

THE HORSE TRADE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOUTH ASIA*

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During the last decade there have been several successful attempts to widen the geographical perspective of pre-modern Indian history. As a result, India now emerges as a core area in a dynamic trading system which stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Siberia to Sri Lanka. Although this was an area of social and cultural diversity, and rooted in many different civilizations, seaborne trade and continental caravan traffic had created a strong sense of unity. So far, however, scholarly interest has predominantly focused on the maritime relations of trading diaspora groups like the Parsis, the Bohras, the Baniyas, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, and the French¹). We know far less about the continental trade and its networks of Jewish, Armenian, Kashmiri, Afghan and other merchants²). This article will concentrate on one particularly important branch of the latter: the long-distance horse trade in the century preceding the advent of colonialism³).

1. *The Pattern of the Horse Trade in South Asia*

The Overland Trade

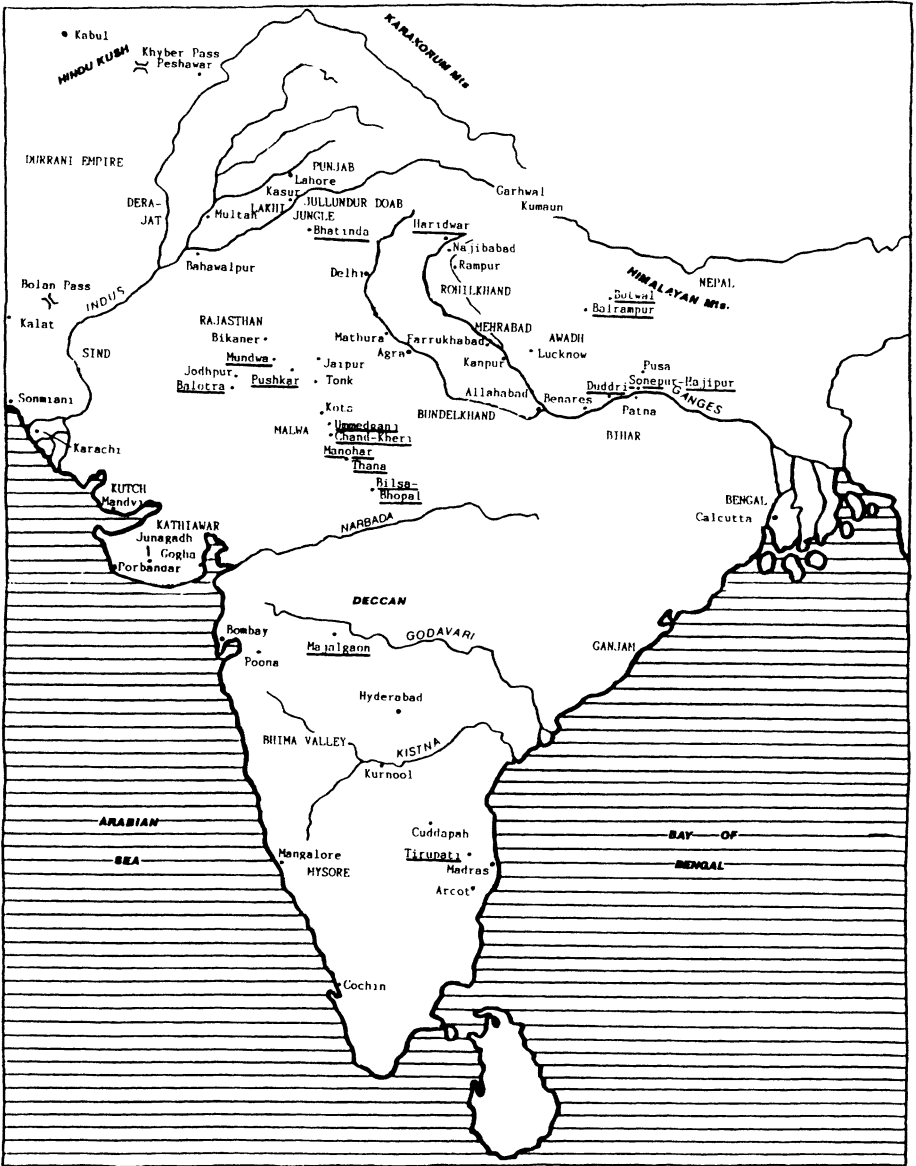
During the eighteenth century, India was still part of a thriving inter-regional livestock trading system which originated in the major breeding

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1) See e.g. K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean. An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985).

2) Very informative, however, is J. Deloche, *La circulation en Inde avant la révolution des transports*, 2 vols (Paris, 1980); for a recent re-evaluation of these communities during an earlier period, see A. Wink, *Al-Hind. The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, vol. 1. Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th-11th Centuries* (Leiden, 1990).

3) Given the importance of the horse in general, it is surprising that Simon Digby's *War-Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate* (Karachi, 1971) still stands out as the only larger scale work on the topic. For a recent discussion on horse trading in early India and Ming China, see the interesting series of articles in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, volume 34, part II (June, 1991). For the Mughal period in Indian history nothing of the kind is yet available.



South-Asia in the eighteenth century The horse fairs mentioned in the text have been underlined.

areas of Central Asia, and included eastern Europe and the Middle East. The bulk of the supply was produced by pastoral nomads in the Kalmyk and Kazakh steppes of southern Russia, the Turkoman steppes east of the Caspian Sea, and further to the south-east, in Afghan Turkistan. During the eighteenth century, in the wake of Russian and Afghan expansion into the producing steppe areas, by far the most important markets for sale were those of Russia, mainly for cattle, goats, sheep and horses, and South Asia—the latter mainly for war-horses⁴). At the Indian fairs or *melās* the horses imported from the north-west were generally known as *Kābulī*, *Qandahārī*, or *Wilāyatī* horses. Actually, these were Turkoman or *Turkī* breeds, from the area north of the Hindu Kush around Balkh and the area lower down the Amu Darya and near Andkhui and Meymaneh. They were initially sold at the local markets of Balkh, Bukhara and Herat, of which the latter also become an outlet for the minor Iranian market. During the summer, the horses were bought by Afghan merchants, either indirectly through middlemen at the fairs or directly from the breeding nomads themselves. In general, the horses were bought in a rather bad condition for only about one quarter of the ultimate Indian sale price. In order to prepare them for sale they were for 1 or 2 months fattened in the more southern Afghan pastures or *maidāns* around Kabul and Kandahar⁵). During October and November, these merchants, joining the caravans of the *Powindah* trading nomads, moved *en masse* with their horses across the Sulaiman mountains, either taking the southern routes through the Bolan and other passes to Multan and the Derajat, continuing via Bahawalpur to Bikaner, mainly supplying Jaipur, the Deccan and southern India; or, travelling northwards through the Khyber pass into Hindustan. After crossing the mountains, but before being distributed to the local markets of the Punjab, Rohilkhand, Awadh, Benares and Bihar, the bulk of the horses was kept grazing at the extensive wastes of the Jullunder Doab and the Lakhi Jungle which were created by the recurrent floods of the Indus and its wild tributaries the Beas and the Sutlej. On these inundated alluvial fields the

4) For the Russian livestock economy, see I. Blanchard, *Russia's "Age of Silver" Precious-Metal Production and Economic Growth in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1989), pp. 215-87, see also P. Longworth, *The Cossacks* (London, 1969), pp. 25, 172.

