



Pioneering Trade: The Malda Factory's Role In English East India Company's Foray Into Bengal (1680-1705)

Paramjit Kaur^{1*}, Dr Munmun Mondal², Dr Amita Gupta³

^{1*}Research Scholar, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India,

Email: paramjit.2021.2709@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India

³Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Religion and Civilization, Central University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir

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ARTICLEINFO ABSTRACT

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, Kasimbazar emerged as the English East India Company's (EIC) primary market for silk and its textiles. The region surrounding Kasimbazar was prolific in producing silk goods destined for export. Attracted by Bengal silk's substantial profitability, EIC's directors in London envisaged an expansion to regions with existing infrastructure capable of delivering high-quality raw silk and textiles. Subsequently, Mr. Streyntsham Master was dispatched to Bengal as a special envoy to strategize this expansion. The establishment of the EIC's sixth factory at Malda directly resulted from this mission. However, the nascent years of the Malda settlement were fraught with challenges, leading company officials to perceive Malda as a subordinate to Hooghly and Kasimbazar with uncertain business potential. But, within two decades, consistent profits began to reshape this perception. Up until the key shifts in 1898 and 1899—EIC acquiring *zamindari* rights in Calcutta, establishing Fort William as the English headquarters, and the subsequent relocation of the subah capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1706—interactions with local provincial rulers were mired in extortion and bribery. Nonetheless, the handsome profit margins painted a promising outlook for the EIC's future in the region. This paper delves into the initial 25 years after the Malda factory's inception. It evaluates the hurdles faced; the resolutions reached—whether through diplomacy or through petitions to distant Dhaka—the appointment of *dadani* merchants, the inclusion of *pykers*, and most notably, the trajectory of business growth and profits during this period.

Keywords: *silk, factory, weaver, merchant, pyker.*

Introduction:

The present study concerns itself of the Malda region and how the culture of rearing silkworms and weaving silk textiles made it a silk emporium many centuries ago when the first Europeans came. It also thrust upon the first 25 years of the English settlement in the Malda region, as this time period was crucial for the existence and development of this trading post, which later became one of the best-performing factories of the EIC. Here, Malda region does not follow present-day Malda district, as the 'district' concept came in 1813, taking some areas from Rajshahi, Purnea and Dinajpur as its direct administrative unit, although it was not formally announced till the year 1859. Rather, this study assesses some parts of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Bogra (now in Bangladesh) along the line with Mughal *sarkars* of *Jennatabad*, *Panjara*, *Barbakabad*, *Ghoraghat* and *Tajpur* (Ain-i-Akbari: Abul Fazal vol II) and constitute the silk-hub with epicentre at Malda town. Also, before the British era, Malda town referred to present-day old Malda, whereas after the settlement at Makdumpur on the opposite side of Mahananda, people used to call it Englezabad, which later became English Bazaar, *naya bazaar*, etc. In Company records, Malda referred to this new factory in English Bazaar.

The exact time of the introduction of sericulture in India is not yet found, but it definitely came from China along the Silk Route. Interestingly, domestication and rearing of mulberry silkworms have been found since very early times in Kasmir and in the Gaur (near Malda town) area. The first is close to the Silk Route, near the famous Bactria-Tuxila road, and the second has a direct land route from China along Arakan and Kamrup roads. (Geoghehan: 1880) However, sericulture has been an old agro-industrial art in Bengal since sometime

in the early modern age. In the Mughal era, the demand and attraction of Malda silk was very high in the Agra court and among the nobility. (Habib: 1963) Patna was the nearest center from where Bengal silk was transported to Agra and Surat and, from there, all of Europe. Dutch had a factory in Malda since the early 17th century, whereas Armenians worked as interlopers in the Malda market. The town was seated at the confluence of the Mahananda and Kalindri rivers, directly connecting with the river Ganges in the east and west and Bhagirathi in the south. Such a geographical location, with a river route open throughout the year, made it a lucrative European trade center. English came at the end and changed the region's history forever.

