

## Introduction

Concerning sugar, I think there was always some in *Indes*. I know people strongly contest this and most of the authors assert that sugar is a product of the New World and the people of the Old World used nothing but honey. However, I have a different opinion with the following reason. That is, sugar grows throughout *Indes* abundantly, easily and excellently, and it was not like products brought from remote countries, which never grow up so well since they were transplanted far from their own soil...

Jean Chardin (1811)

Historiographically, the eighteenth century has been defined as a crucial period of transition for the political economy of the Indian Ocean. The withdrawal of Asian powerhouses such as the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) and the Mughal dynasty (1526–1858) from maritime trade reflected the significant growth of European interests in the sea. These shifts resulted in expansion onto land, including the formation of British rule in India and its neighbouring countries. Persistently prevalent is the idea that the slide of power conformed with an eastward shift in the axis of maritime trade. This school of thought suggests that from the early eighteenth century, the economy of the Persian Gulf, which had until then had an important part of the Indian Ocean trade, faced a decline due to political uncertainty and lost considerable portions of trade to Bengal and then to China. Meanwhile, English traders are said to have amassed assets which enabled them to develop imperial interests across the ocean.<sup>1</sup> This storyline is :faulty because it rests on an Anglocentric premise: that there was a total decline in the Gulf trade during the eighteenth century. This study discusses sugar trade in the Persian Gulf in the eighteenth century. In contrast to the existing historiography of the region, which still stresses eighteenth-century imperial and economic decline, I argue a

different perspective that emphasizes a maintained vitality of the Gulf trade by illuminating remarkable changes in the relationship between trade and consumption in the context of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

For Jean Chardin, a French Huguenot jeweller who made visits to Iran between 1655 and 1677 under the Safavid dynasty, the country was a place of wonders. While mesmerized by infinite exoticisms — climate, flora and fauna, minerals, ways of life, science, art and so forth — a certain sense of familiarity also arose when he encountered the abundant use of cane sugar there. It was reminiscent of contemporary Europe, where sugar produced in the Caribbean had increasingly entered the market. Yet, the great excitement that Chardin got from his “discovery” of sugar seems to have overwhelmed his curiosity. He could have asked why Iran’s population consumed sugar so lavishly. Or, he could have guessed why the market was expanding at that very moment. Instead he narrowly focused on whether tobacco and sugar were originally from the New World.<sup>2</sup>

The question of why sugar was so popular in Iran has remained unanswered. What is puzzling is that in spite of its relatively sparse population, Iran became a major sugar-importing region in the Indian Ocean of the late Safavid period. Until then, Iran had imported sugar from India by land and sea, but began to import substantial quantities from various Asian countries through the Persian Gulf. The total population of Iran during the prime years of the Safavid dynasty in the early to mid-seventeenth century was no more than seven or eight million, while India in the same period boasted between sixty and a hundred million inhabitants, and in the Ottoman realm at the turn of the seventeenth century there were thirty to thirty-five million. In fact, Safavid Iran presented an impressive depository for most commercial items passing between South- and Southeast Asia and Western Europe. Nevertheless, hardly any sugar imported via the Persian Gulf seems to have been re-exported. It was destined for major cities, especially the Safavid capital of Isfahan.<sup>3</sup>

To discuss the trade and consumption of commodities in the Indian Ocean, K.N. Chaudhuri, a renowned economic historian, proposed the theory of “state capitalism”. He argued that the crucial driving force behind the maritime economy in early modern times was the “Asian state”. Before the European technological revolution prevailed in the nineteenth century, he thought that the “Asian state” was “the single largest financial enterprise with its income and expenditure forming a significant proportion of total production and consumption” in the Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup>

This concept is applicable to sugar trade and consumption in Safavid Iran. Muhammad Muhsin, an eyewitness to the last days of the kingdom, blamed the indulgence of the final monarch, Sultan Husayn (r. 1694–1722), and his consumption of food and medicine in the secluded harem for causing for the degeneration of the state to the degree that it provoked the Afghan conquest.<sup>5</sup> This claim has been echoed in modern literature on the Safavids.<sup>6</sup> To Marxist historians, the court’s penchant for spending appears to be a symptom of the undeveloped state of “modern capitalism” in the country.<sup>7</sup> In recent decades, scholars have paid increasing attention to Iran’s material culture vis-à-vis its religious and spiritual culture.<sup>8</sup> Some have pointed out the significant development of social life in Safavid Iran, especially in the court circle, as being behind the high demand for sugar in the late Safavid period. R. Matthee argues that, on special occasions such as honourable receptions, preparing specific items such as sweetmeats, coffee and the *qalyan* (water pipe) became more or less a social norm.<sup>9</sup> In the same vein, A. Hosseini states that *sharbat* (sherbet, or sugar and fruit water) had a prominent place in the capital’s social life.<sup>10</sup> T. Morikawa similarly argues that sugar, traditionally a “medicine”, became an indispensable “condiment” for royal cuisine, surpassing the indigenous sweetener, honey.<sup>11</sup>

The situation in the nineteenth century also supports Chaudhuri’s hypothesis about the all-conquering Western industrial capitalism. While Asian sugar was imported through the

Persian Gulf, during that period, American sugar, which was refined in industrialized European refineries, and Russian beet sugar poured into the Iranian market. Particularly in the latter half of the century, imports of sugar increased, and its availability substantially improved. Sugar was estimated to represent 24 per cent of total imports in 1910. Coupled with tea drinking, which became highly popular among wider society, sugar became an integral part of the nation's modern diet.<sup>12</sup>

However, there remains unanswered, the critical question regarding the kind of relationship sugar supply had with the consumption of sugar from the collapse of the Safavids until 1800. The Afghan conquest triggered serious political disarray, and that lasted until the establishment of Qajar rule (1796–1925).<sup>13</sup> Although the occasional rise of powerful warlords, including Nadir Shah Afshar (r. 1736–47), Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751–79) and Ahmad Shah Durrani (r. 1747–72), allowed some respite to some parts of the country, repeated hostilities forced the inhabitants to endure continuous uncertainties.<sup>14</sup> So if the theory of “state capitalism” is true, there should be a serious decline, if not a rupture, in that relationship. The prevailing concern in recent literature on the eighteenth-century Gulf is to elucidate how political turmoil severely hindered maritime trade. W. Floor, the most important contributor to this line of study, underscores the fact that the fortune of the Gulf economy was dependent on the strength of the political entities involved. He argues that the relatively stable rule of the Safavids facilitated the Gulf trade by providing security and infrastructure for the smooth flow of merchants and commodities. The sustained disappearance of efficient regional powers after the eclipse of the dynasty, therefore, dealt a crucial blow to the trade. Although traders to some extent adjusted to the changing trading situations, the instability occasioned an overall disturbance and decline of Gulf trade.<sup>15</sup> From the same standpoint, Matthee has emphasized the unmatched role of the Safavid dynasty in the history of Iran through its decrees over the

country, which resulted in long-term control. He claimed they gave it more of the status of an “empire” than a “kingdom”.<sup>16</sup>

### **Previous studies of the eighteenth-century Persian Gulf**

A careful reading shows that many earlier studies present a rather contradictory picture. What does seem to have consensus is that during the eighteenth century, numerous ports and portions of the Gulf formed a strikingly resilient regional market for goods coming from and going to countries in the Indian Ocean rim.