5) M. Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (Oxford, 1972), 1, pp. 386-8; *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 287; Military Department Proceedings, 9-5-1808, "Letter R. Frith to Secr. Brd. of Superintendence for the Improvement of the Breed of Cattle", ff. 540-1, Military Department Proceedings, 13-2-1813, "Letter W Moorcroft to Secr. Brd.", f. 150.

merchants could rest and nourish their horses without much expenditure and free from too much state interference⁶).

At the turn of the eighteenth century the total amount of duties which had to be paid along both routes was around 40 Rps per horse, which would mean somewhat more than 10% of the salesprice⁷). On their way, the horse merchants sold part of their stock at the local fairs and at the same time bought horses from the indigenous breeding centres in Rajasthan, the Punjab and Rohilkhand. Buying and selling *en route*, the merchants proceeded as far as Sonapur-Hajipur in the east and Tirupati and Arcot in the south. In this way, the regional breeding economies were integrated into the long-distance trade with Central Asia.

Many of the local *melās* (in Rajasthan also called *hāts*) became important outlets for indigenous horse-breeds. Some important examples in this respect were the fairs at Bhatinda which served as the entrepôt of the Lakhi Jungle, Majalgaon, the main Maratha market for the horses from the Bhima valley, and Balotra and Pushkar for the indigenous breeds of Sind and Gujarat. All the fairs were held in a relative short period of a few weeks, either during the autumn, at the arrival of the foreign horses, or the spring, at the end of the grazing season. The timetable of the local fairs was adjusted to the convenience of the traders, enabling them to travel from one fair to the other without losing too much time. For example, the Ummedganj fair in Malwa, which serviced the Kota court with horses, followed neatly 18 days after that of the great Pushkar *melā*, some 200 km to the north-west. Besides, regular postal services kept merchant and customers up to date about the latest developments at the other fairs.

During the autumn, Pushkar was the major fair in Rajasthan. It was held in early November and some 5000 horses were brought to it each year. This was only a minor part of the total quantity on offer because the traders held back the bulk of the horses. Business on the spot was mainly a kind of window-dressing. Customers, mostly army officers or court agents called *chābuk-sawārs*, who wanted to buy horses on a large scale, had to purchase strings of horses on being shown only a few specimina⁸). After collecting the

6) For a similar pattern in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, see J. Arlinghaus, "The Transformation of Afghan Tribal Society: Tribal Expansion, Mughal Imperialism and the Roshaniyya Insurrection, 1450-1600" (PhD thesis, Duke University, 1988), p. 61.

7) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 287

8) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 302-3; J. P. Pigott, *Treatise on the Horses of India* (London, 1794), pp. 56-7

horses, the officers resold most of the very best and the very worst animals, whereas the medium quality was reserved for the military⁹). Obviously, the quality within a string of horses varied considerably and only the very best, and the most fed and well-trained, were sent to the actual fair. In general, merchants preferred to dispose of their horses directly but in case there was no ready sale, they retained them, meanwhile fattening, breaking or training them, and at the right time fetching a higher price for them¹⁰). The prices of the horses were not only related to their quality and to the general market conditions but were also greatly influenced by the local price level of fodders like grain and hay, which affected overall costs of breeding and transport¹¹).

Other autumn fairs in the area included Mundwa near Nagaur and Balotra near Jodhpur. The latter, however, had a more important spring fair during March-April, at which season regional breeds dominated the scene. More to the south, in Malwa, which was the gate to the Deccan market, there was a similar rhythm of alternating autumn and spring fairs. Here Ummeganj, and particularly Bilsa, near Bhopal, serviced the autumnal imports of foreign horses, whereas Manohar Thana and particularly Chand-Kheri (near Khanpur-Kota) held their most important *melās* during spring¹²).

In the north, by far the most important centre was Haridwar, which had a fair both during the autumn and spring, at which time the Himalayan traders from the hill states to its north were also served. The biggest event, however, was the spring fair which coincided with the famous religious festival that drew thousands of pilgrims to the banks of the Ganges each year¹³). The combination of trade and pilgrimage was a fairly common phenomenon; it also occurred at the Mundwa, Hajipur, Tirupati and numerous other fairs. Obviously, at the fairs, religious and political interests were two sides of the same coin. For example, the Maratha and

9) *Ib.*, f. 287

10) *Ib.*, f. 303.

11) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 27-9-1804, "Report Capt. Nuthull", ff. 74r-84v

12) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 10-4-1795, "Cavalry agent R. Murray to Lieut. A. Green", ff. 169-70.

13) For Haridwar, see the accounts of Thomas Hardwicke in *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Field Books, 1, "Plot of Route from Najibabad to Srinagar and Upper Ganjes (1796)", ff. 36-46 and "Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagar", *Asiatic Researches*, 6 (1799), p. 309 ff., also F V Raper, "Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Sources of the Ganges", *Asiatic Researches*, 11 (1812), pp. 450 ff., *India Office Library and Records, London*, Home Miscellaneous, 582, "Report H. Wellesley (1802)", ff. 2233-306.

Sikh generals and their troops were in regular communication with the Haridwar and other fairs, not only to pay their devotion at the holy places but also to safeguard a secure supply of war-horses¹⁴).

The control of the *melās* was always a cause of intense rivalry. Although at the spring fair there were not as many horses from Afghanistan or Turkistan as during the autumn, customers could buy foreign horses procured during the previous season by speculators who prepared and fattened the horses for the following spring sale or they could order them in advance for the November fair, since on their way back home many long-distance traders from Afghanistan called or recalled at the swarming Haridwar spring fair. Of course, one could buy indigenous breeds from the Punjab or Rohilkhand or *Gunth* ponies from the Kumaun and Garhwal hills at any time.

More to the east, the autumnal fairs were held at Duddri, answering the big demand from Benares, and Hajipur for the Bihar market. The spring fairs were held at Balrampur and Butwal along the Himalayan fringe, which were also the entrepôts of local indigenous breeds like *Tattūs* and hill *Tāngans* from Nepal¹⁵).

