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978-0-521-62285-1 - The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama

Claude Markovits

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## The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947

*Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*

In his latest book, Claude Markovits tells the story of two groups of Hindu merchants from the towns of Shikarpur and Hyderabad in the province of Sind. Basing his account on previously neglected archival sources, the author charts the development of these communities, from the pre-colonial period through colonial conquest and up to independence, describing how they came to control trading networks throughout the world. While the book focuses on the trade of goods, money and information from Sind to such widely dispersed locations as Kobe, Panama, Bukhara and Cairo, it also throws light on the nature of trading diasporas in South Asia in their interaction with the global economy. In an epilogue, the author brings the story up to date in a discussion of the origins of the present-day diaspora of Sindhi Hindus, the most wide-ranging of all the diasporas from the Indian subcontinent.

This is a sophisticated and accessible book written by one of the most distinguished economic historians in the field. It will appeal to scholars of South Asia and of the history of diasporas, as well as to colonial historians, economic historians and to students of religion.

**Claude Markovits** is Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris.

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To the memory of my father Paul Markovits  
(1912–1993)

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## Glossary

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- ajrak* kind of quilt cover produced in Sind
- Aksakal* elder (in Central Asia), head of Indian community in Russian Central Asia and Sinkiang
- amban* petty Chinese official (in Sinkiang)
- Amils* Hindus belonging to the superior segment of the Lohana caste in Sind, mostly employed in government service
- anna* fraction of the rupee (1/16th)
- badmash* bad character
- bajra* indigenous millet, staple food of the lower classes in Sind
- bania* generic term for Hindu traders belonging to the merchant castes
- bavangami* group of fifty-four villages in Kathiawar, region of origin of Jain migrants to East Africa
- bawa* Nanakpanthi priest
- bhai* brother, fellow trader
- Bhaiband* literally brotherhood, term used to designate the lower segment of the Lohana caste, by extension applies to Sindhi business firms
- Bhatia* Hindu caste of Kutch, Kathiawar and Sind
- bima* insurance
- biradari* patrilineal kinship group
- Bohras* community of Shia Ismaili Muslims, originating from Gujarat
- chela* disciple of a Hindu holy man
- Chettiars* Nattukottai Chettiars or Natukottai Nagarathars, caste of TAMILIAN Hindu bankers originating from Chettinad, strongly represented in Burma and Ceylon prior to 1948
- Chulia* community of TAMILIAN Muslims, active in trade in Southeast Asia
- commenda* partnership contract of medieval Italy
- crore* 10 million
- dalal* broker
- devanagari* Sanskrit script used in Sind by *banias*

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*dharamsala* hostel for Hindu pilgrims, also used by travelling Hindu merchants

*dhow* native craft in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean

*firman* decree, proclamation

**Ghadr** Party Revolutionary party fighting to overthrow British rule, mostly recruiting among Sikhs

**guberniia** of Turkestan governorate-general of Turkestan, part of Central Asia under direct Russian administration

*gumastha* a Persian term for an agent, factor or working partner

*gurdwara* Sikh place of worship

*hari* small cultivator, landless labourer in Sind

*havania* small trader in Sind

*Hoofd der Indiers* head of the Indians, local head of Indian community in Surabaya, in the Dutch East Indies

*hundi* indigenous bill of exchange

*izzat* honour, prestige

*jagirdar* holder of a jagir, an assignment of state revenue derived from a specified area

**Jains** followers of a religion founded by Mahavir

*kafila* caravan

*kala pani* 'black waters', the sea, which orthodox Hindus cross only at the peril of losing caste

*kangani* supervisor or headman, organizer of migration of labourers to Ceylon, Burma and Malaya

*kansa* metal work of Sind

**Kapol** Banias Hindu trading caste of Gujarat

**kashani** rupee monetary unit of pre-colonial Sind

*kashi* painting work on flower vessels, a speciality of Sind

**Kayastha** North Indian Hindu caste, whose members were employed as scribes in the Mughal administration

*kazi* Muslim judge or magistrate

**Khalsa** Sikh order, brotherhood founded by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699

**Khatri** Hindu caste of the Punjab, mostly engaged in trading

**Khojas** community of Shia Muslims, divided into Ismaili and Itnaashari

**kopeck** Russian copper coin

**kora** rupee monetary unit of pre-colonial Sind

*kothi* business firm

**kran** Persian monetary unit

**lakh** 100,000

**Lohana** principal Hindu caste of Sind, divided into Amils and Bhai-bands

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*lungi* piece of clothing worn by men*Luwattiya* Arabic name given to Hyderabad Khoja traders in Masqat*mamlo, mamlat* estate*Marakkayar* Muslim group from Tamilnadu, active in trade in South-east Asia*Marwari* generic name for a cluster of Hindu and Jain castes originating from a part of Rajasthan. Marwaris constitute an important business community in India*maund* Indian measure of weight. The Surat maund was the most widespread*mazhar* Persian term for a public declaration, a kind of newsletter exchanged between merchants of different localities*Mitaksara* Code of Hindu law, applied in most of India (except Bengal)*mofussil* Anglo-Indian term for the areas outside the provincial capitals in British India*mudaraba* Arabic term for partnership contract*muhajir* Muslim refugee from India in Pakistan*mukthiyarkar* local government official in charge of revenue collection*munshi* Persian writer*murid* disciple of a *pir**musharaka* Arabic term for partnership contract*Nanakpanthi* follower of the Guru Nanak, non-Khalsa Sikh*nukh* fraction of caste or lineage*oblast* Russian administrative division*panchayat* Council of Five, corporate body of Hindu merchants or caste council*Parsi* Zoroastrian*picul* Chinese measure of weight (equivalent to  $133\frac{1}{3}$  lb or 60.453 kg)*pie* fraction of an *anna* (1/12th)*pir* Muslim spiritual guide and religious preceptor, a *sufi* or descendant of a *sufi* saint*pirzadeh* descendant of *pir**pongee* silk cloth woven from *tussah* silk*pardah* seclusion of women*Pushkarna* caste of Brahmins in Sind*riba* Arabic term for lending money with interest, a practice forbidden by the Koran and *sharia**ryotwari* system of revenue collection prevalent in the Bombay Presidency under British rule, in which the cultivator pays rent directly to the state*Sahajdari* a Sikh who neither accepts baptism into the Khalsa nor observes its code of discipline

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- sahukar* big merchant, generally Hindu
- samadhi* memorial, in particular of a Hindu holy man
- sarai* (*karavansarai*) halting place for travellers, where merchants often resided
- Saraswat caste of Brahmins in Sind
- sarraf, shroff* banker and money changer, generally Hindu
- Sayed* Muslim holy man
- shah* principal, capitalist partner in a business firm
- sharia* Islamic law
- shuddi* reconversion to Hinduism of those who have embraced other faiths, a practice encouraged by the Arya Samaj
- sumb monetary unit of Russian Central Asia
- tabut* (*taziah*) symbolic bier of Imams Hasan and Husain, carried during the procession of Muharram
- tael Chinese silver currency unit, abolished in 1933
- taluka* British Indian administrative division, sub-district
- taotai* Chinese official
- tenga monetary unit of the Emirate of Bukhara
- tikhana* Nanakpanthi place of worship in Sind
- tilla Bukharan gold coin
- tussah* silk, wild silk, produced from worms fed on oak leaves
- Udasi Fakir caste of non-Khalsa Sikhs
- wadero* big landowner in Sind, always a Muslim, often of Baluchi ancestry
- wahdat-al-wujud* Doctrine of the Unity of Being, a central tenet of *sufism*
- zamindar* fiscal intermediary, landowner in Colonial Sind