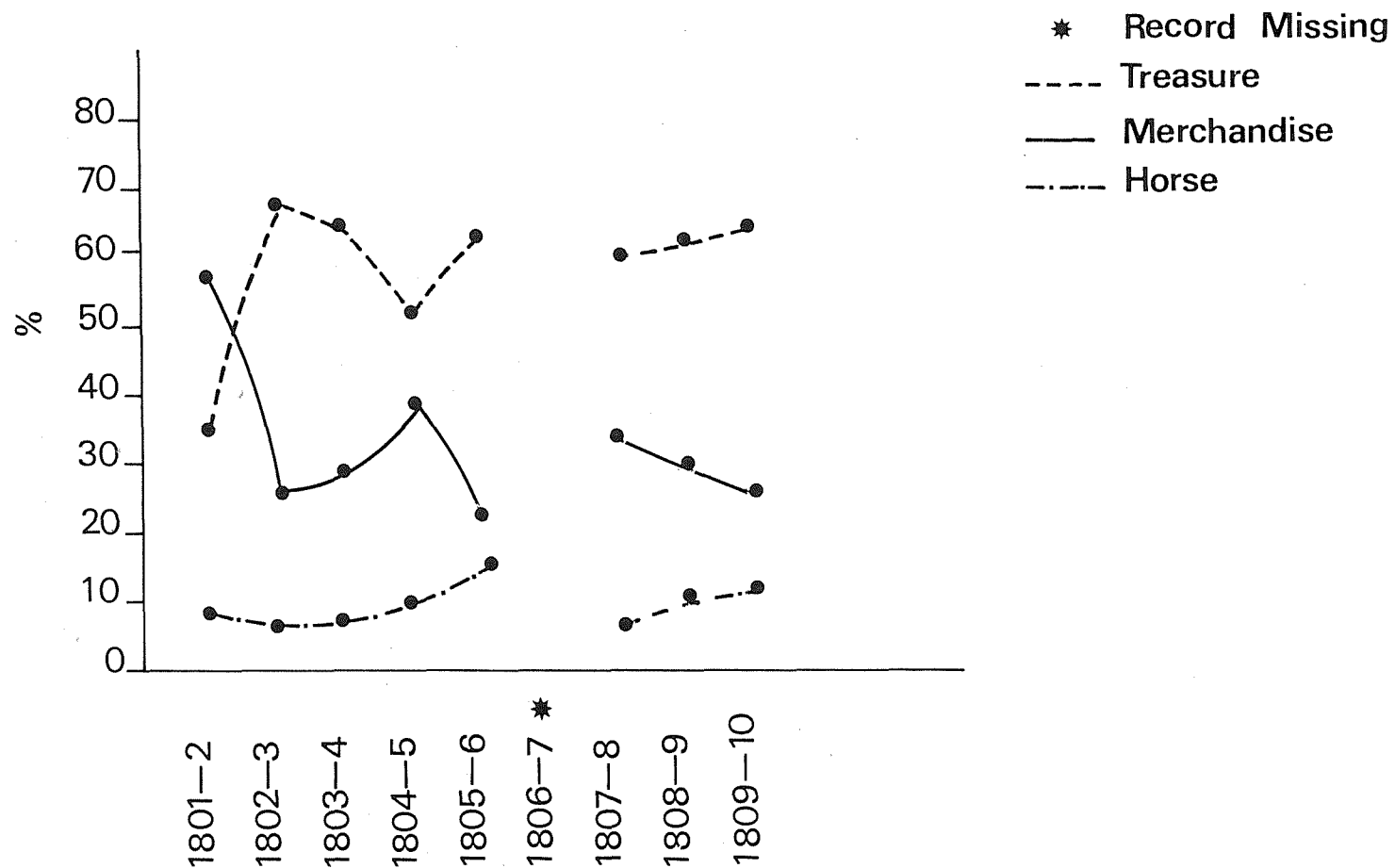


FIGURE 4.10 Percentage of merchandize, treasure and horses  
exported to Bombay from the PG, 1801-1810  
Source: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

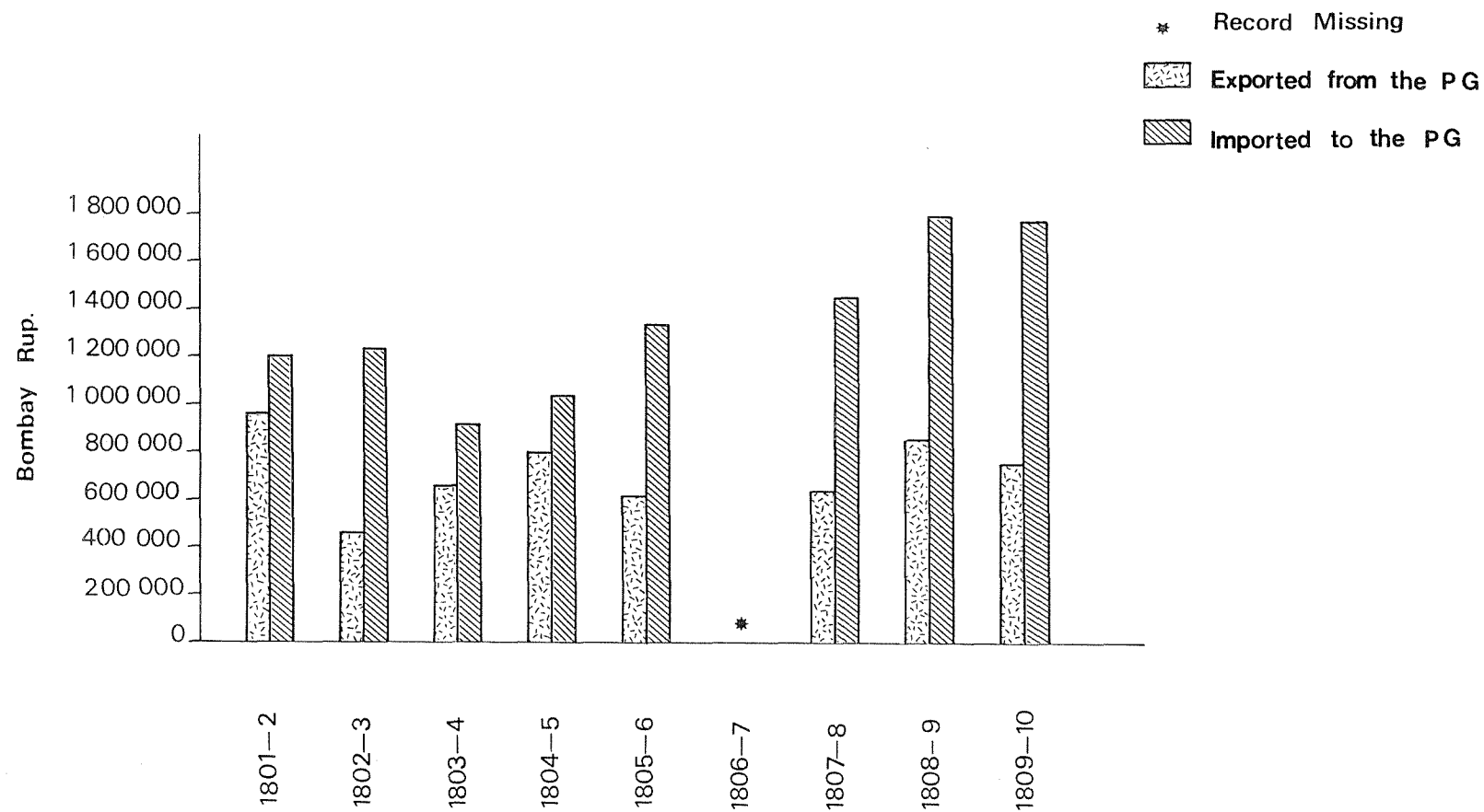


FIGURE 4.11 Value of merchandize exported and imported  
between Bombay and the PG, 1801-1810  
Source: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

by the greater reliability of European, and latterly EIC, vessels.<sup>31</sup> It is probable that both local and English merchants trading on their own account with Iran were increasingly attracted to use Company ships to convoy their goods, because the EIC's vessels were larger than the Company's own trade in the region warranted. It was therefore sensible for the Company ships calling in the PG to take on extra cargo, as well as the mail en route to and from India. That Company vessels did take on non-Company cargoes is indicated, for example, by a letter from Jonathan Jervice, Commander of The Bombay Grab, to the Company's resident at Bushehr while anchored in the road on 21 February 1786. He informed the resident that:

*"If you have no goods to send on board the Bombay Grab, on the Honourable Company account, I request I may be allowed to take such freight as the merchants may have to send to Bombay."*<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, it seems likely that the officers of the Company's maritime section, like its other servants, were allowed to trade on their own account in addition to their other duties and they would probably use the ships on which they served for the purpose.<sup>33</sup>

Thirdly, many English merchants became increasingly dependent upon the EIC for trading, factoring and other services at Bushehr since they would have been unable to finance those services on their own. Also the Iranian authorities only gave various trading and legal privileges to foreign merchants if they were under the protection of the EIC. Finally, and perhaps most important, the EIC's ships offered greater security for the cargoes carried than the local craft, an important consideration because of the amount of piracy with which the PG was afflicted. Security from this threat largely depended upon the number of guns carried by the merchant ships themselves and for this reason the EIC's vessels were comparatively heavily gunned. At the same time, the Company maintained its own

frigates cruising in the PG to act as a deterrent to pirates threatening the Company's and other vessels. Because security was particularly important where treasure was being shipped, the Company's ships carrying it were well armed and something of this is revealed for the period 1775-80 in Table 4.1, where the number of guns fitted on EIC's ships engaged in carrying treasure from the PG are listed. The defensive role of the Company in such troubled waters in turn provided it with a useful additional source of revenue in the form of custom dues, over and above freight charges. The right to the custom dues was given to the EIC by the authorities for protection. The EIC's revenue from these sources was estimated at about 10% of the total value of goods exported and imported between the PG and India. Additionally, the demand for the EIC's assistance by the countries who used the PG routes for their trading contacts became a major means whereby the EIC was able to strengthen its political foothold in that region and it seems likely that the EIC's role as a protector to Bushehr cabotage trade was more in demand than its service as trader. Without such protection, the export and import trade between the PG and India would have been handicapped, particularly when this private trade was more substantial than the EIC's own trade.

TABLE 4.1 : The EIC's vessels engaged in the shipment of treasure  
between Bushehr and Bombay, 1775-1780

| Date         | Name of the vessel | Number of guns carried |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| August 1776  | Bombay Grab        | 24                     |
| January 1778 | Eagle              | 16                     |
| April 1778   | Drake              | 14                     |
| May 1779     | Success            | 14                     |

Source : RRPGB Vols. 2 and 3; Parsons (1808)

If the demand for protection was increasing, it was not only because the EIC's shipping set a new standard for secure transit, but also because of the increase of piratical activities in the PG and the consequent decline of native shipping. This piracy will be described in the next chapter but the nature of protection against it may be outlined here. In the early seventeenth century, the EIC, on being given the right to maintain two warships at Bandar Abbas, had been allowed to collect half of the customs dues at this port to offset the cost of maintaining these frigates. While it seems that the Company continued to maintain this cover during the period under study, its nature changed. During the eighteenth century it had become the custom for ships sailing from India into the PG to call at Masqat.<sup>34</sup> When a Company ship, or any vessel trading under the Company's protection, arrived there a messenger was sent overland to advise the Company's agent at Basra of its arrival.<sup>35</sup> On receipt of the news, the resident would then order one of the two cruisers normally stationed at Basra to proceed down the PG to Masqat and convoy the merchant ship up to Bushehr and Basra.<sup>36</sup> In return for the protection thus given, the Company's resident at Bushehr was allowed to collect duty (consulage and customs) based on the value of the cargo.

The duty collected by the EIC from those merchants trading under its protection amounted to 4% ad valorem in the first decades of its establishment at Bushehr.<sup>37</sup> This duty was divided into two parts, custom, and consulage.<sup>38</sup> The former was a duty of 3% levied on the value of all the cargoes whether owned by English or native merchants.<sup>39</sup> The latter was a duty of 1% which was collected only on the imports and exports of the English traders.<sup>40</sup> These duties increased to 7% (5% custom dues and 2% consulage) toward the end of the century.<sup>41</sup>

Although it is difficult to estimate directly the amount of private trade carried on under the EIC's protection, the revenue

obtained between 1775-84 from its right to levy customs and consulage at Bushehr give some indication of its scale. As Fig. 4.12 shows, the amount fluctuated over this period but in total it was not large and, never exceeded 6,000 Rup. per year suggesting that, at that time, the EIC did not carry much cargo for other persons in its ships, because the total volume of the trade between India and Bushehr was small at this time. On the other hand there is some reason to suggest, as was indicated earlier, that this trade did grow towards the end of the century into the first decade of the new century. This can be concluded from the increase in the volume of trade between PG and India (Bombay) during 1801-1810.

No data are available on the freight charges of the EIC on the ordinary cargoes it carried, but something can be said of its treasure freightage. While the freight rate charged on the carriage of treasure were comparatively low - 3 per cent of the cargo's value between Bushehr and Bombay, 5 per cent to Surat - they were a useful source of Company revenue credited to the Bushehr account.<sup>42</sup> Due to the smallness of private trade between Bushehr and India which involved the shipment of treasure from Bushehr from 1776 until the last decade of the eighteenth century, the EIC earnings from freight charges did not reach more than 5,100 Rup. in 1776, though it decreased to 1,000 Rup. in 1779 and only recovered slightly to over 1,500 Rup. in 1780.<sup>43</sup> However, there must have been a big increase in the amount earned by the Company from freight charges on treasure in 1800-1810. This is implied by the increase in trade and the export of treasure between India and Bushehr at this time. Although the data does not allow one to judge the EIC's total income and profit from its role as protector and carrier, the fragmentary evidence does suggest that these in total were not inconsiderable, particularly in terms of profit, since the Company vessels were there anyway so that using them to protect and carry other people's goods involved little extra cost. The very profitable nature of the carrying trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century in general,<sup>for</sup> and the EIC in particular, is

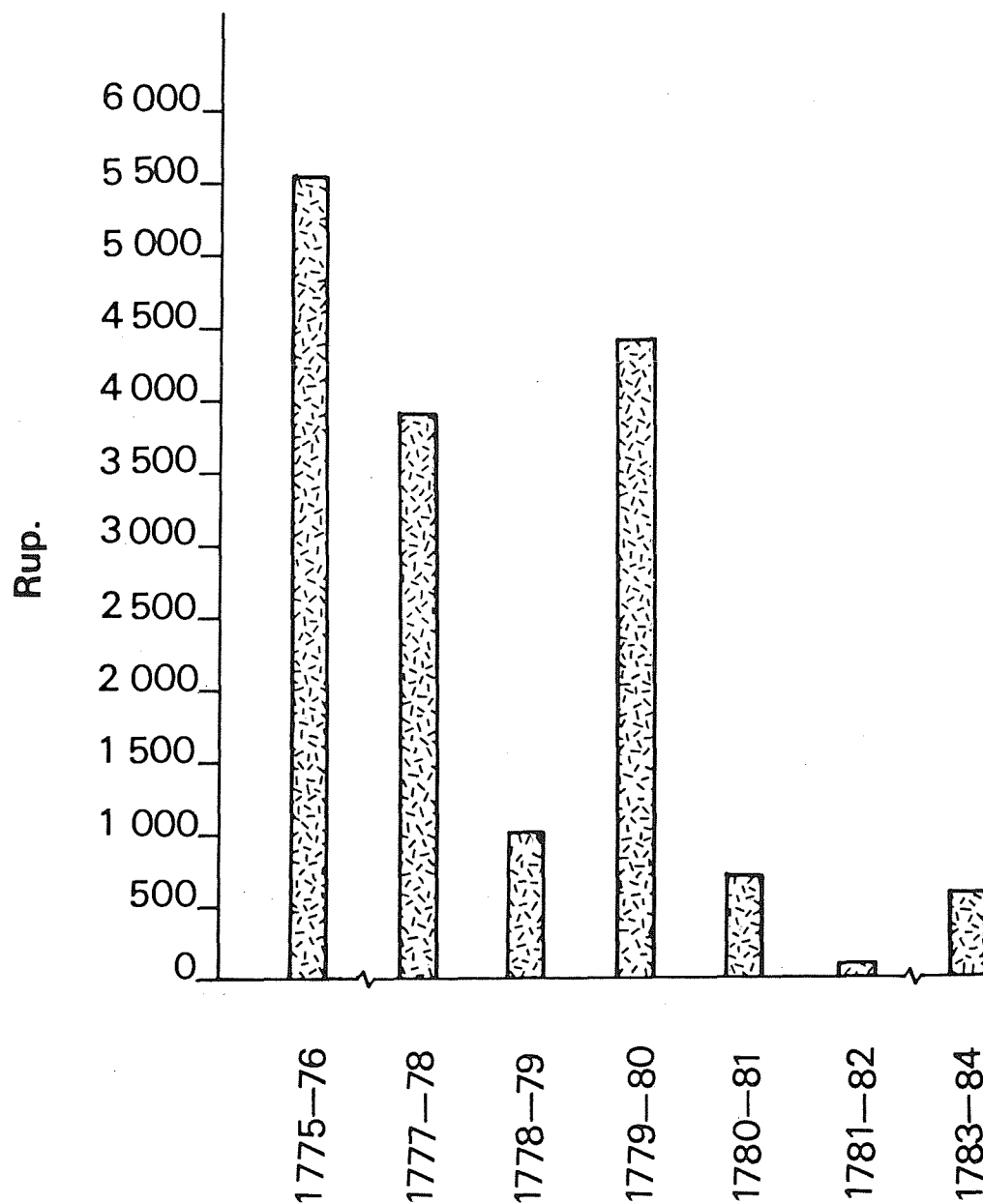


FIGURE 4.12 Amount of custom and consulage duty collected on the private trade of Bushehr, 1776-1784  
Source: RRPGB vols. 2 and 3

indicated by Waring. Not only was he told that the number of local ships engaged in it had increased, but that it was more profitable to hire a ship out to carry cargoes, particularly treasure, than to engage directly in the import or export of goods at Bushehr because of the uncertainty of this trade.<sup>44</sup> This point seems to be confirmed by the existence of local shipowners who followed the EIC's example, as in the case of the Iranian merchant, Aqa Muhammad Behbehani, who, during the first decade of the nineteenth century, owned the ship Duncan but hired her out for the carriage of goods between Bushehr and India.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4.5 : Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the cabotage trade of Bushehr and the EIC's role in that trade. The suggestion has been made that the Indian ports formed Bushehr's major foreland for both exports and imports during the study period, accounting for over half of Bushehr's trade. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, as this trade grew, Bombay became India's major port in its commercial connections with the PG, with 7% of Bombay's total trade. Similarly the PG averaged about 4% of the total trade of Surat in 1802-1810. Unfortunately, no comparative information is available for the contribution of Iranian and PG trade to the traffic of Indian ports during the earlier decades of the study period, but it seems that Bushehr's private trade with India suffered as much as the EIC's own trade during the Zand period. At that time, much of this trade had been directed to Masulipatam. Bushehr's trade with India had created a comparatively extensive hinterland for this port. It was larger than that for the EIC's own trade, both in respect to its imports and its exports. The Indian trade, in general, however, was disadvantageous to Iran's economy, because Iranian goods were not suitable to be exchanged for the goods imported from India so that the balance had to be made up with specie. This affected Iran's internal economy adversely.



A major feature of this Indian trade from the Gulf, and from Bushehr in particular, was that most of it appeared to be in private hands, a situation that the EIC turned to its own benefit by acting both as a carrier of some of it and a protector of much of it. The EIC in its role as a carrier and protector of trade from the PG to and from India certainly contributed to the drain of Iran's wealth by making this trade possible but the Company obtained useful profits from these activities. For this reason it was keen to foster it. The profit was in addition to less tangible, but real political benefits that the Company gained from its role as protector in the region. As its role as protector grew, so a heightened presence in the region became inevitable.

Even so, one must keep the scale of this trade in perspective. In total, it only involved a handful of Company ships and a number of other privately-owned vessels so that this level of trade made it impossible to support more than one port, that of Bushehr. Much more trade almost certainly flowed in and out by land. The scope for diverting this land-borne trade onto the sea route was limited by a number of impediments to Gulf shipping and these are considered in the next chapter.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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27. BCP Range 419 vol.40
28. It should be noted, however, that a letter from the EIC's resident dated July 1803 seemed to be indicating that private merchants were involved in this trade.  
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## CHAPTER 5 : THE ORGANIZATION OF TRADE

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### 5.1 : Introduction

During the course of examining the Company's commercial activities at Bushehr, mention was made of the Company's failure to fully exploit the Iranian market by selling and exchanging more of its woollen goods for money and Iranian products. Its failure to extend was related partly to the Company's own inadequacies and inefficiency, as well as to the problems created for the Company by the commercial and political policies of the Iranian government. There were other problems, however, which created difficulties for the EIC's commercial organisation in the PG in general and Iran in particular, and these can be divided into two types. The first type consisted of those problems related to the natural hazards on the sea and land routes which the Company used for its communications with the Iranian market. The second type of problem consisted of those which were human-related, chiefly the threat of attack by pirates and bandits. This chapter examines this varied set of problems and their effects upon the EIC's communications with its market in Iran. It comes to the conclusion that the failure of the EIC to exploit its Iranian market resulted not only from the disorganised state of the Company at Bushehr, which in turn was related to its overall administrative policy and hierarchial arrangement, but also to the various natural and human-related hazards of the Iranian environment. The Indian monsoon and the PG's winds contributed to this disorganisation by hindering and delaying communication between India and the PG ports. Piratical activities in the PG and EIC action against them brought considerable expense and loss to the Company, though, in the end, the Company was able to increase its political influence in the

region. In order to pursue these problems it is first necessary to examine the Company's organisation at the port of Bushehr.

## 5.2 : The EIC's system of organisation at the port of Bushehr

Generally speaking, the EIC's agent or factor played a central role in the commercial affairs of the Company in overseas markets like Iran. Consequently, the number and type of appointment made by the Company to its agencies must be considered as an important part of the Company's trading organisation. Its degree of importance may be assumed to have depended upon the commercial significance attached to the particular market at any particular time. Thus, in the period under study, we see a decline in the establishment of the Company's settlement paralleling a decline in its Iranian trade.

Before 1763 the Company's establishment in Iran consisted of an agency in the port town of Bandar Abbas and factories<sup>1</sup> in Esfahan and Kerman.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Company employed 11 persons at Bandar Abbas in 1751 is the most obvious indication of the relatively high commercial importance of Iran at that time. The names and the positions of the Company's employees at Bandar Abbas in 1751 are included in Appendix 5.1a. The fall in the number of employees in that port to 6 by 1758, listed in Appendix 5.1b, was due to the decline of the Company's trade resulting from internal upheavals in Iran. But, when the Company re-established itself in Iran at Bushehr after 1763, at the start of the period under study, it limited itself to a residency, consisting of a resident and assistant in the port of Bushehr. This reflected the Company's reduced activities in the area and the general uncertainty about future trade in Iran.

As a result, the Company's policy was mainly concerned to minimise any risk by reducing the expenses of trading in Iran and

by keeping as little goods and property there as possible.<sup>3</sup> The resident in 1766, for example, was neither allowed by his superior to establish any settlement in the interior of Iran nor to carry on any inland trade that would over-extend the Company there.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, all the Company's formal transactions for buying and selling goods took place at Bushehr and, until the residency of Mehdi Ali Khan (1798-1803), not a single bale of woollen cloth left Bushehr before payment had been fully completed on it.

Things changed a little under Mehdi Ali Khan when he installed a local agent "Aga Momin" in the interior at Yezd in about 1802, in order to tap more distant markets in Iran for the Company, but the general pattern throughout the period under study was for the Company to concentrate all its limited activity at Bushehr and to rely on native merchants to support the Company throughout the country.<sup>5</sup> During 1763-69 the resident, for example, maintained links with the interior markets partly through linguists employed by the Company at Kerman and Shiraz and partly from information on supply and demand situations for various goods at the principal market centres supplied by prominent native merchants.<sup>6</sup> In some cases Iranian merchants who resided in Bushehr provided this market intelligence often through their own agents or factors stationed in some market in the interior of Iran.<sup>7</sup> In other cases, the pattern was reversed, with information reaching the Company's resident via the Bushehr-based factors of merchants located in other commercial centres in Iran. The resident's other source of information on market conditions in the interior was through interviews with the merchants themselves when they came down to Bushehr.

There seems little doubt that the Company's trade suffered as a result of its policy of reducing its commitments in the country and centralising its activities at Bushehr on the periphery of the Iranian commercial system. Research into the records has shown that

two of the Company's servants, Mr Manesty in 1790 and Mr Bruce in 1808, suggested to the Company that it should establish permanently a "respectable agent" in the interior and the need was recognised by the CD.<sup>8</sup> However, a search of the records has found no evidence that these recommendations were ever acted upon and the Company continued to operate in the region from its one eccentric location at Bushehr.

#### 5.2.1 : The EIC's Residency at Bushehr, 1763-1810

By 1763, and for the reasons indicated, the number of the Company's employees in Iran was reduced to little more than a resident, sometimes with an assistant at Bushehr, and this pattern varied little over the next 47 years. Table 5.1 lists the men appointed as residents during the period covered by this study and it can be seen that for only eight of the years covered was there an official assistant to the resident, although for many years, as Table 5.2 shows, the resident had an Armenian broker in his service. Table 5.2 also lists the other local people employed by the Company in various capacities, from linguists down to cooks, indicating the considerable support required for the resident.<sup>9</sup>

The Company records do not detail the various skills of the Company employees at the residency, but one would expect the resident to be skilled commercially and his assistant to have been either a senior merchant or a factor. Sometimes the resident assumed both duties.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of Mehdi Ali Khan, who was the resident from 1798 to 1803, all the other nine residents between 1763-1810 were British by origin, none of them staying in the post for more than eight years and most of them staying for much shorter periods. At least three of them retired from the residency for reasons of ill-health, each of these being among those who served the Company's



TABLE 5.1

EIC's Servants at Bushehr, 1763-1808

| Name of the servant      | Title          | Period of service |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Benjamin Jervis          | Resident       | 1763-1766         |
| William Bawyear          | Resident       | 1766-1767         |
| James Morley             | Resident       | 1767-1769         |
| George Green             | Asst. Resident | 1767-1769         |
| John Beaumont            | Resident       | 1775-1780         |
| George Green*            | Asst. Resident | 1775-1778         |
| Edward Gallery*          | Resident       | 1780-1787         |
| Charles Watkins*         | Resident       | 1787-1793         |
| Nicolas Hankey Smith     | Resident       | 1793-1798         |
| Mehdi Ali Khan           | Resident       | 1798-1803         |
| T.H.Lovett               | P.C. Resident  | 1803-1804         |
| Lieutenant William Bruce | Asst. Resident | 1804-1807         |
| Nicolas Hankey Smith     | P. Resident    | 1807-1808         |

Sources: Wright (1977), RRPGB Vols. 1-10 (various letters),  
DB Vols. 14, 25 and 27

\* = Retired for health reasons

P = Political

C = Commercial

TABLE 5.2

The EIC's local servants, their salary (monthly) and length of service at Bushehr in September 1803

| Name of the Servant | Title   | Salary (rup.) | Length of service (year) |
|---------------------|---|---------------|--------------------------|
| Gaja Arranoss**     | Broker  | Not known     | 30                       |
| Gaja Arraton        | Linguist                                      | 30.2          | 25                       |
| Gaja Satoor         | Warehouse man                                 | 20            | 25                       |
| Mirhadi Cofin       | Carpenter                                     | 18            | 20                       |
| Sala                | Mate  | 8             | 15                       |
| ?                   | <u>Galianchie</u><br>(tea and coffee servant) | 10.2          | 52*                      |
| Muhammad Ali        | Butler  | 10.2          | 43                       |
| Hojbell             | Mate  | 10.2          | 52*                      |
| Hapan               | <u>Allamdar</u><br>(Flagman)                  | 10.2          | 30                       |
| Hapaire             | Waterman                                      | 8             | Not long                 |
| Muhammad Mikean     | Cook  | 10.2          | 25                       |
| Hammud              | <u>Farash</u><br>(Footman)                    | 8             | 15                       |

Source: RRPGB Vol. 8 letter from Bushehr dated 24 September, 1805

\*The servant was in service when EIC was still at Bandar Abbas

\*\*Gaja or Khodjah is a Persian term of respect applied to a merchant or a man of considerable means such as a gentleman or a rich merchant. Emin (1792)

Bushehr post for longer than the average period.

The EIC's records suggest that the main duties of the resident were:-

- a) to conduct all the Company's transactions in Iran involving both the purchase and sale of goods;
- b) to provide the Company with relevant information on market conditions and needs;
- c) to collect for the Company the customs and consular duties to which it was entitled;
- d) to maintain correspondence with the Bombay presidency and the Company's Agency at Basra, particularly as relating to Company activities involving the port of Bushehr.

In these activities the resident was generally aided by a broker who, for much of the period under study (and most probably from the Company's re-establishment at Bushehr), was an Armenian named Arranoss. His duties appear to have included:-

- a) the collection of trade information either from local merchants or from merchants from other parts of Iran who came down to Bushehr to buy woollens and other imports;<sup>11</sup>
- b) to act as an intermediary between the Company and the customers;<sup>12</sup>
- c) to assess the availability and quality of goods like silk and Carmania wool which the Company was interested in purchasing.