Thus, the long-distance overland horse trade connected and integrated several overlapping market areas. In each of these areas were held one or more major spring fairs, mostly an outlet for local produce, and autumnal fairs which specialized in the direct sale of *Wilāyati*, i.e. *Turki*, horses which were brought in by foreign merchants. In addition, these fairs served as a market for each of the local states which tried to ensure a stable horse supply for their cavalry. The main fairs of the Rajasthan area were Pushkar in autumn and Bilotra in spring; of Malwa, Bilsa in autumn and Chand-Kheri during spring; of Rohilkhand and the Punjab, Haridwar was the predominant market, especially in spring.

As far as the eighteenth-century overland horse trade is concerned, a clearly perceptible rhythm and pattern comes into sight. After the horses were bought, they were prepared for the market by letting them graze on the natural *maidāns* of Afghanistan and, after crossing the Sulaimna mountains, on the wastes of the Jullunder Doab and the Lakhi Jungle. In autumn the adjacent Indian markets tuned up for the arrival of this long-distance

14) For Marathas at Tirupati: *India Office Library and Records, London*, Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/D/45, 26-1-1761, f. 87 For rivalries at Haridwar fair see Hardwicke, previous footnote.

15) For information on the fairs: *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", ff. 288-293; B. L. Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan during the 18th Century* (Jaipur, 1987), pp. 80-83.

trade from Central Asia. At the regional level new horses were held for direct use, for fattening, for reexport or for reintroduction into the breeding industry.

The Overseas Trade

The overland traffic stood in a complementary relation to the transportation of horses by sea. Whenever the landroute was interrupted by political unrest, importation by sea could provide a viable alternative and vice versa. Prior to the eighteenth century, the so-called *bahrī* or “sea” horses had usually come from Fars, Iraq or Arabia in large numbers. In the eighteenth century, however, the horse trade with the Persian Gulf was limited and certainly secondary to the overland trade with Central Asia¹⁶). Besides, the bulk of the overseas horses did not originate from the Middle East but from ports in Kathiawar like Porbandar, Gogha, Mandvi or Sonmiani. It was not before the beginning of the nineteenth century that, in order to meet British army demands, sustained horse exports from Iran again reached India by sea. Some decades earlier the government at Madras had already decided to avoid the native overland network and to buy horses in Kathiawar directly through its own channels in Bombay. In order to assure a safe arrival of the horses they were transported by sea to the west coast at Cochin or Mangalore from where they were brought overland to Madras. This was in direct response to the falling off of the overland supply¹⁷). The Madras territory, like its client the Wālājāh Nawab or Arcot, was located at the other end of the supply lines from the north. At the end of the century the number of northern horses arriving at their regional fair of Tirupati in the south dropped dramatically. The northern horse traders found a growing market in the hands of the agents from the several competing native states in the Deccan. Moreover, Mysorean and Maratha interlopers tried to siphon off the traditional supply lines controlled by the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Afghans of Bhopal, Kurnool and Cuddapah¹⁸). In fact,

16) S. R. Grunman, “The Rise and Fall of the Arab Shaykhdom of Bushire 1750-1850” (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1962), p. 196.

17) *National Archives of India, New Dehli*, Military Department Proceedings, 27-11-1813, nr. 108, “Report E. Wyatt”, *India Office Library and Records, London* Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/252/18, 3-8-1787, ff. 407-9; Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, 14-8-1787, f. 484; Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, 17-8-1787, f. 536; Madras Military and Political Proceedings, P/253/10, January 1793, f. 565; Madras Military and Political Proceedings, P/252/75, 10-1-1797, f. 156.

18) *India Office Library and Records, London*, Madras Military and Political Proceedings, P/253/12, April 1793, f. 608; Madras Military and Political Proceedings, P/253/33, 4-10-1794, f. 4109

the same was true in northern India, where Sikh agents of Ranjit Singh intercepted the supply lines to Haridwar¹⁹). The situation was aggravated by the fact that whatever numbers were brought to Tirupati—around 500 horses each year—, the best of them were first claimed by the local *chābuk-sawārs* of the Nawab of Arcot and, only through their mediation, the remainder was left to the Company²⁰).

What can be said about the costs of transport of overseas horses in comparison with the overland horses? For the latter we only know the sales prices. At the time the overland horses arrived at Tirupati these had increased considerably. During the 1770's a good cavalry horse at Tirupati would cost from 150 to 200 Pagodas—which was equal to 500 to 700 Rps²¹). The same horse at the northern fairs would be around 100 to 200 Rps less²²). At the end of the century the prices had fallen to about 300 to 400 Rps in the north²³). At the same time carrying horses from Kutch to Calcutta by sea would cost around 760 Rps, from Basra to Calcutta 838 Rps. The latter sum consisted of the following subcharges:

purchase at Basra	250
duties	30
fodder	100
freight Basra-Calcutta	300
insurance	80
landing charges	2
casualties on the voyages	76
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cost price at Calcutta	838 Rps ²⁴)

19) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 13-2-1813, "Moorcroft to Secr. Brd.", ff. 137-8.

20) *India Office Library and Records, London*, Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/251/72, 2-11-1772, f. 880; Madras Military and Political Proceedings, P/253/33, 4-10-1794, f. 4110.

21) *India Office Library and Records, London*, Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/251/71, 17-2-1772, ff. 189, 207: horses for officers would cost around 250 Pagodas; Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/251/72, 14-7-1772, f. 623: frequently horses were also valued in Rupees; *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Foreign and Political Department, S, 8-10-1784, nr. 12; Foreign and Political Department, S, 19-2-1785, nr. 44.

22) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Foreign and Political Department, S. 6-1-1774, nr. 1, Foreign and Political Department, S, 3-2-1777, nr. 13; Public and Home Department, 9-7-1782, f. 1457

23) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 9-10-1795, nr. 37-39; Military Department Proceedings, 10-4-1795, ff. 169-70; Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, f. 305.

24) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 307; see Military Department Proceedings, 27-9-1804 for Kutch-Calcutta.

From this we may conclude that the costs of overseas transport of horses were considerably above the level of the overland passage, even at a stage when the latter had become very difficult indeed.

In another reaction to this supply crisis, the Madras government, increasingly aware of the importance of cavalry troops, had to resort to the hiring of native cavalry forces, which was extremely expensive but could not be dispensed with in the protection of British transports and communications²⁵). Still another attempt to solve this problem was the launching of a breeding operation of their own, as was tried at Pusa in 1793 and at Ganjam in 1795.