Key Objectives:

Initially, we focus on unraveling the commercial ambitions that the English EIC nurtured within the Malda region, aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of their strategic intent in this area. Subsequent to this, we explore the myriad challenges in day-to-day operations they grappled with. While daunting, these obstacles also unveiled many opportunities, which we discuss in detail. Our final objective centers on a comprehensive assessment of how the English EIC organized its commercial endeavors in this region, looking closely at its structural framework and operational dynamics.

Literature Review:

Abid Ali Khan in his book 'Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua' gave us a very good perspective and background based on which we could understand the factors responsible for the success of the Malda silk industry even after the destruction of Gaur and the staggered de-industrialization of the surrounding area. The colony of master craftsmen and the knowhow of sericulture remained in and around Malda specifically because, one, it has a superior communication system even after the unruly behavior of the river Ganges in the last three-four centuries, and two, the demand of silk textiles in the nobility and Mughal *darbar*. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali explained how the Muslim conquest of Gaur changed the demand for pure silk for a while, as it was forbidden in Muslim law, and how a special kind of silk with cotton mixed into it, or 'maldehi' silk emerged. Interestingly, another name for 'maldehi' was 'mashru' or 'sufi' meaning 'permitted'. (Bhattasali: 1922) Later, this variant became famous even in Europe. He also observed how, after 1576, the capital of Bengal *subah* permanently migrated to Rajmahal and then Dhaka, and that decimated the region economically.

In Irfan Habib's work, we found the chronological developments that had taken place in this industry in the Mughal era. According to *Ain-i-Akbari*, the largest amount of silk used to be produced in Bengal, which Habib also proved, citing instances from contemporary sources. However, Assam, Kashmir and the western coastal area also had some practice of sericulture. P. J. Marshall recognized in his work that from the 12th century till the end of the 16th century, the largest number of sericulture looms were present in the Gaur region and to some extent, around Dhaka. We can depend on '*Ain-i-Akbari*' by Abul Fazal, vol.2 and '*Riyazu-s-Salatin*' by Golam Hossain as two important texts of contemporary times to have an idea of the administrative units and fiscal divisions of the Malda region in the Mughal era, and immediately afterward. Abul Fazal described at length the industrial outputs of five Mughal *sarkar s* and the predominant position of township Lakhnauti, very near to present-day old Malda. Both Abid Ali and Bal Krishna found with evidence that Malda was in 12th century very close to Bhagirathi, the mainstream of the Ganges then, and the 'bara sagar dighi' was nothing but a shipbuilding industry where ships used to be built for overseas trade as well royal navy. Akbar, as *Ain-i-Akbari* excerpted, was very particular to revitalizing the silk industry in Malda- Kasimbazar belt and established royal *karkhana s* in these areas so that it could produce high-quality silk textiles for the royal families. It is believed, and Irfan Habib supported, that the intent of establishing royal *karkhana s* was not export-driven commerce but only to meet the demand of the nobility. Amiya Kumar Bagchi highlighted the area of whether indigenous merchant capital attributed to any transition in the textile industry of Bengal. He observed that indigenous capital failed to organize the local *aurungs*, could not add any improvisation to the techniques of the weaving widely practiced, nor created any scientific environment where new invention could lead to commercial revolution. He also explained the mode of communication between artisans and merchants in the pre-British era as artisans were pretty independent. They used to buy their raw materials, produce their product and sell them in the nearest marketplace, whereas merchants would buy them in various markets. Sometimes, merchants would extend advances in credit, raw materials, etc., but it would never bind the artisan. Definitely, it would not create any vicious cycle where artisans were puppets of the big merchants and would not get a share of good production. Anis Mukhopadhyay observed that big merchants to local *pykers* congregated based on their caste groups instead of commercial opportunities—similarly, local caste guilds of artisans specializing in a particular product consolidated on the caste line. Thus, market and capital integration purely based on commerce and profitability was unthinkable in the pre-British era. In the end, Tapan Roy Chaudhury's valuable observation is that because of the Bengal economy was solely agrarian with easy availability of staple food with no agrarian revolution, where indigenous capital failed to induce any scientific culture for enhanced production, it was natural that preconditions of industrial revolution would not be met with. True, there was no 'need' felt.