It seems clear that from the resident downward, the Company's administrative hierarchy made it difficult for its employees in Iran to function effectively. One reason for this was that those stationed at Bushehr were, until 1788, subordinate to the Company's Basra Agency, as well as to its Bombay presidency. As a result, two sets of instructions had often to be sought and followed. At the same time, it was not unknown for other orders, relating to the Company's affairs at Bushehr, to come from London to Bombay from where they were forwarded to Bushehr. Further complicating matters were the delays in receiving instructions or advice. Orders from the CD in London had to go to the Bombay presidency, then sometimes to Basra, before finally reaching Bushehr (Fig. 5.1). Despite this it was also a normal procedure for orders to be sent directly from Bombay to Bushehr with copies to Basra. In any case, instructions could often take several months to arrive. It was not until 1807, with the increasing importance of the PG to the Company, that direct contact was provided from the Company headquarters in London to Bushehr.<sup>13</sup>

In addition there was the problem of the suitability of staff who manned the Company post at Bushehr. All but one of the residents for the period covered by this study were British, most of whom appeared to have had little previous experience of Iran. It appears that the Company residents were appointed by the Bombay presidency with the approval of the London directors.<sup>14</sup> As such they were kept subservient to the wishes and commands of Bombay and were not therefore free to act as they saw fit. All required the services of a linguist as well as others that knew Iran. This was certainly seen as disadvantageous to the Company's trade when in 1790 Mr Manesty suggested that whoever the Company might send to Iran to assess the availability of export products should have a knowledge of the Persian language, as well as the customs and

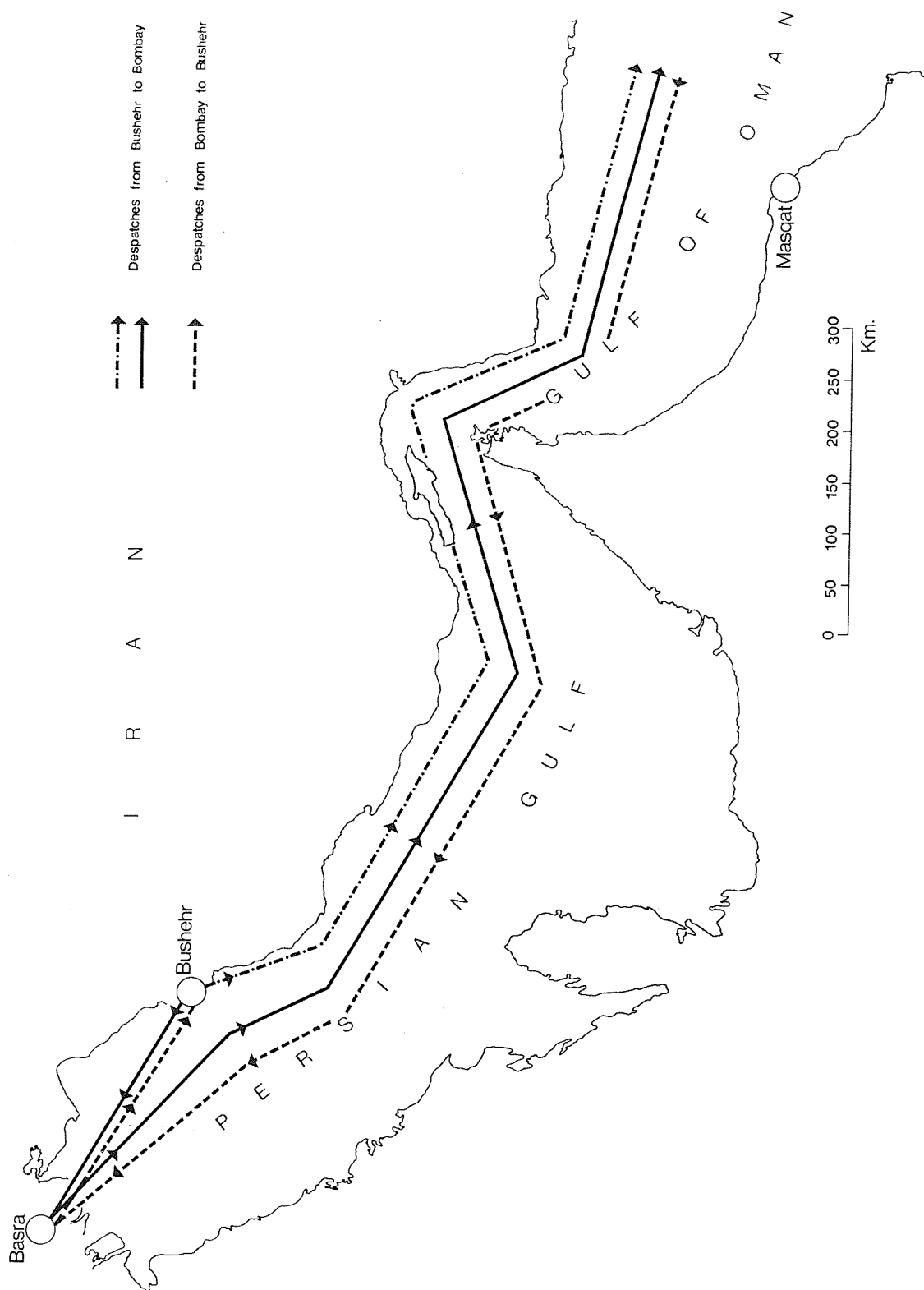


FIGURE 5.1 Communication (despatches) between Bombay presidency, Basra Agency and Bushehr Residency, 1763-1810

manners of the people.<sup>15</sup>

Much responsibility therefore probably fell on the broker, linguist and warehousemen that the Company employed to make and keep trade bargains. Generally, the Company employed Armenians for these purposes since it was felt that they were more trustworthy and could be expected to follow instructions.<sup>16</sup> It should also be added that the Armenian community was generally experienced in commerce, whilst individuals often learnt English and other European languages, partly through their trading contacts and partly through educational contacts with the West.

What little evidence is available on the salaries offered by the Company to its Bushehr residents suggests that it was not a well-rewarded post unless the resident also engaged in another income-earning activity. Table 5.3a gives the salary and allowances provided by the Company to its resident in 1786. It will be seen that the allowances exceeded the basic salary which was set at quite a low level. The low level of the salary is also indicated by the fact that by 1803 it had been more than doubled by the Company, an increase possibly related to increased responsibility because by then the resident was meant to act as a political and a commercial agent for the Company. By that date also (as Table 5.3b shows) the assistant resident was earning as much as the resident himself had earned a few years before.

It is not possible to say first how dependent a resident was on his salary and allowances alone, but there are indications that private income, or income derived from private trade, was also important to the Company's residents. The Company adopted a policy of allowing its employees to engage in private trade in order to keep them faithful to the Company's own interests.<sup>17</sup> At the start of the

TABLE 5.3

Salary and Allowances (per month) of the Company's Resident at Bushehr in 1786 (Rup.)

A)

| Salary | Allowance | Allowance* | Allowance** | Allowance*** |
|--------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 150    | 30        | 12.2       | 8.1         | 167.4        |

Source: RRPGB Vol. 3 letter from Bushehr dated 22 February 1786

\* For Christmas Day, New Year and King's Birthday

\*\* For table linen

\*\*\* Emoluments arising from 1% Consulage on the sale of European property, disbursements and wrappers of woollens

The Monthly Salary of the Resident and Assistant Resident at Bushehr in 1786 and 1803 (Rup.)

B)

| Date | Resident | Assistant Resident |
|------|----------|--------------------|
| 1786 | 150      | ---                |
| 1803 | 400      | 150                |

Sources: RRPGB Vol.3 letter from Bushehr dated 22 February 1786  
RRPGB Vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 18 September 1803

nineteenth century, the Company resident at Bushehr was allowed to keep half of all the profits from the sale of woollens.<sup>18</sup> This was most certainly a new policy meant to encourage its servants at that port to act more energetically in promoting the sale of woollens.

### 5.3 : The EIC's communication system in the PG, 1763-1810

The Bushehr resident ran a Company post that lay at the end of a long chain of communications with England. This chain was made even longer by the fact that there appeared to be no direct consignment of goods from London to the PG or to Bushehr. As far as the research reported here has been able to discover, cargoes from England, mainly woollens, destined for Bushehr were usually landed and warehoused at Bombay and only sent into Bushehr when requested by the resident there. As has already been mentioned in chapter 2, this policy resulted directly from the Company's concern about the security of its property in Iran and its desire not to warehouse the woollens there. In contrast, there is some evidence to suggest that in the years before 1763, when the Company traded with Bandar Abbas (Combroon), direct shipments did take place. This can be seen in the extracts from ship's logs given in Appendix 5.2. Consequently, it seems that the decision to trade with Bushehr via India was a change of practice, which was clearly detrimental to Company trade with Iran.

The adoption of such a practice only lengthened an already long and wearisome process of contact. That this was accepted seems to point to the low priority which trade through Bushehr was accorded by the Company. It was reckoned that it could take as long as nine months to complete a voyage from London to the PG and, as such, this was often considered a trip that could be prejudicial to the health of the crew.<sup>19</sup> As a result, a direct voyage from London to Bombay was



often to be preferred even if it delayed the arrival of goods at their destination in the PG. Because the Bushehr trade was rated of low importance by the Company, goods destined for the Iranian market were sometimes loaded on India-bound ships that were not calling at Bombay but at some other port in the sub-continent. This presumably happened when the Bombay ship was full and sending another vessel was not considered worthwhile. For example, one consignment of woollens for the PG was loaded on a ship dispatched for Fort St. George (Madras) in 1783.<sup>20</sup> Another woollen consignment in 1755 had also gone to Fort St. George and was to be returned to Bombay "by the first convenience".<sup>21</sup>

Since woollen goods had to be indented for from England before they were despatched on this long circuitous journey to the PG, it is readily apparent that there were long delays in delivery. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that supply seldom properly matched demand.

These problems of communication were made more difficult by the system of routes which the Company used for its vessels at its eastern stations. Company ships bound for the PG from India appeared generally to call at Bushehr first before going on to Basra. The same ship on its return voyage through the Gulf to India would usually call at Bushehr again, some days or weeks after its first call. But not all Company ships followed this route, particularly those sent to the Gulf to deliver important despatches for forwarding to England via Aleppo. The use of the PG route to forward messages from the Company presidencies in India to London had, since the Company's first years in Iran, assumed great importance to the Company and was one reason for the Company's continued interest in the PG route.

In the early days on this route, Company despatches to London, mainly on their fleet movements, were normally forwarded from Surat or Bombay via one of three Gulf ports - Jask, Bandar Abbas or Basra, from whence they went overland across the Middle East via Aleppo.<sup>22</sup> From there the Mediterranean route was used as far as Marseille or Leghorn, the choice of European port depending on political conditions in that part of Europe at the time. It was reckoned that by this means a despatch from India might take six months to reach England, but this time was down to two-three months by the 1750s.<sup>23</sup> From the middle of the eighteenth century, Basra had become the only Gulf port used for this purpose with the onward journey via Aleppo, Constantinople (Istanbul) and Vienna.<sup>24</sup> If the Basra route was for any reason interrupted, the Company used the Suez route, as for example, between 1773-75.<sup>25</sup> But whichever route and port was used, ships on this mission generally avoided Bushehr in order to speed their journey from India to the point where the despatches continued their journey overland across the Middle East.

The failure of a despatch to arrive at all in England, or to arrive after a long delay, was the result of various possible hazards on one or other of the stages of the route. Unfavourable winds in the PG, or a failure of the monsoon on the route from India to the Gulf could create delays. There were also other dangers on the route, notably pirates, and for this reason the Company used armed vessels. However, not all the problems lay at the Iranian end of the journey. Some arose from the difficulties of the land route between Basra and Aleppo. At Basra the Company employed desert messengers who were trained by the Company to carry the packages to Aleppo. Because the overland journey could take anywhere from thirteen to forty days, the Company resident at Basra, Mr La Touche, tried in 1784 to speed up the run by paying messengers one

tuman for every day saved on the journey.<sup>26</sup> Generally this involved the messengers using two camels in place of one in a relay system and by this means the journey was cut to around thirteen days on average.<sup>27</sup> So reliable did this route become that by the end of the eighteenth century almost every commercial, political and private document that the Company's officers wanted to deliver to London went by this route.<sup>28</sup> This included orders for woollens and other goods and even samples of goods that the Company was interested in importing into England. These varied items emanated both from Company officers in India and from those stationed around the Gulf and elsewhere.

Since Bushehr was largely bypassed by this type of Company traffic to Basra, its significance in the Company network was reduced. More important though was delay to incoming despatches, and the receipt of information on the Iranian trade. Yet the Bushehr resident had to make reports to both Basra and Bombay. From the opening of the EIC's residency at Bushehr in 1763 until 1777, when control of the Bushehr residency was separated from Basra, the Bushehr resident reported directly at least once every two weeks to the Basra agent, who was his superior, on all Company matters.<sup>29</sup> These despatches went either by sea or overland to Basra via Shushtar<sup>30</sup> and took three-nine days, generally longer by sea than by land because of the problem of unfavourable winds.<sup>31</sup> The time that a despatch took from Basra to Bushehr was generally a little less, three or four days because the winds in this direction were generally favourable.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time as the Bushehr resident had to report on all his activities there to the Basra agent, he had also to write despatches to Bombay containing all the information already sent to Basra, but doing this at less frequent intervals. This not only

created more paper work but also increased delays because requests to Basra could not be separated from those to Bombay. There is evidence, for example, that the indent from Bushehr for woollens went to Basra first for relaying to Bombay, even though, in the meantime, a direct order to Bombay might have been fulfilled sooner.<sup>33</sup> The only real modification in this system occurred in 1807 when the Bushehr resident was put into direct contact with London. This was the result of the Company's recognition of the increasing importance of the PG as French influence in the area grew and the British government needed to be more quickly informed of these events.<sup>34</sup>

#### 5.4 : The means of transportation used by the EIC in the PG, 1763-1810

The means of communication generally used by the Company to link India with the PG were maintained either with its own ships (those in EIC's marine in India), those which the EIC hired for the voyage to India from London (which also made the round voyage before returning back to London), or those of other English owners, although some local vessels, either Indian, Arab or Iranian were also involved. The Company vessels during the period under study can be considered under two headings on the basis of, first, tonnage and role, and secondly the normal length of the voyage undertaken.<sup>35</sup> First, there were the Company ships known as East Indiaman (Appendix 5.3) which were chiefly used for Company trade between London and India. The average registered tonnage of these vessels was 499 tons in the 1750s, but in later decades larger versions of these general cargo vessels appeared.<sup>36</sup> For example, the average tonnage of 78 Company ships sent to China and India between 1782-1786 was 760 tons but of these only two exceeded 800 tons.<sup>37</sup> A further increase in the size of ship to be used on the eastern passages was approved by the Company

in 1786 and the first two ships of this class - the "Nottingham" and the "Ocean" - made their journeys in 1789 and had a tonnage of about 1150 tons.<sup>38</sup> In fact, by this time, the Company ships on this route were some of the largest in the English merchant navy. They were also well armed because of the nature of the waters they had to operate in, so that these "Blackwall frigates" were neither ordinary merchantmen nor proper ships of war, but a form of armed merchant vessel.<sup>39</sup> As early as 1709 it had been the custom for the Company to hire and not to own its shipping.<sup>40</sup> It could be related to the Company's adherence to old tradition that ship and cargo were not the property of the same man.<sup>41</sup>

It was not uncommon for the larger ships outward bound from England to visit the PG ports as indicated for a sample of voyages in Appendix 5.2, and presumably this became more practicable with larger ships, particularly from the beginning of the nineteenth century. As mentioned in chapter 2 an overriding objective was then to reduce freight charges by despatching the ships directly to Bushehr so as to reduce the cost price of woollens for the Iranian market by cutting freight costs and insurance charges on unsold woollens.<sup>42</sup> But so far as this research is concerned, no evidence was found to prove whether this change was actually introduced or not by 1810.

The second class of vessel used by the EIC was employed only on the route between India and the PG and formed part of the Company's maritime service based at Bombay. This service had been formed in 1613 to protect and serve the Surat factory and local trade along the Malabar Coast, but the fleet had become a considerable naval force in the area by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> By this time it included over twenty vessels.<sup>44</sup> As time went on, its duties were no longer confined to the carriage and protection of local trade, especially the carriage of the Company's mail between

India and the PG, but had been extended to the trade between India and the PG. These vessels were more varied in type and smaller than the East Indiaman but they were well armed. Some had been constructed in India. However, it was the custom for the Company from as early as 1620 to leave its oldest ships in India to act as men-of-war, rather than to return them to England, thus some of the vessels in the eighteenth century fleet could have been older British vessels.<sup>45</sup> The clear exception to this was the Bombay Grab class of ships built in India since the early 1700s and described as:

*"...not only as strong, but as handsome, are as well finished as ships built in any part of Europe; the timber and plank, of which they are built, so far exceeds any in Europe for durability, that it is usual for ships to last fifty or sixty years;...."*<sup>46</sup>

Table 5.4 lists six types of vessel which formed part of the Company's Indian fleet during the period under study, nearly all of which were probably engaged in the Company's woollen trade.

The Company's use of at least some Indian-built ships on its eastern cabotage since the early seventeenth century reflected a major concern not only for cheapness but also suitability. However it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that the Company had vessels built in India to its own specific requirements.<sup>47</sup> An Act of Parliament of 1772 empowered the Company to have built, or to hire, ships in India both for the purposes of its local trade and defence.<sup>48</sup> There is also evidence to suggest that some ships owned by native merchants in the PG in the second half of the eighteenth century were also Indian-built and possibly shared features of the Company ships commissioned from the same ship builders.<sup>49</sup>

TABLE 5.4

A sample of EIC's vessels which belonged to the Bombay Marine,  
1763-1769

| Name    | Type                             | Number of guns carried |
|---------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Drak    | Snow (a 3 masted brig)           | 14                     |
| Tyger   | Not known                        | 8                      |
| Revenge | Frigate (a fast escort vessel)   | 28                     |
| Eagle   | Snow (a 3 masted brig)           | 16                     |
| Success | Ketch (a small 2 masted coaster) | 14                     |
| Bombay  | Grab*                            | 24                     |

Sources: RRPGB Vol.1 (1 and 2); Parsons (1808); Kelly (1968)

Evidence exists that most of these were engaged in the carriage of the Company's goods (woollen<sup>s</sup>).

\*Grab is a corruption of the Arabic word ghurab (literally "crow").

The term was originally applied to a galley propelled by oars, but later on it was used to denote any swift, well-armed sailing vessel. It was a ship with three masts and a sharp prow. Emin (1792); Lockhard (1958).

All of these ships, whether British or Indian-built, dominated the trade between India and the PG for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Sixty-seven per cent of the ships known to have been engaged in communication between Bombay and the PG during 1800-1810, for example, carried English colours.<sup>50</sup> This dominance of the trade route by British registered vessels over those of other, notably Arabs,<sup>51</sup> is seen in detail in Fig. 5.2. In only one year, 1804-5, during that decade did the number of Arab ships arriving at Bombay from the PG exceed British ships. While some local vessels may have been permitted to carry the British flag, it still seems safe to assume that British vessels generally outnumbered others. What is of interest to note is the relative size of the Arab vessels compared with the British vessels on the Bushehr-Bombay route. Whereas the British vessels ranged in tonnage from 160-380 tons,<sup>52</sup> reflecting the more limited range of vessels used, the Arab vessels, though outnumbered two to one, generally ranged between 150 and 500 tons,<sup>53</sup> including dhows, grabs and trankeys.<sup>54</sup>

By contrast with the situation of Bombay, local vessels accounted for 88 per cent of the traffic between Surat and the PG in the period 1803-1810, and here the average vessel was much smaller at 70 to 148 tons.<sup>55</sup> Most of these vessels were in fact, of the more traditional types known collectively to the Company official as "Muslim shipping".<sup>56</sup> At both ports as European ships were introduced, traditional Moslem shipping went into decline, with the main exception of those local traders who switched increasingly to the larger Indian-built vessels in order to compete with EIC shipping and other English vessels.

Apart from the material outlined above, virtually nothing is known for the study period about native Iranian shipping interests.



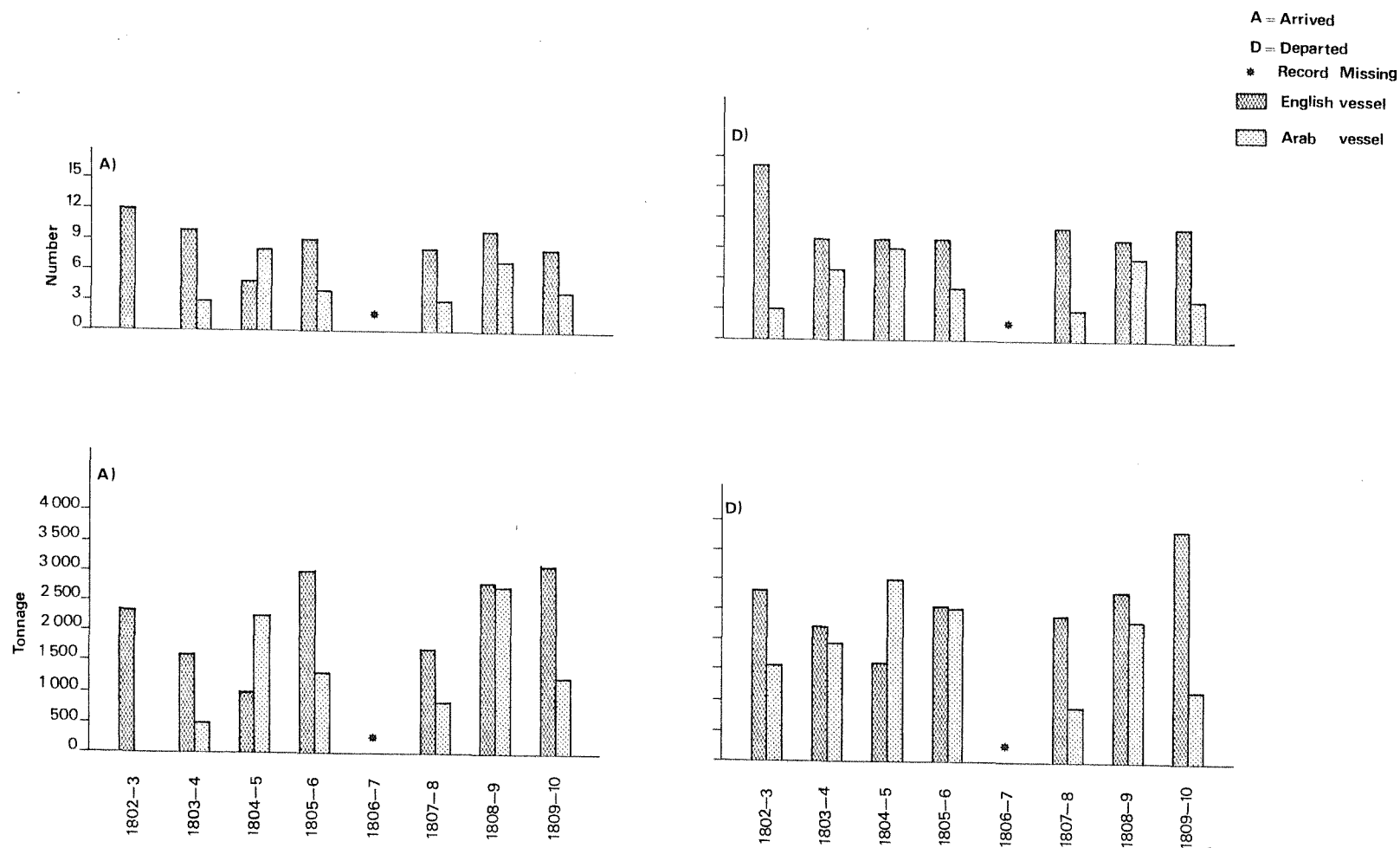


FIGURE 5.2 Number and tonnage of ships arriving in Bombay from the PG and departing Bombay for the PG, 1802-1810  
Source: BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46

There are no records of Iranian shipping activities based on Bushehr for the period 1763-1810, but there is reason to believe that a few Iranian vessels were based there. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, at a time of uncertainty for trade within Iran, it is known that some Iranians put their capital into ships which could be hired out. Generally these vessels were locally crewed but had a European Commander<sup>57</sup> so that they really formed part of a considerable and varied fleet of cabotage vessels under Indian, Arab or British ownerships. There were also some small Iranian craft based at Bushehr and suitable only for use within the Gulf. But most Iranian vessels based at Bushehr seem to have been warships belonging either to the Iranian government or to the governor of Bushehr.<sup>58</sup> In general Iranians paid little attention to maritime activities, particularly after the Sasanian Dynasty (A.D.222 - 651), and it was not till the 1730s, during the reign of Nadir Shah, that some interest was taken in naval activities.<sup>59</sup> Nadir Shah was anxious to develop naval power in the PG and tried to fulfill this plan by starting to construct warships at Bushehr with timber carried overland from Mazandaran. He did not survive long enough, however, to realise his ambitions. The Company opposed his plans in various ways. In the 1740s, when two English privateers sold their ships to the Nadir Shah's admiral to form part of his navy, the Company ordered their agent in Bandar Abbas to forbid Englishmen from selling anymore vessels to the Iranian government and stressed to the Iranian authorities the advantages of trading under EIC protection.<sup>60</sup> It is not known why specifically the Company opposed Nadir's ambitions, but it can be assumed that his success would have threatened the Company's commercial and political interests in the region, as well as in India. Nadir Shah's invasion of India during the first half of the eighteenth century was an obvious reason for the Company's fear.

## 5.5 : The EIC's problems regarding navigation in the Indian Ocean and the PG

Whatever the type of ship engaged in the trade of the PG, they were all exposed to numerous natural hazards. In addition to the currents, rocks, shoals, reefs and islands, there were also pirates who exploited these elements (Fig. 5.3). Effective communication also depended upon a knowledge of the monsoons and local winds, but the Company made only limited headway in dealing with these hazards. Each will be considered here in turn.

### 5.5.1 : Hazards of the Sea

In spite of the long history of contact between the EIC and Iran no serious attempt was made by the Company to survey the coast of Iran from the Shatt al Arab to the Straits of Hormuz before the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup> No adequate chart of the Gulf previously existed.<sup>62</sup> The only reasonable map available was that published by the German traveller, Carsten Niebuhr, (Fig. 5.4) toward the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Inadequate information about the risks to navigation in the PG cost the EIC great expense each year for the repair or replacement of wrecked vessels. A letter written from Bushehr in 1785 illustrates a not infrequent occurrence:

*"A letter from Mr Manesty who is in charge of the Honourable Company's affairs at Bussora informs me that a boat he despatched to Muscat the 15th of October with packets for the Governor and Council of Bombay was wrecked in a hard Northerly wind near Genowa, and that an Indian servant of his who had charge of the packets had returned to Bassra..."*<sup>64</sup>



FIGURE 5.3 Chart of the Persian Gulf by John van Keulen, 1787  
Source: I.O.L.R. (by permission)

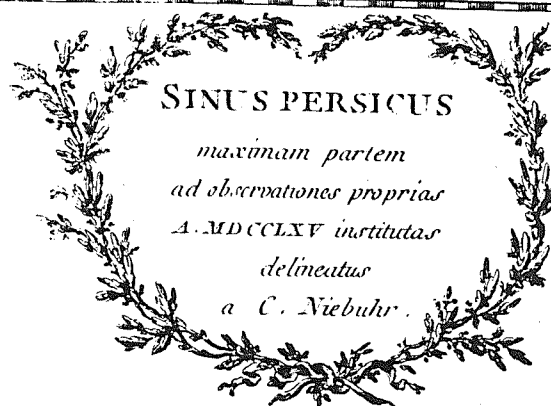


FIGURE 5.4 Map of the Persian Gulf by Carsten Niebuhr, 1765  
Source: I.O.L.R. (by permission)

By the end of the eighteenth century, due to the increased frequency of communication between India and the PG resulting from growing commercial and political interests and the CD's concern for faster conveyance of its despatches to London, it became necessary for the Company to show a greater interest in surveying and gathering more accurate information about the problems of navigating the PG. Accordingly, a brief survey of the coast of Iran was made in 1785 by Lieutenant John McCluer of the Bombay marine service.<sup>65</sup> But within a few years the McCluer charts were being criticised as inaccurate.<sup>66</sup>

5.5.1.1: The effect of the Indian monsoon and PG's winds on the Company's navigation between India and the PG

Recording and using the variable wind conditions in the region presented other problems. The importance of the monsoon winds, and their seasonal changes in the eastern seas made it necessary for the EIC to send its ships out from Europe to India either in the winter (November-December) or early Spring. In this way and allowing about six months for the voyage, the vessel would normally arrive in the Indian Ocean during the south-west monsoon (April-September).<sup>67</sup> July and August were the best time of the year to arrive in the Indian Ocean as the winds have settled into a steady pattern and no change took place until September.<sup>68</sup> For a ship calling in the PG on the way to India, or continuing on from India to the Gulf, the strong local winds in the approaches to the Gulf also had to be considered. A passage from India to the PG was customarily undertaken during the period of the north-east monsoon from October to March. During this time a favourable wind could reduce the length of the voyage from India to Masqat to two weeks, whereas during the south-west monsoon (April-October) it could take four to six weeks to do the same journey.<sup>69</sup> To reach the

Gulf from India during the south-west monsoon required a voyage to five or ten degrees south of the Equator and then a change of course northward to run before the monsoon.<sup>70</sup> During the period June-September any direct passage from India to Masqat was impossible and for this reason, as well as because of the dangers involved, most shipping on the route, like most local shipping on the Indian coast, ceased at this season.<sup>71</sup> Delaying the passage until September or even October was also hazardous. The changeover of the monsoons produced variable winds. Consequently, the best season for sailing from Bombay or Surat to the PG was from November to March, at the time of the north-east monsoon. Whilst the trip to Masqat could be fast and could be completed in two weeks, it normally took at least another two weeks to make the remaining shorter voyage to Bushehr.<sup>72</sup> This was because the monsoon had far less effect inside the Gulf than outside.<sup>73</sup>

Of course, much more data is now available on the various winds of the region than was the case in the eighteenth century so that it is appropriate here to refer to the contemporary sources, in the form of Company records or passenger accounts, to understand better how shipping in and around the Gulf was affected by the winds. It was known that a north-westerly wind blows across the PG all year round, but with intervening southerlies, especially in the winter months:

*"In this Gulph, the North Westers are the prevailing winds, all the year round. November, December and January, are the only months to depend upon having southerly winds. What you have at any other time is mere chance, and when blow fresh for two or three days, you are certain of the North Westers with double violence: In those months, I have been running up with a southerly wind, fludding*

*sails out on both sides, and the North Wester has taken us a-back, and, to that degree, to bring us under our foresail, and close Reef Main Topsail, and oblige us to look for shelter under the Lee of the nearest Island: for it is in vain to attempt working against it. According to the strength of the southerly wind that blew before, you may expect the North Wester, double in strength, in time. These North Westers seldom exceed five days, oftener two and three days; when they abate, it either changes to the southward, or light land winds."*<sup>74</sup>

This dominance of north-west winds is now known to be the result of the prevalence of low pressure centred over West Pakistan.<sup>75</sup> In places the wind has a strong northerly component as a result of the disposition of mountain barriers. (Fig. 5.5). Contemporary writers also understood that these northerly winds, called locally Shamal, were a particularly serious problem for navigation, especially during the time of the Grand Shamal (Shamal Kabeer) at the height of summer, and made northward voyages very difficult. The Grand Shamal was mentioned by almost every traveller who voyaged in the PG during the eighteenth century.<sup>76</sup> As McCluer wrote in the 1780s:

*"The Northerly Wind, is called by the Arabs, Baw Shaumaul. This wind blows once a year for 40 days without intermission, this they call shaumaul Gubbier, or Grand shaumaul, It happens in June and July. It is needless for a vessel to attempt to work up, during this time, though I have known our vessels to turn up the river during these winds.*

*There is likewise a smaller shaumaul, that blows in March and April, sometimes 20 days without the least variation in strength or point:....."*<sup>77</sup>



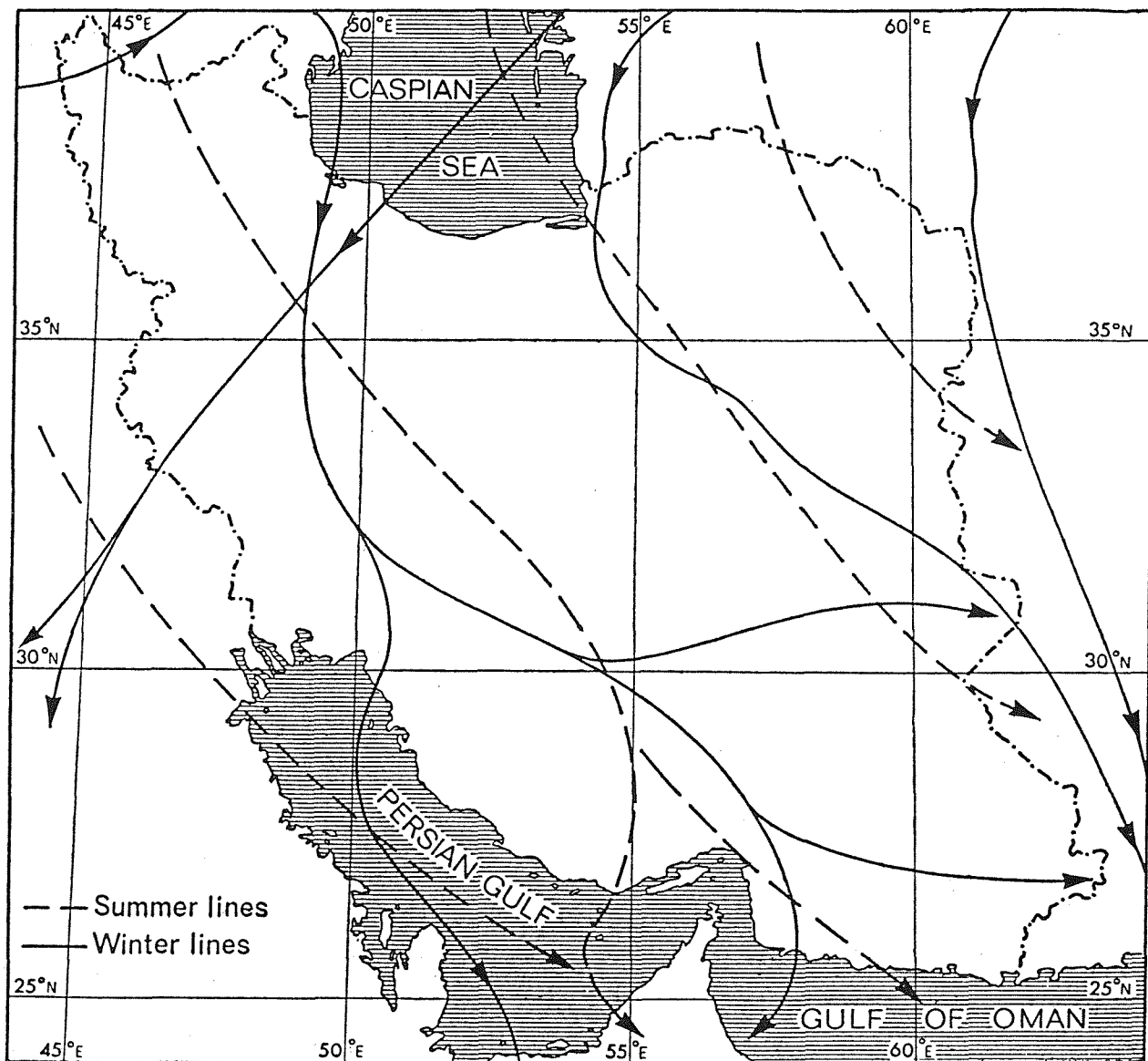


FIGURE 5.5 Streamlines over Iran and Persian Gulf  
After Fisher (1968)

Apart from the delays caused by the Shamal and grand Shamal in particular, the winds of the PG were seen as presenting no particular navigational and sailing problems in themselves. These came rather from the characteristic of sudden changeability:

*"The navigation of the Persian Gulph is plain and easy; and although the strong Northerly winds, which generally prevail in it, in the month of June and July, render the passage from Muscat to any of its ports, both boisterous and tedious, and the violence of the south west monsoon prevents, during the months of June, July, August and September, direct passage being made from the ports of India to Muscat, yet by perseverance and skill, a passage may be made in a well found European vessel."*<sup>78</sup>

The variability of the Gulf winds had several effects on navigation, most notably the danger of grounding on the shallow shoaling coast of the lee shore, or actually losing one's way as a result of adjusting the course of the vessel to the changing winds.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore vessels were not normally rigged to work against the wind, and even where the rigging was adequate, the ports were often sited so that they were not easy to reach in difficult wind conditions. Not least, there was a lack of accurate information about hazards like shoals.