2. *Volume of the Trade*

In order to arrive at a general estimate of the total volume of the horse trade it is necessary first to give an estimate of the total amount of cavalry horses employed in India. Let us start with the relatively small cavalry contingents of the EIC. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Company's officials and army officers became increasingly aware that, in the long run, they could not hold or expand their newly acquired territories without a substantial enlargement of their cavalry establishment. The Maratha and Mysore wars had proven to them the persisting importance of the horse. In 1793 the peace-time Bengal cavalry consisted of only two regiments of native cavalry with an establishment of no more than 500 horses. Only six years later the total Bengal military horse establishment had risen sevenfold to 3500 animals. In 1809 it had grown twelvefold to 6000 horses. Similarly, in Madras the cavalry contingent was increased, mainly by incorporating the native regiments of the Nawab of Arcot and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Until 1803, only the Bombay government had no cavalry of its own and had to rely completely on the mounted contingents of its native allies²⁶).

Despite these increases, the total British cavalry force was still inferior to the massive cavalry contingents of the native states. In 1778, Haider 'Ali's army in the Deccan was reported to count 28,000 horses. At the same time,

25) *India Office Library and Records, London*, Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/251/59, 19-10-1767, ff. 1071-3; Madras Military and Secret Proceedings, P/251/61, 29-2-1768, ff. 252-3.

26) For Bengal: G. J. Alder, "The Origins of the "Pusa Experiment" the East India Company and Horse-Breeding in Bengal, 1793-1808," *Bengal Past and Present*, 98, 1 (1979), pp. 10-2; for Madras, see W. J. Wilson, *A History of the Madras Army from 1746 to 1826* (Madras, 1888), 2, p. 149; for Bombay, see B. Mollo, *The Indian Army* (Poole, 1981), p. 16.

the cavalry of the Marathas, in the Deccan only, numbered 67,000²⁷). To Robert Orme we owe the following evaluation of the strength of the military powers in Hindustan around 1760²⁸):

<i>Rohillas</i>	
Hāfiẓ Raḥmat Khān:	4.000 horse 20.000 foot
Dūndē Khān:	10.000 horse & foot
Maulā Sardār:	3.000 horse & foot
Nadjīb al-Dawla	10.000 horse 20.000 foot
Aḥmad Khān Bangash	10.000 horse & foot
<i>Rāna of Udaipur:</i>	20.000 horse 10.000 foot
<i>Jats:</i>	10.000 horse 30.000 foot
<i>Sikhs under Charhat Singh:</i>	20.000 horse 30.000 foot
<i>Rajputs under Rādhu Singh:</i>	20.000 horse ? foot
<i>Chief of Malwar:</i>	25-30.000 chiefly horse

These figures, together with those of the Deccan give a total of something over 200,000 horses. These figures do not present a complete picture, however, because many native states are not included in the above list. Obviously, it is not possible to calculate the exact number of the total Indian cavalry but when we only take into account the Maratha army in Hindustan, the cavalry of the rulers of Awadh, Benares and Bengal, and the remaining Rajput chiefs, the figure would already be nearly doubled. Even the Mughal stables still counted some 200,000 horses around 1740. Although this figure is only half of the total of Akbar's cavalry units, given by Abū'l Faẓl, together with the armies of the Mughal successor states, the total sum for the mid-eighteenth century clearly exceeds the sixteenth-century numbers²⁹).

Looking at the number of horses of the many armies of local landlords

27) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Foreign and Political Department, S, 2-2-1778, nr. 21, these figures only refer to the Deccan.

28) *India Office Library and Records, London*, Orme Mss, ov, 108, f. 89.

29) For these figures, see W. Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: its Organization and Administration* (London, 1903), p. 61.

(*zamīndārs*) in India, even more doubts are raised. When we adopt Habib's figures for the total number of *zamīndārī* horses in the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, this would result in another 400,000 horses³⁰). Considering the increased impact and buying power of the *zamīndārs* in eighteenth-century India, even this staggering figure would seem to be too low for the later period. All these figures, including those of Habib are, however, very difficult to check and often the contemporary accounts were influenced by the hyperboles of the overenthusiastic observer. Besides, there was most probably a great deal of overlap in the numbers. For example, Rohilla mercenaries switched sides rather frequently and thus their contribution to the potential strength of native armies could easily be overrated. On the other hand, the Leiden scholar Dirk Kolff rightly observes that even the Mughal inventories of the military labour force did not exhaust the total reservoir of armed men, with or without horses³¹).

Keeping these restrictions in mind, we may still come to a general assessment of the importance of the horse in quantitative terms. As a result of the decentralization of the Mughal empire and the rise of the regional courts, the total horse population in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century was brought to a peak. Thus, the total sum of warhorses in India, excluding the Iranian and later Afghan provinces, can be ranged somewhere between 400,000 and 800,000

What do these figures tell us about the total turnover of the horse trade? Obviously, we have to add another myriad of uncertainties which will leave the end result even more wide-ranging. For example, the price level of horses varied considerably during the eighteenth century. During the first three quarters of the century there was an upward trend in prices because demand continuously exceeded supply and because of an overall trend of inflation. Of course, prices were higher when horses had to be transported to far-off places like Mysore or Bengal. As a convenient alternative, horses could also be imported by sea but this markedly raised the costs of transport, fodder and casualties. As we have seen, the northern horses which arrived on the southern markets by land fetched a price which was only around 150% of the level on the Hindustani markets. For overseas horses the cost price would be around 200% or more.

The date of the mid-century upswing of trade will serve as the basis for the following estimate of the total turnover. At that time, indigenous *Taṭṭū*

30) I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)* (London, 1963), pp. 166-8.

31) D. H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy. The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 3.

breeds, the horses that dominated in the local *zamīndārī* armies, could be procured for only 15 to 100 Rps each³²). Larger, stronger and superior foreign and indigenous *Turkī* or *Tāzī*, i.e. Arabian-like, horses—mainly from Kathiawar, Kutch, Rajasthan, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Turkistan—fetched a medium price of around 500 Rps but never under 400 Rps. Rare thorough-bred Arabian horses were even three to four times this price. The enormous price difference between indigenous and foreign horses was due to a persisting high demand for large and strong cavalry horses of the latter category and also indicates the difference in status of both races. The Mughal cavalry during the sixteenth and seventeenth century consisted almost entirely of relatively strong *Tāzī* and *Turkī* horses. The *Turkī* was particularly predominant among the Irani, Turani, Afghan and Rajput contingents, the *Tāzī* among the Maratha troops. During the eighteenth century these horses remained the mainstay of the now more decentralized Mughal cavalry³³). However, in the Deccan at the end of the century, the Marathas started to breed a *Tāzī* horse of their own along the Bhima valley which was a mixture of *Tāzī* and local indigenous blood³⁴).