Traditionally the eighteenth century was regarded as a prelude to Britain’s predominance in Gulf affairs. The assumption was, that after the decline of the Safavids, increased insecurity permitted the East India Company (EIC), which had hung on thanks to the Royal Navy and the Bombay Marine, to elevate their presence in the Gulf market, thus paving the way for their firm control of the regional economy and politics from the nineteenth century onward.<sup>17</sup> A. Hakima’s *History of Eastern Arabia* (1965) changed this picture. Casting a critical eye on the literature focused on activities of the European companies, he illuminates the rise of maritime Arabs, particularly the ‘Utub in Kuwait and Bahrain in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Together with the increase of the ‘Utub’s involvement in commercial shipping and caravan traffic, he argues, Kuwait developed into a prominent outlet for Indian goods bound for Baghdad, the inner parts of the Arabian Peninsula, Aleppo and Constantinople.<sup>18</sup> About a decade later Th. Ricks furthered this argument. In an analysis of the activities of local notables and traders in southern Iran in the eighteenth century, he revealed that anarchy and chaos were limited to competition within a group or class of the late-Safavid elites for socio-political domination. With the establishment of the Zand dynasty in Shiraz (an Iranian or Kurdish clan, 1765–94), he argues, order was restored to Iran and the focus of the

Gulf trade shifted from south to north. Consequently, Bandar Abbas, the largest emporium during the Safavid period, went into decline and instead Bushire, the outer harbour of Shiraz, developed into a principal centre of trade. He posits that it was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that trade routes with Iran shifted away from the Gulf. Then the trade moved further north towards the Caspian regions, where the Qajars established their power base, and towards Khurasan.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1980s, when the Indian Ocean had begun to draw scholarly attention as a new unit of historical survey, A. Das Gupta provided a useful overview of the Indian Ocean trade in the eighteenth century, including the contributions of Hakima and Ricks. He succinctly showed that, although the Gulf trade suffered intermittent upheaval after the Safavids, when pressured, it moved to the Upper Gulf. He also showed that the rise of the maritime Arabs of Kuwait and Bahrain to some extent improved the situation in the northwest Indian Ocean.<sup>20</sup> Since then a number of scholars dealing with different areas of the Gulf have corroborated his assumption by revealing the remarkable flexibility of the commercial networks of local and regional rulers and merchants in generating alternative trading routes and secondary markets.

S. Grummon scrutinized the rise of Bushire under the rule of the Arab family Madhkurs in the second half of the eighteenth century. He pointed out that the Madhkurs succeeded in establishing an effective partnership with the Zands, a hinterland power, in which the Madhkurs used their naval power to support the Zands' maritime interests, and the Zands in turn protected the hinterland for the Madhkurs. He claimed that as a result, Bushire became a significant "port-of-call", competing with Bandar Abbas, Basra and Muscat<sup>21</sup> Th. Abdullah reveals that the decline of Bandar Abbas also allowed Basra to become a leading commercial port in the Gulf. From the early 1720s to the mid-1770s, trade at Basra substantially developed to deal with a wide range of foreign actors such as India, the Red Sea region, Southern Iran, Iraq and the Middle East, as well as within the Gulf. In the middle of the

century, the *Mamluks*, originally Christian slaves recruited from the Caucasus to Ottoman Iraq, founded their own regime in Baghdad. The *Mamluk* rulers encouraged trade, especially towards Baghdad. Although the trade at Bandar Abbas remained considerable during the first half of the century, he notes that Bushire rose to become a competitor of Basra and took larger shares of the Indian trade.<sup>22</sup>

Using the concept of “free ports”, H. Fattah describes the emergence of al-Zubara, Kuwait and Bahrain under the control of ‘Utbi tribesmen from the mid-eighteenth century. Unlike the Ottoman port of Basra, she says, these ports permitted regional merchants the freedom to trade their goods without any payment of customs tariffs. Thus, they facilitated the transit trade passing from Arabia to India, as well as the regional trade connecting market towns in the Arabian Peninsula, Southern Iraq and Arabistan.<sup>23</sup> P. Risso deals with the significant growth of Muscat’s commerce under the Bu Sa‘id dynasty (1749– present) in the latter half of the eighteenth century. She ascribes the success of the port to three factors: the domination of transit trade in Mocha coffee to Basra, the increase of trade with the western coast of India (particularly Javanese sugar to the Dutch settlement of Cochin), and the decline of Bandar Abbas and Basra.<sup>24</sup>

Since the 1990s, Gulf trade has received renewed attention from scholars investigating Eurasia’s overland commerce in early modern times.<sup>25</sup> According to many of them, the trans-continental routes and the sea-lanes of the Persian Gulf had a complex relationship. J. Gommans suggested that the reformation of Gulf trade in the eighteenth century accompanied that of Eurasian overland trade. Analysing the overland trade through Afghanistan under the Durrani dynasty (1747–1773), he claimed that, while the Gulf trade relocated from the Iranian littoral to the Arabian coast and Basra, the caravan trade invigorated the economic centres of India, Iran and Central Asia. On the other hand, the Durrani incorporation of Baluchistan, Makran and Sind created a new link between the Iranian and Central Asian hinterland and the

Persian Gulf; many outer harbours of these regions had good access to Muscat.<sup>26</sup> In *Arabian Seas*, R. Barendse comes much into line with this view. He asserts that the Gulf as a market for Iran-bound goods declined as the caravan traffic from India to Iran via Afghanistan replaced much of the old maritime trade, but the Gulf continued to play a role as an impressive intersection that connected the economies of the Mediterranean and South Asia. Therefore, he says, what happened in the Gulf during the eighteenth century was not an overall decline but a shifting of the trade, and that the Gulf was particularly prone to political crises because the financial rewards were so enormous.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, these views concur that the idea of an overall catastrophe in the eighteenth century carries no great weight. Rather this conception of the region bears a noticeable resemblance to the reinterpretation of the relationship between merchant and state in eighteenth-century India in the past few decades. That is to say, the fragmentation of the Mughal Empire seldom precipitated capital into atrophy as formerly believed. On the contrary, the increased vigour of merchants, adjusting to political vicissitudes, stimulated further commercialization of the so-called successor states.<sup>28</sup> It appears that during the eighteenth century, sugar trade in the Gulf indeed maintained a considerable level of intensity while shifting course.

In the seventeenth century, Iran imported sugar from Taiwan, China, Oman and Java, as well as from Northwest India and Bengal. By 1700, its market became a mainstay for the nascent sugar production in Java under the management of the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC). The VOC was presumably the single largest supplier of sugar in the late Safavid period. After the Afghan invasion, however, sales of Javanese sugar sharply dropped. Although the Company tried to keep up the business in the emerging markets of Basra, Bushire and Kharg Island, their trade did not reach its previous level, which resulted in their final withdrawal from the Gulf in 1766.<sup>29</sup>

While Floor thinks the downfall of the Company signified a substantial decrease in the population's purchasing power, it is important to note that sugar imports by other suppliers carried on.<sup>30</sup> After the Afghan conquest, the focus of English private traders, the biggest competitors of the VOC, shifted from Bandar Abbas to Basra, and their ex Calcutta shipping brought commodities, including sugar, to Basra.<sup>31</sup> In the course of the ensuing century, Omani merchants began to be very active in trading sugar. Omani vessels exported Gulf products such as dates and sulphur to Dutch Cochin, and in return they imported Javanese sugar, spices and Malabar pepper. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Arabs turned their eyes to eastern Indian ports. They sailed to Calcutta to buy silk and sugar more cheaply. The Bu Sa'id *sultan* even sent ships to Batavia annually in order to acquire Javanese sugar and spices at more competitive prices.<sup>32</sup> Floor himself admits this continuity, pointing out the fact that the VOC permitted Dutch private traders to send the Company's sugar to Muscat during the period from 1777 to 1793.<sup>33</sup>