Reasons like these also help to explain the frequent interruption that occurred to shipping using the port of Bushehr from Bombay and other ports. Bushehr, as the later part of the chapter shows, is exposed both to the shamal as well as to southerly winds so that the entrance to the port was often hazardous. The shallowness of the water also meant that vessels often had to

anchor well offshore and, as will be seen later, could gain little shelter from winds. All of this frequently delayed the arrival, unloading, loading and departure of vessels as some examples from the Company's letters quoted below will indicate:

*"....her detention here was rather longer than we could have wished, but the collecting of coins proper for sending by her our balance of cash and two or three days of strong southerly winds prevented her going sooner."80*

*"The very bad weather since the arrival of the Morning Star, has prevented the woollens by her landed before this afternoon; and she is now dispatched to you agreeable to the Honourable the President and Council orders on that subject....."81*

*"The weather having continued so extremely bad since the arrival of the Grab as not to admit of the woollens by her being landed before this morning, I have now the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your favour....."82*

*".....is by far the worst season of the year in the Gulph the great shammeul is now blowing with violence, the service the ship is going on, is a dangerous one, the wear-tear-loss of sails, rigging spars-anchors, and cibles, are likely to be great under these circumstances....."83*

Such delays in loading and unloading not only contributed to disorganisation of the EIC's market at Bushehr, but also led to the

extra costs of waiting for those merchants who were travelling to Bushehr for the purpose of purchasing the woollens.

Finally, to add to these natural hazards there was the danger to ships from piratical attacks.

#### 5.5.2 : Piratical activities in the PG

While one traveller in the PG noted that its passage was possible, he also drew attention to the danger from pirates:

*"....a passage may be made in a well found European ship. Vessel may with propriety sail from Bussora, on a voyage to any port in India, on any day in the year---- In the navigation of the Persian gulph, some degree of risk is justly to be apprehended from pirates."84*

A number of individuals and groups at various times created the threat of piratical attack but three main ones - Mir Mohanna, the Banu Ka'b<sup>and</sup> the Jowasim - will be described here since the measures taken against them help to explain the preponderance of EIC shipping over that of other merchants in the PG.

The endemic nature of piracy in the PG at this time resulted from the limited economic opportunities offered by the position of the surrounding land areas so close to a major shipping route where ships were always likely to get into difficulties.<sup>85</sup> Access to this major shipping route in turn provided pirates with the chance they needed for plunder. As well as that, there was a traditional opposition to foreign influences in the region and these infidels were often represented by <sup>the</sup> European vessels or even those of Shia Moslems.<sup>86</sup> Linked to this was the political power

vacuum left by the decline of the Iranian presence on the Arabian coasts and the emergence of a power struggle in the area as Wahhabism expanded from the interior of Arabia. One manifestation of this was fighting at sea and along the coasts of Arabia.

From 1754 to 1769, the leading pirate in the PG was Mir Mohanna who controlled Bandar-e Rig and Kharg Island.<sup>87</sup> Mohanna's activities not only interrupted the EIC's sea routes, particularly between Bushehr and Basra, but also caused a great deal of disturbance to the overland route between Bushehr and Shiraz by attacks on, and the plundering of, caravans.<sup>88</sup> The insecurity of communication between Basra and Bushehr by sea<sup>is</sup> illustrated by the following letter written at Bushehr in 1768:

*"---This difficulty of sending advices from hence to Bussora may possibly be continued till the reduction of Carrack, which we have thought proper to mention that you may see the necessity of convoying your letters to the Agent and Council by the direct road overland for Schirass (Shiraz), without depending entirely on having them forwarded from hence...."*<sup>89</sup>

Although Mohanna's activities in the period 1758-1768 clearly damaged the trade of Iran via Bushehr, the policy of Karim Khan was to take every possible step to avoid an open outbreak of any war with him.<sup>90</sup> However, by neither defeating Mir Mohanna, nor making a positive alliance with him the Khan had to resort to a series of small attacks. But Mir Mohanna succeeded in escaping from the effects of these every time. The EIC's role in this matter was very mixed. On the one hand, it requested action from the Khan against Mohanna and gave assurances of its cooperation in this. On the other hand, the Company had considered the possibility of making an alliance itself with Mohanna and establishing a residency at Kharg Island in return

for his co-operation against the equally hostile Arabs of the Ka'b, whose interference in the Basra river area was hampering the Company's communications in that region.<sup>91</sup> Finally, in 1769, Karim Khan launched an attack against Mohanna on Kharg. The Khan captured the island but Mohanna managed to escape to Basra<sup>92</sup> where disorders caused by Mohanna finally ended with his murder in 1769.<sup>93</sup>

The Company's struggle with the Ka'b Arab was a much more serious and costly affair. The Ka'b were an Arab tribe headed by Shaykh Salman which possessed country on the frontier of the Turkish and Iranian empires.<sup>94</sup> Although they did not themselves recognise either the Iranian or the Turkish authorities and challenged them both, they were considered by outsiders to be both Iranian and Turkish subjects.<sup>95</sup> The Banu Ka'b became more powerful after 1763 but the EIC only became seriously alarmed about their activities when they blockaded the Shatt al Arab and interrupted the commerce of Basra.<sup>96</sup> Then in July, 1765 Shaykh Salman carried out his first direct hostilities against the English. His men captured two Company ships, the "Salay" and "Fort William", as well as a merchant ship, "Islamabad".<sup>97</sup> The interference of Ka'b Arabs in the navigation of the PG eased after the death of their leader, Shaykh Salman, in August 1768.<sup>98</sup> His successor allied himself with Karim Khan and co-operated with him against Oman and in the capture of Basra.<sup>99</sup> In total the Company's losses as a result of the Ka'b's interference were put at 1,018,836 Rup.<sup>100</sup> This was due partly to the plundering and loss of vessels and partly to the cost of the Company's expeditions against the Ka'b.<sup>101</sup>

Amongst the other piratical attacks which interrupted the EIC's communications in the PG in the first decade of the nineteenth

century were those made by the Jowasim. Their aim was to control the shipping of the PG. This derived from their being the controlling elite in the Gulf, as well as from the decline of Iranian government control over its ports.<sup>102</sup> The Jowasim marshalled a very considerable fleet at several bases and Fig. 5.6 shows the ports where the Jowasim and their supporters were located, all of them being just inside the Strait of Hormuz on a coast favoured for piracy by its character as a lee shore composed of shoals and reefs. According to a well-authenticated report the Jowasim possessed 83 large vessels and over 800 smaller crafts which were manned by nearly 19,000 men.<sup>103</sup> Johnson in his description of the piratical activities of the Jowasim, indicates that the "piratical dhows" they possessed were fast vessels which were large and light.<sup>104</sup> Each carried two or three guns and were manned by between 300-500 well armed men, their manner of attacking a vessel being to overpower the crew by sheer weight of numbers when the vessel was becalmed or in some sort of difficulty.<sup>105</sup>

While these were the main piratical episodes, there were other instances of isolated attacks on vessels, but to the ships' masters and the EIC it was not the actual identity of the pirate group that was as important as the need to protect one's self from all such incidents. Reference was made in chapter 4 to the EIC's role in protecting the country trade from these pirate attacks, and the manner of sailing in a large group seems to have been a useful solution to the problem. Parson's account describes the manner in which the convoy was organised:

*"On July the 15th, at five in the morning, I embarked on board His Majesty's ship the Seahorse,*

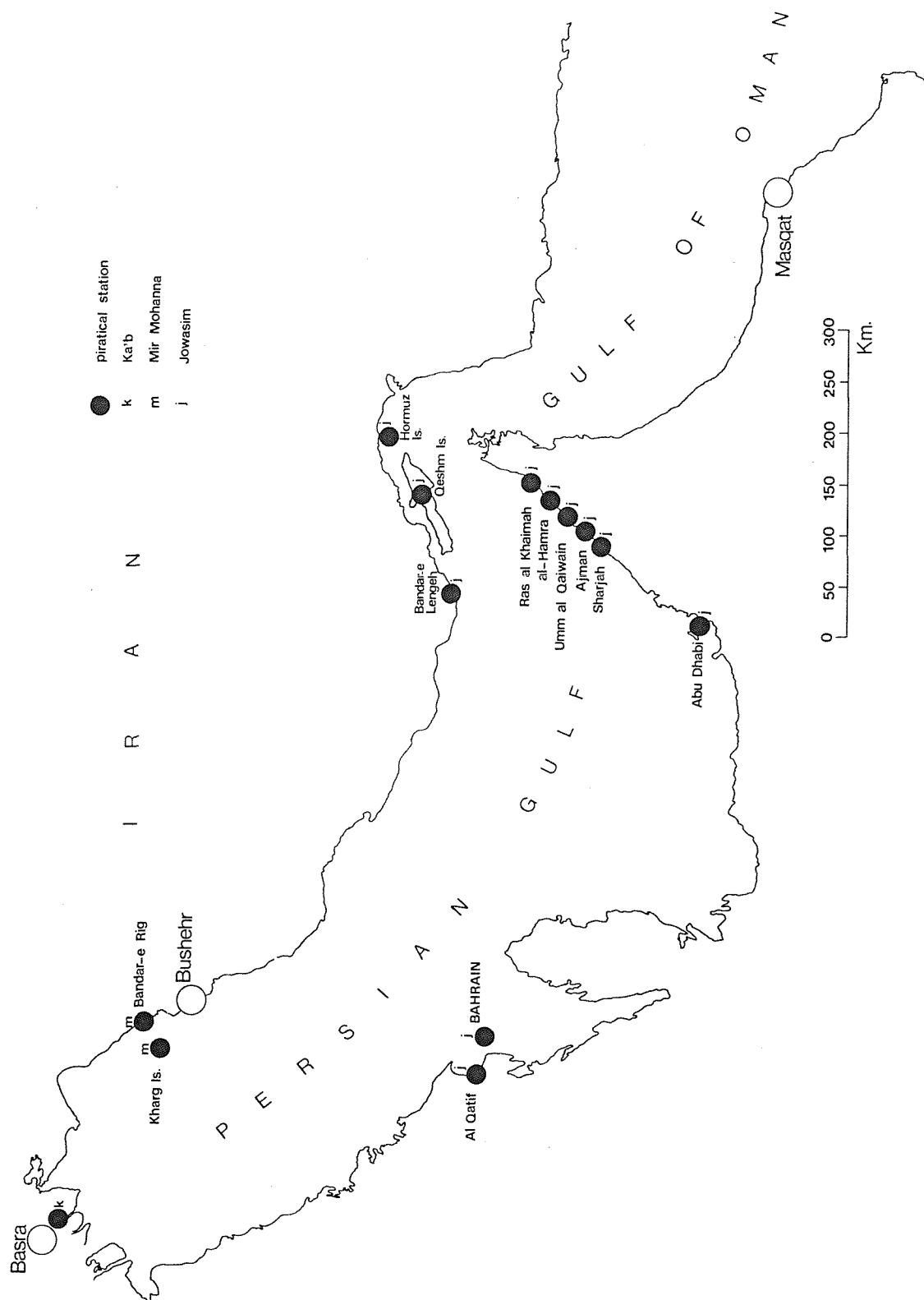


FIGURE 5.6 Pirates' stations in Persian Gulf, 1763-1810  
 Sources: Kelly (1968); Wilson (1920);  
PPG vol.25 (1790)



*Captain George Farmer, who anchored in the outer road to wait for the ships which were to proceed with him to Bombay. At four in the afternoon the following ships joined the Eagle cruiser, three merchant ships, the pasha of Bagdad's two ketches, and a schooner belonging to the governor of Bombay; the Drake snow, Captain Gage, remaining behind. At six in the evening we all weighed anchor, and sailed down the gulph of Persia.*<sup>106</sup>

A similar system was also used for those vessels leaving India for the PG.<sup>107</sup> The merchant vessels in such a fleet would wait at Masqat until the Company's cruiser arrived from Basra to convoy them safely up the Gulf.

Taken together, these physical hazards of the sea and the piratical activities which they fostered had an interrupting effect upon the EIC communications with its market in Iran. However, growing piratical activities in the PG meant an increase in the EIC's role as a protector of country trade which, in return, provided the Company with more power to control the affairs of the region, something the Company was interested in. The fight against piracy thus increased the political role of the EIC in the region.

As indicated already, further interruptions to the EIC commercial activities were created by the physical state of the port of Bushehr, as well as by the physical and human-related problems which existed along the overland route linking Bushehr with the interior market. The following sections deal with the remaining problems.

## 5.6 : Port of Bushehr

Bushehr became one of the main commercial gateways to Iran from 1763 onward. It is situated on a twelve mile sandy peninsula curving northward into the sea, enclosing on its landward side a wide shallow bay unfit for vessels of any size.<sup>108</sup> On its seaward side, as mentioned before, there is an anchorage but it is exposed to the prevailing north-west wind (shamal) and was so shallow that a vessel had to anchor a couple of miles off-shore.<sup>109</sup> There were, in fact, two anchorages offshore, the inner and outer roads. The inner one lay up to five km. off-shore, with a depth of four to five metres of water.<sup>110</sup> The outer road lay six to ten km. from the shore and had a depth of 14-18 metres.<sup>111</sup> Fig. 5.7 shows these features of the harbour and town. The outer road in particular was very risky and dangerous due to lack of shelter under strong north-westerly winds.<sup>112</sup> The inner road, where ships normally anchored directly fronted the river and was more sheltered. As Johnson wrote in the first decade of the nineteenth century:

*"On entering the outer road we made signal for a pilot, and with his assistance stood over the bar, and anchored in the inner roads, where the sea is not so much affected by the winds, being nearly surrounded by sand banks. It was fortunate that we arrived at this period, for a N.W. wind set in with considerable violence, which, if we had been at sea, would have driven us back."*<sup>113</sup>

There were many channels at the entrance of the inner road between which there was no more than two to three metres of water. This meant that ships of greater draught had to anchor at least ten km. from the shore in quite exposed water.<sup>114</sup> With shoals close by,



FIGURE 5.7 Chart of Bushehr by David Simmons, 1774  
Source: I.O.L.R. (by permission)

it seems to have been the custom for all the ships heading past Bushehr for Basra to make a signal from the outer road at Bushehr to fetch a local pilot to guide them on their voyage to Basra; the returning ships also carried a pilot into Bushehr.<sup>115</sup>

Beside north-westerly and southerly winds, ships captains also always had to contend with land and sea breezes which are particularly strong and regular during Spring and Autumn.<sup>116</sup> At most seasons the wind in early morning is from slightly east of north, and in the afternoon from the north-west or west.<sup>117</sup> (Fig. 5.8 and Appendix 5.5).

#### 5.7 : The town of Bushehr

The town of Bushehr was built at the extreme end of the peninsula forming the inner roadstead.<sup>118</sup> It was described by Niebuhr in 1765:

*"The town is triangular in figure,  
of which two sides are situated  
on the sea; the third is fortified  
by a bad wall, with some towers..."*<sup>119</sup>

The town had a circumference of five km. and according to Parsons, had a long and rectangular form with the longest sides those on each seashore.<sup>120</sup> The situation of the land on which the town was built is so low that its buildings were said to be seen much sooner on the seaward side than from the land.<sup>121</sup>

The earliest settlement on the Bushehr peninsula may have been Rishahr, situated some ten km. to the south of the eighteenth century town and port.<sup>122</sup> Bushehr itself, though, may have existed as a settlement in Sasanian times, but nothing is known about it

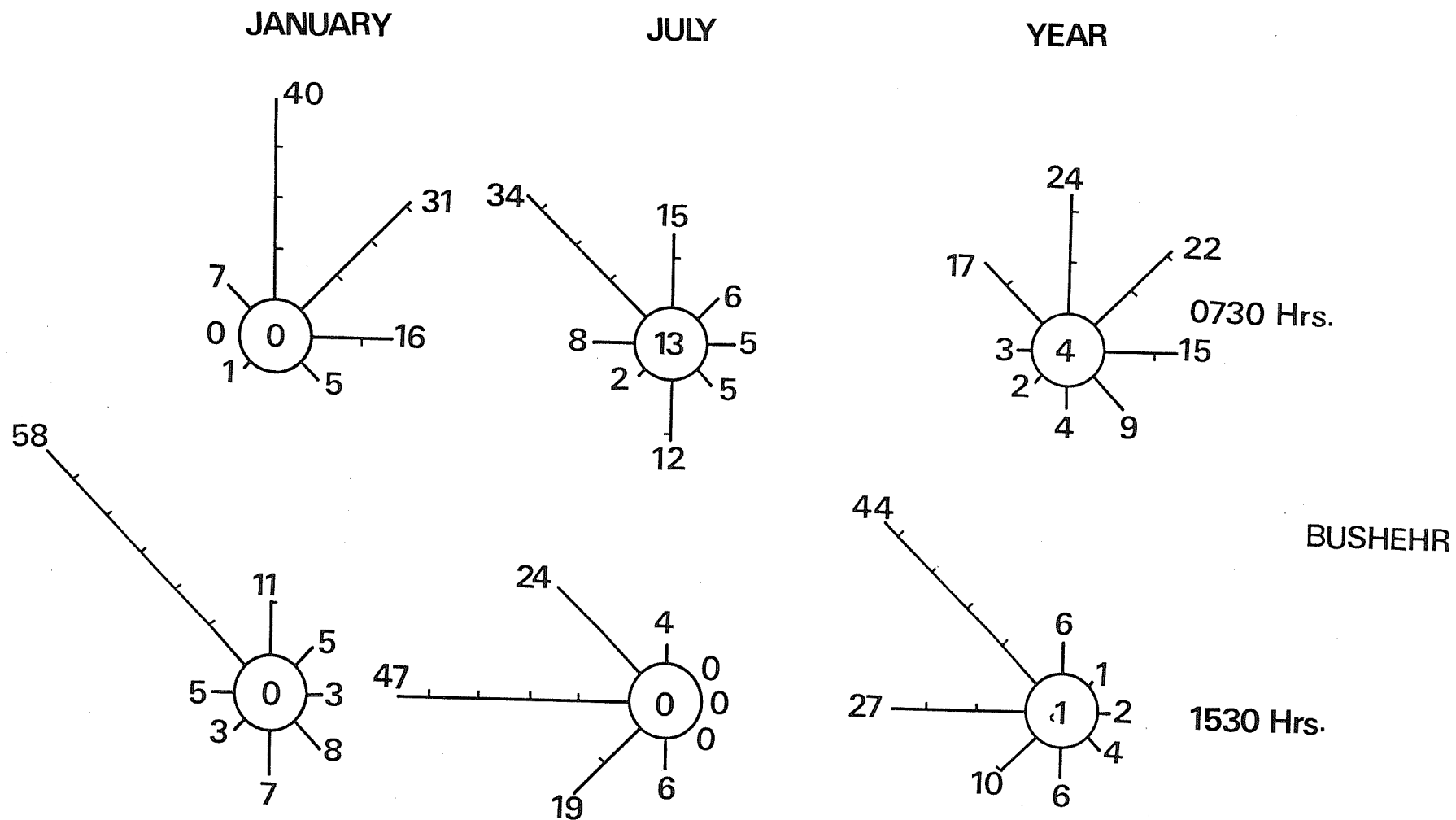


FIGURE 5.8 Percentage frequency of wind directions at Bushehr  
Source: Naval Intelligence Division (1945)

until the sixteenth century. The Portuguese built a castle on the peninsula (Rishahr) and with it a walled settlement.<sup>123</sup> They were forced to abandon the area during the reign of Shah Abbas and the town became an insignificant village. Bushehr gained importance with the accession of Nadir Shah (1736)<sup>124</sup> when he planned to turn the port into a naval base, build ships there, and promote it as the major centre for Iranian seaborne trade.<sup>125</sup> It is not clear, however, why Nadir Shah chose Bushehr from the array of possible contenders along the Iranian shore of the PG. The best explanation may be that the physical conditions of the area were judged favourable to shipbuilding<sup>126</sup>, and it may also have possessed some advantages to Nadir Shah in his expansionary wars. Be that as it may, Bushehr's prosperity grew with the establishment of the Zand Dynasty at Shiraz in 1753. It was, after all, the nearest port to the capital and lay in territory which the Zand dominated. The governor of the town may have assisted its development through his concern to maximise his revenues by promoting trade. The establishment of the EIC in the port in competition with the Dutch in Kharg Island must also have done something to expand the port's commerce.

At the time covered by this study, Bushehr was described as looking from a distance like a city half-built, and this was because the houses were irregularly scattered over the site and mixed with ruins between which ran streets no more than two and one half metres wide.<sup>127</sup> There were supposed to be about 400 houses in the town during the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>128</sup> They had flat roofs, above which rose wind towers (Badgir) to admit air into the interior rooms. Building materials were either clay or a soft sandstone brought from the ruins of Rishahr ten km. to the south.<sup>129</sup> Neither material enhanced the respectability of the town, in the view of European visitors. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the town contained three caravanserais for the

accommodation of merchants.<sup>130</sup> The bazaars were said to be exactly like those of provincial towns in Turkey,<sup>131</sup> and the shops themselves consisted of no more than little platforms, raised about two feet above the footpath.<sup>132</sup> About the only notable set of buildings in Bushehr at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the EIC's building. Since the CD's order of June 1764 forbade the building of a factory for the EIC, the resident hired a building from the governor of the town at an annual rent in 1767 of 1,000 Rup.<sup>133</sup> The building had originally been a caravanserai built of mud and stones, and consisting of numerous small apartments like all such structures.<sup>134</sup> In 1777 it was in such a bad condition, due to the governor's refusal to maintain it, that the resident requested permission to build a new factory, at an estimated cost of 6-7000 Rup.<sup>135</sup> This was not allowed so that some improvements were made to the original structure during the residency of Mr Beaumont (1775-1780) when three rooms and a stable were added.<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, in 1808 the residency was described as being in much the same state as it had been fifteen years before.<sup>137</sup> In the second decade of the nineteenth century the residency was described by Alexander as consisting of:

*"....a large court, in the centre of which stood the Residency itself, a large square building of two stories: surrounding it are irregular ranges of outhouses, containing rooms for visitors,...."*<sup>138</sup>

A considerable problem for the town was the bad quality of its water.<sup>139</sup> There were some rainwater reservoirs within the defensive walls but the supply was totally insufficient for the inhabitants, and the water at the nearest well, two km. from the town gate, was of indifferent quality.<sup>140</sup> The best sources were at ten or even more km. from the town and water was brought in from them.<sup>141</sup>

### 5.7.1 : Population

The inhabitants of the town were reported to be about 20,000 in the 1770s, but this had declined to about 8,000-10,000 by the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>142</sup> The Bushehr population was a mixture of Persians and Arabs, along with a smaller number of Armenians and Indians. The major occupations of the inhabitants were in commerce and maritime activities. The Armenian residents were chiefly engaged in the port's trade, particularly that connected with the EIC. It can be assumed that there was some seasonal variation in the population of the town which resulted from its commercial activities, as well as its climate. As far as the EIC's records reveal, the most active time of the year was between the end of September and the beginning of March. (Appendix 5.6) The commercial activity of these months, involving the sale of English woollens, can be attributed to the onset of the cold weather in the interior of Iran beginning in October, as well as to the Iranian New Year festival when it was customary to wear new clothes. As the Company's resident wrote in March 1777, when the arrival of the English woollens was delayed by several months:

*"We are much concerned to see the cold season in a manner elapsed before the arrival of the expected woollens--- as it is well known that the latest times for the Persians to purchase them is that they might reach Schiraz some days previous to the feast of their new year which happens the 21 instant. We have great reason to fear, should they come now, they will lay on hand until next September--- or that we shall be reduced to the disagreeable alternative of selling the perpets alone, as the season for the sale of cloth hold only from September to February-----"*<sup>143</sup>



August was the most unsuitable time of the year, not only for any commercial activities but even for residing in the port due to the heat and humidity.<sup>144</sup> It was usual for most of the inhabitants to move to Shiraz and adjacent towns and villages about June in order to avoid the heat of these months and to return back in September when the hot season was over.<sup>145</sup>

Due to the general aridity of the climate and the unsuitability of the land surface of the peninsula which consisted of mud and sandy desert for farming, the Bushehr area did not produce very much of anything, nor did anyone attempt to cultivate in the vicinity on any scale.<sup>146</sup> The town market which was reported to be well supplied with fruit and vegetables at good prices, was heavily reliant on the inland parts of the country, or even Basra, for its daily needs. The only item manufactured in the town was a kind of cotton cloth which was produced from some cotton grown nearby, though the major areas of production for this cloth were near Helleh (south of Bushehr peninsula).<sup>147</sup>

#### 5.8 : Inland Communications between Bushehr and Shiraz

Since Bushehr was a transshipment point it is necessary to say something of the routes inland from the port and over which goods coming into, or leaving it, had to pass. According to the Company's records there were two direct roads from Bushehr to Shiraz, one passing through "Kingdom" and the other one via Firuzabad.<sup>148</sup> The most popular of these was the former which was adopted for both commercial and travelling purposes. (Fig. 5.9) It is not known exactly why the route via Firuzabad was not as popular, but it did contain several difficult passes and bad stretches of road and was also much more lengthy at 336 km. to Shiraz than the "Kingdom"