Therefore, the above literature could not enlighten us of the business organization of the Malda market in the 17th and 18th centuries. This region came in authors' references as an extension of the Kasimbazar market.

Although Malda was not as big as Kasimbazar mart, it was more or less an uncharted market and a void was present in the silk manufacturing sector, filling up which English quickly came into the pole position. Bagchi pointed out how indigenous capital failed to revive silk manufacturing but could not further the scope for foreign capital. Chaudhury's observation could not answer why the rising demand for silk in Europe in the later period did not usher in artisan's fortune. Both Khan and Habib detailed the Mughal era silk emporium in Malda; others, e.g., Marshall, looked into the period since Jafar Khan established his capital in Murshidabad more prominently. The period of around quarter of a century, when English settlement was in a nascent stage, and faced many problems in building their factory in the region, has always been neglected and needs close consideration.

Establishing the English Outpost: The Foundations of Old Malda

Since the late 16th century, Kasimbazar was the silk capital of India, and a great quantity of silk textiles were manufactured in and around the Kasimbazar-Muxadabad belt and transported to Patna for re-transportation throughout India and abroad. Europeans as well as the English, were buying the Bengal silk since the 17th century. Since the middle of this century, the profits were sizeable enough for the English to expand beyond Kasimbazar. Company directors at London were eager to add new areas, having expert knowledge of weaving and rearing mulberry silkworms so that the high European demand backed by foreign capital could form similar constellations such as Kasimbazar. On this mission, Mr. Streysham Master was sent as chief operating officer of the English EIC in Bengal in 1676. There are reasons to believe this commercial urge led them to find another silk cluster and un-charted market in the Malda region. We can find in the 'Malda diary' (Firminger Ed.: 1909) that on 14th October 1676 at Kasimbazar, a proposal was made that the area 'Malda,' some 15 miles away from Rajmahal, was full of expert artisans and silk filatures, and could be a great market. Company official John Marshall first gave this opinion, and Master quickly investigated this new finding. By then, company officials used to visit Rajmahal Royal Mint to liquidate the Company's bullion, and because it was a slow process, officers sometimes strolled around nearby areas. John Marshall knew of the Malda market in this way, and now, on Master's persuasion, Officer Richard Edwards was sent to Malda and made some purchases. (Temple Ed.: 1911) The sole desire of this purchase was to examine the quality and ultimately send it to London for the final decision to be made. On 26th November 1676, Edwards gave his detailed report about the market and the area to Streyansham Master at Hugli. The following table shows the parcel of purchases made by Edwards in November'1676. The total value was Rs.845.

Table 1: Initial Purchases in Malda by Officer Richard Edwards in November 1676*

No. of Pieces	Items	Measures	Price in Rupees
150	cossaes	40 cubits × 3 cubits	13 to 14 per pc.
50	do	do	11½ to 12½ per pc.
25	do	do	10 to 11 per pc.
100	do	40 cubits × 2½ cubits	9 to 10 per pc.
50	do	do	7½ to 8½ per pc.
50	do	do	6¾ to 7½ per pc.
400	do	35 cubits × 1¾ cubits	5 to 7 per pc.
300	Mulmuls	36 cubits × 2 cubits	5 to 7 per pc.

*Source: *The Diaries of Streysham Master*, ed. Temple, Richard. C. Publisher J. Murray, 1911 *Malda Diary and Consultations (1680-82)*, Firminger, Walter.K. 1909

Edwards, in his report to Master, not only detailed about the town, the weaving community, the river traffic and the weather, but also the existing Dutch module of purchases in the local market. Dutch had a factory in Malda beforehand but employed small *pykers* or commission agents rather than established merchants. Therefore, they could not increase the business at scale, unlikely to English, who were ready to give orders to big merchants, if not from Malda, then Kasimbazar, Hugli, etc., who employed local *pykers*. Edwards mentioned that till 1676 the highest Dutch annual order was not more than Rs.60000, and most of it was purchased from small-time agents.