Sugar trade in the Persian Gulf continued well into the nineteenth century. In the early century, sugar from India filled the Iranian market, although this might have included Javanese sugar sold by the Dutch in British-controlled Bombay and Surat. In 1805, goods worth 3.1 million sicca rupees were imported to the Persian Gulf from India, of which sugar represented 12 per cent. After the Dutch East Indies resumed direct commercial voyages to the Gulf in 1824, Javanese sugar once again edged into markets in southern Iran while vying with other varieties from Bengal, Mauritius and Siam. In the first half of the century there was a remarkable development in sugar supplies from Europe to markets in northern Iran through the rise of the Black Sea trade through Trabzon in Anatolia. There, sugar from France (especially Marseilles), Great Britain and the Netherlands rivalled for market share. From the 1860s, French sugar had the forefront in the northern market, but as of 1880, cheap beet sugar from Russia poured in. Russian sugar, however, seldom dominated the Iranian market. While

French sugar increasingly was sold in the south, going head-to-head with Javanese sugar and others, many other European countries joined the ever-growing market in Iran including Belgium, Germany and Austria.<sup>34</sup>

### **Sugar consumption in global history**

What made demand for sugar persist during the political instability after the fall of the Safavids, when social life must have been severely diminished? In order to address this question, we may want to recall the question that S. Mintz, an American anthropologist, posed in his pioneering study of the modern history of sugar, *Sweetness and Power*; “What really is demand?”. With regard to the phenomenal development of the sugar market in England from the middle of the seventeenth century, Mintz, like many other scholars of consumption history, gives consumer preference its due.<sup>35</sup> But he also stresses the important contribution of mercantile and bureaucratic agencies — planters, bankers, slavers, shippers, refiners, grocers and bureaucrats. In order to gain more economic and fiscal rewards, he argues, these groups targeted the unexploited potential markets of the lower classes. Through lobbying, they successfully put in place many institutional settings expedient for increasing the availability of sugar, molasses and rum in the country, thus bringing the proletariat into the marketplace. Mintz says that the freedom to choose for consumers was therefore “freedom only within a range of possibilities laid down by forces over which those who were, supposedly, freely choosing exercised no control at all.” With this view in mind, he thinks that in Great Britain, the cane sugar which had been previously enjoyed by a privileged minority became quite common around 1650 and found its way into the diet of every working household by 1900.<sup>36</sup>

The picture that Mintz portrays — the evolution of a system of industrial capitalism over the Atlantic Ocean that would allegedly spread over the rest of the world — has since

offered a useful framework for historians to write sugar history.<sup>37</sup> In addition, his ground narrative has favoured and been supported by E. Wallerstein's prominent theory about modern world-systems.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, it has opened up debates about exactly how the substantial growth of the sugar market came about. J. de Vries conceives the change of consumer behaviour in the households of England and the Low Countries in the seventeenth century as being behind the expansion of the market. Proposing an "industrious revolution", he argues that, in the course of the century, Northwestern European households became eager to acquire more manufactured goods and luxuries including sugar, coffee and tea, so they worked longer to earn more wages. Thus, the "industrious revolution" preceded a society's "industrial revolution".<sup>39</sup> Instead of crediting Northwestern Europe for the change, E. Stols has suggested a long-term expansion of the sugar market in Western Europe dated from much earlier times. In analysing the diffusion of sugar preserves and the spatial scope of sugar trade and refining, he points out that sugar was already commonplace in the cities of Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Flanders and the Netherlands around the mid-sixteenth century or even earlier. In this regard, he ascribes mass consumption to "a marked urbanization and modernization" of European society in 1500–1650 rather than the depression of prices from the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup> Stellar works by scholars such as Maxine Berg have further explored the contours and parameters of European consumer demand, arguing that the tastes of Europeans and their relentless pursuit of Asian luxury goods in the early modern period were a crucial driving force for the development of a global economy.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to this somewhat Eurocentric storyline of modernity, other scholars have called attention to the parallel developments of sugar markets in Asia, especially in China and Japan.<sup>42</sup> Opinions vary regarding the origin of the cultivation of sugarcane, but it is likely that its domestication first took place in New Guinea in very ancient times and diffused to Indonesia, Malaysia, India and South China over time. A primitive method for transforming

the cane (*Saccharum officinarum*) into sugar crystals appeared in North India sometime after the first century AD.<sup>43</sup> Sugarcane technology travelled both eastwards and westwards. Towards the east it is thought to have been introduced into Tang China (618–907), and during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan periods (1271–1368), vibrant urban consumption prompted commercial production of sugar (from the *Saccharum officinarum* or another plant variety called *Saccharum sinense*) in southern provinces of China such as Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Jiangxi, and the interior province of Sichuan. Ch. Daniels has shown that during the Ming period (1368–1644), there was a profound improvement in agricultural methods as well as sugarcane crushing, clarification and claying techniques in the leading producer Fujian, and new-fangled technologies spread to Guangdong and other neighbouring provinces from the late sixteenth century through phased migration of entrepreneurs, artisans and peasants from Fujian. Excellently refined sugar attained wider popularity and invigorated transregional coastal trade between North and South China, as well as inland commercial traffic along the mid- and upper reaches of the Yangzi River. The mastery of sugar production similarly diffused overseas to countries in East and Southeast Asia including Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Java and Siam, and the Chinese home market received supplies from many of these overseas sugar colonies. Learning of the innovations in the Chinese sugar industry and its economic potentiality, the ruling classes in Ryukyu and Japan also strove to transplant advanced skills of sugarcane cultivation and sugar making to their own lands.<sup>44</sup>

G. Souza applies the concept of “commodity chains”, previously used to describe the global circulation of Latin American products particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the trans-regional flow of Chinese sugar in “early modern Asia”. By examining the economic considerations involved in connected stages of its circulation (production, transportation, exchange and consumption), he illustrates how sugar produced in Guangdong, Fujian and Taiwan became one of Qing China’s primary exports to Tokugawa Japan during

the eighteenth century.<sup>45</sup> G. Xu points out the remarkable development of sugar markets in the Lower Yangzi in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Drawing from a wealth of historical sources, he shows that sugar production in Taiwan significantly increased in the 1720s; the island annually exported about 54,240 metric tons, outnumbering any single sugar-producing island in the Caribbean. He argues that the product was mainly destined for market towns in the Lower Yangzi, especially Suzhou. This region witnessed the rise of a bustling urban sweet culture. Wudingsheng, a local chain confectionary, served a wide variety of tea cakes and side dishes. Many of them are still enjoyed today as Suzhou-style confections.<sup>46</sup> In his analysis of the consumption of grain and consumer goods that included sugar and tea, K. Pomeranz claims a notable resemblance in living standard between Western Europe and East Asia, particularly the Lower Yangzi, up to the end of the eighteenth century. He therefore argues that the European economy was not exceptional in the world until then as European and East Asian economic centres had similar economic and social conditions. According to him, this parity began to decline after Europeans crossed the Atlantic Ocean to tap the New World's enormous resources.<sup>47</sup> K. Yao depicts Japan's transition from *kinsei* to *kindai* (Japanese historiographical periodization terminology more or less corresponding to early modernity to modernity) by highlighting the sweet culture that had developed in Northern Kyushu, a region where the availability of sugar was relatively high during the Edo period (1603–1867) due to its proximity to the international trading port of Nagasaki. Not only were there large supplies from "Chinese junks" (they came from southern China and Southeast Asia), VOC ships docked at Nagasaki with considerable quantities of Javanese sugar every year. Some confectionary brands gained wide popularity that went hand in hand with the rise of the region's coal industry in the early twentieth century; they provided coalminers with the nutrition indispensable for their labour.<sup>48</sup> Today the region is marked by UNESCO as one of the sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution.