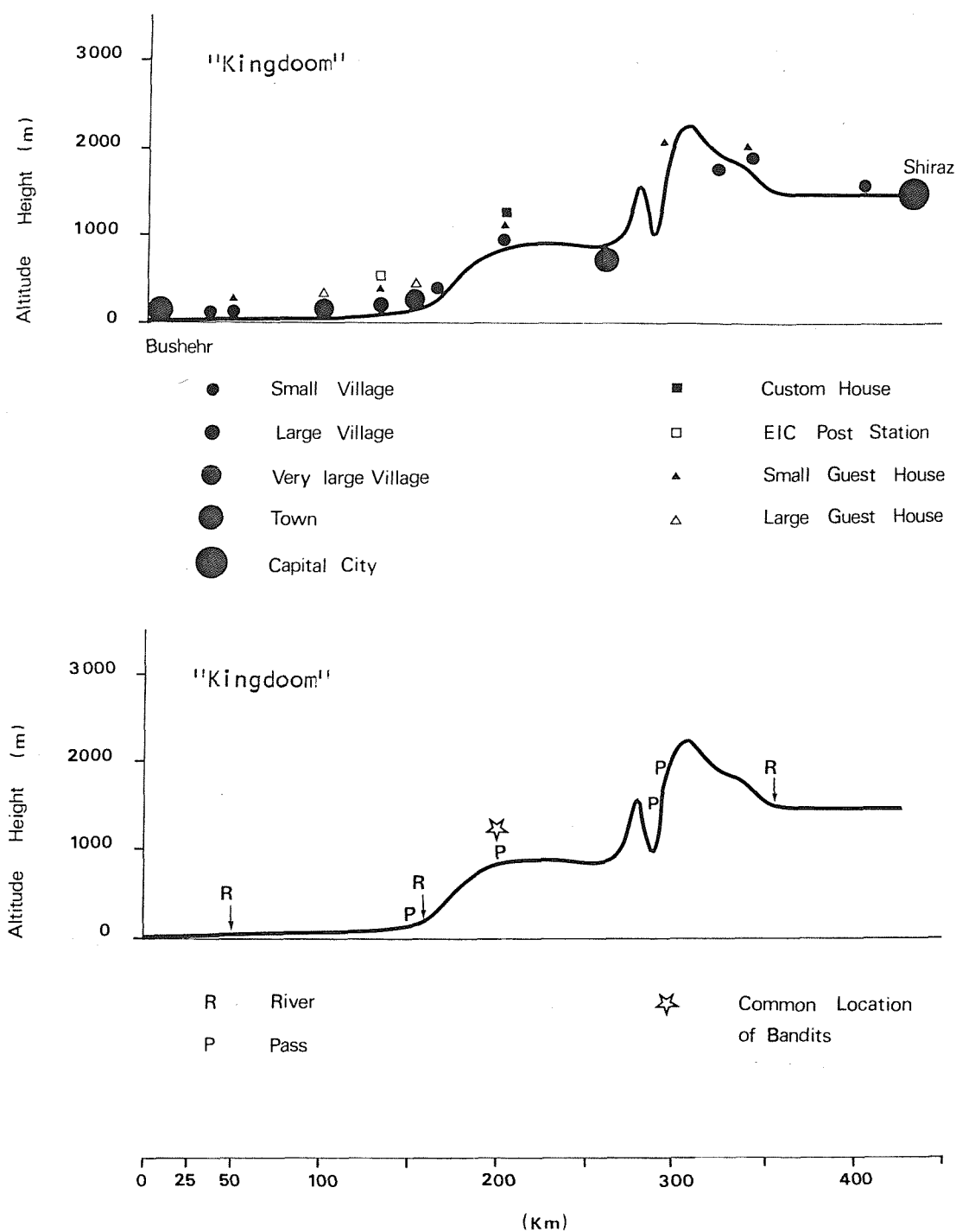
FIGURE 5.9 The road to Shiraz from Bushehr

route.<sup>149</sup> No further information is available on the Firuzabad route, but rather more can be said about the more popular one through "Kingdom". This road ran over the mountain ranges of the Zagros which rise from sea level to over 2,000 metres. The road covered a distance of about 300 km. along which were situated village inns (caravanserais) and customs posts or toll houses.<sup>150</sup> (Fig. 5.10). The most notable feature of this route was a series of passes (kotals) which made the passage long and difficult. After a distance of 83 km. from Bushehr, the road became very rough and rocky. At some points it lay partly in the bed of a river which had to be crossed three times. There was a bridge on only the third crossing but that was in a very bad condition. Nevertheless, this was better than nothing since the stream sometimes contained a large volume of water following rain and the seasonal melting of the snow.<sup>151</sup> From here the ascent of the mountains started. The first pass was some 22 km. long and described as:

*"... frequently so steep, that the mules who had gained the summit appeared to be directly above our heads, and you involuntarily trembled lest they should fall and crush you with their weight."*<sup>152</sup>

This pass, called Kotal-e Molla was at the foot of the mountain where the warm coastal climate gives way to the cold upland climate.<sup>153</sup> The road in this pass was so narrow that it was said that an up-coming mule could not have passed a down-going one, (Fig. 5.11) and the only safe way of negotiating it was to walk beside the animals.<sup>154</sup> The next pass, Kotal-e Kamarj, 61 km. beyond the previous one was less remarkable. Here the road ascends another range of mountains in a series of sudden zig-zags up the pass of Kotal-e Dokhtar.<sup>155</sup> This pass was well known for its danger to animals.<sup>156</sup> The last pass, Kotal-e Pirezan, on the route lay over 192 km. from Bushehr,

Fig 5.10: PROFILE OF THE BUSHEHR-SHIRAZ ROAD



Sources: Alexander (1827); Francklin (1790); Monteith (1857); Morier (1818); Waring (1807)



FIGURE 5.11 Mountain pass of Kotal-e Molla  
After Fraser (1834)

and it was 6 km. in length and being the highest of the three passes. The pass was heavily covered by snow from November. Due to the constant passage of traffic, the state of the road was never allowed to deteriorate, however, far enough for it to become closed,<sup>157</sup> but more animals were lamed and greater losses incurred in this pass than the others.<sup>158</sup>

Whilst the commercial importance of the route described was a source of revenue to the Iranian government, as well as for the local government of Bushehr, it was obvious that no attempt had been made to carry out any improvements to the road. As a matter of fact, the governor of Bushehr thought of these passes as an almost insurmountable barrier against his enemy and therefore purposely did not make any effort even to repair or improve it, since any improvement might help his enemies.<sup>159</sup> Two Iranian merchants ("Hajji Mohammed Hussein" and his nephew "Hajji Abdull Hameed"), whose caravans constantly sustained considerable losses on the route, made some improvement to the worst part of the road at the pass of Dokhtar.<sup>160</sup> The Iranian governments, on the other hand, were only concerned with increasing the amount of the tolls (roaderage) which they gathered from the road and most of the income was not used to improve it. In 1767 there were several roaderage (toll) stations along the road, and at each one duty was collected<sup>161</sup> but the number of roaderages were reduced in the later part of the century.<sup>162</sup> This was because of their disadvantageous effect on the trade of Bushehr which made the Iranian merchants reluctant to go down to Bushehr.<sup>163</sup>

#### 5.8.1 : Means of transportation between Bushehr and Shiraz

Transport along the road between Bushehr and Shiraz was maintained by horses, mules, camels and asses. It required twelve - fourteen

days for a caravan of merchandise using camels and mules, and rather less than that for a messenger (qussed) to complete the journey between Bushehr and Shiraz. A journey in the opposite direction took less time and can be illustrated by Francklin's journey to Shiraz. He took 14 days to go up, whereas his return journey took only nine days.<sup>164</sup> This was due to the physical state of the road and the slowness and difficulties of ascending the passes. The only statistical information available for the transportation charges for merchandise from Bushehr to Shiraz was given by Manesty in 1790. According to his account, the freight charges for 40 M.T. or a mule load of merchandise varied from 22½ to 23½ Rup., and it was slightly more (between 25½ - 26½ Rup.) for a camel load of 60 M.T.<sup>165</sup> As no other information of this sort appears to be available for Iran in the eighteenth century, it is difficult to say if the above rates were expensive.

#### 5.8.2 : Modes of travelling

Joining a caravan was the most usual form of travelling in Iran. A caravan was described as an assembly of merchants and travellers congregating for mutual protection, as there was always a certain degree of danger when crossing Iranian territory.<sup>166</sup> Merchants travelling from Shiraz to Bushehr commonly organised caravans for protection. The merchants and travellers usually hired mules and muleteers for their business. In fact, the latter were the chief agents in the organisation of the caravans and a major determinant of the manner in which the journey was performed. The manner of caravan travelling differed from one region to another, according to local conditions. With regard to the Bushehr-Shiraz route, the most important problems to be faced when considering a caravan journey were the state of the road, the weather and bandits.<sup>167</sup> The size of caravan depended upon the degree of security in the road.<sup>168</sup> So much traffic passed over this road that it was used

in winter as well as other seasons of the year. As illustrated in Fig. 5.10, the most insecure part of the Bushehr-Shiraz route was across the pass of Kamarj. It was reported at the beginning of the nineteenth century that its caravanserai had been deserted for some time and was in a ruined state from having been frequently attacked by bandits.<sup>169</sup>

### 5.8.3 : Caravanserais

Caravanserais (resting places for travellers) were large buildings providing accommodation, stabling, defence and water and erected by wealthy individuals for the convenience of travellers. A caravanserai generally formed an open square with a range of rooms at each side. Of course, the form varied from one place to another. According to Kuznetzova Iranian caravanserais were normally built in two storeys.<sup>170</sup> On the ground level there was space for pack animals and stores, and the first floor contained the living apartments used by merchants and pilgrims. The large caravanserai had shops.<sup>171</sup> They were established at the natural halting places for caravans, that is at intervals of roughly one day's journey.<sup>172</sup> The number of caravanserais varied according to the physical conditions of the road. As the journey along the mountainous routes was slower than that over the plain lands, then one may assume that the number of caravanserais were greater along the former route.<sup>173</sup> The more considerable and commodious caravanserais were located along the roads carrying the greatest amount of traffic. As illustrated in Fig. 5.10, there were seven or more caravanserais along the Bushehr-Shiraz road at roughly 40 km. intervals. The caravanserais at Konar Takhteh, Dalaki and Borazjan were praised by almost every traveller for their excellence and commodious state. The caravanserai at Dalaki was said to have had thirty-six rooms capable of accommodating two hundred persons with their animals and baggage.<sup>174</sup>



## 5.9 : Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine the obstacles which made it difficult for the EIC to keep fully and effectively in contact with its market in Iran during the period 1763-1810. A few of these problems actually derived from the Company's own conservatism and administrative policy. The Company's lack of any proper contact in the interior of Iran by means of agents established there left the EIC's residents at Bushehr with little or no information on supply and demand both for their own goods and those which they required for export. The hierarchy of administration was another cause of delay in supplying the market since the indent for goods had to be sent to Basra first before going to Bombay. <sup>The</sup> Bombay presidency was not always responsive to the needs of the Bushehr residency.

Further delays and interruptions in the Company's communication with Bushehr came from the hazards of the sea and piratical activities. The Company's tendency to interfere in local politics and to support one power against the others in the PG tended to increase hostility to the Company and attacks on its shipping. Local warfare merged into piracy and this caused considerable losses to the Company and forced it into expensive actions against these pirates. The physical state of the port of Bushehr, its debilitating climate and the difficulties of its overland communications with the interior market were other difficulties which beset the EIC's commercial activities in Iran. Climatic conditions in Iran also restricted the sale of woollens to only a few months in the year, so that if, for any reason, the woollens arrived at Bushehr during the hot season they remained unsold for several months before demand revived. The Company attempted to find solutions to these problems, particularly those which affected the safety of the navigation in the PG, such as by:

a) surveying and investigating the physical hazards of the PG

- b) Building up knowledge of the Gulf and its winds
- c) Using well-found ships, and by meeting piracy with convoys and other defences. Of course, not all of these responses were effective.

No specific evidence has been found to demonstrate that the native merchants experienced the same problems as the Company, although there is every reason to believe they did, and there is certainly reason to believe that other shipping was attacked by the pirates in the PG. A known case is that of the private merchantship "Islamabad", and where there was one unfortunate incident there is likely to have been more which were unrecorded by Europeans. The increase in the piratical activities towards the end of the eighteenth century and a postulated decline in local shipping, further increased the demand for the EIC's role in protecting Iran's trade via the PG. This not only made the Iranian government rely more on the EIC's presence in its port, but such a dependence also helped the Company to increase its power and influence in the region. By contrast with the maritime situation, the problem<sup>s</sup> on the overland route between Bushehr and Shiraz were principally the concern of native merchants. The effects were indirect but, as indicated before Bushehr constituted the link in the EIC's trading system between the maritime 'foreland' of Bushehr, and the PG which it normally controlled, and the hinterland where it made use of the existing overland dendritic marketing system. The next chapter moves the discussion to the hinterland of Bushehr and investigates the organisation of trade in the interior of Iran.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The EIC's factory system at the beginning of the 17th century was its means to organise its trade in its eastern market. According to this system, factors or agents left behind by the ships from Europe sold their goods and made provision for return cargo well before the arrival of the next year's shipping therefore, in terms of the EIC's organisation, factory is defined as a settlement for the Company's factor. But it is not known whether this was always the case or not. Chaudhuri K.N. (1965) The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company 1600-1640 (London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd.), pp.16-17
2. The EIC's establishment in the interior part of Iran could have been considered as advantageous in the following related ways:
  - a. It facilitated the flow of exports and imports between Bandar Abbas and the interior market; and made the expansion of that trade easier.
  - b. It facilitated the flow of information in regard to supply and demand
3. The resident was instructed, for example to keep no more than 10,000 Rup. of the Company's property in that port at any time. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 20 October, 1766; RRPGB vol.4 Extract from CD's Command dated 4 July 1777
4. DB vol.2 letters dated 2 May 1766 and 1 June 1764
5. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 30 November 1803  
RRPGB vol.7 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 30 November 1804
6. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr dated 20 April 1763  
RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra 6 January 1764
7. As an illustration of how the Company's Bushehr resident relied on market information from the agents of merchants with whom he dealt, one can quote his following letter to the Basra resident in 1776:  
*"In reply to your paragraph respect your apprehensions that we have been rather too sanguine in our expectations of disposing of so large a quantity of woollens annually here ---- we are to observe that the account we transmitted to the Presidency, as we mentioned to our superiors, was taken from the best informations we could gather on that head, such being the opinion of the merchants here who having partners or factory in the principal places throughout Persia may naturally be supposed to be the best judges thereof-----"*  
RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 29 November 1776
8. PPG vol.25 Report on British Trade with Persia and Arabia by Samuel Manesty and Harford Jones 15 August 1790, p.267 (This Report can also be found in MR; Marine Record, vol.891)  
RRPGB vol.10(2) letter from Bushehr dated 15 September 1808

9. Evidently the Company's resident at Bushehr also had a saraf (banker) in his service but no details are available on him. The resident was advised in April 1763 to give an allowance of 1½ per cent sarafage ('shoroffage') to encourage the saraf to remain faithful to the Company. In the beginning of the Company's establishment at Bushehr, it also had an artillery officer, six soldiers and five artillery men. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr dated 20 April 1763
10. William Bawyear, one Company resident at Bushehr in the letter from the Basra Agent in 1776 was addressed as "Resident and Factor". RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 21 August 1766; RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 14 September 1768
11. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 10 August 1776
12. There was 1 per cent brokerage charge on the sale of woollens. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 12 June 1776
13. TUSON, P. (1979) The Records of the British Residency and Agencies in The Persian Gulf (London: India Office Library and Records), p.15
14. DB vol.25 letter dated 31 August, 1804
15. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 267
16. The reason, as stated by Mr Bruce (Company's resident) in 1808, was that it was easier to keep them under control. RRPGB vol.10(2) letter from Bushehr dated 15 September 1808
17. An Act of Parliament of July 1782 stated that no British subject was permitted to trade in "East Indies or China" goods in his own account or in that of other persons. (RRPGB vol.4 Extract from CD Command dated 16 November 1784). But there is no evidence that the Company ever prevented its employees trading on their own account. Through its history the Company seemed to encourage its employees throughout all its eastern settlements to engage in private trade, and on this basis the Company could continue to pay low salaries to its servants. Amin, A.A. (1967) British Interests in the Persian Gulf 1747-1780 (Leiden: E.J.Brill), p.131
18. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 January 1803
19. DB vol.1 letter dated 29 November 1755  
RICK, T.M. (1974) Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and The Gulf 1745-1765 (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Indiana), p.379
20. RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 30 November 1783
21. DB vol.1 letter dated 29 November 1755
22. FURBER, H. (1951) 'The Overland Route to India in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', Journal of Indian History 29, 109-117

23. AMIN, op. cit., 60
24. KELLY, J.B. (1968) Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880 (Oxford: University Press), p.53
25. During 1773-1775, due to the outbreak of plague, as well as the Iranian occupation of Basra, overland communication through this route was severely interrupted. Evidently during these years overland communication between Bombay and England was carried on via the Suez. Furber, op. cit., 122-123; RRPGB vol.4 letter from Bombay to Bushehr dated 8 August, 1778
26. FURBER, op. cit., 129
27. Before Mr La Touche, Mr Stuart, who was also a Company resident of the establishment at Basra in the 1760s, also tried to cut down on the length of journey for overland despatches. Accordingly, the length of journey between Basra and Aleppo was reduced to only 20 days. Amin, op. cit., 64
28. From the CD's Command of February 1786 it can be seen that the Company's principal servants in India were allowed to send private letters to their friends in England by this overland route. RRPGB vol.4 CD's Command dated 1 February 1786
29. RRPGB vol.2 Extract from CD's Command dated 12 March 1766
30. A journey from Basra to Shushtar took only two days. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 256
31. This time can be calculated from various letters in which the time of departure and arrival was mentioned. RRPGB vols. 1 and 2 (various letters)
32. According to Waring a passage from Bushehr to Basra might have been done in 2-3 days, but under the north-westerly winds it took 6-12 days. Waring, E.S. (1807) A Tour to Sheeraz (London: Bulmer), p.152
33. Until 1785 individual letters from the Bushehr resident to Bombay included both commercial and political information, but after 1785 letters on specific subjects went to each of the various departments in the Company establishment at Bombay. These included the public, military, revenue and commercial departments. RRPGB vol.4 CD's Command 21 September 1785
34. TUSON, op. cit., 15
35. The tonnage of EIC's ships were measured by the capacity (burden) and the loadline for the cargo which they could have taken (net - registered tonnage). Chaudhuri, op. cit., 91; Parkinson, C.N. (1937) Trade in the Eastern Seas 1793-1813 (Cambridge: University Press), pp.130, 164
36. PARKINSON, op. cit., 164
37. RRPGB vol.4 Extract from CD's Commands dated 26 September 1782; 6 March 1783 and 1 February 1786

38. BCP Range 414 vol.49 letter from Bombay to Basra dated 4 July 1789
39. PARKINSON, op. cit., 165
40. Ibid. 170
41. PARKINSON, op. cit., 170
42. In 1793, the Managing Committee of ship owners made their calculation upon a freight charge of £10 per ton between England and Bombay and they did not charge additionally for the freight from Bombay to Bushehr and Basra. Parliamentary Paper, three Reports of the Select Committee appointed by the Court of Directors to take into consideration the Export Trade from Great Britain to the East Indies, 1793 (Abbot collection, Account and Papers, vol.38), p.6
43. The headquarters of the Company fleet in India was moved from Surat to Bombay in the late century. Kelly, op. cit., 58
44. PARSONS, A. (1808) Travels in Asia and Africa. (London: Longman), p.152
45. CHAUDHURI, op. cit., 92
46. PARSONS, op. cit., 216
47. PARSONS, op. cit., 215
48. COTTON, E. (1949) East Indiamen: The East India Company's Maritime Service, ed. C. Fawcett (London: Batchworth Press), pp. 45-47
49. PARSONS, op. cit., 215
50. BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46
51. The term Arab vessel is used in most of the available sources for the period under study. But it must be mentioned that most inhabitants of the Iranian coast of the PG were also of Arab origin, which means that some of these vessels mentioned could have actually belonged to Iranian owners.
52. BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46
53. Ibid.
54. The "dhow" was a small, shallow draft vessel which carried cargo to and from many ports which large ships could not reach. (Appendix 5.4). Trankeys were small undecked or partly decked craft, propelled by either a single Lateen-rigged sail or oars. Sweet, L.E. (1964) 'Pirates or Politics: Arab Societies of the Persian or Arabian Gulf 18th Century', Ethnohistory 11, 277
55. BCP Range 419 vols. 39-46
56. DAS GUPTA, A. (1970) 'Trade and Politics in 18th Century India'; in papers on Islamic History: II Islam and the Trade of Asia, ed. D.S.Richards (Oxford University Press), p.201
57. PARSONS, op. cit., 150

58. In the 1770s there were about 20 war galliotes of from 8 to 10 guns each based at Bushehr, 30-40 vessels from 40-80 tons each and many smaller vessels belonging to the merchants who traded locally. Parsons, op. cit., 188
59. LOCKHART, L. (December 1936) 'The Navy of Nadir Shah', Proceedings of The Iran Society 1, pt.1, 5-18
60. Ibid., 7
61. KELLY, op. cit., 60
62. Ibid., 60
63. KELLY, op. cit., 60
64. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to the governor ("Kalantar") of "Genowa" dated 3 December 1785
65. KELLY, op. cit., 60
66. Morier states that the soundings over the shoals as laid down by McCluer did not all correspond to those found in practice. Morier, J.J. (1818) A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople between the years 1810-1816 (London: Longman), p.9
67. FURBER, op. cit., 114
68. From the CD's despatches to Bombay during 1754-1810, it is certain that the greater number of ships forwarded to this presidency left either in November or December; only a few were sent after December. DB vols.1-30 (various despatches)
69. KELLY, op. cit., 60
70. McCLUER, J. (1786) An Account of the Navigation Between India and The Gulf of Persia (London), pp.1-3
71. PARKINSON, op. cit., 107  
PARSONS, op. cit., 213
72. Johnson's voyage from Bombay to Bushehr took over a month. He commenced his voyage on 15 February and arrived at Masqat on 15th of March. On 20th of the same month he left Masqat for Bushehr, where he arrived on the 7th April. Morier mentions that it took 34 days from Bombay to Bushehr. Johnson, J. (1818) Journey from India to England through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland and Prussia in the year 1817. (London: Longman), pp.1-18; Morier, op. cit., 1-10
73. PARKINSON, op. cit., 98
74. McCLUER, op. cit., 36
75. FISHER, W.B., ed. (1968) The Cambridge History of Iran, vol.1: The Land of Iran (Cambridge: University Press), pp.216-217  
NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION (1945) Persia Geographical Handbook Series B.R. 525, H.M.S.O., p.160
76. JOHNSON, op. cit., 18  
McCLUER, op. cit., 36

- PARSONS, op. cit., 190  
 WARING, op. cit., 3
77. McCLUER, op. cit., 36
  78. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 284
  79. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 20 May 1803
  80. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 6 January 1781
  81. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 8 February 1781
  82. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 19 December 1785
  83. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 5 June 1803
  84. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 284
  85. This is particularly applicable to the situation of the Jowasim Arabs who were not economically self-supporting even in food staples. The Jowasim's only major resource was pearl by which they paid for their goods imported from Masqat, Basra, Bahrain and the Iranian shores. An unsuccessful year in the pearl harvest led to an increase in Jowasim attacks on ships in the Gulf. Sweet, op. cit., 272-275
  86. SWEET, op. cit., 274
  87. Mir Mohanna took over authority in Bandar-e Rig after murdering his father and brother around 1754. In the summer of 1762 he also recovered the Island of Kharg from the Dutch by blockading it and interrupting communication with Bushehr which resulted in the Dutch withdrawal from the Island. Amin, op. cit., 35, 149
  88. FARAMARZI, A. (1967) Karim Khan Zand va Khalij-e Fars, ed. H. Faramarzi (Tehran: Davudpanah), pp.34-37  
 RICK, op. cit., 313-316  
RRPGB vol.1 (1 and 2)
  89. RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr to Shiraz dated 24 April 1768
  90. FARAMARZI, op. cit., 34-37  
RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Basra to Bushehr dated 24 April 1766
  91. The Company's concern was about whether to move to Kharg Island and how this would affect their sales of woollens to Iran, and whether the Iranians would support the Khan in his dispute with the Company by not buying English cloth.  
RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 29 July 1767
  92. FARAMARZI, op. cit., 37
  93. Ibid.
  94. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 13 October 1778
  95. AMIN, op. cit., 73
  96. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay, 13 October 1778



97. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 41
98. PERRY, J.R. (1979) Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779  
(Chicago: Chicago University Press), pp.165-166
99. Ibid.
100. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 41
101. Ibid.
102. SWEET, op. cit., 264-265
103. MORIER, op. cit., 372-3
104. JOHNSON, op. cit., 16-17
105. Ibid.
106. PARSONS, op. cit., 202
107. JOHNSON, op. cit., 16-17
108. FRASER, J.B. (1824) 'Notes made in 1822 in the Course of Voyage  
from Bombay to Bushehr, Trans. Geol. Soc. 1, 2nd series,  
335  
KELLY, op. cit., 43
109. FRASER, op. cit., 335  
KELLY, op. cit., 43  
PARSONS, op. cit., 190
110. McCLUER, op. cit., 25  
NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, op. cit., 502  
PARSONS, op. cit., 190
111. NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, op. cit., 502
112. McCLUER, op. cit., 25
113. JOHNSON, op. cit., 18
114. PARSONS, op. cit., 190
115. JOHNSON, op. cit., 15  
McCLUER, op. cit., 25  
PARSONS, op. cit., 190
116. NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, op. cit., 165
117. Mean temperature at Bushehr is about 12°C in winter and above  
32°C during the summer; July and January are the hottest  
and coldest months of the year. During the hot season,  
the relative humidity stays at 70% for three or four  
months and makes the weather very unpleasant. The annual  
rainfall of Bushehr, which comes between November and  
April, does not exceed 76mm. Fisher, op. cit., 228;  
Naval Intelligence Division, op. cit., 172
118. Bushehr was given different names and spelt differently by  
different European travellers. Strangest of all is that  
given by John Van Keulen, Abbeseer. The common derivation  
for Bushehr (Aba-Shehr) means the father of the cities,

but this is probably incorrect because shehr is singular, not plural and abu (meaning father in Arabic) is Arabic whereas shehr is a Persian word. The other possibility is that the name Bokt-Artakhshir (possibly means fortune of Ardashir), which was given by Ardashir (first monarch of the Sasanian Dynasty) was contracted into Bushehr. Curzon, G.N. (1966) Persia and Persian Question, vol.1 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.), pp.230-231; McCluer, op. cit., 27

119. McCLUER, op. cit., 27
120. PARSONS, op. cit., 188
121. PARSONS, op. cit., 187
122. When Johnson visited Bushehr in the first decade of the 19th century some "curisious" remains of antiquity were found at Rishahr. Johnson, op. cit., 30
123. CURZON, op. cit., 235  
PARSONS, op. cit., 191
124. CURZON, op. cit., 230-231
125. LOCKHART (1936), op. cit., 12  
LOCKHART, L. (1938) Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources (London: Luzac and Co.), pp.92-93
126. WILSON, A.T. (1920) The Persian Gulf (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p.176
127. ALEXANDER, J.E. (1827) Travel from India to England (London: Parbury, Allen and Co.), p.92  
MORIER, op. cit., 57
128. MORIER, op. cit., 57
129. Ibid.
130. WARING, op. cit., 10
131. MORIER, op. cit., 57
132. Ibid.
133. DB vol.2 letter dated 1 June 1764  
RRPGB vol.1(2) letter from Bushehr to Shiraz dated 28 April 1767
134. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay 15 September 1777
135. Ibid.
136. RRPGB vol.3 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 30 November 1785
137. RRPGB vol.10(2) letter from Bushehr dated 5 May 1808
138. ALEXANDER, op. cit., 93
139. JOHNSON, op. cit., 20  
McCLUER, op. cit., 26  
MORIER, op. cit., 56  
WARING, op. cit., 10
140. MONTEITH, W. (1857) 'Notes on the Routes from Bushire to Shiraz', J.R.G.S. 37, 114

141. MONTEITH, op. cit., 144
142. HAMBLY, G.R.G. (1964) 'An Introduction to the Economic Organisation of Early Qajar Iran, Iran 2, 73  
MORIER, op. cit., 57  
PARSONS, op. cit., 188
143. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 12 March 1777
144. In June 1775 the Bushehr resident wrote to Basra that within the hot season they had no prospect of making more sales.  
RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 12 March 1777
145. RRPGB vol.2 letter from Bushehr to Bombay dated 10 August 1776
146. The only possible products which might have been cultivated in such a sandy plain were water melons and cucumbers. Many of the fruits and vegetables like apples, pears, peaches, apricots, plums, grapes, pomegranets, sweet limes, orange, spinage, onions, cabbages and turnips available at Bushehr were brought from adjacent villages and inland markets. McCluer, op. cit., 26; Morier, op. cit., 58; Parsons, op. cit., 191
147. MORIER, op. cit., 59  
WARING, op. cit., 8
148. PPG vol.25, op. cit., 258
149. The distance was calculated by Captain Monteith in 1857.  
Monteith, op. cit., 119
150. There are differences in the information given by travellers about the length of Bushehr-Shiraz road. The lowest distance - 250km. - was given by Issawi and the highest - 320 - by Mr Manesty, the Company's resident in his report about Iran's trade. Alexander, op. cit., 290; Issawi, C., ed. (1971) The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p.197; PPG vol.25, op. cit., 258
151. MONTEITH, op. cit., 115
152. WARING, op. cit., 18
153. FRASER, J.B. (1834) An Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia (London: Oliver Boyd), pp. 282-285
154. WARING, op. cit., 18
155. MONTEITH, op. cit., 117
156. FRASER, op. cit., 286
157. MONTEITH, op. cit., 117
158. FRASER, op. cit., 286
159. WARING, op. cit., 18
160. FRASER, op. cit., 286  
WARING, op. cit., 18

161. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 28 April 1767
162. FRANCKLIN, W. (1790) Observations Made on a Tour from Bengal to Persia 1786-7 (London: T.Cadell), p.47  
WARING, op. cit., 18
163. RRPGB vol.1(1) letter from Bushehr to Basra dated 28 April 1767
164. FRANCKLIN, op. cit., 180
165. PPG vol.28, op. cit., 258
166. FOWLER, G. (1841) Three Years in Persia, vol.1 (London: H.Colburn), pp. 292-293
167. After the commencement of the hot season, travelling from Bushehr to Shiraz was very difficult during the day time; it was done therefore at night or very early morning.
168. Security was a vital consideration for a caravan. Evidently caravans usually had an armed escort and sometimes professional soldiers. This was particularly true for the more considerable caravans and those carrying valuable merchandise. It is not known whether caravans to and from Bushehr was also escorted by soldiers or not. Encyclopaedia of Islam, New ed., s.v. "Iran-Kha", ed. E.van Dozel, B. Lewis and Ch. Rellat (Leiden: E.J.Brill)
169. ALEXANDER, op. cit., 106
170. KUZNETZOVA, N.A. (1962) "Urban Industry in Persia during the 18th and Early 19th Century", Central Asian Review 11, 312
171. Ibid.
172. JONES, A.H.M. (1970) 'Asian Trade in Antiquity'; in Papers on Islamic History: II Islam and the Trade of Asia, ed. D.S.Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassier Ltd.), p.15
173. According to Fraser, the speed of the caravan journey over a mountainous area was 48 km. a day and 80 km. over the plain lands. Fraser, J.B. (1838) A Winter Journey from Constantinople to Tehran with Travels Through Various parts of Persia, vol.2 (London: R.Bentley), pp. 436-439
174. JOHNSON, op. cit., 28

## CHAPTER 6 : THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE EIC'S TRADE WITH IRAN DURING 1763-1810

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### 6.1 : Introduction

This study has been dealing with one aspect of the trade of Iran at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, namely that of the EIC focused upon the port of Bushehr. On a broad scale the EIC was continually seeking new markets for its goods, principally woollen cloth, and at the same time striving to find new sources of items which it could sell either in India or in England, yet, in the case of Iran, during the period under study it made little systematic effort to expand its markets or to acquire more goods there. Its establishment was reduced to the single residency at Bushehr which, like its predecessor at Bandar Abbas, was really located on the very edge of whatever trading systems existed in Iran. The Company seems to have hoped that its establishment at Bushehr would, merely by its existence, serve to focus such of the Iranian trade as was of interest to it and direct it through the EIC's hands. This chapter, therefore, examines what little can be established of the spatial aspects of the trading system within Iran during the period under study and the relationship of the EIC's own trade pattern to this larger structure.

