




RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Princely urbanism and the colonial city: Bombay, c. 1860–1940s

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## Abstract

To this point, nineteenth-century Bombay – including its urban development, economy and population – has most often been analysed in relation to the city’s position within British imperial, and overseas maritime, networks. In contrast, this article calls into question established scholarly definitions of ‘colonial’ and ‘princely’ spaces in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India, through an in-depth examination of Bombay’s socio-economic ties with wider Indian networks. It focuses on connections that stretched across colonial borders and into the princely states, suggesting that both the city’s economy and its business elite were rooted in cross-border Indian capital networks. It further highlights the contributions of Indian princes, their states and populations to the development of urban culture in Bombay.

## Introduction

Bombay in the mid-nineteenth century was a cosmopolitan city. It was well established both as a global commercial hub and as a centre for British political influence in India. The city was perfectly situated at the nexus of Indian and imperial networks, attracting trade and investment from all over the world. The business communities that migrated there – primarily from other parts of western India, but also from East Asia and the Persian Gulf – capitalized on long-standing regional ties to official and subterranean networks of capital to dominate not only the local economy but also Bombay’s global exports. These networks, though only concentrated in Bombay in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, were formed across western India over centuries as a result of migrations, conflict and the region’s rich commercial history. Port cities and urban centres in western India likewise rose and fell in a pattern that would have lasting repercussions for Bombay. In particular, the growth and decline of precolonial centres, such as Surat and Dabhol, are crucial to the story of Bombay’s rise to primacy.<sup>1</sup> Just as Mughal rule in western India shaped the rise, and eventual decline, of Surat, so too did the arrival of the British effect the growing prominence of this commercial

<sup>1</sup>A. Das Gupta, ‘Indian merchants and the Western Indian Ocean: the early seventeenth century’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, no. 3, Special Issue: Presented at the Conference on Indian Economic and Social History (1985), 481–99.

city. Any study of Bombay must, therefore, view the city not only as part of a wider imperial structure, formed of a great many disparate parts brought together to form new relationships, but also as a key component in a longer-term narrative of the western Indian economy, inextricably entwined with evolving networks of trade, class and community.

The city's business elite was likewise reflective of this dynamic, commercially driven environment. Most commonly, this category, in the context of Bombay, refers to the commercial migrants who came to the city on the heels of the East India Company near the end of the eighteenth century. The Parsis, famously, were among the first to arrive and came to dominate Bombay business. Shortly thereafter followed communities of Konkani Muslims, Marwaris from Jodhpur, Mewaris from Udaipur, Baghdadi Jews and others.<sup>2</sup> However, these migrants who became permanent residents of Bombay were far from the only members of this community. As this article will illustrate, the commercial classes were also peopled by visitors and temporary residents, and the city itself relied upon outside investment, not only from overseas but also the princely states.

Together, both the permanent residents of Bombay and their more transient colleagues played an undeniably important role in defining both the social and physical landscapes of the city. While state structures were dominated by the machinery of the British colonial government (and acted in the interests of Company – and later Raj – controlled monopolies), the public sphere was largely dictated by private commercial interests. From the early nineteenth century, these private interests were, in turn, primarily – but not entirely – the domain of powerful Indian brokers. These businessmen invested heavily in municipal infrastructure and public facilities, founded influential charitable trusts and established the schools that educated the next generation of Indian intelligentsia in Bombay.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting that Bombay was not unique in this. Other cities similarly evolved public spheres dominated by private capitalists. In fact, the influence of private capital in the development of a 'bourgeois public sphere' in eighteenth-century Europe was central to Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, as has been demonstrated by Douglas Haynes, the notion can be similarly applied in a colonial context.<sup>5</sup> In nineteenth-century colonial Surat, Haynes points to the prominent role of Indian businessmen as perceived community leaders, fitting into a British liberal conception of a modern public. He suggests that in Surat, as in Bombay, Indian businessmen were seen as leaders of their

<sup>2</sup>For more information on migration of merchants to Bombay from Surat, see O. Prakash, 'Private trade in the Western Indian Ocean, 1720–1740', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50, no. 2/3: Spatial and Temporal Continuities of Merchant Networks in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (2007), 215–34; A. Das Gupta, 'The broker in Mughal Surat, c. 1740', in U. Das Gupta (ed.), *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta* (Delhi, 2001), 315–41.

<sup>3</sup>C. Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India: Politics and Communities in Bombay City, 1840–1885* (Oxford, 1972).