The persistent consumption power that Japanese and Chinese societies showed goes along with the conception of Japanese revisionist scholars of Asian economy for the period after “the Great Divergence”, the point when, as Pomeranz claims, Europe hit a burst of industrialization and left Asia behind. K. Sugihara, a leading scholar on this subject, maintains that in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the intra-Asian trade vigorously revolved around regional industrialization in East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia, where consumer taste preferences strictly articulated market exchange. Therefore, contrary to previous belief, the Asian economy could accommodate the “Western impact” in its own dynamism.<sup>49</sup> The Dutch industrial project in cane sugar in Java during the nineteenth century supports this view. Their industrial sugar was initially designed in response to the growing need for it in Europe caused by soil exhaustion in the West Indies and the abolishment of the slave trade. However, towards the end of the century Java came to cater to large parts of major sugar markets within Asia such as China, India and Japan.<sup>50</sup> Such strong demand for sugar also permitted British entrepreneurs such as Jardine, Matheson & Co. and John Swire & Sons to set up modern refineries in Hong Kong. In the early twentieth century, the Taiwanese sugar industry significantly grew under the auspices of Imperial Japan, rivalling Java and Hong Kong, while the frontier of sugar cultivation was expanding over the Pacific Ocean.<sup>51</sup>

Even though the story of sugar has been recounted under the banner of “global history”, the bulk of literature deems historical demand for sugar as a matter of modernization, if not industrialization, either in Europe or East Asia. One of few exceptions is T. Sato’s posthumous publication *Sugar in the Social Life of Medieval Islam*. Gleaning evidence from the economy of production, trade, medicine, cooking, festivity and gift-giving in Abbasid Iraq, and Egypt from Fatimid through Mamluk times, he argues that Islamic civilization played a pivotal part in sugar history. As mentioned earlier, the basic processes

associated with sugar making appeared in North India and then spread to the west. Whereas waves of migrants from Fujian were a key instrument in the eastward expansion of sugar production, Arab Muslims took a similar role in its westward journey. The Arabs expanded geographically soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. In a single century they conquered North Africa, pursued authority over major parts of the Iberian Peninsula, and founded the Abbasid caliphate at Baghdad (750–1258). Cane growing for sugar fabrication, which in Iran might have dated back to Sassanid times (226–651), grew after the Arab conquest. The conquerors recognized the fabulous properties of cane sugar, as much culinary and pharmaceutical as commercial and fiscal, heeding its active production in southern provinces of Iran including Khuzistan, Fars and Sistan, and the Tigris-Euphrates delta in Iraq. Sugarcane cultivation travelled further west: to Lower Egypt by the ninth century and to Lebanon and its adjoining areas by about the tenth century. From the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, Sato reveals that production sites mushroomed in Upper Egypt such as al-Fayyum, which made Mamluk Egypt (1250–1517) the principal producer in the eastern Mediterranean. Islamic sugarcane technology involved tremendous capital investments and administrative efforts to organize and apply a series of agricultural practices, milling, and sugar-making methods. The last process featured engineered claying techniques with cone-shaped earthenware moulds called *ubluj*, the secret for extracting sugar and molasses separately from the cane juice. This particular method, together with the use of milk, helped to yield pure white sugar. In line with Daniels and others, Sato thinks that the Islamic art of refining sugar with *ublujs* was carried from Egypt to Yuan China in the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Correspondent to the technological development was increased demand for sugar in foreign markets in Europe (especially Italy) and other Islamic counties, so bustling international trade passed through Egypt in those days. However, Sato indicates another important factor, namely that in Egypt, the consumption of domestic raw sugar (*qand*) and

molasses (*'asal*) began to expand from the great to the common (*haqir/amma*), quite surprisingly from as early as the eleventh century. Thus, he suggests that an embryotic form of mass consumption appeared in Egypt long before Western Europe.<sup>53</sup> Though protracted, the westward expansion of sugarcane cultivation continued to advance. The Arabs gradually brought the cane and its production to Mediterranean islands such as Cyprus, Crete and Sicily. After the mid-eleventh century Arabic references to sugar making appear in the Maghreb (especially Morocco) and southern Spain. Arrival in Iberia marked a turning point in Islamic technological achievement. In the fifteenth century, Sato stresses, the Portuguese and Spaniards, who were by then well versed in it, introduced sugar production to the Atlantic Islands under their rule such as Madeira and the Canary Islands, and thence over to the Caribbean and Brazil in the ensuing century. Notably, he questions the popular belief that slavery in the New World sugar industry — organized and ruthless exploitation of (African) agricultural labourers — also took root in the Mediterranean production developed by the Arabs.<sup>54</sup>

Sato's claim about the Islamic centrality in sugar history awaits further examination because his research does not go further than the fifteenth century. It remains uncertain what became of the Islamic sugar industry, especially after the seventeenth century when colonial sugar from the New World came into markets in the eastern Mediterranean basin. Nevertheless, it is quite telling that there might be different origins and routes for the global spread of sugar consumption over the last four centuries, and that those routes might be uneven and often intersect, stimulating relentless desire for the product. Associating the role of sugar with technological modernity would ultimately distract our attention from many sugar-consuming countries where arguably neither an "industrial" nor "industrious" revolution happened. On the other hand, Sato's view of Islam as a geographical framework is worth considering. As he himself points out, merchants deeply involved in the Egyptian sugar

business included Jewish merchants, who were known as refinery managers or retailers from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.<sup>55</sup> One additional blind spot in his Egypt-centric perspective is Iran, another major sugar-consuming region in what Sato calls “the Islamic world”. The Iranian history of sugar appears to follow a different trajectory from the westbound narrative described above. Floor said that local sugar production dwindled after the Mongol invasion into Iran in the thirteenth century as it began to receive supplies from the ancient heartland of sugar production, India.<sup>56</sup> Regardless, in the seventeenth century, Iran became an enticing destination for sugar suppliers from various regions along the Indian Ocean and the China Seas.

### **Sugar for bullion**

Then, what approach can we take towards understanding the case of eighteenth-century Iran? Although his perspective has received much criticism, Mintz’s concept of an “invisible” agency to track down the “demand” remains inspiring; it gives us an opportunity to think about the broader economic settings that truly activated the domain of the consumers.

In Iran, too, the use of sugar unmistakably thrived at a time when increased consumption was assured by the merchant world and capital flows. After the Safavids established Bandar Abbas as their gateway to the Indian Ocean in the early 1620s, this particular economic arena rapidly developed into an active hub for a wide range of entrepreneurs — planters, suppliers, shippers, brokers, wholesalers, hawkers, bankers, transporters, retailers, refiners, drug dealers, confectioners, sherbet makers, etc. — thus forming the crucial instruments for “demand”.