However, the purchased items were sent to Kasimbazar; the report on Malda initially sent to Mr. Streysham Master was now sent to London for further approval. On 12th December 1677 the Court of Directors wrote to Bengal Council, "Maulda goods.... wee find the goods of which you sent us Musters are very well liked here, and therefore, we have ordered a large quantity thereof to be provided to which end wee order that you invest there, of the stock we now send you, in the goods we write 13 for to the value of 80 or 100 thousand Rupees..." On 13th December 1679, in Hugli consultation paper, the commencement of setting up a factory in Malda was first mentioned. (Temple Ed.:1911)

According to "Malda Diary and Consultations (1680-82)," on 22nd April 1680, Mathias Vincent, Chief of East India Company's affairs of the Bay of Bengal, Edward Littleton, Chief of Kashimbazar, Fitch Nedham, Chief of Malda factory and Jonathan Prickrnan, with other servants arrived at Mirzapur. Till the factory was built, they needed to find a temporary residence, and for that, they took the help of some local contacts. On 24th April, they found a suitable residence. The rent was Rs.13. On April 27 and 28, they met with local *Kazy, gomostah*,

the *Faujdar* of the town and *crowry*, who promised them all kinds of help. Subsequently, on 29th April, Littleton and Mr. Nedham again met *Faujdar* of Rajmahal and *Crowry* of Malda and presented each of them with Rs. 11 and valuable gifts as *nazrana*. The next few days, a tussle was going on between the English and *Fauzder's* office, as the English advocated their 'free trade' *farman* received from the Mughal emperor.

In contrast, local administrators translated the *Farman* in their own way to gain maximum bribes and gifts. From the beginning, English was proactive in getting the contracts of the big merchants, although the culture at Malda market was the prevalence of small-time commission agents. Dutch had the monopoly in that market, and because of Dutch presence, English factors had to deal with local *pykers* also, although in the first few years.

As fewer middlemen were present, the products were found to be cheaper than in Kasimbazar or Dhaka. The first merchant appointed was 'crepol dalal', with whom factors made a three-month contract. Soon, some very big merchants were appointed, 24 of them listed in the first few months, some even from Kasimbazar, Hugli. Among them, Paramananda and Sukhananda Shaw (the Shaw brothers), Kunjaman Shaw, Hridiram Tewari, Ghanashyam and Thakurdas were big merchants and Company's financiers. Shaw brothers had a monopoly in the Rajmahal mint, so they could quickly convert the bullion into rupees in times of urgent liquidity requirement. In 1680, the rate was Rs. 4 per *seer*, which raised four *annas* in 1681. However, the demands of the local officials were growing day by day, sometimes on any tax issue or resolving any local disputes. The bribing was rampant and English factors were concerned, and also determined of quick ratification of imperial *Farman*. So much so, within few months of business, factors were looking for options to stave off this local nuisance by shifting the newly built factory on the other side of the river, at Makdumpur.