<sup>4</sup>J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, English trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>D. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928* (Oxford, 1992), 103–4.

respective castes and religious communities and, as such, ideal conduits to connect the Indian masses with the British ruling elite.

With regard to the influence on the city of Bombay's resident Indian mercantile elite, a considerable body of scholarship has developed over the past few decades. Historians such as Jesse Palsetia, for instance, have analysed the role of kinship networks in the formation of Bombay's capitalist class. Palsetia has highlighted how the Parsis drew on family and community networks to preserve their distinctive identity and cement their place within colonial society.<sup>6</sup> Palsetia has also explored how the Parsis also strategically employed commercial and social ties with the British and within the colonial system in order to shape a political culture 'sensitive to Indian concerns'.<sup>7</sup> Others have similarly examined the various ways in which the Indian mercantile elite of Bombay were shaped by colonial systems. Scholarship has done much to improve our understanding of this group's development in relation to the colonial state.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, historians like Christine Dobbin have conclusively established the ways in which links between the various communities of Bombay led to the establishment of a flourishing, heterogeneous Indian business class.<sup>9</sup> We even have considerable information regarding the role of international links in the formation of Bombay's Indian capitalist classes. Nile Green, for example, has looked at the relationship between Bombay's trading connections with Iran and the movement of Iranian people, along with their religious and cultural traditions.<sup>10</sup> However, despite the large body of work focused on this community, we still know surprisingly little about the networks that connected Bombay's business class – and the Bombay economy in general – with the princely states.

The links that connected Bombay's commercial sphere with those of the princely states were numerous, and served to embed Bombay within wider regional networks. These connections flowed in two directions; in fact, the category of 'private' interests is, in the context of Bombay, complicated, as the domain of private capital (that is to say, business not controlled by the colonial state) was heavily influenced by India's princely states. Yet, while the connections maintained by the Bombay business elite in the princely states have been generally neglected in the scholarship, the role of the princely states – their people, their rulers and their economies – in shaping Bombay has been almost entirely excluded.

The independent and semi-autonomous princely states of India varied in size and significance. But in 1947, they still covered nearly half of the subcontinent and were home to approximately 23 per cent of the Indian population. In the nineteenth century, much of western India's agricultural capacity was held within the borders of the princely states. When one looks closely at Bombay's commercial sector – at the dynamics of capital investment, the people involved and the impact they had on public culture – it becomes clear that the influence of the princely

<sup>6</sup>J.S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2001).

<sup>7</sup>J.S. Palsetia, *Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy of Bombay: Partnership and Public Culture in Empire* (Oxford, 2015), 6.

<sup>8</sup>P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis, 2011).

<sup>9</sup>Dobbin, *Urban Leadership*.

<sup>10</sup>N. Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge, 2011).

states extended far beyond their position as political subsidiaries of the Bombay Presidency.

This article therefore seeks to step into this breach, examining the linkages between Bombay and the princely states in two key ways. First, I explore the ways in which Bombay's economy and the activities of its influential mercantile elites were closely invested in the internal economies of the princely states. Notably, these elites drew on opportunities within princely states to grow and develop what has traditionally been categorized as 'Bombay business'. Here, this article seeks to build upon the seminal work of Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, which identified the ways in which Bombay's industrial economy were linked to processes of production and exchange in the city's surrounding hinterland.<sup>11</sup> Chandavarkar describes how the city's industrial mills increasingly depended on the penetration of domestic markets, and emphasizes the sustained links between urban working classes – many of whom had migrated from the countryside to work in the mills – and rural village economies.<sup>12</sup> This article seeks to press the connection further, focusing specifically on those regions that lay outside direct British control, and asserting that the princely states were inextricably linked with not only Bombay's economy but also with the business elites themselves. This was not a new phenomenon of the industrial era, but rather one with roots in the early nineteenth century. This article will, however, primarily focus on the latter half of the nineteenth century, seeking to demonstrate how connections brought to Bombay through eighteenth-century migration, and expanded through the commercial trading years of the early 1800s, were consolidated between 1870 and 1920, as developments in the economy of western India provided opportunities for broader investments. The princely states provided particular avenues for resource acquisition and investment that were open to Indian business communities but shut to their European rivals, thereby facilitating the consolidation of Indian business interests in colonial Bombay.