The settlement pattern in Iran at this time appears to have been hierarchical, with the national capital and the provincial capitals at the top of the structure in terms of population, range of functions, economic and administrative power, so that the higher centres clearly generated greater needs for goods and services. Nevertheless, the relative importance of a settlement within the

trading system dependent on this hierarchy appears to have been influenced as much by political considerations as by purely economic conditions.<sup>1</sup> This was particularly the case in the choice of centres for provincial administration where the mere selection of a town for that role boosted its position in the hierarchy, no matter what its relative economic importance was to begin with.<sup>2</sup> This hierarchy of political and economic power meant that the lower level centres were controlled by those higher up the hierarchy; the villages by the towns and the towns by the cities,<sup>3</sup> so that each city would probably have several towns subordinated to it, whilst each town controlled a number of villages.<sup>4</sup>

Ensuring the maintenance of this economic system appears to have been the peasants' needs for cash to pay taxes and to buy various goods and services,<sup>5</sup> linked to a 'feudal' system of agriculture in which obligation and coercion ensured that food and other agricultural products not only fed the local rural population but reached right up to the higher order centres.<sup>6</sup> This required all peasants to engage in at least some marketing but it was often less to his benefit than to that of the middlemen as a link between the peasant producer and the wholesaler in the larger centres. The peasant would naturally look to the local marketing point for the basic needs he could not provide for himself, and here the middlemen would operate.<sup>7</sup> The small scale of individual farm sales to the middlemen would ensure that peasants benefited little from competition between middlemen, who would set low prices and in turn make a profit by undertaking the bulking necessary before any inter-regional trade could take place in that product.<sup>8</sup> At the same time as offering the peasant low prices for his goods, the traders, operating in a situation of little competition, would be able to charge relatively higher prices for goods or services supplied to the rural population.<sup>9</sup> In this way, as rural produce

was moved up through the trading system to the larger regional centres, its price increased, mainly to the benefit of the traders, while the peasant enjoyed little of this profit. As goods filtered down through the system, they similarly became more expensive in the smaller centres and villages where there was less competition between sellers, again to the detriment of the peasants who formed the bulk of the population.<sup>10</sup>

These characteristics of the basic trading structure of Iran in the eighteenth century suggest that it took on a dendritic form and that the trade pattern of the EIC within Iran represented one form of this.

According to Kelly<sup>11</sup> a dendritic marketing system has the following characteristics. First, it consists of a hierarchy of commercial centres descending in size and importance with increasing distance from the highest level centre. As a result of the merchants' desire to minimise their own transport costs, merchants in each centre would send bulked goods to the next one up the hierarchy which would be a larger place gathering goods from several local centres. It would also generally be nearer to the region's primary bulking centre than the local centres. Second, in the dendritic system all lower centres are oriented towards only one centre in the next level of the hierarchy, so giving that higher level centre much influence over the trade of the lower order centres. This is in marked contrast to the orthodox central-place model of Christaller where each lower order centre looks towards at least two higher order centres.<sup>12</sup> A third characteristic of the dendritic marketing system is the tendency for the hinterlands' income, resources and population to be drained into the higher level centre so that the greater the number and scale of wholesaling networks converging on a particular centre, the larger and more prosperous

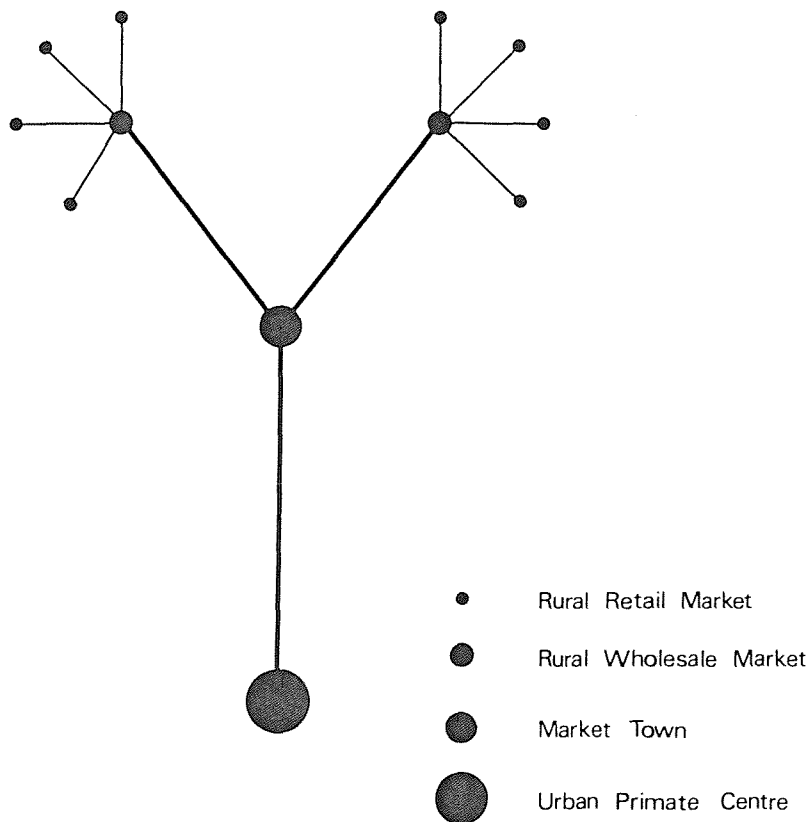
that centre ought to be.<sup>13</sup> A fourth characteristic, related to the latter, is the concentration of the political elite in the highest-level centre, thus allowing it to control the economic networks which converge there.<sup>14</sup>

The second mentioned characteristic of the dendritic system, the orientation of many lower level centres to only a single higher level centre,<sup>15</sup> resulted especially from transport difficulties and low producer-consumer mobility (Appendix 6.1). This can be expected to have been found in eighteenth century Iran where the caravan system, which required a well organised form of carriage to use a poorly developed road system, was the best form for commercial activities. The seasonal nature of many goods also probably played a part in this pattern so that they were best bulked relatively close to where they were produced in great abundance during a short harvest period each year. Taken together, the characteristics of the dendritic marketing system can be represented as the linear and hierarchical organisation illustrated in Fig. 6.1.

Any attempt to apply this model to the EIC's trade structure in Iran, as reflected through the records of the EIC, requires two primary operations. The first is to modify it to take account of the orientation of EIC's system towards the port of Bushehr. The second operation needed is a reconstruction and review of the general pattern of settlement, administrative hierarchies and communications within Iran at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Once these matters have been dealt with, it will be possible to see how far the dendritic marketing model helps to achieve an understanding of the EIC's trading system in Iran.



FIGURE 6.1 A Dendritic Central-place system  
After Smith (1976)



## 6.2 : The hierarchy of settlement

There is no statistical or cartographical information source available in regard to the population and settlement pattern of Iran during the period under study as a whole. Only one population figure has been discovered, that of Sir John Malcolm at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Malcolm estimated the population of Iran at six million people, of which he considered little was urbanised.<sup>16</sup> Information

on the pattern of settlements in Iran for the period under research is fragmentary and diffuse. In fact, the structure must be pieced together largely from information supplied by European travellers. Travellers estimates of revenue and population, as collected together by Perry,<sup>17</sup> reveal something of the status of the urban settlements in Iran and the wealth of their provinces (Fig. 6.2), but at best the coverage is partial and the reliability of the information uncertain. It does seem, however, that a settlement hierarchy did exist.

The upper level of the hierarchy was formed by about twenty cities each with a population of well over 5000 and several of over 20,000 people. Eight of these were provincial capitals.<sup>18</sup> These major cities were mainly concentrated in the western half of Iran. None are shown in Fig. 6.2 for Khorasan in eastern Iran which was also an important and populated province, but which was not at this time under Karim Khan's jurisdiction, being ruled by Nadir Shah's son, Shahrookh Shah, from the Afsharid Dynasty. Information is, accordingly, scarce. Below these leading cities in the hierarchy came between forty and fifty towns with populations of 2-5,000.<sup>19</sup> These were more widely distributed than the larger centres and included ports, as well as centres of lower order for marketing and administration. Below these in the hierarchy came an unknown, but very large, number of villages and hamlets. Unfortunately it is impossible to say how stable this structure had been over time - despite hints of long-term stability - because the destruction and dislocation caused by the Afghan invasion of the 1720s may have emptied many settlements particularly at the lower levels, while other influences may have further modified the settlement pattern over time, notably changes in the location of power centres within the country.<sup>20</sup>

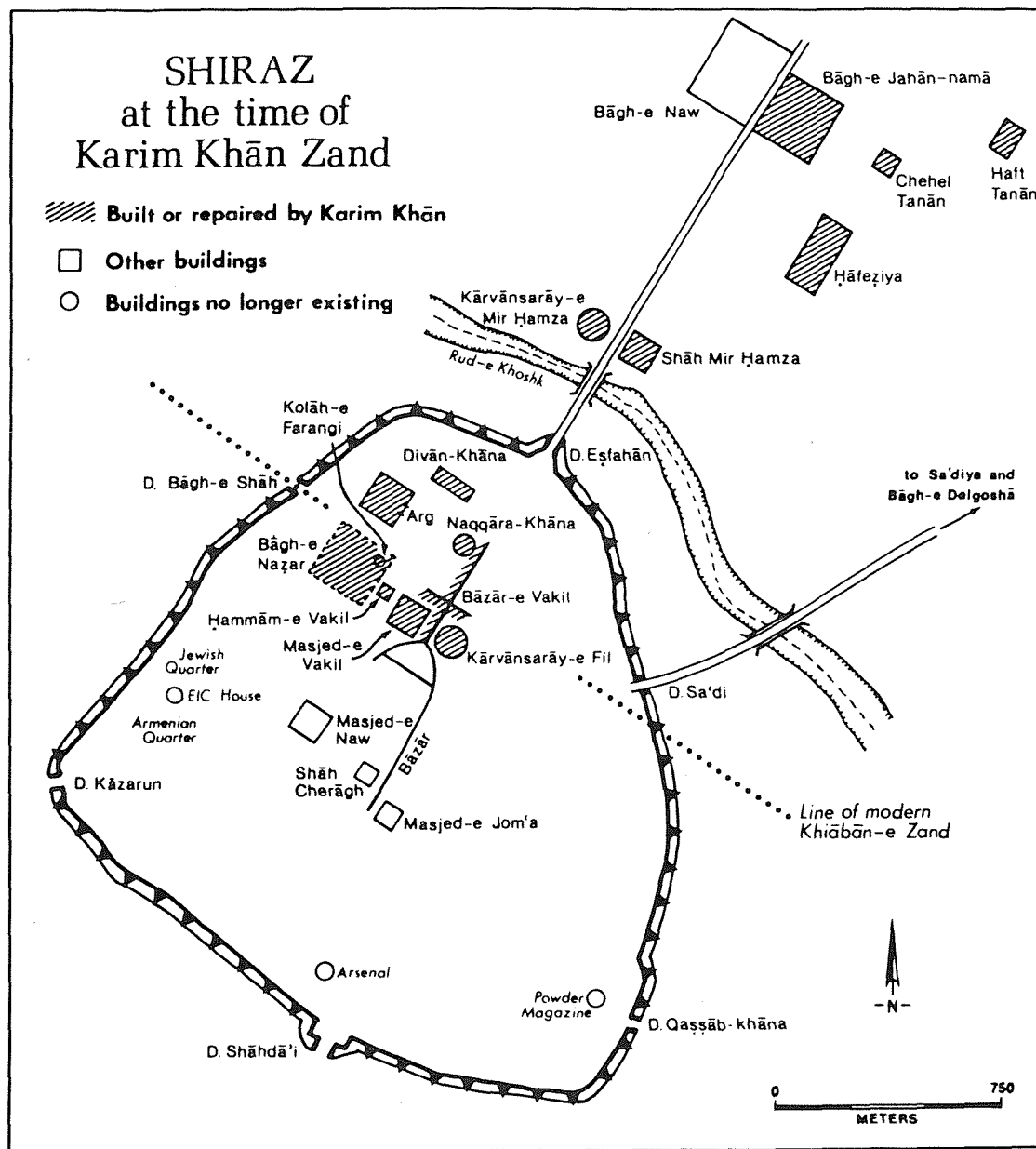


FIGURE 6.2 Population and revenue of Iran's major settlements during the second half of the eighteenth century  
Source: Perry (1979)

The operation of the urban end of this hierarchy can be demonstrated to some extent by looking at what is known of the size and functions of a selection of the leading centres that existed in the eighteenth century. These are Shiraz (the Zand capital), Esfahan (the Safavid capital), the old Mongol capital of Tabriz and the new capital of the Qajar Dynasty, Tehran. Mashhad (capital of the province of Khorasan) will also be examined briefly (because of its intriguing relations with Bushehr noted in chapters 2 and 4).

#### 6.2.1 : Shiraz

Described as the Iranian Empire's greatest city in the early seventeenth century,<sup>21</sup> Shiraz was probably still the largest city in the country during much of the period under study but was in a state of decline by the end of the eighteenth century. It is of interest here as the nearest major Iranian city to Bushehr and hence important in shaping the hinterland for the EIC's trade. In the period 1757-75 it had a population of about 40,000.<sup>22</sup> This was probably somewhat smaller than earlier in the century because the city had suffered severely from the Afghan invasion and the subsequent anarchy.<sup>23</sup> But its prosperity had been somewhat restored when Karim Khan made it his capital in 1753. Then it was considered sufficiently important to be put under the direct control of Karim Khan's brother, Sadq Khan Zand.<sup>24</sup> Not only did the city become the administrative centre of the Zand state, it was also the traditional capital of the province of Fars. As a result of its importance it had outgrown its walls and many buildings had been reconstructed.<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 6.3).



After Perry (1979)

The town itself was famous for the manufacture of glass (especially looking-glasses) and swords, but its commercial connections were more important.<sup>26</sup> It was the entrepot for many goods coming into Iran via various routes and many EIC goods were directed there. There is no information on the number of smaller towns and districts dependent on Shiraz at this time, but it was known to be surrounded by fertile farm areas which produced a wide diversity of crops.<sup>27</sup> Tobacco and opium were exported, as was a celebrated wine made from local grapes.<sup>28</sup> These products must have provided the basis for the relatively large revenue produced by the province, and estimated at 160,000 tuman during 1757-1775.<sup>29</sup> The decline of Shiraz set in again, however quite quickly for in 1788, with the success of the Qajars, who made Tehran their capital. This halved the population of Shiraz.<sup>30</sup>

#### 6.2.2 : Esfahan

Esfahan was arguably the second, and possibly, the most important city in Iran in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its total population was then similar to that of Shiraz, but while Shiraz declined, Esfahan held more of its own. It had about 100,000 population at the beginning of the nineteenth century when it enjoyed some Qajar patronage.<sup>31</sup> The importance of the city, however, had been even greater during Safavid times (1502-1736) when it was the capital of a more united country and attained a peak population estimated as high as 600,000.<sup>32</sup> Chardin reported in the 1670s that no less than 1,500 villages in its vicinity furnished its daily supplies.<sup>33</sup> In the eighteenth century the city manufactured cottons, metal utensils, lambskin caps and brocades, but probably the most important local product was opium.<sup>34</sup> The city's commercial significance at the end of the seventeenth

century is perhaps best revealed by the number of caravanserais on routes in its vicinity. Fraser<sup>35</sup> put their number at 1802 and, clearly, much trade must have flowed in and out along these routes. Many foreign goods which entered Iran reached Esfahan and some 800 Armenian families took a leading part in the trade.<sup>36</sup> Something of this importance was sustained into the late eighteenth century.

### 6.2.3 : Tabriz

Tabriz was probably the third largest city in Iran in the second half of the eighteenth century, with a population of about 30,000.<sup>37</sup> This had increased to about 50,000 by the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> The city had come to prominence in the days of the 11-Khans, but derived much of its importance from its strategic location near the borders of the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Its nodal position made it an important centre in the transit trade of Iran and in the distribution of European goods imported through the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports.<sup>39</sup> Its province (Azarbaijan) was described as the most productive in Iran at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with dried fruit and wool its most important agricultural products.<sup>40</sup> The province's revenue was put at 60,000 tumans in 1763.<sup>41</sup> The city itself manufactured silk stuffs, carpets, copper utensils and armaments.<sup>42</sup>

### 6.2.4 : Tehran

Before Tehran was captured by Aqa Muhammad Khan it was described as a spacious but not well populated town<sup>43</sup>, but when it became the Qajar capital in 1788 it soon grew in importance both commercially and

politically. By 1796 it had attained a population of 15,000.<sup>44</sup> In the first decade of the nineteenth century it was described as being the same size as Shiraz, but with fewer public buildings.<sup>45</sup> The revenue from the surrounding farm districts - largely from cereal-growing - was considerable, but much less than Fars, Esfahan and Azarbaijan earned, at least before the Qajars seized power.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, Morier<sup>47</sup> reckoned that Tehran contained 150 caravanserais at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and perhaps the most striking characteristic of these early days of Tehran was the seasonal fluctuation in the size of its population.<sup>48</sup> It was estimated to fall by about 80 per cent during the summer months to only 10,000, when the Qajar Court and the bulk of the army transferred to Soltanyeh, probably to avoid the heat of summer.<sup>49</sup>

#### 6.2.5 : Mashhad

In the early days of Qajar rule, the holy city of Mashhad had a population of perhaps 50,000, so that it rivalled Shiraz and Esfahan as the largest city in the country, though this may represent a considerable reduction from its size in its most important days when it was Nadir Shah's capital (1736-47), and before the Afghan invasion.<sup>50</sup> At its peak, its population had been estimated at 200,000 - 300,000.<sup>51</sup> Apart from its status as Afsharid capital, a status it retained even during the time when the Zand Dynasty ruled most of western Iran, the basis of Mashhad's importance was four fold. First, Khorasan was the richest province in Iran - or at least was so considered in the eighteenth century - though no estimates of its revenue have been located. This was based on the province's fertility, producing drugs and dried fruit for export, amongst other products.<sup>52</sup>



Second, Mashhad was the focus of important caravan routes from Buskhara, Balkh, Badakhashan, Kandahar and India, though in 1741 it was described as possessing only 90 caravanserais.<sup>53</sup> Thirdly, the city also manufactured carpets and because of its commercial importance, its merchants in the 1760s went as far as Bushehr to purchase the EIC's imports despite the distance.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the city was the destination each year of thousands of pilgrims because it contained the Shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam.<sup>55</sup> These five cities were Iran's most important commercial centres in the eighteenth century. Two other important centres were Rasht, the capital city of the province of Gilan, and Kerman, the capital city for the province of the same name which will be considered later in this chapter.

### 6.3 : The Hierarchy of Administration during the period 1763-1810

It is clear from what has been stated of the main cities that they derived their importance partly from their functions as commercial centres and partly from their status as the capital city of their provinces. Their relative importance fluctuated from time to time with changes in the administration of Iran, but it is possible, mainly following Perry's<sup>56</sup> work, to reconstruct the administrative hierarchy which existed during the reign of Karim Khan, at least in the area of Iran over which he had dominion. The period of Zand dominance was comparatively brief, but Karim Khan tried to continue much the same policy as that of the Safavid and Afsharid Dynasties, and the same system was also maintained for the first decades of Qajar rule which fall within the period with which this research is concerned.<sup>57</sup>

The system of national administration exercised through the provincial centres depended upon appointed state officials who were based in cities, towns and smaller settlements at the three levels of the hierarchy below the national capital, as shown in Fig. 6.4. The national capital was the seat of the ruler and his court and was, like the second tier provincial capitals administered by a governor general (beglerbegi).<sup>58</sup> There were twenty-six provincial capitals and major cities although these varied somewhat in importance.<sup>59</sup> Under Karim Khan, eight of these capitals, the more important ones, had a governor general, while one had a hereditary provincial governor (vali) and the rest had a governor, (hakem).<sup>60</sup> Fig. 6.5 shows the distribution of these appointees. It is noticeable that the governors general were located in the more northerly provinces, perhaps because of their frontier status and the risks of defection in these remote areas. All these officials were appointed directly by the ruler and the central government to whom they were administratively responsible, especially for forwarding revenue collected at subordinated levels under their jurisdiction.<sup>61</sup> Five of the twenty-six governors were members of the Royal family while the rest were chosen from prominent families with connections in the areas they governed.<sup>62</sup> In the more important capitals the governors-general or governors had a number of subordinate officials below them, such as a chancellor (vasir), a chief fiscal executive (mostawfi), and other officers in charge of peasant problems (vakil ol-ra'aya); tax assessment (mohasses); weights and measures (kalantar); market inspector (mohtaseb) and artisan guild (nagib).<sup>63</sup>

At the third level in the hierarchy were the towns which were administered by a mayor, or kalantar, appointed by the ruler<sup>64</sup>, while at the lowest level, the villages had their chiefs or headman (kadkhoda) appointed by the kalantar of the area.<sup>65</sup> A major duty

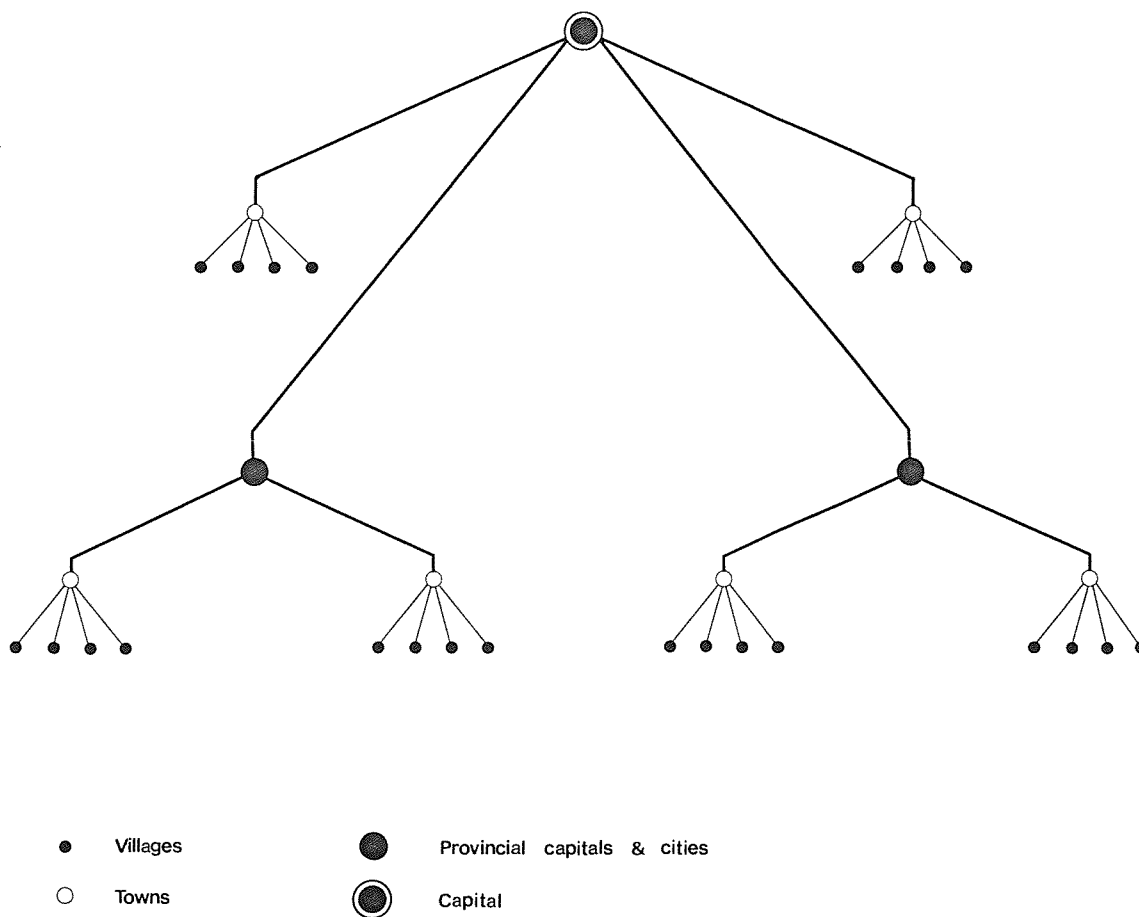


FIGURE 6.4 Administrative hierarchy of Iran 1763-1810



FIGURE 6.5 The administrations of Iran's provincial capitals and cities during the second half of the eighteenth century  
Source: Perry (1979)

of the village chiefs was to assist in the collection of taxes, as well as to settle local disputes.

While this administrative hierarchy may seem over-elaborate, it was really a response to the size of the country and the difficulty of governing it from the political centre. By controlling the appointment of the governors, and those who administered the major cities, and through them the provinces and towns, the ruler hoped to ensure the unity of the country and guarantee that tax revenues flowed back to the national capital. At the same time, the frequent appointment of governors from persons known in those provinces ensured that the governor elicited the support of the mayors and village heads at the lowest level of the administrative structure. In the eighteenth century Iran's problems of internal communication almost enforced such an administrative structure and this aspect is reviewed next.

#### 6.4 : Roads and the means of transportation between cities and towns

Both administration and commerce depended upon communications and transport. Roads were the principal means of communication during the period under study. For the most part they consisted at best of rough tracks of the type which had been used for centuries, and to which the government paid little or no attention in their construction or repair.<sup>66</sup> None of them were suitable for wheeled traffic and they were really only used by draft animals, generally camels, mules and asses.<sup>67</sup> No complete map of roads at about the year 1800 exists but Fig. 6.6 shows the main pattern of routes as derived from several travellers' accounts. The absence of routes between some of the cities and towns illustrated in this map must not be interpreted as meaning that no links existed; some gaps are



FIGURE 6.6 Iran's major routes for internal communications,  
1763-1810  
Sources: Research in PPG vol.25 (1790) and other sources

attributable mainly to the limitation of information. The largely empty sections in the centre and south-east of the country are, however, due to the lack of settlement, itself largely a reflection of the harsh conditions of the Dasht-e Kavir, the Dasht-e Lut, Baluchestan and Makran.<sup>68</sup>

Camels and mules were mainly used on caravan routes because of the greater loads which they could carry, with the camels used more for journeys across dry areas, though the loads they could carry seemed to vary according to the climate.<sup>69</sup> In cooler conditions such as on the Tabriz to Istanbul route, the camels appeared able to carry a heavier load than in hotter areas, such as in the south of Iran.<sup>70</sup> Mules were suitable for carrying goods on mountain routes and over difficult passes, and although a mule carried less than a camel, on the Bushehr to Shiraz route, where both camels and mules were used, a normal mule load (at 40 M.T.) was as much as two-thirds that of a camel.<sup>71</sup> Generally speaking, travel with either camels or mules was slow and hazardous. Appendix 6.2 gives the normal number of days that it would take to complete a journey between various major destinations in Iran. In most cases, one could not expect to complete more than 40 km. a day and on some routes it was less than this.<sup>72</sup> Often the speed of the journey depended less on the normal ability of the animal to cover a stated distance each day than on the state of the road, the weather conditions, the weight of the load imposed on each animal, the general physical well-being of the animal, and the need to travel at the speed of the slowest animals for reasons of security.<sup>73</sup>

A brief reference was made to the caravanserais, or traveller's resting-places on the Bushehr-Shiraz road in the last chapter. Throughout Iran these were located at roughly equal intervals of one day's journey along the routes. As an example Fig. 6.7 shows



FIGURE 6.7 Routes and the number of caravanserais from Kashan to different parts of Iran  
Source: Zarrabi (1341/1962)



the number of caravanserais along routes radiating out of Kashan toward the end of the nineteenth century. Much the same pattern probably existed earlier in the nineteenth century and in the eighteenth century as well. The map demonstrates that the distance between caravanserais located on the routes varied from one part to another, but a rough measurement on a map gives an interval of 26 to 90 km.

It is difficult to make any specific comments for such a variation on each route, particularly when no information is available about the physical conditions of the road. Beside the physical condition of the road, variations can be related to the demand for caravanserais and the popularity of the route; climatic conditions and the number of other settlements along the route offering accommodation which could have been used by the travellers for halting overnight.

Another aspect of transport on which almost no information exists is the costs of freight carriage along these caravan routes in Iran during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, although what little can be gleaned from the EIC materials would suggest that transport costs, compared with the value of the goods being shipped, were moderate.<sup>74</sup> At least, one rarely comes across complaints in the documents about the costs of transport. It can be assumed, however, that freight costs varied considerably according to the nature of the merchandise,<sup>75</sup> the season of travel, and the route involved.

Even if the basic freight charges were not excessive, the levy of customs which merchants had to pay in each city passed through, together with the road tolls, did create considerable additional costs on the goods being moved by the time they reached their final destination. Waring mentions that a merchant might pay as much as 30 per cent of the value of his merchandise on the Bushehr to Caspian Sea route just on road taxes and other duties.<sup>76</sup>

#### 6.5 : Applying the Dendritic Model to the EIC's trade with Iran

The evidence laid out in this chapter about Iran's settlement and administrative hierarchies and its system of communications for the study period tend to confirm the view expressed earlier that the dendritic model is an appropriate aid to the understanding of the trading system of Iran at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It remains to be seen how this might be related to the EIC's trading activities based on Bushehr. It must be mentioned at the outset, however, that there is little specific information available on the spatial organisation of the EIC's trade in Bushehr's hinterland, in contrast with what the records reveal of the commodities and quantities involved in the trade. This lack of information on where the goods moving through Bushehr were going to in Iran, or coming from, can be attributed not only to the relatively small scale of the Company's trade which probably restricted its record-keeping, but also to the lack of an EIC establishment in the interior of Iran. This prevented the flow of information on the movement of goods back to the Company's servants in Bushehr.

A somewhat indirect approach to the problem of the spatial pattern of the Company's trade flows is needed here. This can best be undertaken using the cases of Gilan silk and Carmania wool which, as has been shown, were the Company's preferred exports from Iran. Two important aspects of the trade in these goods were instrumental in creating a dendritic structure to the trading pattern. These were, first, the long distances over which both products moved as wholesale items from the centre of their areas of production to the point of export, and second, the convergence of wholesaling networks on one major centre<sup>77</sup> at Rasht for silk and Kerman for Carmania wool. The case of Carmania wool is looked at first.