The New Factory: English Bazar

The English had several reasons for considering their new factory being shifted to Makdumpur, the other side of the river Mahananda. One, the local poll tax or *jijia* was being strictly collected at the Rajmahal side, thus any kind of altercation of local nature was best being avoided, two, Makdumpur was under the jurisdiction of a separate ruler, the Nawab of Purnea, and English factors were hopeful that these new officials were less greedy. Asfandiyar Khan was the new Nawab at Purnea during that time. It is known that the Nawab also invited the English to settle a factory at Purnea also which could not be materialized. Third and most importantly, a local zamindar offered a suitable piece of land at a competitive price. On 1st December, 1680, this new piece of land of around 56 *bigha* was registered in the local kazi's office in between English factors of Malda factory and local zaminder and collaborator Raja Raychowdhury. However, this *zaminder* even took the tender of building the new house cheaply, using bricks and materials of the deserted Gaur site, not a long distance away. At Makdumpur, there was nothing but muddy huts of thatched roofs. On the arrival of English at the other side, many artisans, under contract with English factors, became interested in coming and living with them. The *Faujder* at Rajmahal was at a tantrum. He first objected of *pykers* and artisans having business transactions with English on the other side, hindered *dadani* or advance to the *pykers*, and even procured an order from Dhaka *Nawab* that English should immediately come back to Malda side and resume operation there. Business was stopped throughout the year due to these obstacles. However, English factors were trying to resolve these issues amicably and somehow managed to reach an understanding with *Faujder* and Dhaka *Nawab* both. On 19th October, 1681 Makdumpur factory started operation. In December, an order was issued by *Faujder* of Rajmahal and *Kazi* of Gopalpur that no local entity should obstruct the operations of English at the Makdumpur factory. The *parwana* from Dhaka came just one year after, on 19th October, 1682.

The weavers, rearers and artisans started moving to the Makdumdur side of the river and within few years, a colony was formed around the English factory. The English orders were the largest, easily surpassed the Dutch within the first three years and proximity to the English factory gave some operational benefits to merchants, *pykers* and weavers. Thus, within a few years, this 'naya hat' or 'naya bazar' became the new Malda, named by locals Englezabad, which later became English Bazar. (Wilson: 1895)

The Investments at Malda Factory

Since 16th century the silk industry in England was growing, and in the beginning of the 17th century a good number of people were employed in this craft. Thus, the demand for raw silk for this industry was rising. England had no production of raw silk. Therefore, she had to depend on Persia, Italy and Bengal solely. In the second half of 17th century, Persian silk declined, and English EIC increasingly imported Bengal silk through the Patna hub. But raw silk was not in demand until the middle of the 18th century.

On the contrary, it accounted for not more than 1% of the total silk import. From Malda, their demand was pure silk and *maldehi* mixed silk textile, cotton piece goods and some amount of raw silk exclusively for the English indigenous silk market. K. N. Chowdhury in his "Trading World of Asia and English East India Company" (p. 503-505) gave an elaborate list of different kinds of textiles exported to the European market. The following table shows an order of products that were provided by directors at the London to Malda factory in 1682. Interestingly, the orders used to be handed down two years in advance to the Bengal council, which in turn divided this into different factories thus, this order was to be delivered within the next two years.

Table 1: Product Orders for Malda Factory from London Directors in 1682*

Item	Variety	No. of Pieces/Quantity
Cossaes fine	Muslin	13000
Mulmul of all sorts	Muslin	15000
Tanjees fine	Muslin	10000
Seerbands fine	Muslin	5000
Seersuckers	Mixed	4000
Rehings	Muslin	3000
Humhums fine	Muslin	4000
Addaties fine	Muslin	1500
Mandilla	Mixed, striped	10000
Puttaes or Bird's eye	Muslin	2000
Puttaes	Striped	3000
Doreas fine	Mixed	4000
Elatches	Mixed	12000
Any sort of taffeta	silk or cotton	20 bales

*Source: *Despatch Book (28th August 1682). India Office Record; Chaudhuri, S. (1975). Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal (1650-1720). Calcutta.*

It is to be noted that mixed *maldehi* silk and pure silk were in high demand, especially muslin of every kind, and it can be shown in the above list also. The cotton-piece goods and raw silk were of no special distinction in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Later, when domestic industry grew in England and English became dominant political force in India, they started developing silk filatures with better techniques and trainers from European countries, such as Italy.