Returning to our estimate of the total turnover, it seems reasonable to qualify half of the total amount of cavalry horses as inferior *Taṭṭū* horses and the remainder as varieties of the more expensive *Turkī* or *Tāzī* breeds. Considering the fact that the annual wastage in peacetime was around 10% (which means that every ten years the existing stock of cavalry horses had to be renewed³⁵)), and assuming the total amount of cavalry horses in India to be 600,000 around the middle of the century, this produces the following results:

Annual renewal:	Annual turnover:
30.000 × 500 Rps (<i>Tāzīs</i> , <i>Turkīs</i>)	15.000.000 Rps
30.000 × 50 Rps (<i>Taṭṭūs</i>)	1.500 000 Rps
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Total annual turnover:	16.500.000 Rps

32) Comte de Modave, *Voyage en Inde du Comte de Modave 1773-1776*, ed. J. Deloche (Paris, 1971), p. 327, Pigott, *Treatise*, p. 43.

33) Abū'l-Fazl 'Allāmī, *The A'in-i Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann, H. S. Jarrett, 1, p. 245; R. A. Alavi, 'New Light on Mughal Cavalry', *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, 2 (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 70-99

34) H. Shakespear, *The Wild Sports of India* (London, 1862), pp. 298-9

35) This figure from Alder, 'Origins', p. 12; my own calculations are less optimistic: service of cavalry horse mostly started around 3.5 years, after which it could be active for less than 9 years. Other references speak of only 7 years, cf. *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Foreign and Political Department, S, 6-1-1774, nr. 1, C. F. Traver, *Hints on Irregular Cavalry, its Conformation, Management and Use in both a Military and Political Point of View* (Calcutta, 1845), pp. 60, 85, 88.

Obviously, this is an extremely rough estimate because many of the quantitative data is uncertain. On the other hand the calculation appears to be a conservative one when compared with the contemporary assessment of the French traveller Comte de Modave, who during the 1770's reckoned the annual importation of horses from Turkistan and Iran to be around 45 to 50.000³⁶). This would result in a total import trade of around 20 million Rps, which would be more than three times the total of Bengal exports to Europe by the English, Dutch and French EIC's together. Although in terms of regular trade the Frenchman's account seems to be an overestimation, it is certainly possible that occasionally these figures could be realized as a result of a sudden increase of demand. During times of large-scale warfare or epidemics the losses of horses increased from one out of ten to one out of seven or more. Taking the incidental character of Modave's figures into account, they are not so far off from the calculations above.

All in all, we cannot trust these figures to be more than lump sums which can offer us only an impression of the volume of trade. But even if only 5000 horses were annually imported into India, this would result in a trade volume which compares still very favourable with the total export trade of, for example, the eighteenth-century Dutch EIC in Bengal. Thus, the figures above do not claim any accuracy at all, but they should shed some new light on the overland connections of India and Central Asia and they should have implications for the still current views of an isolated Central Asia. Until far into the eighteenth century, and not least thanks to the horse trade in general, overland commercial relations between India and its northern and western neighbours were still very close and were certainly in a flourishing condition³⁷). In northern Afghanistan this resulted in further pastoralist penetration from the late seventeenth century onwards and a general shift from crop-cultivation to pasturage³⁸). As we shall see in the following section, in India too the rising demand for warhorses stimulated regional breeding efforts.

3 *The Breeding of Horses: Two Examples*

The balance between horse breeding and arable farming could be an extremely delicate one. In areas where conditions of soil and climate were

36) Modave, *Voyage*, p. 327

37) For the growing horse trade after the decline of the imperial Mauryas and Guptas, see C. Gupta, "Horse Trade in North India: Some Reflections of Socio-Economic Life", *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 14 (1983-4), p. 195.

38) R. D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889* (Princeton, 1991), p. 234.

not ideal for crop cultivation and methods of horse breeding required extensive grazing lands, horse-breeding was often at the expense of arable farming. However, in areas of secure and rich harvests the relationship between breeding and farming could be more symbiotic. Therefore, in this section I will pay attention to two examples of local breeding areas. One is Kathiawar, where very good horses had always been bred, but at the cost of a low intensity of settled crop cultivation. In contrast to this predominantly pastoral area, Rohilkhand was traditionally not associated with the breeding of strong horses since it possessed extremely rich conditions for settled cultivation. Nevertheless, during the eighteenth century, the more sedentary area of Rohilkhand not only witnessed an expansion of settled cultivation but also an increasingly flourishing horse-breeding industry.

Kathiawar

In 1814, the British agent Wyatt was commissioned to the Kathiawar and Kutch area in order to buy horses for the EIC's Bengal army³⁹). He wrote to his superiors that this task had become very difficult since some years past there had been a marked decline in the local breed of horses. But during the eighteenth century the local chiefs had greatly encouraged the breeding of horses. Particularly the Kāṭhī tribe had paid great attention to breeding. According to Wyatt, the natural conditions in Kathiawar were ideal for breeding purposes. The face of the country was almost everywhere hilly and mountainous while the soil was generally rich although mixed with stone and sand. According to Wyatt, "this made the area scantily cultivated and so bare of trees, that excepting near the towns and villages there is scarcely a tree to be seen throughout the whole country". The country abounded, however, in nutritious "jinjirah" (*gānjā*) and "durrū" (*dūrvā*, a variety of *dūb* or *Cynodon Dactylon*) grasses. Although the climate was relatively dry, there were innumerable small streams and rivulets which took their rise in the hills and ran into the creaks of the sea or lost themselves in subterranean caverns. In contrast, to the north and east, in Gujarat, where the climate was very moist and the landscape flat, the breed of horses degenerated and became ill-formed. In the early nineteenth century, however, even in Kathiawar not much was left of this once famous breed.

Following an earlier report of Colonel Walker, Wyatt ascribed this sudden decline to the rude system of native government and the several incur-

39) This section on Kathiawar is based on *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 14-6-1814, nr. 76, "Report E. Wyatt", ff. 75r-83r.

sions of the Marathas in the area. At the same time, however, he reluctantly had to admit that the earlier political unrest and the predatory politics of the local chiefs were in fact the *raison d'être* of a blooming local breeding industry. Quoting his own words:

The decline of the breed however amongst the Kattee tribe who were the most famous for their horses and who to this day possess the best remains of the breed is owing in some degree to a cause which cannot be regretted, that is to a check having been given to their plundering excursions by which until very lately they almost entirely subsisted.