Yet, there remain two questions to be answered. First, how did the whole commercial agency function in the Safavid period? Second, how did this machinery change the economic

environments in the following period? One crucial consideration is that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sugar, being lucrative ballast, not only facilitated flows of commodities in Asian waters but also functioned as an effective means to acquire precious metals. Since the early 1640s the VOC had tried to trade sugar for bullion in Japan and Iran. Both Japan and Iran were initially suppliers of silver and gold, and later of copper. These items were indispensable for the Company to orchestrate various circuits of international trade, notably procurement of highly profitable cotton textiles in Coromandel and Bengal.<sup>57</sup> In the course of the eighteenth century, the VOC also promoted sugar sales at Surat and in return acquired silver specie to pay for spices in Ceylon and textiles in Bengal.<sup>58</sup> China's state and private traders similarly tried to exploit Chinese sugar as a ballast good for outward junk navigation to Japan so that they could obtain Japanese copper needed for Qing monetary policies concerning the manufacture of small denomination coins.<sup>59</sup> As far as Iran's place in the bullion flow is concerned, it was also important that the gold and silver coins that passed through the country came all the way from America via Europe. Hence, sugar shipments to Iran helped stimulate monetary flows on a global scale. This fact is also useful to reconsider the historiography of sugar that still stresses the dichotomy between Europe and (East) Asia.

However, few studies have been done on the exact process through which the sugar imported to the Persian Gulf was turned into exported bullion. We know this was not achieved through "bartering" in the late Safavid period. In order to gain specie for export, it was necessary for a maritime trader to sell his sugar at Bandar Abbas and then transfer the proceeds of the year's sales to the principal bullion market of Isfahan. For remittances, he had to arrange bills of exchange, which required high skill in monetary transactions and rich knowledge of the regional economy. Not surprisingly, such processing was a tall order for the VOC and other European traders. Moreover, the foreign traders always had substantial difficulties in overcoming linguistic barriers and unfamiliar local conventions.<sup>60</sup> In order to

handle all of these issues, they needed to use many local merchants as their brokers and interpreters.

We have very limited knowledge about this critical relationship between local merchants and the VOC, since scholars of the merchants in Safavid Iran tend to understand this relationship in terms of competition. About forty years ago, the Danish historian N. Steensgaard argued that numerous itinerant traders, none of whom were powerful enough to control either individual markets or individual commodities, made up the “early Asian trade”. There, the unpredictability of the market and the arbitrariness of protection costs prevailed, making rational calculations difficult for the “pedlars”. But the VOC and the EIC as “Companies” could stabilize price fluctuations through supply controls and internalized protection costs from their own resources. As a result, they successfully directed a significant proportion of the Asia-Europe trade to the Cape route, thus reducing the trans-continental caravan trade.<sup>61</sup> Studies of Indian merchants and the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran have since responded with sharp criticisms to the claimed structural superiority of the Companies. They contend that those communities developed sophisticated information networks and legal and financial devices such as *commenda* (a medieval form of limited partnership contract) based on family or extended family ties. In so doing, the “family firms” overcame the non-transparency of the market and diversified their trans-regional commerce vis-à-vis the Companies.<sup>62</sup> While admitting some collaboration between the Julfa Armenians and the EIC, E. Herzig states that it was not as successful as the one in India, and those parties were mostly in direct competition.<sup>63</sup> Floor emphasizes that even the VOC, probably the most powerful commercial organization in Safavid Iran, did not have much leeway in the regional market. Revisiting the “peddler market” model, he argues that there was “fierce competition between merchants from different nations and purchasing power, while no single competitor had the means to dictate the market price, which was determined by supply and demand.”<sup>64</sup>

There is another reason for the lack of attention to the relationship between the VOC and local intermediaries. Since the 1970s, scholars of South Asian merchants have cast critical eyes on the colonial literature that dwelled on the susceptibility of the Indian commercial sector to the rapacious nature of political elites.<sup>65</sup> Culling evidence from merchants in various South Asian regions, they have revealed a spectrum of relations between the merchant and the state, ranging from fundamental separation to structural interdependency.<sup>66</sup> Since the 1990s, historiographical works about Safavid Iran have been cropping up. Scholars such as R. Klein, Matthee and Floor have unfolded complex relations between merchants and the military and bureaucratic elites.<sup>67</sup> In an analysis of the Safavids' involvement with the trade in Iranian raw silk, Matthee argues that, in the active economy, the political-military elite coexisted and interacted with local and foreign merchants, particularly the Julfa Armenians. But he also thinks that there was a social distinction between rulers and merchants. This was unlike the notion of an "early modern" (South) Indian mercantile sphere, where so-called "portfolio capitalists" actively diversified into a wide range of domains, including trade, politics, agriculture and the military. Thus, the categories of politics and economy "overlapped" and "negotiated".<sup>68</sup> From a close examination of the Safavid administration of Bandar Abbas, Floor holds that there was an essential difference of interest between the authorities and "foreign merchants"; the Safavid elite sought "political rather than economic efficiency" while the "European and Asian merchants" were concerned with "economic efficiency".<sup>69</sup> These works suggest a relatively high degree of unity among the merchants as they faced the port authorities. On the other hand, such a delineation functions as a trick to divert our attention from the diversity of commercial interests and directions *among* individual merchants. We know little about the way different economic considerations were compared with and attuned to one another. Moreover, how, if at all, did the state affect the process?

In fact, we do not even know who actually acted as business intermediaries at Bandar Abbas in those days. As for the brokers, Matthee indicates that most of the brokers of the European companies in Safavid Iran were Banians, or Gujarati Hindus, and tended to exercise their profession on a familial basis. Generally, he says, Banians acted as moneychangers (*sarrafs*) and brokers (*dallals*), and began to dominate as moneylenders after the mid-seventeenth century, having replaced the Jews.<sup>70</sup> Concerning the origin of the brokers, A. Qaisar also points out that most of the brokers who worked at Bandar Abbas, Basra and Bandar Rig in the first half of the seventeenth century were Hindu Banians. He thinks that those Banians could be connected to well-established families who served the EIC as brokers in Agra, Gujarat, Sind, etc.<sup>71</sup> Conversely S. Dale argues that most merchants from Mughal India who conducted business in Iran, Turan or Russia came from Multan. Among those who carried the *nisba* (a name often indicative of the person's place of origin) "Multani" in those countries, nearly all the Hindus were Punjabi of the Khatri caste and most Muslims were Afghans or Pashtuns. Moreover, he assumes that "*Banias*" or "*Banians*" recorded by contemporary Europeans could also be Multani merchants.<sup>72</sup> Mainly following his lines, Floor notes that most "Indians" active in Safavid Iran were indeed of Multani origin and that besides their own business, they also acted as brokers and moneylenders for foreign merchants including the VOC and the EIC.<sup>73</sup> J. Onley also thinks that the largest single group of Indians in the Gulf region during the Safavid period were the Multani Khatri. But he claims that after the decline of the Khatri following the fall of the dynasty, the Bhatia and Bhaiband Lohanas, other Hindu merchant groups from Sind, Kutch and western Gujarat, became the majority of Indians in the Gulf.<sup>74</sup> As for interpreters, M. Haneda illustrates that some Armenian merchants who served the VOC and the EIC as interpreters at Bandar Abbas in the Afghan interregnum (1722–30) were significant as mediators between the port government and the Companies.<sup>75</sup> These studies imply that Banians and Armenians held

important places in the process in question. However, they tell us little about the individuals involved.

For the period following the Afghan conquest available information is even more limited. In the first place, the VOC, a major sugar supplier, was in severe decline. Historians attribute the Company's commercial misfortune to the deterioration of trading conditions due to political turmoil in Iran and the lack of innovative management.<sup>76</sup> But if that is true, why did the other suppliers survive? Who in the country could afford to purchase the imported sugar in troubled times? More importantly, how were merchants' interests co-ordinated so that particular commodities like sugar and bullion could steadily go into circulation?