Now, how the English factors would procure their goods to be exported in time, what were the mode of transactions, how the standardization of the product would be done and how the pricing would be determined, are areas that need further assessment. From 'Malda Diary', we can have an immaculate description of the first three year's operations, where we see that English factors were not flexible in dealing with small commission agents or *pykers* at the beginning. But in Malda-like small market, they could not find enough number of big merchants who could fulfill their procurement consignment. They appointed some big merchants from Kasimbazar and Hugli markets. Still, these merchants were unaware of the local markets and had to eventually depend on local *pykers*, who were also small-time commission agents. The result was that too many middlemen had raised the prices of the goods. The mulberry farmers and artisans were also completely disconnected from the business organization, as the bigger merchant from another town hired local agents, who advanced them money at the start of the season. Therefore, bigger orders from English could not raise income in the presence of too many commission agents.(Sarkar: 1911)

On the other hand, Dutch dealt with small commission agents and weaver's clusters, which made the English have agreements with local *pykers* and weaver's guild. However, English never believed that micro-managing the procurement process was a good idea and always tried to appoint influential and significant merchants. The English factors also strictly maintained the standardization and pricing of silk goods. Standard samples were usually examined and based on that, the prices were agreed.

Upon calculating this price the total value of consignment was determined, and a percentage of that agreed value was to be advanced to the merchant. This advance percolated into smaller merchants and individual looms. The standardization process started on delivery by comparing the piece goods with previous samples. This used to be a stage of intense bargaining. Sometimes conflicts occurred and local administrators poked their noses into it with some vested interests. Sometimes, large merchants became headstrong, formed a ring and vehemently opposed the company officials of reducing the value of the delivery. Another factor was that some of the big merchants were the Company's financiers also, thus influential enough to have the upper hand in time of standardization and pricing. In January, 1684 Malda factors reported to Hugli that a ring of local *pykers* under the influence of two big merchants, Sambhunath and Ghanashyam, revolted against the price settled by the English officer. Indigenous merchants even took this dispute in Nawab's *darbar* in Dhaka. The English expressed concerns in their consultation papers that this incident's implication could ruin the company business in the future; loosening grip on pricing meant loosening control of the market.

Although the English way of conducting business did not benefit the production system or add any new invention or improvisation, it surely added some new elements in the local market. One was rigid standardization and pricing. In the case of both piece goods and raw silk, English factors meticulously adhered to the principle of standardization and quality control. For example, the classification of raw silk was termed head, belly and foot, signifying the first, second and third classes of silk. The English purchased head and belly types in the proportion of 5:4 in the 17th century. Second, as mentioned above, a business organization with roots in a distant country and completely devoid of local demands. Third, because the original market was in Europe, they would slowly want to dictate the production system by telling the artisans the length, breadth, texture, color, dying process, etc. Even before the inception of the Malda factory in 1668, the Company sent

Roger Fowler- an expert dyer. Wilson said that between 1670 and 75, a number of expert artisans came from Europe to guide local artisans. In this way, strict quality control was imposed on gaining popularity in the larger European market.

Another aspect of the English factory's quick advancement was that it was not averse to getting financed by the indigenous capital. In 17th and early 18th centuries, English merchants would pay the price of the piece goods and silk in bullions. The shiploads of bullion sometimes would get delayed; moreover, coining silver in the royal mint was a tiresome process and got delayed more often than not. On the other hand, factors needed money to pay *dadani* to the merchants within February to get the orders by September end. In this scenario, some of the big merchants were their ready financiers who would extend short-term loans until the silver came and minted to be ready. This system continued until the English set up their own mint in Madras in 1705, and the Bengal council took a policy that all imported silver would first go to Madras to be minted and then despatch to Bengal as per requirement. In 1680, the rate of interest of indigenous capital was 1% per month; it slightly increased to 1.15 in 1681 and 1.25 in 1682, though merchants of big repute like Chintaman Shaw of Balasore gave Rs.10,000 loan to Malda factory at 1% in 1682. Other major financiers of this factory were Paramanand Shaw, Sukhanand Shaw, Kunj aman Shaw, Chaturmal Shaw, Ghanashyam Das, Hridiram Tewari, Thakurdas Brahmin, etc. Paramanand and Sukhanand were the most frequent and extended large sums among these lenders. In 1680, Paramanand lent Rs.20,000 to Malda factory. (Chaudhuri: 1975)