Furthermore, these ties were not just levied by private capitalists in Bombay, but also by the rulers of the princely states themselves, who were drawn into investing in Bombay as a consequence of these linkages. Rulers of numerous princely states – and their governments – retained both a financial and physical presence in the city, investing in property and business, encouraging the spread of their home institutions into Bombay, and employing Bombay banks and agency houses. Many of the princes spent long periods residing in the city, mingling with both the private business and the bureaucratic elites. Arguably, then, the princes themselves comprised a crucial component of Bombay's Indian business class and, most importantly, operated alongside and in conjunction with private businessmen in the constitution of public culture in Bombay City.

This reciprocal connection between Bombay and non-colonial Indian territories locates Indian business communities within both princely and colonial economies. The city itself is likewise reflective of its position at the nexus of regional networks, being shaped as much by its links to its regional territorial hinterland as by its position within the global British empire. By framing my analysis of Bombay in such a

<sup>11</sup>R. Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

manner, this article seeks to blur the boundaries of the 'bounded' colonial city within South Asia's urban historiography. Ultimately, in recognizing the impact of the princely states within Bombay itself, this article further reconceptualizes how we define the 'colonial' city, questioning prevailing scholarly distinctions between the 'colonial' and the 'princely' in nineteenth-century India.

### Capital networks in Bombay's non-colonial hinterland

Bombay benefited greatly from its position at the centre of imperial and regional trading networks. The city received investment from both spheres, as well as serving as a crucial market and port for the processing and export of Indian goods to other parts of the empire and beyond. Moreover, in addition to its diverse resident population, Bombay was a bustling place of encounter for temporary visitors, seasonal residents and travellers. The city was an important staging point for external travel; foreigners preparing to venture onward to other parts of India and, conversely, Indians looking to travel overseas, both often began their journeys in Bombay. For travellers, the city was not only an important port, but also a financial base of operations, a meeting point, and a space for ritual and celebration. As a result, Bombay was shaped both economically and socially by its connections. As this article will demonstrate, such connections went beyond the colonial world and were deeply embedded in Bombay's non-colonial hinterland in the princely states. The social consequences of these connections will be addressed later; this section demonstrates the ways in which Bombay was shaped specifically by its economic ties to the princely states.

Discussion of Bombay's rise to economic prominence in the nineteenth century is inextricably caught up with the emergence in the city of a powerful Indian business elite. The business elite not only contributed to the development of trade and industry in Bombay, but also helped to shape the physical and social landscape of the city itself. The extent to which these communities' success was connected to their ability to ingratiate themselves with global British imperial networks is well established. Since 1970, when Amalendu Guha's articles outlining the 'comprador' role of Parsi entrepreneurs in Bombay were first published,<sup>13</sup> a number of scholars have sought to reanalyse and dissect the nature of the relationship between the colonial establishment and the Indian business classes. It is generally agreed that a number of Indian businessmen, including prominent Parsis such as Jamsetji Jejeebhoy and Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, built successful, internationally recognized businesses, because of their ability to mediate between Indian suppliers, British commercial firms and markets in China. Tata, in particular, raised large amounts of capital through investment in British military expeditions, first to Bushire and later, in 1867, in Abyssinia.<sup>14</sup> However, this was but one source of revenue upon which the merchant elite depended. The capital with which this traditionally defined 'business class' exerted their influence in Bombay was derived

<sup>13</sup>A. Guha, 'The comprador role of Parsi Seths', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 (28 Nov. 1970), 1933–6; A. Guha, 'Parsi Seths as entrepreneurs, 1750–1850', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5 (29 Aug. 1970), 107–15.

<sup>14</sup>H.P. Mama, *The History of the Swadeshi Mills 1866–1987* (Bombay, 1987).

not only from their position relative to the imperial state, but also through vast Indian commercial networks.

These networks connecting Bombay with its regional hinterland developed out of the ties that commercial migrants brought with them when they relocated to Bombay. Indian businessmen retained ties with castes and religious communities in other parts of India. Profits made in Bombay were sent to support communities elsewhere, while the merchants themselves capitalized on links with regional traders and cultivators in order to acquire goods at advantageous prices.<sup>15</sup> Businessmen maintained personal relationships with princely governments, serving as state investors, moneylenders and middlemen.<sup>16</sup>