## **Sources**

The traditional idea of a serious setback in the eighteenth century may be critically misinformed because of its flawed initial premise; that the VOC, which had so far constituted an important core of the Gulf trade, faced a total decline in the trade due to political uncertainty. As Floor and Qasimi have shown, Dutch reports coming from the Gulf after the Safavid period include a multitude of complaints about increasing difficulties in keeping up their commerce in the region. However, a careful and detailed exploitation of the VOC archives unfolds the curious fact that most of those concerns were not really about frequent shifts of political vicissitudes but about the reformation of the Indian Ocean sugar trade caused by them. They tell us that the news of approaching armies prevented inland merchants from coming to the Dutch factory for trade, while some other places in the Gulf and neighbouring countries took advantage of their misfortune to offer alternative markets. English arrivals sailed from one port to another offering their sugar to the local merchants at incredibly cheap prices. The Banian brokers who had traded imported goods well for the VOC

became bankrupt and were not reliable any longer; the Company had to rely on servants of the brokers to continue their trade. Because no regular accounts were left by other groups of merchants who also engaged in sugar trade in the Gulf, these records form a treasure-trove of information for understanding remarkable changes in the region's political economy during the eighteenth century.

Despite this huge advantage, the corresponding reservation is that VOC reports were made for the scrutiny of superior officers in home offices as well as Batavia, who kept an inquisitive eye on their faraway employees' performance for any sign of corruption, especially their failures. Hence it is quite possible that in times of bad sales of Javanese sugar the Dutch factors felt the desperate need to justify their position by penning everything, regardless of whether it was true or not. Another difficulty for utilizing VOC sources is that most of them were written on the coasts and thus their authors were rather unfamiliar with inland happenings, including flows of commodities, markets and consumption, even though this disadvantage was to some extent compensated for by broad information networks of their local staff which provided valuable tidings on a regular basis.

For a closer examination of changes in the relationship between sugar trade and consumption during the eighteenth century, I scrutinize Dutch records in relation to other source materials. While local records in Arabic and Persian are silent on the workings of sugar circulation, we may still learn much from anecdotal descriptions of sugar consumption left by "outsiders". Iran and bordering countries were visited by many Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Apart from officials deployed by the European trading companies, there were merchants, diplomats, military people, missionaries, scholars and explorers. An obvious disadvantage is that their accounts were less informed by tested knowledge about local society and often lacked any profound understanding of people's words, attitude and motives. Yet it is important to notice that in these countries, Europeans

were not just observers but active participants in social and economic life such as giving presents and providing hospitality where sugar acted a key role. In this regard their accounts approximate a record vested with a dual perspective of both locals and Europeans.<sup>77</sup>

The VOC archives likewise form a wealth of detailed information on the history of such multi-layered interactions between Europe and countries surrounding the Indian Ocean and the China Seas. Recently VOC historians have written of the vigorous participation of the Company in local ceremonial rites and gift-giving in Asia, especially Japan, Thailand, India and Yemen. The resulting information refers to a society not impelled by the emergent sense of nationality. Rather it was one of moving identities that greatly conformed with the development of global circulation of objects in the early modern period.<sup>78</sup> By looking at the Dutch encounter with the Iranian court, I will supplement this argument, and show that Dutch-Iranian interactions greatly factored in the socio-cultural practices of the region and the Indian Ocean economy.

## **Organization**

The organization of this book is as follows. In Chapter 1, I attempt to depict the “demand” — i.e., the relationship between sugar imports in the Persian Gulf and its consumption in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — in terms of the places where sugar was consumed. While touching on considerations of various socioeconomic arenas into which sugar entered, such as in medicine, nutrition, festivities, gifts and treats, and as an economic resource, I argue that there was remarkable flexibility and continuity in the sugar consumption market during the eighteenth century, as opposed to the altered commercial settings which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

After the Afghan conquest, it is said that the VOC sales of Javanese sugar in the Gulf substantially decreased, causing their final retreat in 1766. This traditional description is, I think, inadequate. The identified total decline is allowed to overshadow another important fact, that they sold sugar in new marketplaces like Basra, Bushire, Bandar Rig, Kharg, Muscat and Sind. In Chapter 2, therefore, I conduct a quantitative analysis of the sales in those places to examine the extent to which the Company was successful in adjusting to the transformation of the Gulf market.

The decline of the VOC also reflected increasing threats from other suppliers of sugar. This development might have begun in the late Safavid period despite the successful sales the Company recorded during that time. In Chapter 3, I attempt to treat the shipping by other suppliers to Bandar Abbas and their flexibility in utilizing secondary markets in the Gulf from the end of the seventeenth century until the fall of the Safavids. Thereafter, I look at the sugar trade of the VOC competitors at Bandar Abbas after the Safavids. My aim is twofold. First, to show how these traders adjusted so quickly to the changing economic settings, such as changes of regime, emergent alternative channels of trade and increased cash scarcity, so that they grabbed market share from the Company. And second, to show that sugar traffic maintained a considerable level of vigour in the south of the Gulf.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the competition the VOC encountered at Basra, Bushire, and Kharg. I believe that the breakdown of the Dutch trade was not so much a failure of the relationship between trade and consumption as a sign of an unsettled time, one out of which, as Das Gupta suggests, “the more peaceable formations of the next century emerged.”<sup>79</sup> I hope to show, as part of such formations, the influx of export bullion into the Upper Gulf regions, the increased demand for copper, the active itinerant wholesale merchants, and the brisk local shipping and caravan traffic. This leads to a discussion of the important link between sugar and precious metals.

To reflect this point, in Chapter 5, I deal with the partnership between the VOC and local merchants who engaged in this particular economy as the Company's brokers. I illuminate various aspects of the business intermediaries — family ties, ethnic backgrounds, places of origin, types of merchant and relations with the Company as well as the ruling elite — and the way the partnership functioned not only as the main entrance to Iran for Javanese sugar, but also as conduits through which bullion found its way to overseas markets. Finally, in Chapter 6, I argue that the local agency was transformed after the Safavids, and that brokers and intermediaries of various ethnic backgrounds were crucial in mediating maritime linkages to promote local consumer demand and the transregional circulation of minerals during that period.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Das Gupta and M. Pearson, eds., *India and Indian Ocean: 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, first published in 1987); K. MacPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, first published in 1993); M. Kearney, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2004); M. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008, first published in 2003).

<sup>2</sup> J. Chardin. *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient*, ed. L. Langlès (Paris: Le Normant, 1811), 3:303-4.

<sup>3</sup> R. Mathee, "The Safavid Economy as Part of the World Economy," In *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, eds. W. Floor and E. Herzig (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 33, 34, 38-9.

<sup>4</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 384-7.

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<sup>5</sup> Anon., *Tadhkirat al-mulūk: A Manual of Šafavid Administration (circa 1137/1725)*, trans. and ed. V. Minorsky (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1943), 23-4; L. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Šafavī Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

<sup>6</sup> R. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 226-54. For a revisionist view, see A.J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 104-16.

<sup>7</sup> Among others, see Ahmad Ashraf, “Historical Obstacles to the Development of a Bourgeoisie in Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 2, no. 2 (1969): 54-79; A. Banani, “Reflections on the Social and Economic Structure of Safavid Persia at Its Zenith,” *Iranian Studies* 11, no. 1 (1978): 83-116; M. Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period: Contributions to the Social-economic History of Persia* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1982), 215-43. For a critical review of the debate on Safavid economic history, E. Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan: A Study in Pre-modern Asian Trade” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1991), 11-26.