During the eighteenth century the Kāṭhīs were still semisetled pastoralists who, 200 years before, had migrated from the north-west to Kathiawar. They claimed descent from the mythical Kāṭh who was a robber of cattle, and this, to the indignation of Wyatt, caused them to feel not the least remorse for their earlier predatory way of life. Only after the British had settled the country in 1807, did the Kāṭhīs leave their former occupations and did they concentrate exclusively on settled agriculture, which offered more secure profits, given the rise of Bombay and the EIC trade along the coast. While the British had successfully pacified the area, the breeding industry had almost completely disappeared. The area changed from being by far the most important source for supplying the Deccani cavalry troops, to a relatively unimportant agricultural area deprived of its main item of export. Thus, since the breeding industry had been directly linked to a vigorous predatory economy, the imposition of the Pax Britannica took away the last incentive for breeding horses on a large scale⁴⁰).

Rohilkhand

In Rohilkhand too the breeding industry declined following the end of native encouragement under the Indo-Afghan Rohilla government (1738-1774). In the words of the Company veterinary surgeon William Moorcroft:

The spirit of horse-breeding supported by the Rohillas during the period they possessed Rohilkhand has become almost extinguished since their expulsion, and the animals now raised are seldom fit for other service than that of irregular troops⁴¹).

40) Cf. Shakespear, *Wild Sports*, p. 313; P. Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806* (Cambridge, 1970).

41) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 13-2-1813, nr. 156, ff. 137-8.

The Rohilla ruler Ḥāfiẓ Rahmat Khān (1749-1774) stimulated breeding systematically by supervising the regular distribution of stallions to the local *zamīndārs*. They put them to their own mares and also to those of their circle of relatives and friends. The Rohillas, however, did not breed horses themselves. Most of the stallions were held by a Hindu caste called Bhāt, of mixed origin, which normally served as panegyrists and bards who attended and added lustre to family parties and ceremonies. They are also frequently related to the Banjāra caste of highly mobile grain carriers⁴²). This caste of Bhāts employed the best breeds of horses, which were however rejected for cavalry service because they were lame or for some other reason blemished and not fit for warfare. The Bhāts regularly took these stallions to the stables of the local *zamīndār* who had to pay one Rupee in order to have his mare three times covered by the stallion, with the privilege of a fourth time whenever there would appear to be a necessity for it. Most of the breeding *zamīndārīs* were situated in the delta of Mehrabad in southern Rohilkhand, between the Ramganga and the Ganges rivers⁴³).

Although to a lesser extent than in Kathiawar, the ecological conditions of Rohilkhand were suitable for breeding. The alluvial pastures along the many streams coming from the northern hills had a reputation for their fattening and nutritious qualities for horses. The area in general was extremely fertile and, in Chris Bayly's terms, might be called an area of natural surplus⁴⁴). Although the Rohilla territory became increasingly cultivated, the *zamīndārs* retained a certain quantity of land for growing the very nutritious *dūb* grass, which was cut at the end of the rainy season and made into hay and stacked, and given to the horses during the dry season. Most of the grazing fields were situated along the river shores in order to facilitate easy inundation. Besides, the waterlevel was so near the surface that *dūb* grass could grow for over 8 months during the year, from the start of the monsoon until the time of the spring fairs. However, the cultivation of *dūb* was extremely labour intensive as it required the close scrutiny by grasscutters who had to keep the ground clear of more savage weeds that naturally

42) J. Deloche, *La circulation en Inde* (Paris, 1980), 1, pp. 251, 253.

43) For breeding in Rohilkhand, see reports of W Moorcroft, J. Fortescue and Capt. Nuthull in: *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, ff. 275-281, Military Department Proceedings, 13-2-1813, nr. 156, ff. 137-8; Military Department Proceedings, 2-6-1803, ff. 2r-8v; Military Department Proceedings, 27-9-1804, nr. 56, ff. 74r-84v

44) C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 80-3.

suppressed and overpowered the more delicate *dūb*⁴⁵). Next to grass and hay, the chaff of other winter crops available in Rohilkhand like gram (*chunā*), lentils (*masūrī*) and particularly grains like wheat and barley, could serve as a suitable additional source of fodder.

In contrast to the more extensive pastoral production in western India and Afghanistan, the Rohilkhand breeding process represented a more intensive type of mixed farming which confined the animals to stables and small fields of pasture. Besides, Rohilkhand regularly imported horses from abroad, either through the long-distance trade or from the unsettled areas surrounding it to the north and the west. This was the territory of the semi-nomadic and predatory Banjāras, Gūjars, Bhaṭṭs and Bhaṭṭīs. Although these groups were frequently seen as enemies of settled agriculture and settled government, they played a crucial part in the regional economy of Rohilkhand, especially by providing fresh livestock for transport and breeding⁴⁶).

Although the cultivation area and the population in the region rapidly increased during Rohilla rule (c. 1720-1770), horse breeding activities did not suffer at all. On the contrary, agricultural expansion facilitated breeding activities because it made fodder and labour readily available and relatively cheap. The high demand and prices for horses further stimulated the breeding economy. In Rohilkhand the demand was so high that advance reservations could be made even before foaling. The horses were sold directly to Rohilla mercenaries or to Afghan horse-traders who mostly purchased them when one and a half or two years old from the local *zamīndārs*, after which they fattened them well until they were three years of age and fit for military service and resold at the autumn or spring fairs. The quality of the Rohilkhand breed was not only a reflection of local breeding conditions, but also resulted from a regular injection of foreign stallions and mares from the Punjab, Afghanistan and Turkistan, brought by Afghan and Sikh traders or by roaming Gūjar and Bhaṭṭī herdsmen-marauders who exchanged these horses mainly for the Rohilkhand *kharīf* cash crops such as indigo and sugar, made ready for the autumn fairs, or the *rabi*^c crops like wheat and barley, entering the market during spring. The invasions of Nādir Shāh and Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī gave another impulse to the Indian breeding industry since many horses were bought or stolen from the invading armies by attentive Sikh, Rohilla, Gūjar and other *kazākī*. As a

45) There also exists a tension between making hay and gathering in the *kharīf* crops, both of which take place around September.

46) Cf. Bayly, *Rulers*, p. 29.

consequence, it was claimed that the breeds of the Lakhi Jungle and the Bikaner desert had markedly improved thanks to a sudden influx of *Wilāyatī* horses⁴⁷).