The importance of these connections came to bear in the early nineteenth century, when Indian businessmen in Bombay drew on them to gain an advantage within the opium trade. In particular, connections with the princely states afforded opportunities to profit from a trade in opium that lay outside the British-sanctioned 'official' trade. Labelled as smuggling by the colonial authorities, this trade circumvented British tariffs by routing through stations controlled by princely states. Claude Markovits, for instance, has highlighted the extent to which Indian firms that flourished in the British Bombay opium trade had actually begun the traffic in the years prior to 1819, before the western opium trade was officially sanctioned by the East India Company.<sup>17</sup> However, even after 1819, these firms continued to seek opportunities to gain an advantage over their European rivals – an end that was often obtained through the use of connections outside of colonial India. Before its official annexation by the British in 1843, Karachi was a particularly busy port for this kind of activity. The Bombay-based Marwari merchant, Motichund Amechund, for example, was convicted by the British for attempting to smuggle opium out of India via the port at Karachi. The link between the Rajput states of Jodhpur and Mewar on one end, and Karachi on the other, was a continual source of anxiety for the colonial government due to the volume of opium being allegedly shipped along that route by way of the popular Marwari trading city of Pali.<sup>18</sup> For the British, this route represented not only a circumvention of their export duties, but also an area of Indian trade to which they lacked access. For Marwaris, however, like Amechund, it was an avenue for profit, and an opportunity to gain advantage in a climate that was being increasingly constrained by the rise of European interests. Similarly, financial records also indicate strong communal ties between communities in the state of Mewar and those resident in Bombay.<sup>19</sup> At a time when the Maharaja of Mewar continued to block outsiders from purchasing local goods or from utilizing transit routes through the city, local traders were making sizeable profits trading locally in opium and cotton.<sup>20</sup> While European merchants were

<sup>15</sup>A.B. Trivedi, *Kathiawar Economics* (Bombay, 1943), 87.

<sup>16</sup>V. Remakrishna Reddy, *Economic History of Hyderabad State* (Delhi, 1987), 471–2.

<sup>17</sup>C. Markovits, 'The political economy of opium smuggling in early nineteenth-century India: leakage or resistance?', *Modern Asian Studies*, 43 (2009), 89–111.

<sup>18</sup>K. Boehme, 'Smuggling India: deconstructing western India's illicit export trade, 1818–1870', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2015), 685–704.

<sup>19</sup>E.I. Howard. *Memoir by Director, Public Instruction, Bombay, on the Rajputana Districts* (Bombay, 1863).

<sup>20</sup>Mumbai, Maharashtra State Archives (MSA), *Opium 144*, Revenue Department (1853), John C. Brooke to G.S.P. Lawrence (Aboo, 20 Sep. 1853).

typically frustrated in their attempts to access this market, Mewaris in Bombay were still able to benefit from connections with their home state to capitalize on hereditary rights of access. In fact, in the 1830s and 1840s, Indian firms based in Bombay invested in the overland movement of Mewari opium to the coast for overseas sale, in direct competition with Bombay-based European firms and the British opium trade.<sup>21</sup>

These ties to princely India were not limited to trade, but extended to the investment and banking sectors. Ashin Das Gupta noted the importance of the patron–broker relationship in precolonial western India as the mutually beneficial core that underpinned the regional economy. While rulers depended upon private capital to support government spending, a ‘broker’ position offered preferential business rights and security, as well as a certain prestige that, in turn, attracted investment.<sup>22</sup> This relationship was not severed with the advent of European colonialism. On the contrary, as the British assumed the role of patron, persistent links with the princely states remained important for providing access to resources, concessions on transit duties, protection along roadways and, in later years, permissions for the construction of industrial mills. This relationship survived the relocation of many Indian firms to Bombay and firmly embedded the colonial city, and its Indian inhabitants, within regional financial networks. For instance, the Parsi firm Viccaji Mirji, owned and managed by the brothers Viccaji and Pestonji Mirji, were famed for their success in the opium trade to China, becoming one of the most successful Bombay opium-trading firms of the early nineteenth century. However, they remained connected to regional networks of capital, investing in state and private interests across India, and even extended loans to the Nizam of Hyderabad.<sup>23</sup> The Viccaji Mirji firm became major creditors to the government of Hyderabad between 1835 and 1845.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, they provided so many loans to the Nizam’s government that by October 1841 the government’s debts to Viccaji Mirji had swelled to more than 41 lakhs (4,100,000) of rupees.<sup>25</sup> By February 1848, the Nizam was finding it increasingly difficult to repay these loans. In an effort to ameliorate his debts, the Nizam offered Viccaji Murji land revenue collection privileges in certain taluqdars (an administrative grouping of villages), waived particular duties and granted the firm rights to trade goods at a reasonable rate within his territories.<sup>26</sup> There are similar instances of firms like Jamsetji Jejeebhoy Sons & Co., extending loans to the Gaekwars of Baroda, as well as financial agreements between Bombay-based firms and Ali Murad Khan, the Mir of Khairpur.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Das Gupta, ‘The broker in Mughal Surat’, 402.