<sup>8</sup> W. Floor, *Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran (1800–1925)* (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003); Idem, *History of Bread in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2015); W. Floor and H. Javadi, *Persian Pleasures: How Iranians Relaxed through the Centuries with Food, Drink & Drugs* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2019); R. Mathee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> R. Mathee, “A Sugar Banquet for the Shah: Anglo-Dutch Competition at the Iranian Court of Šāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn (r. 1694–1722),” *Eurasian Studies* 1-2 (2006): 195-217.

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<sup>10</sup> A. Hoseini, “Sharbat va sharbat-khana dar gudhar-i zaman [Iran’s Sherbet and Sherbet Houses in Passage of Time],” *Bagh-i nazar* 10, no. 25 (2013): 57-66.

<sup>11</sup> T. Morikawa, “Perushia kyūtei no wain to shābetto [Wine and Sherbet at the Persian court],” In *Shoku to bunka: Jikū o koeta shokutaku kara [Food and Culture: Eating across Space and Time]*, ed. N. Hosoda (Hokkaidō: Hokkaidōdaigaku shuppankai, 2015), 65-96.

<sup>12</sup> Floor, *Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran*, 328-75; Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, 254-6.

<sup>13</sup> Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavī Dynasty*; W. Floor, *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia 1721–1729* (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études iraniennes, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac, 1938). For re-assessments of Nadir’s achievements, see E.S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah’s Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006); M. Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009). For the Zands and the Durranis, see J. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747–1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); J. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire c. 1710–1780* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> B. Slot, *The Arabs of the Gulf 1602–1784: An Alternative Approach to the Early History of the Arab Gulf States and the Arab People of the Gulf, Mainly Based on Sources of the Dutch East India Company* (Leidschendam, 1993); Sultan ibn Muhammad al-Qasimi, *Power Struggles and Trade in the Gulf 1620–1820* (Forest Row: University of Exeter Press, 1999); W. Floor, *The Persian Gulf: The Rise of the Gulf Arabs: The Politics of Trade on the Persian Littoral 1747–1792* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2007); Idem, *The Hula Arabs of the Shibkuh Coast of Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2014).

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<sup>16</sup> R. Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Idem, “Relations between the Center and the Periphery in Safavid Iran: The Western Borderlands v. the Eastern Frontier Zone,” *The Historian* 77, no. 3 (2015): 431-63.

<sup>17</sup> A. Wilson, *The Persian Gulf: An Historical Sketch from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1928), 171-91; J. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1-61; C. Allen, “Sayyids, Shets and Sultāns: Politics and Trade in Masqaṭ under the Āl Bū Sa‘īd” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1978), 33-67; R. Savory, “A.D. 600–1800,” In *The Persian Gulf States: A General Survey*, ed. A. Cottrell (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 33-9; J.E. Peterson, “Britain and the Gulf: At the Periphery of Empire,” In *The Persian Gulf in History*, ed. L.G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 277-93. Cf. J. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, ‘Omān, and Central Arabia*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1908–15).

<sup>18</sup> A. Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia, 1750–1800: The Rise and Development of Bahrain and Kuwait* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> Th. Ricks, “Towards a Social and Economic History of Eighteenth-Century Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1973): 110-26; Idem, “Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf, 1745–1765” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1975). Recently the author has published a revision of his dissertation. Idem, *Notables, Merchants, and Shaykhs of Southern Iran and Its Ports: Politics and Trade of the Persian Gulf Region, AD 1728–1789* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> A. Das Gupta, “Introduction II: The Story,” In *India and Indian Ocean: 1500–1800*, ed. A. Das Gupta and M. Pearson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, first published in 1987),

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40-1; Idem, "India and the Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth Century," In *India and Indian Ocean*, 133, 137-40.

<sup>21</sup> S. Grummon, "The Rise and Fall of the Arab Shaykhdom of Būshire: 1750–1850" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Th. Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks, and Murder: The Political Economy of Trade in Eighteenth-century Basra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> H. Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf 1745–1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> P. Risso, *Oman & Muscat: An Early Modern History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> S. Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994); M. Alam, "Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, c. 1550–1750," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, no. 3 (1994): 202-27; Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*; S. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 35-8.

<sup>27</sup> R. Barendse, *The Western Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 of *Arabian Seas 1700–1763* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 299, 301-2, 312-4. The modern Persian literature on the topography and history of the Gulf regions also deserves attention. Muhammad 'Ali Sadid al-Saltana, *Bandar 'Abbas va Khalij-i Fars*, ed. Ahmad Iqtidari (Tehran: Dunya-yi kitab, 1363/1984); Iraj Afshar Sistani, *Nigahi bi Bushihr: majmu' ai az awda 'i tarikhi, jughrafiyayi, ijtimai' i va iqtisadi-yi ustan-i Bushihr*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Mu'assa-yi intisharati va amuzishi-yi nasl-i danish, 1369/1990); 'Ali Riza Khalifazada, *Haft shahr-i Liravi va Bandar-i Daylam* (Bushire: Intisharat-i shuru', 1393/2014, first published in 1382/2003 or 2004).

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<sup>28</sup> For a critical overview of this argument, see B. Bhattacharya, G. Dharampal-Frick, and J. Gommans, “Spatial and Temporal Continuities of Merchant Networks in South Asia and the Indian Ocean,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 2-3 (2007): 99-103. The revisionist scholars, though, have taken little heed of their Iranian counterparts. L. Blussé and F. Gaastra, eds., *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> W. Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2000), 126-33; Gh. Nadri, “The Dutch Intra-Asian Trade in Sugar in the Eighteenth Century,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 63-96.

<sup>30</sup> Floor, *The Rise of the Gulf Arabs*, 200.

<sup>31</sup> O. Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-colonial India*, part 5 of *Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism*, vol. 2 of *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 250.

<sup>32</sup> Nadri and Risso note that the Arabs of Bahrain also engaged in the sugar trade in the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the Archipelago. Nadri, “The Dutch Intra-Asian Trade,” 77; Risso, *Oman and Mascot*, 80-1, 195-6, 198.

<sup>33</sup> W. Floor, *The Persian Gulf, Dutch-Omani Relations: A Commercial & Political History 1651–1806* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2014), 161-70.

<sup>34</sup> Floor rather humbly estimates that the Iranian sugar market doubled during the Qajar period. Floor, *Traditional Crafts in Qajar Iran*, 332-44.

<sup>35</sup> S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 151-8. Chaudhuri speaks about the nature of Indian Ocean economy in the same vein. Against David Ricardo’s theory, he contends that pre-modern international trade

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was not necessarily a matter of comparative price differences, but there “consumer tastes” and “social conventions” played an important role in shaping the demand for luxury goods. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 16-7; Idem, *Asia before Europe*, 159, 180-1.

<sup>36</sup> S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 166-71.

<sup>37</sup> S. Mintz, “Introduction,” In *Sugarlandia Revisited: Sugar and Colonialism in Asia and the Americas, 1800 to 1940*, eds. U. Bosma, J. Giusti-Cordero, and G.R. Knight (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 1-4. For recent studies, see E. Abbott, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008); M. Aronson and M. Budhos, *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* (Boston: Clarion Books, 2010); A.F. Smith, *Sugar: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> E. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-system*, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> J. de Vries, “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,” *The Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (1994): 249-70; Idem, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> E. Stols, “The Expansion of the Sugar Market in Western Europe,” In *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680*, ed. S. Schwartz (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 237-88.