After the annexation of Rohilkhand by Awadh in 1774, trade, agricultural production and breeding activity declined simultaneously. Most of the Rohillas and their clients concentrated on their remaining territory around Rampur or migrated to other more attractive areas. In order to control his new territory the ruler of Awadh discouraged external trade relations in Rohilkhand, and commercial traffic now began to avoid this more and more depopulated area. The collapse of the Rohilla state and its Indo-Afghan trading network in northern India caused an overall dwindling of the demand for war-horses, exacerbated by increasing exchange problems caused by falling agricultural production and depopulation in the area. In addition, throughout the newly created fallow lands, parasitic grasses could spread, and reports of roaming cattle destroying the crops increased. For a decade the hub of the Hindustan horse trade shifted eastwards to Awadh and Benares. The Nawab of Awadh, Āṣaf al-Dawla (1775-1797), enticed Afghan and other horse-traders to move towards his territories instead, circumventing Rohilkhand to the south via Mathura, Farrukhabad and Kanpur to Lucknow⁴⁸). Rājā Balwant Sing and his son and successor Chait Singh of Benares every year got hold of many colts and fillies from the Lakhi Jungle which they, like their counterpart *zamīndārs* in Rohilkhand, distributed amongst their numerous relatives and dependants. In the wake of the expulsion of Rājā Chait Singh in 1784, the trade with Benares diminished significantly⁴⁹). The death of Āṣaf al-Dawla (1797) and the increasing political influence of the East India Company dealt the final blow to the remaining horse trade of north-eastern India. Simultaneously, Central-Asian horses were progressively drained into the Deccan⁵⁰).

At this point, we may draw some general conclusions. First, that the success of the breeding economy was based, on the one hand, on a regular exchange of livestock with north-western India and Central Asia and, on the other hand, on a close relationship between nearby settled-sedentary and

47) Pigott, *Treatise*, p. 43; *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 2-6-1803, "Report J. Fortescue", ff. 2r-8v; similarly the breed of Bihar was known to have been improved through the spoils of the battle of Buxar (1764).

48) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 283.

49) *Ib.*, f. 280.

50) *Ib.*, f. 279; *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 13-2-1813, nr. 156, f. 138.

more unsettled-pastoral areas and groups. Secondly, that the emergence of new political configurations within a flourishing predatory economy created extremely favourable conditions for both horse breeding and trade. In these circumstances, when high levels of demand and prices prevailed, an area like Kathiawar specialized in pastoral horse breeding, since ecological and political conditions did not allow an efficient combination with crop cultivation. On the other hand, in Rohilkhand, breeding was tied in with intensified cultivation and was also integrated with the more unsettled fringe areas to its north and west. As such, stability in one area was almost conditioned by instability in the neighbouring area.

4. *Decline*

At the end of the eighteenth century the Indian provinces under the control of the ascending English East India Company experienced a marked decline in the quality and quantity of the available cavalry horses. The quality requirements for a good British dragoon horse were very high indeed. The British cavalry trooper of the day, together with his saddle, weapons, ammunition and equipment, came to around 115 kilograms, which was much heavier than the common native horseman⁵¹). Therefore, if he was to make an effective cavalry charge, the horse needed both height and weight, bone and muscle. Disreputable *Tattū* horses were considered absolutely deficient for this purpose. Besides, British agents complained about an overall degeneration of the Indian horse following a marked decline in the trade relations with north-western India and Central Asia⁵²). It appeared that every westbound step of British expansion was nearly automatically accompanied by a similar westward retreat of the international horse trade. Consequently, the bulk of the Company's horses could not be bought at the local fairs of Bihar and Bengal but had to be procured, through intermediary agents, from the *melās* of Rajasthan and the Punjab. The resultant import trade, however, caused an increasing drain of specie which the Company could not afford.

To secure an indigenous source of supply the EIC set up a stud-breeding farm of its own at Pusa in Bihar in 1793. Two years later, in reaction to increasing supply problems, a similar project was launched in the Ganjam

51) Alder, "Origins", p. 11.

52) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, "Report W Moorcroft", f. 295; cf. E. Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India and Eastern and Southern Asia* (Graz, 1967), "horse"

district in the Madras presidency. Apart from producing horses at the stud-farm itself, the policy aimed at stimulating the breeding industry of the surrounding *zamīndārs* as well, especially in the traditional breeding districts of Ghazipur, Sarin and Shahabad. Until then, the most prominent figure dominating the local breeding business had been the so called *na^q-band*. This term literally meant “farrier” or “blacksmith” but in fact he was the manager who supervised all aspects of local breeding and selling⁵³). As a trader he provided stallions to serve the mares of the *zamīndārs* after which he was entitled to buy the resultant offspring which he took to the local fairs. Otherwise he resold them directly to Afghan and Maratha long-distance dealers who carried the horses to the most lucrative markets of India. At the end of the century, these were certainly not located in the eastern territories under the sway of the EIC. As we have already observed, the imposition of the Pax Britannica and the collapse of the northern Rohilla network engendered a dwindling regional demand in Hindustan.

British officers could not afford to pay as much cash for horses as traders in the Deccan or Rajasthan were used to receive. Because the demand from the south was on the increase, the price level was still under pressure. Anticipating the lack of purchasing power from the east, the traders from the Punjab and Rampur separated their stock in two classes. One consisted of the best and most expensive horses which were earmarked for the Deccani market where they could be readily sold at high prices. The other group was made up of inferior horses and sold to local adventurers and mercenaries. Only a small part of the worst horses reached the eastern *melās* under British control. As a result, most of the cavalry of the native forces employed horses far superior to those of the British. The situation was further aggravated by a European cultural predilection for Arabian horses, which were directly imported from Iraq to Bengal. This “Arabomania”, as Moorcroft called it grudgingly, stemmed from Europe and the experience of breeding English thoroughbreds and race horses. Under British rule Indian horse breeding became, in effect, an entirely different operation which required stronger, higher and better trained horses than the indigenous *Ṭaṭṭūs*. On the Bihar scene, however, Arabian crossbreeding with native stock was not very encouraging. In order to counter the general lack of qualified indigenous stock, the Pusa stud-farm tried to control the quality of the breeding stock by supplying stud stallions and mares to the local *zamīndārs* and to the *na^q-bands*. Although these new breeding investments caused some increase in production and in commercial interest in the eastern fairs, through the

53) Cf. Alder, “Origins”, in Rohilkhand the *na^q-band* signified a farrier only

mediation of the *na^l-bands*, the majority of these horses were driven to the western and southern markets⁵⁴).