#### 6.5.1 : Carmania wool from Kerman

The regional economy of Kerman province during the study period was largely based on Carmania wool and its manufactured products.<sup>78</sup> The provincial city of Kerman must have been the main bulking and shipment centre for the wool to be despatched to Bushehr, because of its position in the regional hierarchy. As outlined earlier, the main production areas for the wool were the northern and central districts of Kerman,<sup>79</sup> in each of which at least one town or large village<sup>80</sup> served as the centre for adjacent villages and hamlets. The traders in these nodal towns and villages would act as intermediaries between the villagers who were selling the wool and the wholesalers from Kerman. These intermediaries purchased the wool and bulked it to be sent on to Kerman where much larger quantities would be brought together from several sources to be shipped to Yezd, where the EIC's linguist resided.<sup>81</sup> For the wool which was to be purchased by the EIC, the linguist acted as the intermediary between the merchants shipping the wool and the EIC resident in Bushehr. The exact form of these various transactions is not known. It may be that the traders in the local towns and large villages went to the peasants and advanced them money before the wool was produced in order to ensure their custom.<sup>82</sup> What is significant is that the product passed out of the hands of the producer very close to the point of production. From the local town trader upwards the wool became a wholesale goods passing through various hands on its long journey to Bushehr. It was not then a case, as in the Christaller model, of the peasant producer taking his goods to the main shipment centre.<sup>83</sup>

Figure 6.8 drawn from Consul Abbott's observations in the middle of the nineteenth century, shows a spatial and hierarchical pattern of settlement and may serve to illustrate the pattern of wool

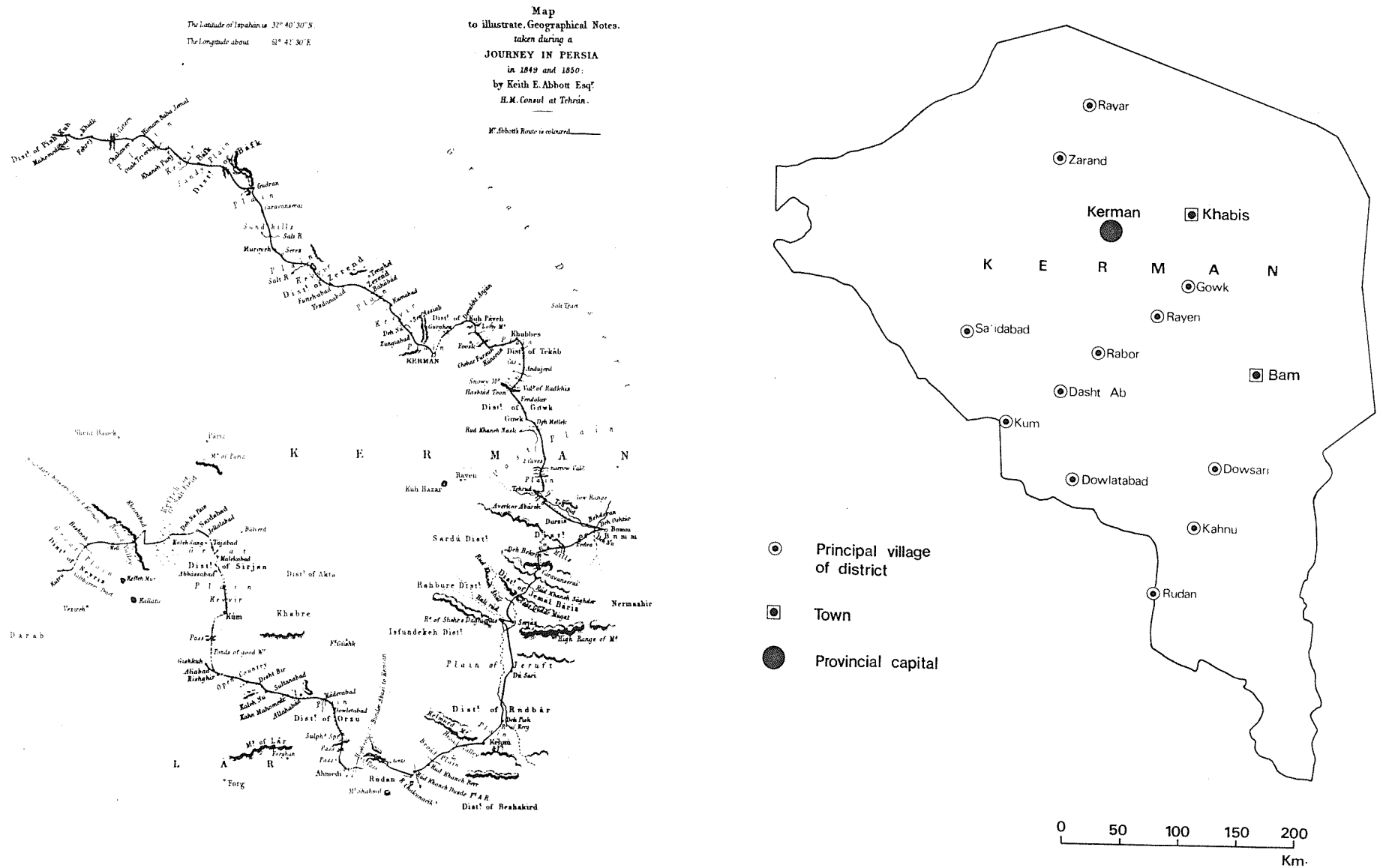


FIGURE 6.8 An example of an hierarchical pattern of settlements of Kerman province according to Abbott, 1850  
Source: Abbott (1855)

sales and bulking that probably applied in the early nineteenth century and probably before that.<sup>84</sup> The district of Sirjan, with its principal centre of Sa'idabad, can be used as an example of the process of bulking that went on close to the point of production. (Fig. 6.9). Sa'idabad was known to be a flourishing village of about 500 houses and possessed a bazaar of about 150 shops, as well as a small number of permanent traders.<sup>85</sup> Within its district were 41 villages and 42 hamlets whose trading activities were orientated towards Sa'idabad,<sup>86</sup> so illustrating the large number of low level places dependent on one centre as in the typical dendritic trading model.<sup>87</sup> It may also be that Sa'idabad served as the bulking centre for wool from the Akta district; this would have increased its importance in the wool trade even further. Unfortunately, the EIC records give no hint as to where within Kerman province it obtained its wool, although this was probably unimportant since its bulking occurred at points lower down the dendritic hierarchy as well as at Kerman itself so that information on product sources is almost impossible to obtain.

#### 6.5.2 : Gilan Silk

Much the same pattern of local bulking was to be seen with some variations in the case of Gilan silk. Gilan was a flourishing province during the period under study. Its regional economy was based on silk production and on long distance routes which linked the province to the southern ports for the export of the silk, as well as to the neighbouring areas of northern and western Iran, Russia and Turkey.<sup>88</sup> Its capital, Rasht, functioned as a major bulking and transshipment centre for its exports, just as Kerman was the regional centre for Carmania wool. Most of the towns and villages of Gilan were engaged in silk production, and Lahijan and its surrounding villages were the

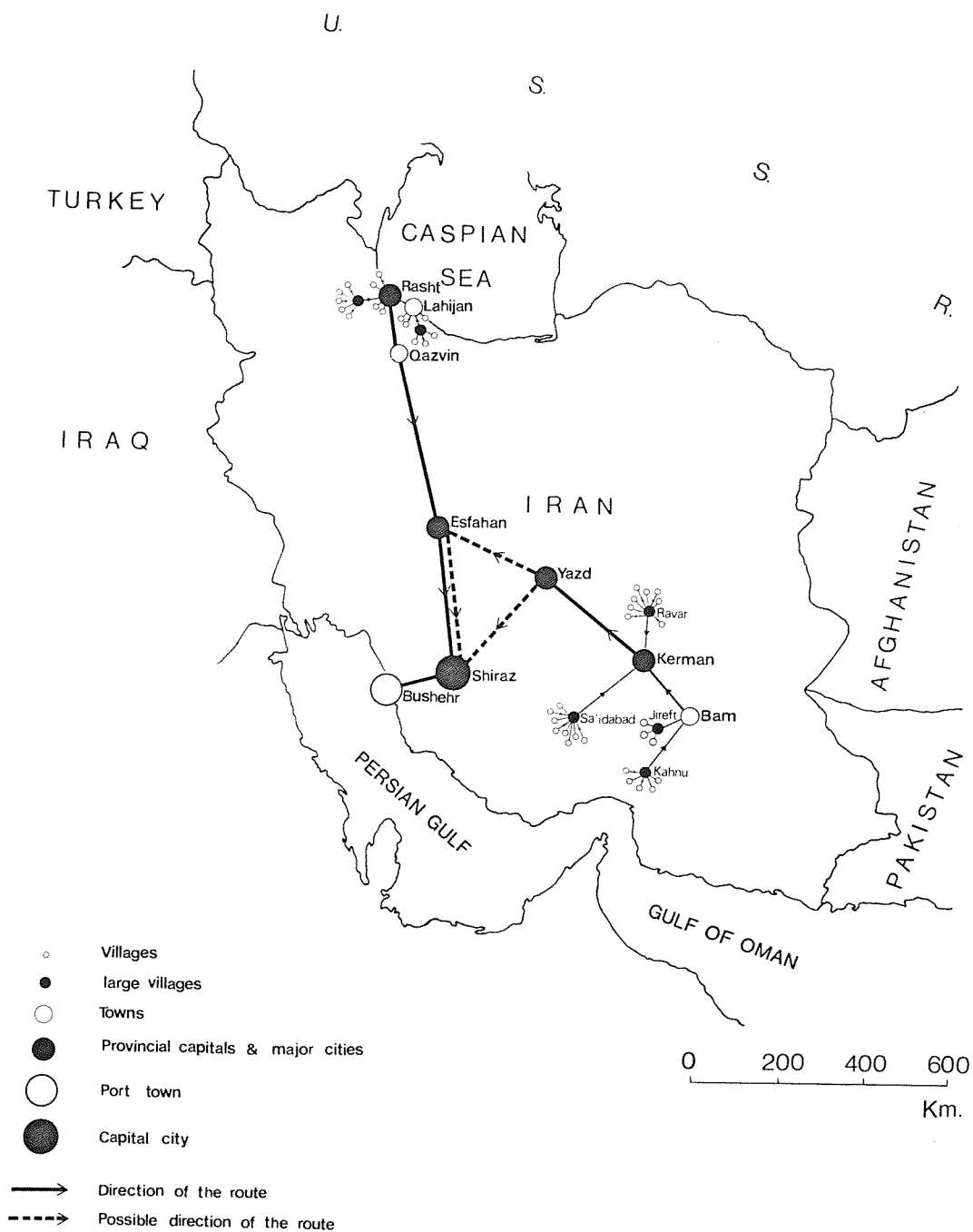


FIGURE 6.9 Probable wholesaling networks for the export of Carmania wool and silk to Bushehr, 1763-1810

major source;<sup>89</sup> Lahijan was Gilan's most important settlement after Rasht. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Lahijan had a population of about 15,000 people.<sup>90</sup> It had an extensive bazaar<sup>91</sup> and it seems more than likely that it served as the bulking centre for the silk production of its surrounding villages, as did other places in other parts of Gilan. When bulking had taken place, the silk was conveyed to Rasht where it was delivered or sold to those wholesalers who were engaged in international trade, often Armenians, Jews and Indians.<sup>92</sup> Villages around Lahijan probably brought their silk to this market and sold it to the traders who resided there and acted as intermediaries between the peasant-producers and the major wholesalers in Rasht.

Other systems may have operated, however, for at least some of the silk traded. It is known that at the end of the nineteenth century, agents travelled around the villages contracting with the peasants for their silk and then returning later to collect it.<sup>93</sup> There was another complication. It is clear that, due to the importance of silk to the country's foreign trade and the wealth which sales abroad could purchase, a monopoly was often exercised by the provincial governor and even the ruler of the country. In the sixteenth century, Shah Abbas had enjoyed this right, whilst at the end of the eighteenth century it was held by Khosro Khan, who forced the peasants to bring their silk to him.<sup>94</sup> A third complication in the pattern is the existence of periodic markets in Gilan province during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>95</sup> The basic reason for the existence of such markets in the province can probably be related to the difficulties of communication between the villages which were highly scattered throughout somewhat dense woodland. The periodic markets of Gilan were held both at the producing towns and villages, as well as at seasonal market places where there were no permanent settlers.<sup>96</sup> (Fig. 6.10) It is not clear how far periodic markets were involved in the bulking

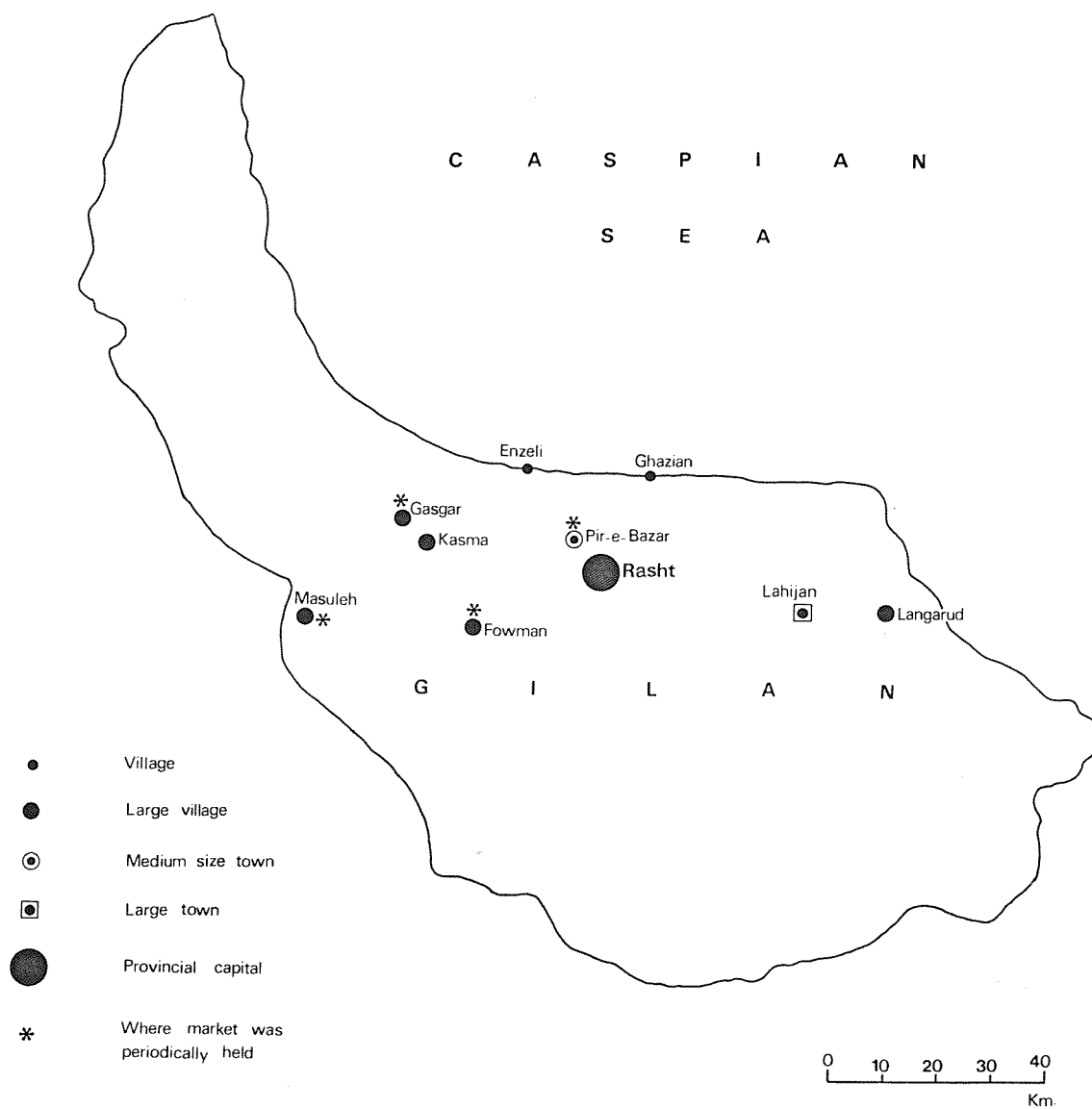


FIGURE 6.10 Part of Gilan's settlement and market hierarchy according to Fraser, 1820s  
Source: Fraser (1826)



of silk, however.

Although it has been shown that the EIC's export of Iranian silk was less (quantitatively) than that of Carmania wool, and not considerable, the movement of both commodities toward Bushehr must have been somewhat as shown in Fig. 6.9; that is, the outward flow of silk and Carmania wool toward Bushehr possessed the obvious characteristics of the dendritic marketing system. The commercial hierarchy of Kerman and Gilan clearly consisted of several levels which linked and were active in the movement of these goods from production areas to that of their main regional bulking and exporting centre (Rasht and Kerman respectively).

Such a pattern in the flow of goods was probably applicable to most of the regional trade of Iran.

Generally speaking, however, information on the amount of goods moved and the degree of regional contact resulting from the movement of goods along the commercial routes is non-existent for Iran in the period under study, whether one turns to travel accounts, the EIC records or other sources. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that some regions of the country did contain important resources, or produced goods such as silk, tobacco, rice, dried fruit, etc. that were sought after in other regions and one might expect this to create a certain amount of interchange and some form of marketing system with a spatial framework involving the movement of goods from production areas to bulking centres over relatively long distances and the orientation of lower centres towards higher centres. Figs. 6.11a and b illustrate the spatial features of some of Iran's interregional activities as based on the evidence obtained from travellers' accounts. In <sup>them</sup> one can see that a number of major cities - notably Shiraz, Tabriz, Sari and Yazd - appear to act as major centres for the receipt and

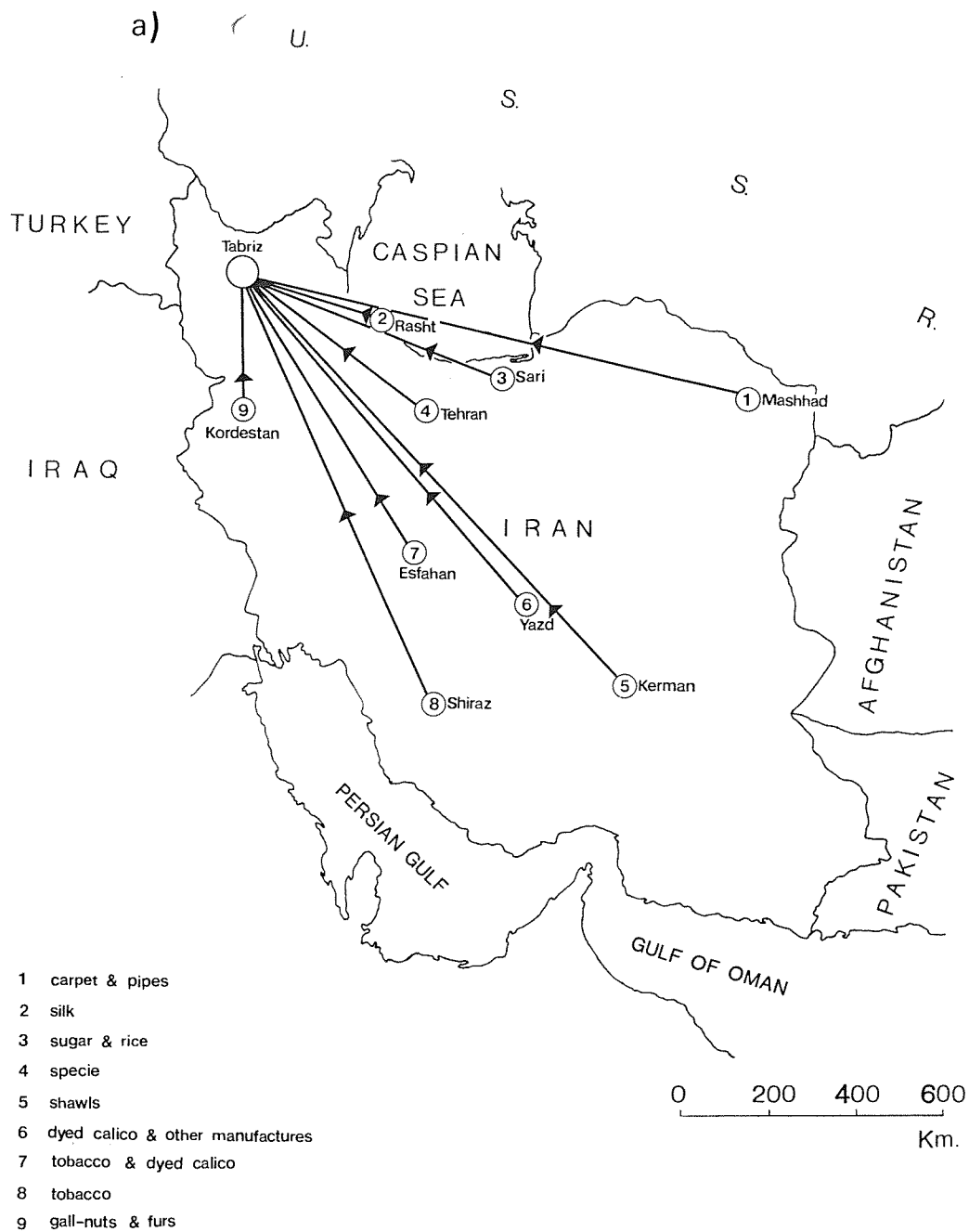


FIGURE 6.11a Sources of goods sold in Tabriz during the 1840s  
 Sources: Anon. (1822); Holmes (1845)

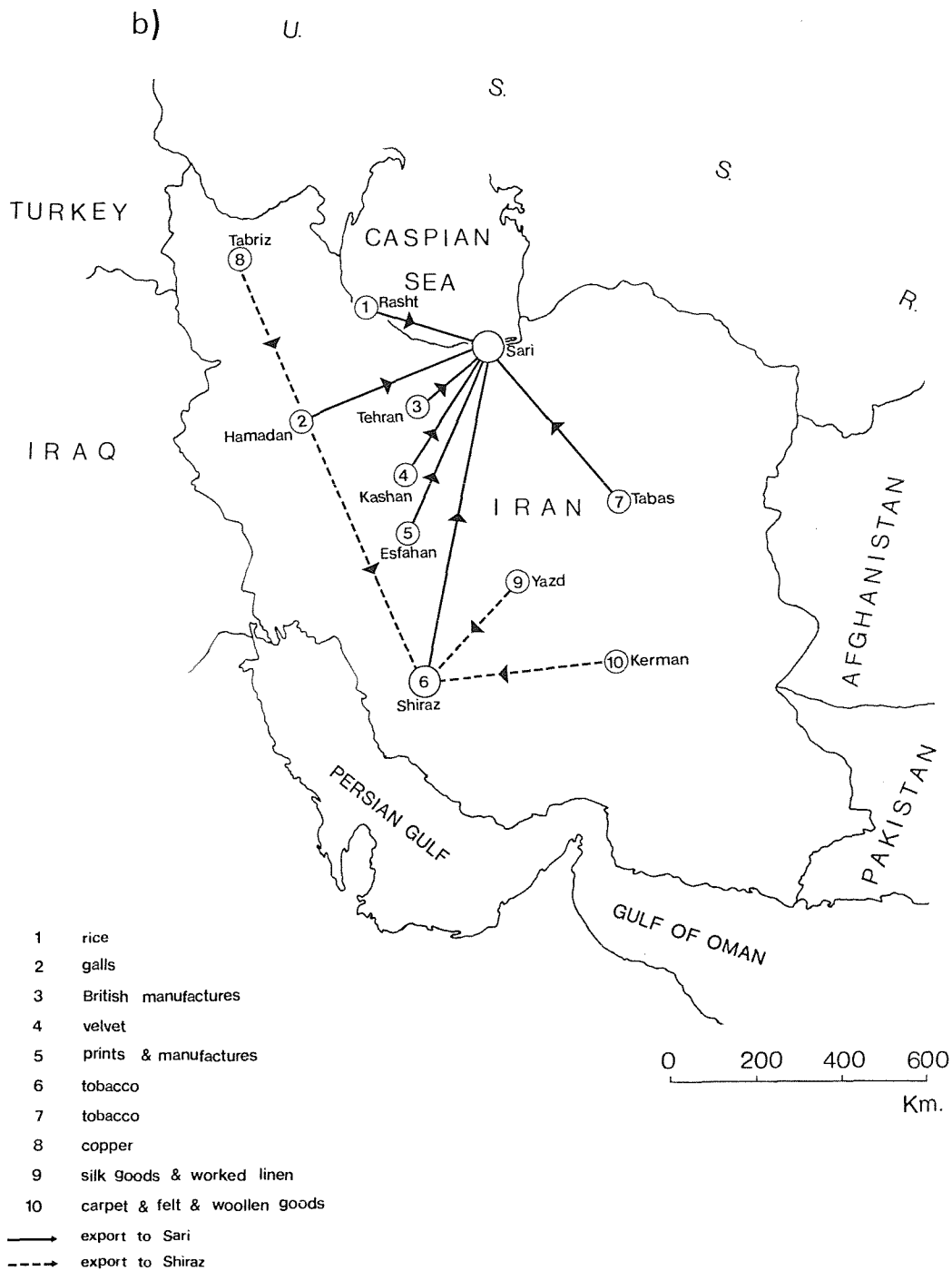


FIGURE 6.11b Sources of goods sold in Sari and Shiraz during 1780s and 1840s  
Sources: Francklin (1790); Holmes (1845)

disposal of various goods for international trade. The figures also show that unlike the regional system in which the lower centres were orientated toward only one single higher level centre, these major centres for exporting regional products had some choice. Some of them could have exported their goods to three or more other centres. In the illustration, traders in tobacco from Shiraz could have had the choice of exporting it to Tabriz, Bushehr or Sari. Of course, these choices depended upon the degree of demand, and the probability of the trade to particular centres. The same could have applied in the case of silk and Carmania wool, in that the products could have passed up the marketing chain from Rasht, in the case of silk, and Kerman in the case of wool, to several other major centres in Iran. It is because the study has concerned only itself with that part of the silk and wool product which was being exported through Bushehr by the EIC that their movement has been traced only through Yazd, Esfahan and Shiraz.

The highest level centres, which acted as major bulking and shipment foci for regional export purposes, also functioned as redistribution centres for imported goods moving downwards to the lower-level centres, but it might be assumed that the number of levels in this hierarchy of redistribution were limited by the ability of the consumer in the lower centres to buy the imported goods. Unfortunately, there is hardly any information available about the movement of the EIC's woollen cloth throughout Iran in general and individual regions in particular during the period under study. As mentioned before, the EIC's woollens were considered to be expensive in the Iranian market and their consumption must have been limited, therefore, to the regions with relatively strong economies and to the higher levels of the urban hierarchy where the greatest concentrations of wealth were found (Fig. 2.19). Even so there is some evidence that some EIC woollens found their way to the smaller

towns or more prosperous villages. During the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, Sa'idabad, the large village in Sirjan district of Kerman province and Bam, a small town to the south-east of Kerman, were retailing Manchester cloth.<sup>97</sup> In fact out of the 150 shops in Sa'idabad, 20-25 were reported retailing this item.<sup>98</sup> Part of the reason for this could be that those merchants who were engaged in the export trade of a region were also responsible for its import trade so that foreign imports tended to penetrate further into the interior ones from which the export products came.

Since some of the merchants seem to have travelled to Bushehr to purchase woollen cloth directly on their own account, it is probable that they were not only engaged in international trade but also - importantly - in the interregional trade of the country. For example, the caravans from Esfahan to Bushehr usually carried considerable quantities of wet and dried fruit as well, which were sold on its arrival at Shiraz.<sup>99</sup> On returning from Bushehr, one caravan was reported to have broken bulk at Esfahan with part of it carrying quantities of the goods purchased at Shiraz and Bushehr on to the Caspian Sea areas.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, an elaborate and complex marketing system existed in Iran which, to a limited extent, the EIC was able to use.

#### 6.6 : Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has shown that such evidence as exists tends to support the notion that the marketing system within Iran during the period 1763-1810 resembled that of a dendritic marketing model. Some of its basic characteristics were certainly present:

- a) significant amounts of long distance trade which involved wholesaling networks directed at least partly to an export outlet;

- b) lower-order centres orientated towards only one single higher level centre;
- c) a high ratio of the number of lower level to higher level centres.

Long-distance trade involving wholesaling networks was an almost inevitable feature of Iran's system of marketing. It was the outcome of the country's size and geographical diversity. The pattern of resource endowment produced items in one region which were in demand in other distant regions. These goods had to pass through a network of commercial dealers, hierarchically organised, before they reached their final destination.

The major settlement of each region was the centre for bulking goods produced in it and for distributing imported goods. In other words, these major settlements were the seats of those wholesalers who linked their region with similar large centres outside it, and to settlements like ports directly engaged in import and export trade. Unlike the lower level centres, which were orientated towards a single higher level place for their requirements, these major centres had some choice in the outlets towards which they directed bulked produce and from which they imported goods for redistribution. In fact, the wholesaling networks for some goods could extend to more than one centre. A degree of competition was thus possible between major centres but much would have depended upon the overall conditions of supply and demand, as well as upon relative distance, available information, transport costs and customs duties.

The dendritic marketing system was also intimately related to the spatial structure of administration in Iran. It is possible to envisage the administrators making use of these important regional trade links to increase their power as in the use of silk as tribute,

and there is also some evidence that the transference of the seat of the Royal Court affected the population levels of the city chosen as capital and hence its demand. As most long-distance trade passed through the main cities, major regional demand emanated from the regional capital. Food and raw materials flowed towards it from subordinated centres and the regional centre became both the principal market, because of its size and the relative wealth of at least some of its citizens, and the location of coercive power which could extract surplus from the countryside either in kind or as goods for sale to pay rents or dues necessary to support those who wielded authority. In fact, the dendritic central place system was effective as a means of controlling the countryside and of draining its wealth for the benefit of the powerful. Perhaps the basic reason for the EIC's apparent lack of success in its trade with Iran was its failure to break into this structure and exploit it effectively. This failure resulted partly from the introverted and inland orientation of political interests in Iran and partly from a failure to appreciate the extent to which power rested in these inland centres at which the EIC was not represented.

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## CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSION

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The overall concern of this thesis has been to make a contribution to the understanding of Iran's foreign trade at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries through the experience of the EIC. The particular aim has been to examine the effects of geographical and other factors on the organisation of the EIC's trade with Iran and, to a lesser extent within Iran. During the period 1763-1810 covered by this study, the EIC was the only European Company which had direct commercial relationships with Iran through the port of Bushehr. As such, it was in a position to virtually dominate Iran's trade through PG, though the limited degree to which the EIC's trade grew over this period - indeed, it may well have declined - would suggest that the Company never actually realised the potential, and that most of the trade conducted between Iran and neighbouring countries around the Gulf remained in native and other hands.