At the end, it must be noted that the Malda factory was subjected to occasional disturbances, attack even temporary postponement of business in more than one occasion till 1705. On the first occasion, the Company came into conflict with the local *founder* over customs duty and trading privileges, as discussed earlier, which made them shift their factory to the Makdumpur side of the river. In 1686, this dispute became wider, and on one occasion, guards of the English factory took to arms against *Faujdar's* army. In return, the Mughal army retaliated, ransacked the Malda factory, and closed it for nearly three years. In 1689, Ibrahim Khan II took charge of Bengal *subah* in place of Shayestah Khan, and the English Company officials of Malda, Kasimbazar, who fled to Madras, returned at the invitation of the new Nawab of Bengal. The Company, using the good relation with Ibrahim Khan, even urged the Nawab that they should be allowed to trade customs-free, as was originally mentioned in the Royal *Farman*, and that the Nawab should compensate for rebuilding the factory at Malda, which his army had destroyed. In 1695, a local rebellion against Mughal rule deteriorated the business environment and stalled English procurement in Malda, Kasimbazar and Hugli. Subah Singh, a rich landowner in nexus with Rahim Khan, an Afgan chief from Orissa, conspired against the Nawab at Dhaka. They first ousted Raja Krishna Ram of Burdwan, seized his property and moved with growing power. The insurgents grew powerful very fast and quickly captured Kashimbazar, Rajmahal and Malda. In response, Zabardast Khan was sent by the Mughal emperor in charge of the Mughal force to destroy the rebellion. Eventually, the rebellion was defeated and Rajmahal, Malda and Kasimbazar were restored. As was seen many times in history, there was a common apathy of the Mughal rule towards business; the properties and factories that were destroyed by the rebel forces were re-captured by the Mughal army but were reluctant to give it back to the English. In his diary, Walsh wrote, "The course of war did not concern the English except in so far as it emboldened them to press for further grants." In June 1697, the English attempted to regain their properties at Malda. For negotiation, they sent to Zabardast Khan, an influential Armenian merchant. They asked for the rightful reinstatement of the properties of the English, which he recovered from the rebels of Rajmahal and Malda. (Seth, Mesrobian Jacob:1937) Zabardast Khan, however, refused. Therefore, we can see that in the first two decades after its establishment, business was thwarted, assets were destroyed and life threats were caused by factors on more than one occasion. But every time after resuming the operation, the Malda factory quickly gained momentum. Probably because the margin on the cost price of Bengal silk goods was so high in the European market, directors in London were always ready to increase investment and bring new big merchants under contract. For example, in 1691, when the English were rebuilding the factory after the war with the Mughal force, the court directed the Bengal council to resolve their differences with Mathurdas (Mukhopadhyay: 1991), an influential merchant in Hugli, who also had a large investment in Malda. The Company was even ready to offer him a 10-12% commission in return for a very large order in Malda. Therefore, apart from some interruptions, there was no real dent in the Company's actual volume of orders, and business rebounded quickly.

Conclusion:

In drawing this research to a close, it's paramount to underscore the significance of Malda's burgeoning silk emporium in the tapestry of global trade. This emergence gave the English EIC a pivotal chance to intensify its foothold and regional investments. With the 17th-century wane of Persian silk prominence, Malda's strategic position ascended, rendering it an invaluable nexus of commerce in tandem with Kasimbazar. Despite the initial adversities faced, the English EIC's tenacity was evident, a stark contrast to the Dutch retreat from Malda. Innovatively, the English EIC adapted its conventional strategies to the nuances of this niche market, even directly recruiting *pykers* and weavers when the situation demanded. Yet, it's disheartening to note that despite the surge in orders from the European market, the economic prosperity did not trickle down to the grassroots: the incomes and working conditions of the mulberry farmers and weavers remained stagnant, an anomaly in the broader context of global trade dynamics.

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