In general, however, ecological circumstances in Bihar remained far from ideal for breeding large and strong horses. Because of the lack of a suitable climate and breeding stock the interest of the stud officials was redirected to the traditional breeding areas of the north-west: the Punjab, Rajasthan, Kutch and Kathiawar, and even beyond to Afghanistan and Turkistan. Here they hoped to procure a bigger and bonier parent stock both for crossbreeding and military service. The most enthusiastic example in this respect was William Moorcroft, veterinary surgeon and superintendent of the Pusa stud. From 1810 until his death in 1825, spurred by an inner drive to find the source of the famous Turkistan blood stock, he made long journeys across the Himalayan and Sulaiman mountains which eventually would take him as far as Bukhara. However, because of the ever progressing pacification of the subcontinent, the Central-Asian horse trade with India had shrunk to an utter minimum and Central Asia itself had changed into the imaginary nineteenth-century ‘‘Back of Beyond’’⁵⁵).

5. *Horse Trade and State Formation*

Not only for the EIC, but also for the other regional states it was difficult to check the movements of the horse-trade. The highly mobile and experienced horse-trader was in a powerful position vis-à-vis the local consumers. As a result, horse-traders had a particularly bad reputation, to which their wandering life contributed as well. Their mere presence could constitute a serious threat to law and order, as is illustrated in the case of the Rohilla freebooter Dā³ūd Khān. Dā³ūd Khān was later considered to have been one of the founding fathers of the Indo-Afghan state in Rohilkhand. At the start of the eighteenth century and as an agent of his master Shāh ʿĀlam Khān, he was sent to the *melā* of Haridwar to buy some horses. After he had bought these he declined to send them to his master and instead distributed them among some fellow Rohillas whom he had gathered around him and thus he began a career as highway robber. A few years later he had collected a following of 80 horsemen and 300 footsoldiers,

54) We witness a similar process in the nineteenth-century Dutch East Indies where the indigenous breed of *Batakkers* deteriorated as a result of European interference (W Groeneveld, ‘‘Het paard in Nederlandsch-Indië; hoe het is ontstaan, hoe het is en hoe het kan worden’’, *Veeartsenijkundige Bladen voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 28 (1916), pp. 195-240).

55) For William Moorcroft, see G. J. Alder, *Beyond Bukhara. The Life of William Moorcroft, Asian Explorer and Pioneer Veterinary Surgeon 1767-1825* (London, 1985).

was able to built his own mud fortress and to defy Mughal rule in the area⁵⁶).

Apart from being a disruptive element, the itinerant horse trader represented a more or less cosmopolitan culture. They were accustomed to their own esoteric language, which was a mixture of various local dialects combined with a special jargon and an extensive code of manual signs, exchanged during the actual bargaining at the fair, mostly concealed beneath a handkerchief⁵⁷). Sometimes the local rulers tried to regulate and control the movements of the horse-traders. At the Pushkar fair, for instance, the traders and their horses had to take up their camping ground in the direction of the countries they came from. Through such regulations the authorities hoped to make the trader and his horses more identifiable and to assure that there would always be somebody answerable for frauds or other malpractices⁵⁸).

Partly as a consequence of the extreme mobility of the horse trade, it is very difficult to come very close to the horse-trader himself, who may appear alternately as a merchant, a mercenary, a highway-robber or a Sufi. This multi-faceted role may also explain why the sources remain rather vague about him. Most of them were people from the north-west—Afghans, Sikhs and Punjabis—but at the Hindustani fairs Maratha traders were also active. Even in Kabul the Maratha chiefs had their agents who bought horses for them through bills of exchange⁵⁹). Among the Afghans there were many Lohani *Powindah* traders and Rohillas. Many of them travelled long distances, as, for example, the Rampur merchant Aḥmad ‘Alī Khān who, even at the start of the nineteenth century, had a radius of action which extended from Bhatinda to Bundelkhand and far into the Deccan⁶⁰). Some of these people answered the traditional picture of the itinerant pedlar but we should not forget that supplying merely a small number of horses required already huge capital investments for purchase, duties, fodder, and other expenses. Many of the smaller traders at the fairs were agents of the greater men behind the Sulaiman mountains to the west. An example of

56) Ghulām ‘Alī Khān Naqawī, *‘Imad al-Sa‘ādat* (Lucknow, 1864), pp. 40-1.

57) Sa‘ādat Yār Rangin, *Faras Nama e Rangin or the Book of the Horse by Rangin*, trans. D. C. Phillott (London, 1911), pp. 42-4.

58) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, “Report W Moorcroft”, f. 289

59) H. R. Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab 1707-1793* (Lahore, 1944), p. 259.

60) *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 15-10-1811, nr. 80, “Report W Moorcroft”, ff. 302-3.

such an entrepreneur is one "Sunderji" who at the end of the eighteenth century had gained a complete monopoly of the horse supply from Kathiawar. His agency network extended far to the north from Kalat in Baluchistan to Kabul and Kandahar. During the years 1810-12 he supplied the Company agents at Bombay with 1800 horses although the quantity and quality of his deliveries had already greatly decreased during the last one or two decades⁶¹).

The eighteenth century witnessed the rise and expansion of a contiguous series of Afghan states⁶²). Like, for instance, Dāʿūd Khān Rohilla, many of the new Indo-Afghan rulers started their political careers as horse-traders-cum-mercenaries. As such they helped to promote and widen the Afghan trading network. Afghan mercenaries served in almost every army of the subcontinent and thus acted as valuable contacts, being both agents and customers for the native states of India. Therefore, it is no coincidence that nearly all Afghan states were carved out along the traditional horse-trade routes: the newly emerging Durrani empire controlled the main breeding areas in Afghanistan proper, while Rohilkhand and Kasur were situated along the northern supply lines, whereas Tonk, Bhopal, Kurnool and Cuddappah supervised the communications to the south, to the Deccan, Hyderabad and Mysore. Even in Kathiawar the Afghan Bābī merchants, coming from the Kandahar area, established their Nawabi in Junagadh, where they also acquired a stake in the maritime connections at the port of Gogha. Most of the other native states were strongly indebted to Afghan mercenary chiefs and intermediaries for both man- and horsepower. In fact, Afghans rivalled the British in terms of military service. Instead of a disciplined infantry, they could offer horses and cavalry, and during the eighteenth century it was still not clear which of the two was the most important⁶³).

61) Letters of E. Wyatt, *National Archives of India, New Delhi*, Military Department Proceedings, 27-11-1813, nr. 108; Military Department Proceedings 9-4-1814, nr. 89; Military Department Proceedings, 4-6-1814, nr. 76.

62) See my "Mughal India and Central Asia in the Eighteenth Century An Introduction to a Wider Perspective", *Itinerario*, 15, 1 (1991), pp. 51-71.

63) E.g. P. J. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 2.2: Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 51, 71, S. Chander, *From a Pre-Colonial Order to a Princely State: Hyderabad in Transition c. 1748-1865*" (PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1987), pp. 136-7