Even so, the existence of the Company's activity at Bushehr as recorded in EIC documents, as well as a complete lack of Iranian records, has determined the direction that the present study has taken with its almost total reliance on Company documents. Despite the relative richness of these records, this study has shown that they are a less adequate source for a consideration of Iranian trade than might at first be expected. Not only are they restrictive in being concerned only with the Company's trade in the area, ignoring all local and competitive trading in the Gulf through Bushehr, but they are also limited in the detail they contain.

Nevertheless, the Company records are the best that exist for the area and the time period, and their value has been recognised in

that they have been used previously, but in a less detailed manner by other researchers. These studies, mainly in history and economic history, made little attempt to examine precisely what goods were traded (in respect of their quantity, quality and price) and what geographical conditions affected the organisation of the trade. In focussing on these points, the present thesis is something of a pioneering effort and no doubt some of its conclusions will require refinement or even modification in the future, should further data sources come to light.

One of the major conclusions of this study, which also accounts for the rather restricted value of the EIC records in a study of Iranian trade through the Gulf during the study period, is that EIC trade with Iran was, throughout that period, on a relatively small scale, in spite of the EIC's monopolistic position. The total amount of trade that passed through Bushehr and between Iran and its Gulf neighbours was probably considerably greater than that under the EIC's control, but because the EIC's trade was relatively small and its record-keeping equally limited in scope, the Company records make no systematic mention of this non-Company trade. The EIC did not, then, control Iranian trade in the Gulf when it was in a position to do so, and it is therefore reasonable to ask why it did not more fully exploit its strong position and what impact it did actually have.

In an attempt to answer these questions it is useful to conclude the thesis by summarising what has been discovered of the nature of the Company's trade in the period under study, both in terms of woollen goods imported into Iran and the export of Iranian silk and Carmania wool. Finally, some consideration will be given to the Company's role in promoting Iranian trade in the Gulf through Bushehr.

### 7.1 : The EIC's trade in English woollens through Bushehr

The history of the EIC's connection with Iran goes back as far as the beginning of the seventeenth century when the Portuguese were the main European power in the PG. In spite of French and Dutch interests in the area, the EIC was the only European Company to maintain direct commercial contact with Iran for a continuous period of over 200 years. Until the 1760s the sole aim of the EIC's presence in Iran was to secure markets for British manufactured goods, notably woollen cloth, as well as to find sources of raw materials like silk, which could be traded in Europe. While the EIC continued in this role after 1760 and throughout the period under study, it was joined by a second, more political role which resulted from a growing realisation of the important strategic position of the PG in general, and Iran in particular, with respect to British territories in India.

The period examined in this thesis provided something of a contrast, then, to the earlier years of the EIC in the region. The commercial interests of the Company remained paramount but they were narrowly specialised in silk and Carmania wool. This may have been a deliberate attempt to avoid too great an involvement in Iranian trade. The Company concentrated on exporting to Iran a limited range of manufactured goods and importing an equally limited range of Iranian products. It chose English woollens as its principal export to Iran because they were believed to be well suited to the Iranian market where the cold winters created a demand for warm clothing and where English cloth shipped on Company vessels, bound for India, could compete with textiles from France and elsewhere entering Iran by northern and western routes. In return, raw silk from the northern provinces of Iran and Carmania wool from central Iran seemed to offer the Company the greatest opportunities to acquire cheaply Iranian products with a ready market in Europe. With

a Company presence established at Bushehr more than half-way up the PG, this simple trade pattern would seem to fit in well with the Company's view of the PG as part of an important route to India and Iran as a strategic area adjacent to it. A toe-hold was all that was needed both for strategic and trading purposes and there was no desire to set up trading posts in the interior of Iran. Iranian merchants would ship goods to and from the Company's residency at Bushehr and the Company would simply trade with those merchants when they happened to be at Bushehr. Incoming British woollens would be brought to Bushehr via the Company's Indian warehouses, while outgoing Iranian products would be shipped to India, thence to England, as dictated by available Company shipping space.

The thesis has shown that it is difficult, because of the problem<sup>s</sup> in the data, to establish the true scale of the Company's exports of English woollens to Iran, but even if those records are of limited reliability, EIC exports clearly do not represent amounts of woollen goods equivalent to either the true demand or the actual consumption levels of Iran. The reason for Company woollens failing to relate more realistically to Iranian demand for these goods was that the Company paid little attention to the level of demand. Several reasons can be advanced to explain why the Company engaged in such a form of trading. First, the Company's resident in Bushehr confronted great difficulties in getting information on the real demand in Iran for the goods he could offer. The Company's main sources of information were its local Iranian employees, and the merchants who made an annual journey to Bushehr. In the early months of the EIC's establishment at Bushehr, it employed linguists based at Shiraz and Kerman, from where probably much better information could have been obtained about market conditions than in Bushehr, but it does not seem that this arrangement was maintained after the EIC's re-establishment at



Bushehr in 1775.

Secondly the Company saw that it could help to support British manufactures by sending its surpluses to such markets as Iran, rather than finding out the real needs of the market and then going out to meet those needs. Iran was known to be a market for English woollens and therefore the Company tried to manipulate the market to absorb whatever surplus woollens came into the Company's hands from English manufacturers. Such a cavalier attitude towards the Iranian market resulted from the fact that the Company found itself the sole importer of woollens into Iran via the PG after the removal of the OIC in 1766. It believed that it had little to fear from competitive imports. As a result, the Company shipped in woollens of inappropriate types and colours, and often at a high price. Of course, simply disposing of surpluses in this way, whether they suited the market or not, did not, in the long run, help either the Company or the English manufacturers who supplied goods to the Company. In time, competitors would appear, as happened during most of the period under study, when Russian cloth imported into Iran on the northern route took away much of the Company's dominance in woollens via the PG.

Thirdly, the research reported in this thesis has shown that the EIC's attempts to manage its trade, especially in woollen goods, were very disorganised. It has become apparent that this disorganisation resulted from several factors. The changing policies of successive Iranian governments made for much uncertainty in the EIC's dealings with them. The long distances involved, especially between London and Bushehr and on the other legs of the journey from Bombay to Bushehr and vice versa, imposed a powerful constraint on the availability and immediacy of information on market needs quite apart from the information constraints already mentioned.

The hazards of the sea voyages created risks and enhanced the uncertainty of consignments meeting real market needs. Fourthly, the Company's own local policy towards the merchants it dealt with was also a factor in its commercial failures in Iran. This also resulted from the Company's unrealistic assessment of the strength of its own position in Iran. The fact that the Company felt it could safely offer low prices for Iranian silk and wool and yet could expect high prices for its English woollens; the fact that the Company normally insisted on cash for its woollens rather than accepted exchange arrangements; and the fact that it felt it could dominate the Iranian silk and wool market from a port far to the south of where these products came from, all illustrated the high-handed and unreasonable approach the Company took in its dealings.

At the same time, the lack of confidence which the Company had in successive Iranian governments led it to adopt a policy of minimum risk so that the Company would never allow its servants to carry out any inland trade which might endanger the Company's property. As a result, it never sanctioned the establishment of any Company settlement in interior Iran. This policy, in turn, largely contributed to the Company's lack of information about the market demands for its woollen goods since these markets were often hundreds of kilometres from Bushehr. Information on these markets obtained from the merchants who bought the woollens, and from the Company's own local servants, could not be relied upon, particularly because the merchants themselves found it difficult to assess the state of the market. As a result, it was not unusual for stock shipped in one year to remain unsold to a later year. This affected prices so that merchants suffered losses. A lack of adequate and regular information on market needs also had an effect on the European suppliers whose estimates of the export potential of different cloths were based on what they thought had been the previous year's sales there.

The net result was the stockpiling by the EIC of English woollens for the Iranian market at Bombay because it could not sell all it supplied and it feared for the security of stock piled up at Bushehr. But keeping woollens at Bombay, to be shipped to Bushehr as and when required, led to inevitable delays and mismatches between needs and supplies, as well as to the higher costs involved in the extra loading and other charges. The sea route from Bombay to Bushehr was beset with numerous hazards, including the Indian monsoon and the winds of the Gulf, so that even if a ship avoided running aground on the lee shore of the Gulf coast, it was always likely to be delayed. This was particularly important in view of the very seasonal demand in Iran for English woollens which would only sell readily in the winter months. If the goods failed to arrive, not only would the market have evaporated with the coming of the summer heat, but also many of the merchants would no longer be in Bushehr to buy cloth, many would have left the torrid heat and gone elsewhere for alternative supplies. Even if the woollens reached Bushehr on time, the problem they presented for the Company's representative was not over. Timing was an important factor in unloading a ship in the shallow waters of Bushehr as this involved transferring cargoes to small boats to be brought ashore. Unloading was impossible when a strong north-westerly wind blew. If the ship or its unloading was delayed the merchants incurred extra waiting costs.

All of these factors tended to contribute to the relatively high cost of English woollens in Iran and much fluctuation in the types of cloth available in different places and at different times. In consequence, the market was seldom satisfied with what was on offer, especially in the furthest interior markets that were less frequently in receipt of those shipments.

## 7.2 : The EIC's failure to exploit Iranian silk and wool exports through Bushehr

In acquiring products to ship out of Iran the EIC appeared to be no more successful. As has already been made clear, the EIC seemed interested only in establishing a toe-hold for trade with Iran for a very limited range of goods, with an outward flow of Iranian silk and Carmania wool to reciprocate the inflow of English woollens. Not only did this simple trade policy make it possible for the Company to keep its presence in Iran without the risks involved in establishing inland factories or posts beyond Bushehr, but also by keeping its trade to a restricted range of goods it perhaps hoped to attain a greater control on the flow of those commodities and so trade on more favourable terms. By specialising in a few products it could avoid becoming deeply involved in Iran's trade yet could seek to monopolise the trade in these goods. The fact that it chose to base its operation on Bushehr, far to the south of the source areas of both silk and wool, but where there would be no other competition for these products, would support the view that the EIC sought a monopoly trading position for the goods it traded in that part of Iran. When the OIC dropped out of trading into Iran through the Gulf in 1766, the EIC came nearer to achieving this monopoly position. The Company hoped that the lack of other export outlets for silk and Carmania wool in that part of Iran would put the Iranian merchants it traded with at a big disadvantage. In order to buy EIC woollens they would bring their goods all the way from the north to Bushehr without any guarantee that the Company would purchase them, or purchase them at a fair price. The merchants would enjoy no advantage of advance payments to entice them south with their silk and wool and would, once there, have no other outlets for their goods if the Company offered them only low prices. In order to buy the English woollens the Company would have on offer, most merchants would be forced to sell on the the Company's terms since their only alternative would be to return

with their unsold, and rapidly deteriorating goods, to the interior to seek native outlets.

To a large extent, however, the Company policy failed particularly in the case of the silk trade. Anxious to avoid the inevitable losses that could result from trading in this way, most Iranian merchants carrying silk simply boycotted Bushehr and the EIC which became known as an unreliable and unprofitable outlet. Furthermore, internal manipulation of the silk trade from time to time by the political elite also helped to blight the Company's attempts to get control of part of this export trade. For example Karim Khan's policy of fixing high prices for silk, made the EIC reluctant to purchase during the years 1763 to 1779. In response to this, the EIC attempted to acquire silk supplies more reliably and cheaply on an exchange basis rather than for cash from Khorasan merchants who did come to Bushehr to buy woollen goods from the Company. This policy was, however, only a partial success. Attempts by the Company to acquire silk direct from the producing area of Gilan, again on an exchange basis, also proved abortive, mainly because there was no market there for the only goods - woollens - the Company had to offer in exchange.

The failure of the EIC's silk trade was the result of several factors, but especially the reputation it acquired as an unreliable and unfair trader. Offering low prices for the goods it sought, selling its woollens at high prices, advancing no credit to merchants who were expected to bring goods hundreds of kilometres with no guarantee of a sale, and greatly limiting the range of goods it would trade in, made the Company appear unattractive as a trading partner to many Iranian merchants.

As a result, the Company made little headway in breaking into the existing and well-established pattern of routes by which silk was already exported from Iran, mainly through Turkey and

Russia. In order to break this monopoly, the Company would have had to offer suppliers very favourable terms, especially if they were to carry their silk as far south as Bushehr. It is clear, however, that the Company never offered sensible prices to cover the merchants' extra costs and efforts. Information derived from the reports of Mr Pilloro, the Company's employee at Bushehr in 1765, illustrated that it cost Iranian merchants well over 4 Rup. to ship down each M.Sh. of Gilani raw silk to Bushehr if one takes account of the extra costs of custom duties, brokerage, and similar expenses, but still exclude other incidental costs like those of the shipper's accommodation for the month or more which the journey took. The price set by the CD (which the Company resident at Bushehr had to offer the merchants) for silk seldom covered these additional costs. In the event, little Gilani silk was diverted to the Company at the port of Bushehr. Of course, the Company could not afford to offer too high a price for the silk because it could not then resell it profitably in Europe in competition with similar silk being brought in via the Turkey route.

The Company's approach to capturing a share of the trade in Carmania wool was much the same as for silk, except that it proved rather more successful. This was largely because there were no other major foreign competitors or established westward routes involved in the export of this product. Again the Company offered very low prices for the commodity but, because it was often worthwhile for Kermani merchants, travelling to Bushehr in order to purchase EIC or most probably Indian imports, to bring quantities of wool from their district with them for sale or barter, the Company was able to acquire a proportion of this trade. The Kermani merchants had a choice of either accepting the price offered by the EIC or storing their goods. In the latter case, the final sale price would generally be lower than originally exported because of the spoilage of the wool owing to the attacks of mice and worms. The merchants would do the best they could.

The critical difference, then, between the success of the EIC in capturing a share of the wool trade, but in not properly breaking into the silk trade, was that the Kermani merchants were more dependent on Bushehr for various imported commodities than the silk merchants of Gilan and the northern provinces. The silk merchants already had an established set of outlets for their product and could get their imported goods through those same ports. The EIC, in trying to get a share of the silk trade did insufficient by way of competitive pricing to attract these merchants to Bushehr. This, in turn, was partly a function of distance, in that northern Iran had other ports close to it for its silk trade with Europe. Bushehr was more poorly placed than for the export of Carmania wool. With the EIC's attempts to break into the silk trade thwarted and its wool export trade of limited size, as well as a restricted market for rather higher priced English woollen goods in Iran, the Company's trade through Bushehr never grew to any great size.

### 7.3 : The EIC's contribution to the development of Bushehr as a major gateway to Iran

As has been shown in chapters 2 and 3 the EIC's own trade through Bushehr was not so large as to contribute greatly to the total trade of the country or to alone determine the development of Bushehr. Even at its peak, the EIC's trade through Bushehr represented only about 12 per cent of the traffic through the port. This suggests that the EIC's share formed a very small proportion of the total trade of Iran at the time, though it must be admitted that very little information is available for the period on the scale and nature of the great bulk of Iran's trade.

On this basis, it is fair to conclude that the EIC's trade at Bushehr had a relatively small direct impact on the total trade patterns of Iran during the study period, and it was the trade's

indirect effects that have some significance. These indirect effects mainly centered on the provision of security which gave encouragement to the greater development of native trade through the port and throughout the PG.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Bushehr had been only a small fishing village. But the port's fortunes then changed. Nadir Shah based his naval forces there in 1736, and with the establishment of the Zand Dynasty at Shiraz in the 1750s, that city became the Bushehr's major entrepot for imports and exports. Then the EIC decided in 1763 to focus their Iranian trade on Bushehr. All of this contributed to Bushehr's rising prosperity and expansion. The scale of the EIC's own trade through Bushehr was not great but the fact that it acted as a major local carrier of other people's goods, and more especially provided protection both for its own ships and by implication of other trading vessels, provided a vital catalyst for the growth of activity in the area. This in turn attracted more merchants from the interior of Iran to use the PG - and Bushehr - to buy, sell and ship goods either using the well-found ships operated by the EIC itself or native vessels operating out of Bushehr and other local ports under the security provided by the EIC's presence. Not that the EIC's presence was proof against all piratical attacks in Gulf areas, but an upsurge in piratical activity in the late eighteenth century merely led to a greater funneling of cargoes into Bushehr and on to ships that were either operated by the Company or were more fully under its protection. Iranian trade would have been severely hampered without the presence of the Company at this time. This can be seen from what happened when the EIC's presence was withdrawn, as happened in 1769-1775. Hardly any European ships touched at the port and total trade through the harbour greatly declined.

As trade through Bushehr expanded, so it developed a more extensive network of links to other parts in the region. These



included various ports in the Red Sea and on both the Iranian and Arabian coasts of the PG, but it was with the Indian ports that the trade connections were strongest. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, 76% of Bushehr's total trade was with the sub-continent. By it Iran imported various foods and manufactured goods, mainly cotton, and in return some Iranian goods such as copper flowed out to India, but in much smaller quantities. The unfavourable balance of this trade was made up partly by the export of specie, partly by the export of Iranian products, and partly by the re-export to neighbouring countries of some of the imported Indian goods. It was the nature of Indian goods and their re-exportation from the country which made the Indian trade and its development more important to Iran than the EIC's own trade. But again it can be argued that it was the stability and security provided by the EIC's presence on the Indian route that probably counted for more than the actual quantities of goods shipped by the EIC.

The organisation of trade the EIC tapped on the Iran-India route was simple, as outlined in chapter 6. Local producers of export commodities in the interior of Iran were linked through a commercial hierarchy consisting of three or four levels to the port of Bushehr from where the Company would ship the products to India before exporting them to England. Provincial capitals and similar larger centres in Iran acted as the major bulking centres for the silk and wool collected from local towns and villages, and from these bulking centres the goods would pass through a wholesaling network to Bushehr and the EIC for export. Such an hierarchial system suited the poor state of communications that existed in Iran. With a lack of proper roads, with long slow journeys between the production areas and the exporting point, and with few available ports, it was inevitable that the goods got funnelled out in this way. They would form a few irregular shipments through the one port, rather than be one of a more regular flow along a more diffuse network based on several points of export. Furthermore, the insecurity of passage

across many of the long land routes and the irregularity of the cargoes meant that freight charges were likely to be high. Consequently, it was only relative high value cargoes and those items in great demand that were traded.

The inward flow of goods to Iran via the EIC showed similar features since they suited a trading organisation based on one point of import and a trade network only able to funnel those goods out to the major centres within the country. As a result, the EIC's imports made little penetration of the more dispersed Iranian market outside the big cities. While the demand may have been there, factors of price and product availability often meant that the demand went unsatisfied. Clearly, the more expensive the imports - and most of the traded goods were costly - the less the probability of their being absorbed at the lowest poorer rural levels of the market hierarchy, even if the marketing system could have reached that far. As a result, many of the goods the EIC imported into Iran via Bushehr only reached the cities, and generally those cities with more regular connections with Bushehr. At no time did the EIC command more than a small part of the Iranian market, even for the goods it commonly had on offer. One of the characteristics noted for the dendritic mercantile central place model, outlined in chapter 6 to describe the spatial organisation of the Company's operations, was that lower level settlements were orientated to only one higher centre, the highest centres in the hierarchy being the seats of the political elite. The highest level centres siphoned resources from the lower level centres and the rural areas, without making much in the way of a reciprocal downward return as seen in the failure of EIC goods to reach into the rural areas.

These characteristics, together with the kinds of goods imported by the EIC and those by the private traders (Indian goods), suggest that the spatial organisation of both the Company and the Indian trade with Iran was both relatively extensive across the

country, at least to the cities, as well as quite intensive and localised around Bushehr and in the south-eastern part of Iran. That is, the goods imported by the EIC reached several centres in Iran, but did not reach into the smaller and more rural centres, especially in the more distant northerly and eastern provinces. However, the nature of the goods exported from India (both manufactured and foodstuff) may suggest that it was more likely for these to be absorbed by the lower levels of the hierarchial system than EIC goods. The scale of the Indian trade in particular would suggest that among the many Iranian merchants who travelled considerable distances once a year to Bushehr, the majority must have been engaged in buying products brought in from India, or selling goods to be exported to India. In spite of the large distances involved, such well developed trade routes gave the opportunity to producers from as far away as Khorasan to exchange their products for imported Indian goods. At the same time, there was a strong local trade in the regions around Bushehr and Shiraz with India and it was this which encouraged many of the merchants in that part of Iran to make the annual, or more frequent journey to Bushehr. In this part of Iran, with shorter land distances to Bushehr, India would seem a natural source of manufactured goods, especially as the presence of the EIC lent a degree of stability to the existence of that trade.

But it is quite clear that both the extensive and more local components of this Iranian trade with India largely depended upon the presence and authority of the EIC at Bushehr. The protective role of the Company benefitted the merchants, while the Company gained in several ways including the custom duties and the freight charges it could levy on the merchants who traded under its protection or used Company shipping space. More directly the EIC must have gained from selling its own goods to some of those merchants. In turn the growth of this trading role allowed the EIC to establish a strong foothold in Iran in particular and in the PG in general. This gave

it considerable political influence which the British government was to put to good use in the Great War with France from 1793 to 1815.

The EIC's presence at Bushehr was also of great value to Iran's trade. The removal of the EIC from Bushehr temporarily between 1769-1775, meant that Iran's trade via the PG also declined. This may well suggest that the EIC's presence was also valued by the Iranian government not just for the trade it brought, nor just for the Company's naval forces which could be used against local powers, but generally because it offered protection and provided order for Iranian trade via the PG, especially Indio-Iranian trade which despite its unfavourable imbalances was of substantial importance to the country. And this was the main outcome of the presence of Europeans in general, and the English in particular, in that region. The EIC's presence led not only to the decline of the local native shipping, by which the trade of that region was previously conducted, but it also encouraged piratical activities especially when the EIC started supporting one power against another in that region. The outcome of increasing piracy was the greater insecurity of the sea-route through the PG. This in turn was beneficial to EIC because it increased the demand for both the services of the EIC's safer and more secure shipping for the carriage of the cargo and also its protection role on this route. Such demand gave more opportunity to the EIC to establish a very strong foothold in that region. In short it can be seen that the trade of the PG was important to Iran in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the volume of this trade was increasing. Bushehr was the main door between the external and internal parts of that trade. In turn, it was of both financial and political interest to the Company to allow that door to be opened against other forces which were, at times, forcing it shut.

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## APPENDIX 1.1

### Currency, weights and measures

A major problem in using the EIC's records to study trade is the wide variety of units used, apparently with only sporadic attempts to note down the equivalents in standard units like English statute measures. This gives rise to considerable confusion and bedevils any attempt to compare value and to construct a statistical series. The appendix results from the author's efforts to produce some sort of order out of the chaos of raw data.

#### Currency

A variety of foreign coins were used in Iran as a result of the imports of specie often necessary to pay for Iranian goods. In addition, a number of indigenous coins were in use, though the type varied over time. The coins circulating in the country are noted in Table 1 which also gives their value in a standard Iranian unit, the mahmudi. Table 2 attempts to standardise those which appear to have been used in the period 1763-1810. Most of these were also used during the early eighteenth century. During Karim Khan's reign (1750-1779) a few provinces had their own locally issued coins<sup>1</sup>. Karim Khan himself introduced the 2-abbasi piece of 144 grains and stopped issuing the rupee.<sup>2</sup> The rupee ("Persian rupee") was actually a silver coin used particularly in the seaport towns.<sup>3</sup> Its value was once greater than the Bombay rupee, but it depreciated during the eighteenth century (Table 3). When the rupee ceased to be minted and the Iranians invaded the territory of Basra, the Turkish piaster came into use instead at Bushehr.<sup>4</sup> The value of this was  $5\frac{1}{2}$  mahmudi.<sup>5</sup> During Aqa Muhammad Khan's reign rupees<sup>s</sup> were issued again.<sup>6</sup> This was most probably the so-called raige rupee which appeared in the EIC's records from the 1780s onward.

The EIC's resident at Bushehr kept his accounts during most

part of the period under research in the units illustrated in Table 4, but it is not specifically clear whether these were Iranian or Indian coins, as the rupee and the mahmudi were also units of currency in India. The only indication that the accounts were kept in the local currency is the use of guz. The guz was a purely Iranian copper coin. By contrast, the EIC's actual transactions at Bushehr were carried out in a variety of local currencies.

A further complication in the construction of statistical series is the debasement of the Iranian currency (Table 5), due largely to the scarcity of silver in the country, though the decline of trade was also a contributory factor.

TABLE 1

The current coins in Iran during the first decade of the nineteenth century

| Coin           | Market price of the coins<br>( <u>mahmudi</u> )* | Type   |
|----------------|--|--------|
| Piaster        | 5.77   | Silver |
| Bombay rupee   | 7.33   | "      |
| German crown   | 15.82  | "      |
| Spanish dollar | 15.82  | "      |
| Persian tuman  | 57.82  | Gold   |
| Dutch ducat    | 33.68  | "      |
| Venetian "     | 37.12  | "      |
| Mehboob        | 16.60  | "      |

Source: RRPGB Vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 May 1803.

\*mahmudi was a silver coin.

TABLE 2

Iranian Currency 1763-1810

| Coin      | <u>Mahmudi</u> | Type   |
|-----------|----------------|--------|
| 1-tuman   | 100            | Gold   |
| 1-abbasi  | 50             | "      |
| 1-rupee   | 5              | Silver |
| 1-mahmudi | 0              | "      |
| 10-shahi  | 1              | "      |

Sources: Carmelites (1939); Issawi (1971); Ives (1773); Rabino (1911);  
RRPGB Vol.1 (1) letter from Bushehr dated 22 November 1766;  
RRPGB Vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 May 1803.

TABLE 3

Depreciation of Iranian Currency 1763-1810

| Date*   | Coin            | Mahmudi | <u>English value</u> |   |   |
|---------|-----------------|---------|----------------------|---|---|
|         |                 |         | £                    | s | d |
| 1750s + | "Persian rupee" | 5       | -                    | - | - |
| 1803    | "raige rupee"   | 5       | -                    | - | - |
| 1750s + | Bombay rupee    | 5       | -                    | - | - |
| 1765    | " "             | 6       | -                    | 2 | 5 |
| 1770s   | " "             | 6.5     | -                    | 2 | 3 |
| 1803    | " "             | 7.33    | -                    | - | - |

Sources: Ives<sup>+</sup> (1773); RRPGB Vols.1 (1), 2 and 6.

\*The dates are those of the letters in which the informations are found.

TABLE 4

The currencies by which the EIC's resident kept their account at Bushehr

| Coin    | Value (mahmudi) | Type   |
|---------|-----------------|--------|
| 1-rupee | 5               | Silver |
| 20-guz  | 1               | Copper |

Source: Ives (1773); Morier (1818); Rick (1974); RRPGB Vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 May, 1803.

TABLE 5

Depreciation of Iranian currency

| Date      | Iranian currency<br>(gold coin) | English value |    |   |
|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------|----|---|
|           |                                 | £             | s  | d |
| 1587-1629 | 1-tuman                         | 3             | 7  | 0 |
| 1678      | " "                             | 2             | 6  | 8 |
| 1694-1722 | " "                             | 2             | 4  | 0 |
| 1736-1747 | " "                             | 1             | 18 | 0 |
| 1800      | " "                             | 1             | 0  | 0 |

Sources: Curzon vol.1 (1966); Issawi (1971)

## Weights and measures

Weights and measures in Iran were extremely diverse. They not only varied from one area to another, but according to the nature of objects being weighed and measured.<sup>7</sup> (Table 6) The more common weights used in Iran during 1763-1810 seem to have been the mann-i shahi and the mann-i Tabrizi. Both of these were used in the Company's transactions. The mann-i shahi was twice the size of the mann-i Tabrizi. As far as the Company's records for the period under study are concerned, the mann-i shahi varied from 12 to  $14\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>lb</sup>. This weight was used for the Company's silk transaction. Carmania wool seems to have been dealt with in mann-i Tabrizi.<sup>9</sup> This varied between  $6\frac{3}{4}$  and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lbs.<sup>10</sup> To make matters worse, a bale of silk contained 16 mann-i shahi of this commodity whereas a bale of Carmania wool contained 15 mann-i Tabrizi. However, none of these units were of specified standard and these bales varied in size from time to time.

TABLE 6

Weights, commonly used in Iran and the Gulf trade 1745-1763

| Weights (basic unit = ju) | misqal | sir | lbs            |
|---------------------------|--------|-----|----------------|
| 1 mann or batman          | 1,200  | 75  | 12.5           |
| 1 mann-i shah (new)       | 1,280  | 80  | ca. 13         |
| 1 mann-i shah (old)       | 1,200  | 75  | 12.5           |
| 1 silk mann               | 1,600  | 100 | 16             |
| 1 indigo mann             | 800    | 50  | 8              |
| 1 mann-i Tabriz           | 640    | 40  | $6\frac{1}{4}$ |
| 1 mann-i Shiraz           | 720    | 45  | 7              |
| 1 mann-i Bushehr          | -      | -   | 8              |

Source: Rick (1974)

ju = ear of barley (Issawi 1971)

### Length

The measure generally used in the sale of cloth at Bushehr was the gaz shahi. It is not known whether it was the local gaz of Bushehr or not. Therefore, no specific comment can be made regarding its conversion to an international measure. For this reason, however, it has been assumed that the residents might have used the local Bushehr measurement for their transactions. The Aleppo gaz of 28 inches was used at Basra. Table 7 illustrates the variation which existed between the different gaz in Iran.

TABLE 7

Measures commonly used in Iran and Gulf trade 1745-1763

| Measures (basic unit = gaz) | inches | meters |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1 gaz                       | 36     | .93    |
| 1 gaz shahi                 | 40     | 1.025  |
| 1 gaz Tabriz                | 42     | 1.089  |
| 1 gaz Aleppo                | 28     | .71    |
| 1 gaz shahi in Shiraz       | 40     | 1.02   |
| 1 gaz shahi in Esfahan      | 40     | 1.04   |
| 1 gaz shahi in Bushehr      | 36     | .93    |
| 1 gaz shahi in Lar          | 26     | .67    |
| 1 gaz shahi in Bandar Abbas | 31     | .79    |

Source: Rick (1974).