<sup>41</sup> M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The milestone American project “Culture and Consumption in the Seventeenth

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and Eighteenth Centuries” during 1989–1991 resulted in the publication of three pioneering volumes on this subject. J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); J. Brewer and S. Staves, eds., *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London: Routledge, 1995); J. Brewer and A. Bermingham, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Similar debates have come up on other luxury and exotic items such as Indian cotton textiles and Chinese porcelains. G. Riello and T. Roy, eds., *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); F. Trentmann, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); A. Gerritsen and G. Riello, *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016); P. Machado, S. Fee, and G. Campbell, eds., *Textile Trades, Consumer Cultures, and the Material Worlds of the Indian Ocean: An Ocean of Cloth* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> T. Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life of Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 15-7.

<sup>44</sup> Ch. Daniels, *Agro-industries and Forestry: Sugarcane Technology*, part 3 of *Biology and Biological Technology*, vol. 6 of *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> G. Souza, “Hinterlands, Commodity Chains, and Circuits,” 15-47. For the concept of “commodity chains” and its implications, S. Topik, C. Marichal, and Z. Frank, eds., *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> G. Xu, “From the Atlantic to the Manchu: Taiwan Sugar and the Early Modern World, 1630s–1720s,” *Journal of World History* (forthcoming).

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<sup>47</sup> K. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 114-65.

<sup>48</sup> K. Yao, *Satō no tōtta michi: kashi kara mita sekaishi [Sugar Road: World History seen through Sweets]* (Fukuoka: Gen shobō, 2011). Chinese sugar exports stimulated cultural interactions between China and Japan. A. Matsuura, “The Import of Chinese Sugar in the Nagasaki Junk Trade and Its Impact,” In *Copper in the Early Modern Sino-Japanese Trade*, ed. K. Nagase-Reimer (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 157-74.

<sup>49</sup> K. Sugihara, *Ajikanbōeki no keisei to kōzō [Patterns and Development of Intra-Asian Trade]* (Kyoto: Mineruba shobō, 1996); Idem, *Sekaishi no naka no Higashiajia no kiseki [The East Asian Miracle in Global History]* (Aichi: Nagoyadaiagku shuppankai, 2020). See also T. Hamashita and H. Kawakatsu, eds., *Ajiakōekiken to Nihon kōgyōka: 1500–1900 [Intra-Asian Trade and Japanese Industrialization: 1500–1900]* (Tokyo: Riburopōto, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> G. Knight, *Commodities and Colonialism: The Story of Big Sugar in Indonesia, 1880–1942* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 17-51, appendix 2; U. Bosma, *The Sugar Plantation in India and Indonesia: Industrial Production, 1770–2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 164-210.

<sup>51</sup> K. Hirai, *Satō no teikoku: Nihon shokuminchi to Ajia shijō [Empire of Sugar: External Forces of Change in the Economy of Japanese Colonies]* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdaigaku shuppankai, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life*, 48-50.

<sup>53</sup> Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life*, 166-9.

<sup>54</sup> Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life*, 173.

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<sup>55</sup> Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life*, 75-7.

<sup>56</sup> Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, 126.

<sup>57</sup> Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, 184, 187-93; E. Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2006), 98-9, 248; R. Matthee, W. Floor, and P. Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran from the Safavids and the Qajars* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 139-76. For the importance of the Japanese copper trade in India, R. Shimada, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper by the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia*, 116-21; Gh. Nadri, *Eighteenth-Century Gujarat: The Dynamics of Its Political Economy, 1750–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 122.

<sup>59</sup> G. Souza, “Ballast Goods: Chinese Maritime Trade in Zinc and Sugar in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” In *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400–1750*, ed. R. Ptak and D. Rothermund (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), 307-12.

<sup>60</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 70-1; G. Sood, “‘Correspondence is Equal to Half a Meeting’: The Composition and Comprehension of Letters in Eighteenth-century Islamic Eurasia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 2-3 (2007): 172-214.

<sup>61</sup> He revised J. van Leur’s “peddling trade”. J. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers, 1967), 133; N. Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India*

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*Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974). As Steensgaard admits, the caravan traffic to the Levant remained considerable, particularly in Iranian raw silk. Cf. R. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>62</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade*, 112-27; Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia*, 180-222; Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa,” 153-272; I. McCabe, *The Shah’s Silk for Europe’s Silver: The Eurasian Trade of the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1530–1750)* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 199-239; S. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 86-201.

<sup>63</sup> Herzig, “The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa,” 198-9, 210-2. For the relationship between the Julfa Armenians and the EIC during the Safavid period, R. Ferrier, “The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Economic History Review* 26, no. 1 (1973): 38-62.

<sup>64</sup> Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, 123.

<sup>65</sup> Among many early works, see W. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History* (London: MacMillan, 1923).

<sup>66</sup> M. Pearson, “India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century,” In *India and the Indian Ocean*, 71-93; A. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat c. 1700–1750* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979); K. Leonard, “The ‘Great Firm’ Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, no. 2 (1979): 151-67; S. Subrahmanyam and C. Bayly, “Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25, no. 4 (1988): 401-24.

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<sup>67</sup> R. Matthee, “Politics and Trade in Late Safavid Iran: Commercial Crisis and Government Reaction under Shah Solayman (1666–1694)” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1991); Idem, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*; Idem, “Merchants in Safavid Iran: Participants and Perceptions,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, no. 3 (2000): 254-63; R. Klein, “Trade in the Safavid Port City Bandar Abbas and the Persian Gulf (ca. 1600–1680): A Study of Selected Aspects” (PhD diss., University of London, 1993–94), 67-115; Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, 27-64; Idem, *A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities 1500–1730* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2006), 237-322, 429-77.

<sup>68</sup> Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, 7-9, 63, 73-4, 89.

<sup>69</sup> Floor, *A Political and Economic History*, 312.

<sup>70</sup> Matthee, “Merchants in Safavid Iran,” 246-8.

<sup>71</sup> A. Qaisar, “The Role of Brokers in Medieval India,” *The Indian Historical Review* 1, no. 2 (1974): 224-5.

<sup>72</sup> Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade*, 55-64.

<sup>73</sup> Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, 21, 24.

<sup>74</sup> J. Onley, “Indian Communities in the Persian Gulf, c. 1500–1947,” In *The Persian Gulf in Modern Times: People, Ports and History*, ed. L.G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 240-3.

<sup>75</sup> M. Haneda, “Les compagnies des Indes Orientales et les interprètes de Bandar ‘Abbās,” *Eurasian Studies* 1-2 (2006): 175-93.

<sup>76</sup> Floor, *The Rise of the Gulf Arabs*, 204-6; Nadri, “The Dutch Intra-Asian Trade in Sugar,” 85.

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<sup>77</sup> For a vivid illustration of this point, see S. Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails & Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

<sup>78</sup> M. Chaiklin, *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture: The Influence of European Material Culture on Japan, 1700–1850* (Leiden: CNWS, 2003); M. Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan: Gift Giving and Diplomacy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Bh. Ruangsilp, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604–1765* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); N. Um, *Shipped but Not Sold: Material Culture and the Social Protocols of Trade during Yemen’s Age of Coffee* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017); C. Viallé “‘To Capture Their Favor’: On Gift-giving by the VOC,” In *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, ed. Th.D. Kaufmann and M. North (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 291-320; M. Vink, *Encounters on the Opposite Coast: The Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). See also Z. Biedermann, A. Gerritsen, and G. Riello, eds., *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>79</sup> Das Gupta, “India and the Indian Ocean,” 139.