#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. RABINO, D.B. (1911) 'Coins of the Shahs of Persia (continued 1737-1848)', Numismatic Chronicle 4th series, 11, 176-97 pp. 176-97
2. Ibid.
3. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 10 May, 1803
4. Ibid.
5. RRPGB vol.6 letter from Bushehr dated 19 December 1800
6. RABINO op. cit., p.180
7. ISSAWI C., ed. (1971) The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 389
8. RRPGB vol.1(1) letters from Bushehr to Bombay dated 2 March 1765, 11 January 1767; PPG vol.20(3) letters from Basra dated 12 March 1772, 2 August, 1772 and 16 April 1776 PPG vol.21(1) letter from Basra dated 12 June 1774
9. According to CD's letter dated 25 April 1765, mann-i Tabrizi used at Bushehr was larger than that used at Bandar Abbas (Table 6). DB vol.2
10. RRPGB vol.1(1) letters from Bushehr dated 11 January 1767 and 3 May 1767

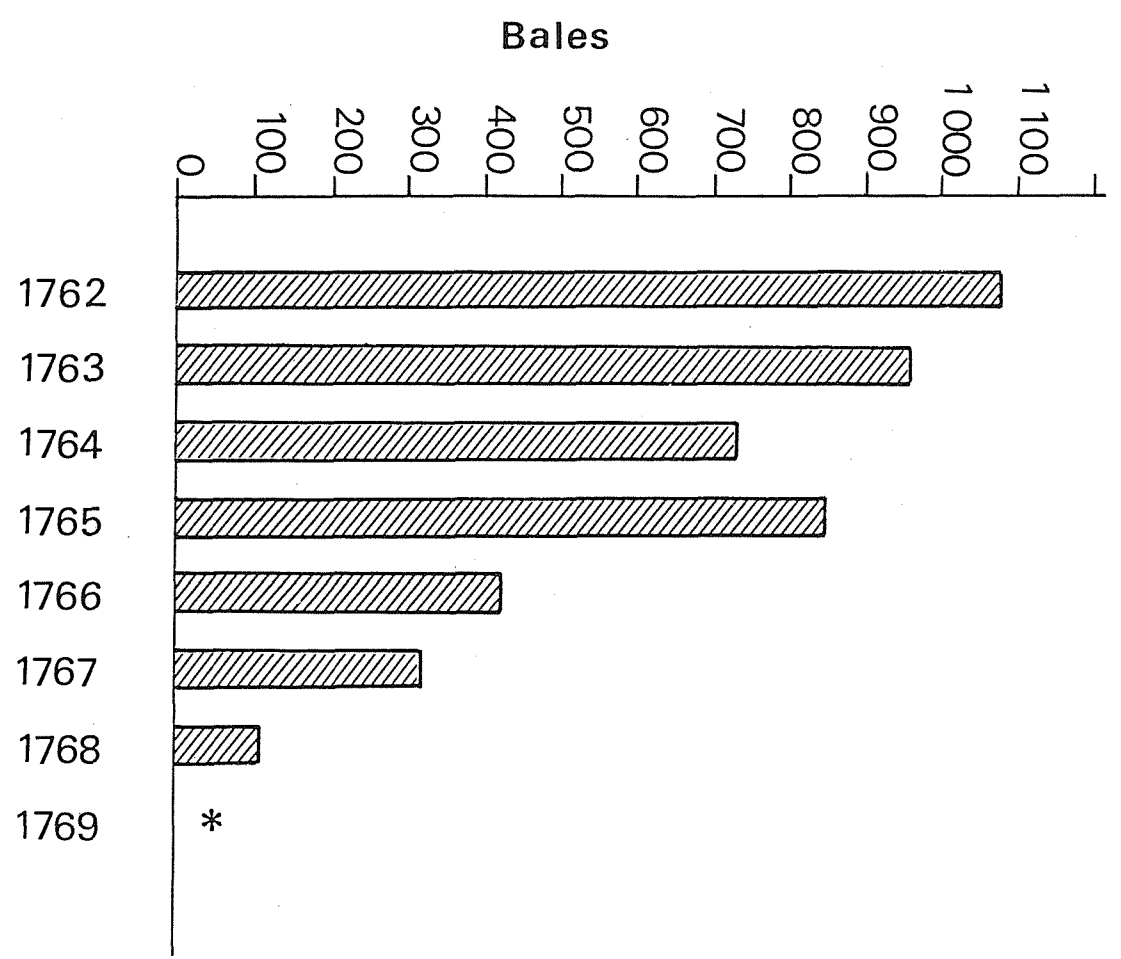
## APPENDIX 1.2 Original Sources

The records used in this study are the working papers kept by the English East India Company. They consist mostly of the commercial letters exchanged between its various officials, some in London, others in India and at various points in the PG. These have been bound up into large volumes arranged according to the administrative hierarchy devised by the Company to handle its affairs. The principal sources came from the Factory Records Series, Persia and Persian Gulf. Although 135 volumes cover the period 1620-1874<sup>1</sup>, use was made only of the 30 or so covering the period 1763 to 1810. Although the most important were: the Residents' Record Persian Gulf Bushehr (vols. 1-11) and Persia and the Persian Gulf (Basra records), use was also made of the Bombay Commercial Proceedings (Range 414 and 419), Letters Received from Bombay to London and of the EIC's Home Correspondence covering Despatches to Bombay. The latter include consignments made by the CD to the PG. The letters are all handwritten, on good quality rag paper. Whilst generally well preserved, the papers are often fragile and in some cases the original letters have been mounted in a new backing to prevent further damage. Although the ink has often faded, the letters are not too difficult to read, with a little experience; they do, however, contain certain ambiguities which are due to variations in style between the hands of the different people involved. Whilst the Court of Directors and the Bombay presidency would use 'writers', the residents in the PG frequently conducted their own correspondence. Most of the letters have been kept in a simple chronological sequence in the bound volumes, sometimes distinguishing between inward and outward letters. Lack of an index to all but the DB means that there are no clues to the contents of the letters and each must be read separately for any information it may contain. This is a time consuming task. The information consists of various qualitative statements about trade, politics and other affairs, but mixed with these are figures on sales, prices and indents. Since they are working figures, yearly statistics have to be compiled from them by the simple expedient of adding. Occasionally, information on the annual sales of woollens was added up by the Company's staff and tabulated. An example are Figures 2.7 (right hand diagram 'value') and 2.9a and b. The only cases where the statistical information is regularly given on an annual basis are in DB and BCP (Range 419). DB normally reported the annual export of goods to its settlements, because the fleet sailed for the Eastern markets only once a year. These figures have been used where appropriate as, for example in the CD's consignments of woollens to Basra and Bushehr. (Figures 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.14, 2.15 and 2.17). BCP (Range 419) are the only records in which the statistics are arranged in tabular form. Each volume deals with the export and import of goods and the departure and arrival of ships sailing between Bombay, Surat and PG in a specific year. Examples of this type of material are seen where the source cited is BCP Range 419.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. YAPP, M.E. (1970) 'The India Office Records as a Source for the Economic History of the Middle East', in Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, ed. M.A.Cook (Oxford: University Press), p.506

APPENDIX 2.1 CD's consignments for Basra, 1762-1769



\*=No Consignment

Appendix 4.1

THE ARTICLES IMPORTED TO PERSIAN GULF FROM BOMBAY BY THE PRIVATE  
MERCHANTS 1801-1810

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| *Anchors & grapenails | Copper Cake        |
| Agla wood             | Carriage & sadlery |
| Agates                | Chilly Peppers     |
| Arrack                | Clock & Watches    |
| Aloes                 | Confectionery      |
| Album                 | Carpets            |
| Arsenic               |                    |
| Amber                 |                    |
|                       | Drugs              |
|                       | Dammers            |
| Beetlnuts             |                    |
| *Broad cloth          |                    |
| Brandy                | Eatables           |
| Benjamine             | Elephant teeth     |
| Brass & Copper ware   | Earthen Ware       |
| Badian                |                    |
| Bird Shott            |                    |
| Beer                  | False Pearl        |
| Beads                 | Furniture          |
|                       | Fireworks          |
|                       |                    |
| Coir                  |                    |
| Coconuts              | Grain              |
| Copra                 | Ghee               |
| Cloves                | Glass ware         |
| Cassia                | Ginger             |
| Copper                | Guns & Pistols     |
|                       | Gin                |
|                       | Garlic             |
| China Ware            | Glass, broken      |
| Cochineal             | Gum Arabic         |
| *Cardamoms            |                    |
| Coffee                |                    |
| Cotton                | Hemp               |
| Cutlery               | Hides              |
| Cotton Thread & Yarn  |                    |
| *Cinnamon             |                    |
| Cassia Buds           | Japan ware         |
| Candles               |                    |
| Chundrooz             |                    |

Appendix 4.1 (continued)

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Ivory                      | Raw silk          |
| *Iron                      | Red & white leads |
| *Indigo                    | Rose Water        |
| Iron hoops                 |                   |
| Ivory work                 |                   |
|                            | Seeds             |
|                            | Soap              |
| *Lead                      | *Sugar            |
| Lace                       | *Steel            |
| Leather                    | Stationery        |
| Looking glass              | Salt Ammoniac     |
| *Long ells                 | Sweat meat        |
| Long Pepper                | Sapper-wood       |
|                            | *Sandal wood      |
|                            | Salt peter        |
| Medicine                   | Saffron           |
| Mace                       | Sadlery           |
| Musk                       | Sharkskins        |
| Mats                       | Shawls            |
| Musical instruments        |                   |
| Mathematical instruments   |                   |
|                            | *Tin              |
|                            | *Turmeric         |
| Nutmeg                     | Timber & Planks   |
| Nail Copper                | Tobacco           |
| Nails Iron                 | Twine             |
| New sugar                  | Targets           |
| Needles                    | Tamarind          |
| Noushadour (Salt ammoniac) | Tea               |
|                            | Toys              |
|                            | Tin Plate         |
| Oil                        | Thread            |
|                            |                   |
| *Piece goods               | Vermilion         |
| Pepper                     | Verdigris         |
| Plate & plate ware         | Vinger            |
| Paint                      |                   |
| Paper                      |                   |
| Patch leaf                 | Wine              |
| Pictures                   | Wax               |
| Perfumery                  | Wool              |
| Printed cottons            | Wooden ware       |

Quick Silver

(\*) = These goods were in demand in Iran

Sources: BCP Range 419, Vols. 39-46

Appendix 4.2

THE ARTICLES EXPORTED FROM PERSIAN GULF TO BOMBAY BY THE PRIVATE  
MERCHANTS 1801-1810

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Attar of Roses   | Elephant teeth      |
| *Asafoetida      | Eatables            |
| Almonds          | Empty bottles       |
| Aloes            |                     |
| Arrack           |                     |
| Arsenic          | False Coral         |
| *Alobacarra      | Feathers            |
|                  | False Pearl         |
|                  | False Gold & Silver |
| Bead Coral       |                     |
| Brimstone        |                     |
| Brass leaf       | Ghee                |
| Bead ruby        | *Galls Persia       |
| Broad cloth      | *Gum Ammoniac       |
| *Behedana        | Gum Arabic          |
| Benjamins        | Grains              |
| Beetlnuts        | Groceries           |
| Buzgan           | Glass Ware          |
| Brass Ware       | Garlic              |
|                  |                     |
| Copper nails     | Honey               |
| Canvas & Cordage | *Hing               |
| Cochineal        | *Hingra             |
| Cloves           | Hemp                |
| Chundrooz        | Hurtal              |
| Coffee           | Hurtal arsenic      |
| Calgut           | Hurdeh              |
| Coral            |                     |
| *Copper          |                     |
| Coir             | Iron                |
| Chilly Peppers   |                     |
| Confectionery    |                     |
| *Carpets         | *Kismiss            |
|                  |                     |
| Dates            | Lace                |
| *Drugs           | *Looking Glass      |
| Dammer           | *Leather            |
|                  | Long pepper         |

Appendix 4.2 (continued)

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| *Myrrh                | Tortoise Shell |
| Mother of Pearl       | Tumeric        |
| Munjeet               |                |
| *Medicines            |                |
| Mace                  | Venice ware    |
|                       | Vinegar        |
|                       | Verdigris      |
| Needles               |                |
| Naphtha oil           |                |
|                       | *Wine          |
|                       | Wool           |
| *Old Copper           |                |
| Oil                   |                |
| *Opium                |                |
|                       |                |
| Paper                 |                |
| *Persian Salt         |                |
| *Pistachio nuts       |                |
| *Piece goods          |                |
| Persian Sundries      |                |
|                       |                |
| *Rose Water           |                |
| Red earth             |                |
| *Rose flower          |                |
| Rose Malloes          |                |
| Rock Salt             |                |
| *Raw silk             |                |
|                       |                |
| *Saffron              |                |
| Sharkskins            |                |
| Seeds                 |                |
| *Shawls               |                |
| Surma                 |                |
| Senna leaf            |                |
| Sweat meats           |                |
| Sugar                 |                |
| Salt                  |                |
| *Sundry Rock (nehmek) |                |
| Stationery & Books    |                |

(\*) = These are most probably of Iranian origin

Sources: BCP Range 419, Vols. 39-46

## APPENDIX 5.1

### a) The East India Company's staff and their salary at Bandar Abbas Agency in 1751

| Name of servant | Title           | Annual Salary<br>£ |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Henry Savage    | Agent           | 150                |
| Danvers Graves  | Senior Merchant | 40                 |
| Henry Draper    | Factor          | 15                 |
| James Daly      | Factor          | 15                 |
| Francis Wood    | Factor          | 15                 |
| Robert Went     | Writer          | 5                  |
| John Wals       | Writer          | 5                  |
| John Parker     | Surgeon         | 60                 |
| Joseph Hermet   | Interpreter     | 75                 |
| Stephen Hermet  | Interpreter     | 50                 |
| Haji Jafar      | Persian Scribe  | 18                 |

Source: Amin (1967)

### b) The East India Company's staff at the Bandar Abbas Agency in 1758

| Name of the servant | Title       |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Alexander Douglas   | Agent       |
| Mr Mostyn           | Factor      |
| Mr Nash             | Writer      |
| Mr Holmes           | Writer      |
| John Parker         | Surgeon     |
| Mr Wait             | Book Keeper |

Source: Ives (1773)



## APPENDIX 5.2

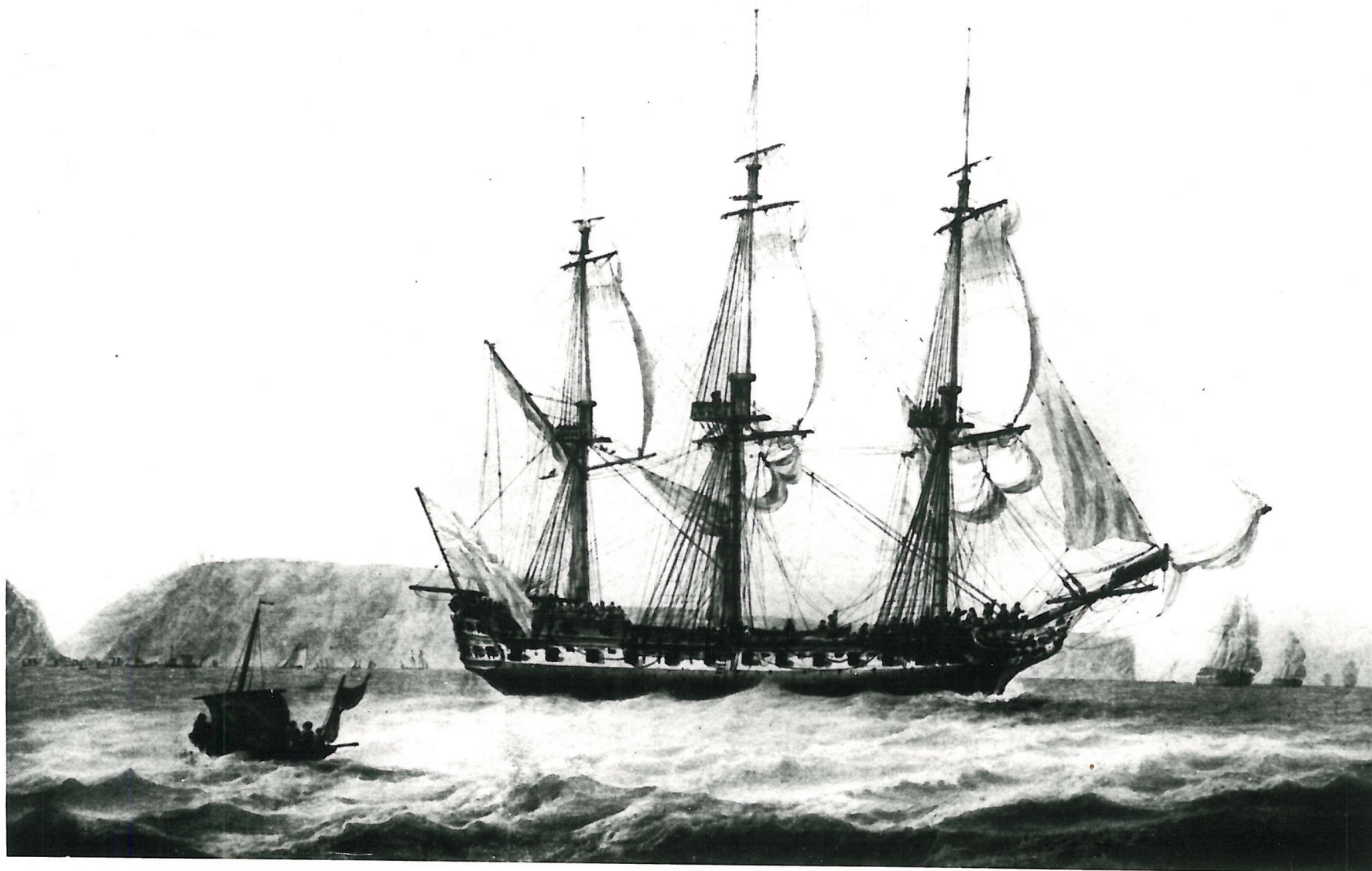
### EIC's Ships which were sent from England and visited Iran's ports, 1750-1807

| Log begins   | Name of the ship | Name of the Captain | Log ends      | Remarks  |
|--------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|--|
| 20 Nov. 1750 | Prince Henry     | Thomas Best         | 9 Dec. 1752   | Combroon, Bombay   |
| 22 Dec. 1752 | Salisbury        | John Foot           | 3 Aug. 1754   | Combroon, Bombay, Surat, Tellicherry, Anjengo                |
| 14 Jan. 1755 | Houghton         | Richard Walpole     | 13 Sept. 1757 | Bombay, Combroon, Surat, Malca, China                        |
| 1 Jan. 1756  | Hector           | John William        | 8 Nov. 1757   | Combroon, Bombay, Tellicherry, Anjengo                       |
| 11 Jan. 1758 | Admiral Watson   | William Cooke       | 6 Nov. 1759   | Combroon, Bombay   |
| 27 Feb. 1759 | Godolphin        | Collingwood Roddam  | 23 July 1763  | Bombay, Muscat, Combroon, Madras, Bengal, Mocha              |
| 17 Feb. 1761 | Royal Captain    | Nathaniel Tanner    | 19 Aug. 1763  | Bombay, Combroon, Trincomalee, Whampoa, Bombay, Surat, Mocha |
| 20 Dec. 1763 | London           | John Webb           | 20 Dec. 1765  | Bombay, Surat, Muscat, Bushehr                               |

APPENDIX 5.2 (continued)

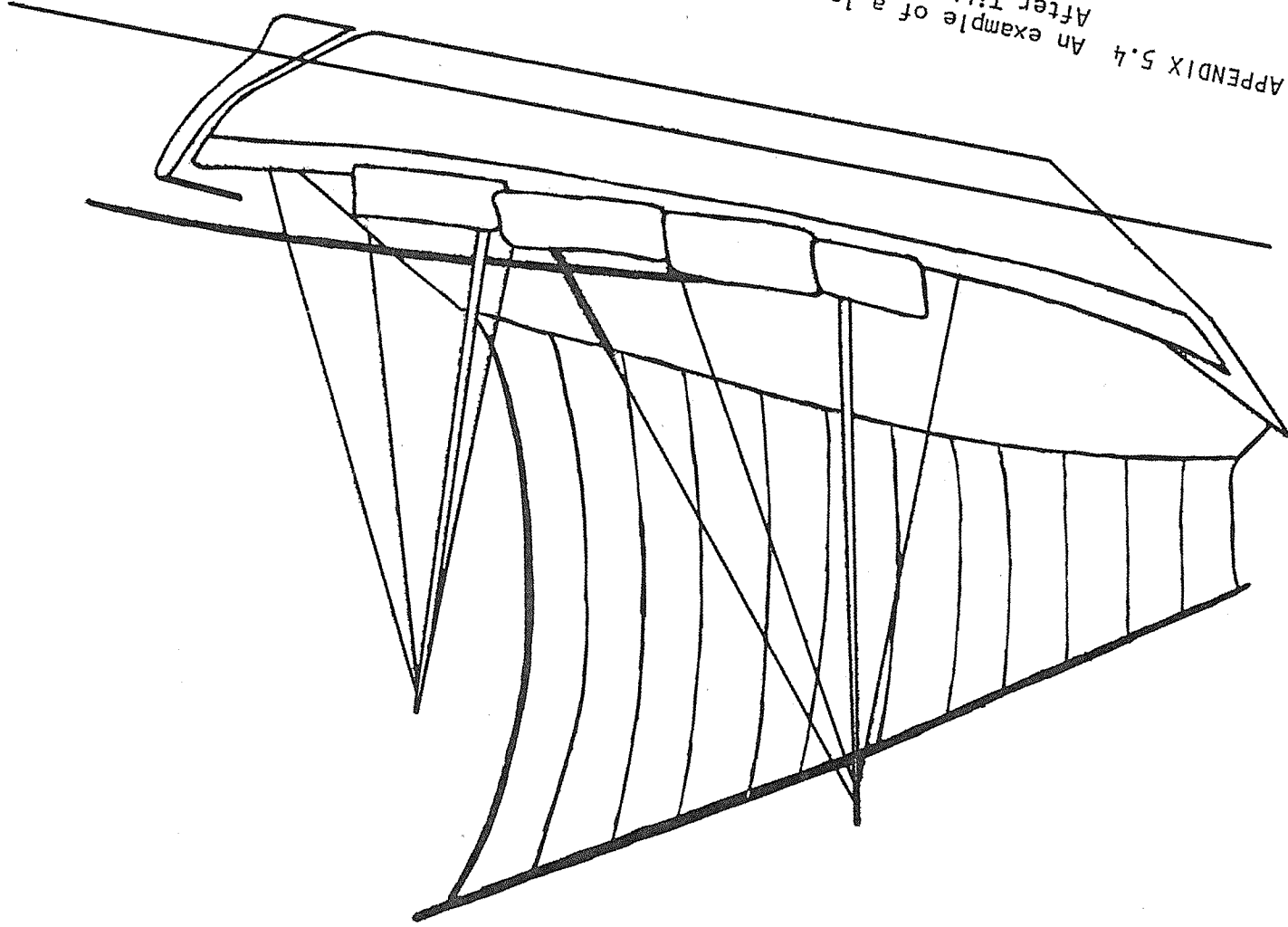
| Log begins    | Name of the ship | Name of the Captain | Log ends     | Remarks  |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| 21 Nov. 1778  | Mercury          | George Forbes       | 19 June 1784 | Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Bussro, Muscat, Bushehr, Mangalore |
| 10 April 1784 | Sampson          | Edward Ledger       | 10 Aug. 1787 | Surat, Bombay, Persia  |
| 3 April 1807  | Royal George     | Charles B. Gribble  | 28 June 1809 | Bombay, Madras, Persia, China                                |
| 13 April 1807 | Wexford          | Charles Barrnard    | 10 July 1809 | Madras, Bombay, Persia                                       |

Source: I.O.L.R. (1896)



APPENDIX 5.3 An example of an East Indiaman  
After Parkinson (1937)

APPENDIX 5.4 An example of a local ship (dhow)  
After Tibbetts (1971)



# APPENDIX 5.5 : Mean Temperatures at Bushehr, 1803

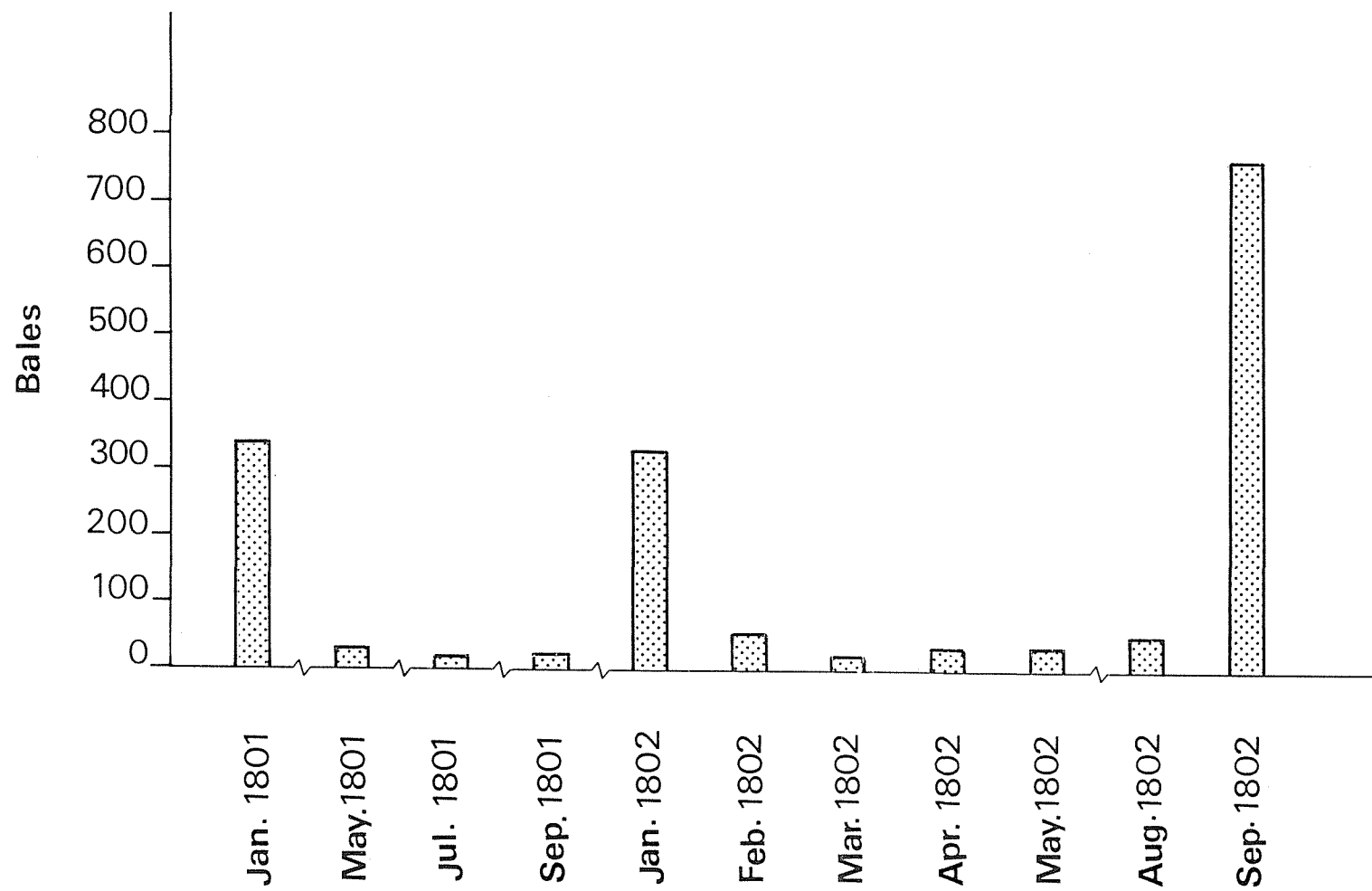
\*The following table of the mean temperature of Abusheher, (Bushehr) which lies about the centre of this tract, is taken from observations made by Mr Jukes in 1803

| MONTH     | TEMPERATURE  |             |              | REMARKS  |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--|
|           | Sun-<br>rise | Two<br>P.M. | Nine<br>P.M. |  |
| January   | 58           | 65          | 62           | Prevailing winds northerly; violent thunder and lightning on the 19th; little rain fell during this month; distant mountains white with snow.                                  |
| February  | 62           | 66          | 63           | An unusual quantity of rain fell this month; very tempestuous weather, with southerly winds.   |
| March     | 65½          | 69          | 67½          | Pleasant weather; a good deal of rain.   |
| April     | 72           | 76½         | 73¾          | Pleasant weather; northerly wind prevailing.   |
| May       | 80½          | 85½         | 82½          | Distant mountains no longer covered with snow; on the 31st the thermometer rose to 110, in a tent, with a fly. Some rain fell in this month, and we had thunder and lightning. |
| June      | 86½          | 93          | 88½          | No rain; prevailing winds W.N.W.; light breezes beginning to blow from the land during the night.  |
| July      | 89½          | 98          | 93           | No rain; partly regular land winds after nine P.M. till morning; prevailing winds northerly; dews at night towards the end of the month.                                       |
| August    | 85           | 100         | 89           | No rain; north-west winds prevailing; dews at night; thermometer, one day in tents, up at 115, with a south-east wind; exceedingly oppressive weather.                         |
| September | 82½          | 95          | 86½          | No rain; heavy dews; north-west winds prevailing.  |

APPENDIX 5.5 (continued)

| MONTH    | TEMPERATURE  |             |              | REMARKS   |
|----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---|
|          | Sun-<br>rise | Two<br>P.M. | Nine<br>P.M. |   |
| October  | 75½          | 87¼         | 78           | A very little rain on the 12th; mornings and evenings, at the end of the month, pleasant; winds variable, chiefly northerly.                      |
| November | 63           | 75          | 68           | Stormy, with thunder, lightning, and rain, during this month; distant mountains seen covered with snow; at the end of the month pleasant weather. |
| December | 54           | 65½         | 63           | South-easterly winds, and sometimes violent; the weather, however, usually very pleasant  |

Source: Malcolm (1815)



APPENDIX 5.6 The sale of woollen<sup>s</sup> at Bushehr in different months and seasons, 1801-1802

Source: RRPGB vol.5 letter from Bushehr dated 8 September, 1802

## APPENDIX 6.1

### Examples of the orientation of lower level settlements to a single high level centre

| Name of the place       | Administrative Position | Number of subordinated villages |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Fasa                    | District                | 18                              |
| Saujbolagh<br>(Mahabad) | District                | 100                             |
| Zanjan                  | Large Town              | 100                             |
| Khalkhal                | District                | 200                             |
| Urmia<br>(Rez'iyeh)     | Town                    | 400                             |
| "Merdusht"*             | District                | 800                             |
| Neyshabur               | District                | 14,000                          |

Sources: Fraser (1826); Fraser (1834)\*; Morier (1818)



## APPENDIX 6.2

### The distance and the time of the caravan journey between Iranian settlements

| From         | To                     | Distance<br>(km.)* | Time<br>(Days) | A day's journey<br>(Km.) |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Bandar Abbas | Esfahan                | 1120               | 32             | 35                       |
| Esfahan      | Caspian Sea<br>(Rasht) | 688                | 20             | 34                       |
| Kashan       | Tabriz                 | 800                | 20             | 40                       |
| Tabriz       | Kordestan              | 400                | 5              | 80                       |
| Tabriz       | Esfahan                | 980                | 24             | 41                       |
| Mashhad      | Gorgan                 | 560                | 7              | 80                       |
| Bandar Abbas | Khorasan               | 1552               | 100            | 15                       |

Sources: Beckett (1966); Fryer (1698); Issawi (1971); Pinkerton (1811); Rick (1974).

\* As some of these distances had to be worked out from the contemporary maps, the route chosen might not have been those used in the eighteenth century.