<sup>23</sup>London, British Library (BL), MSS Eur F213/28, Broughton papers, Broughton to Lord Dalhousie (7 Aug. 1851).

<sup>24</sup>K. Leonard, ‘Banking firms in nineteenth-century Hyderabad politics’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15 (1981), 183.

<sup>25</sup>Mumbai, MSA, *Nizam’s Government, Vol. II*, Political Department (1848), ‘The petition of Viccaji Murji and Pestonji Murji’ (Bombay, 23 Feb. 1848).

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>London, BL, MSS Eur F213/28, Broughton papers, Broughton to Lord Falkland, 5 Sep. 1851; Mumbai, MSA, *Sindh, Vol. II*, Political Department (1849), Khau Talpore to the governor general of India, ‘Complementary letter’ (Sind, 22 Apr. 1849).



Such networks of capital and community, which contributed to the wealth of Bombay's Indian business elite in the first half of the nineteenth century, were consolidated in the second half with the advent of industry. Transportation and communication improvements brought the economies of Bombay and its hinterlands into even closer alignment. Bombay's industrial boom – which was primarily connected with the sudden growth of cotton spinning factories in and around the city – drew on cotton grown not only in the colonial countryside but also in the princely states to supply its mills. Later, as railway links were built, the mills themselves moved out of cramped Bombay into the surrounding region. Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, for instance, capitalized on new railway links to construct a mill at Nagpur.<sup>28</sup> Such projects drew not only on connections within colonial India, but also on those same, early, networks with the princely states and their diasporas to obtain both materials and labour. The Tatas themselves relied on the Marwari agency firm Jamnadhhar Podar & Co. to access India-wide Marwari networks first to supply their interests in the China Trade and later to support their industrial empire. The Podar firm used an extensive network of subsidiary family firms to extend its reach across the subcontinent, including the Jodhpur territories but also the Madras and Bengal Presidencies. In so doing, the firm provided Tata with access to resources otherwise unavailable to them.<sup>29</sup> Like Podar, many of Bombay's Marwaris served as acquisition agents and middlemen, as well as engaging in the related fields of moneylending and investment. A close-knit Marwari network connecting Bombay with other colonial cities and with Jodhpur itself offered these businesses access to capital and optimal investment opportunities.<sup>30</sup>

Relationships with princely networks continued into the latter decades of the nineteenth century, which witnessed the further diversification of Bombay investment. As the Bombay firms sought to cement their wealth and influence through the development of diversified investment portfolios and business interests, they once again looked to the princely states for opportunities. In particular, state industries attracted considerable investment from Bombay. Garnet sand mining in the state of Travancore, for example, was heavily financed by Bombay firms.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, David Sassoon and his sons, prominent Baghdadi Jewish members of Bombay's business elite, were deeply invested with the economies of the princely states. The Sassoon family's agency house, David Sassoon & Co., acted as opium brokers to the government of the Baroda state. Through them, the state was able to export opium grown within their borders, through Bombay, to consumers in China and elsewhere, and funnel the revenue back home. Meanwhile, the company also benefited from their connection with the Baroda government, as they channelled profits from this arrangement back into their other business ventures within the Bombay economy.<sup>32</sup> The Sassoons similarly invested in shipping from the southern state of Travancore and, by the 1930s, had even founded a textile mill

<sup>28</sup>Central India Spinning, Weaving, and Manufacturing Co., Ltd, *A Short History of the 'Empress Mills', Nagpur* (Bombay, 1927).

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>London, BL, MSS Eur E234/102, Chapman collection, Jagonnath Sunkersett to John Chapman (Bombay, 14 Jan. 1854).

<sup>31</sup>'Garnet sand', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 28 Dec. 1911 (accessed 17 Dec. 2018).

<sup>32</sup>Vadodara, Central Library (CL), *Selections from the Records of the Baroda Government* (Government Printing Press, 1908).



at Alwaye, which they named the Sri Chitra Mills for the Maharaja of Travancore.<sup>33</sup> In the early twentieth century, other Bombay firms followed suit: for instance, the Bombay firms Gor & Co. and Das & Co. set up a glass factory and a textile mill, respectively, in Baroda.<sup>34</sup>

Bombay is often viewed as a global port city, firmly tied into the flows of capital, goods and people that moved throughout the British empire and beyond. However, this is only one part of the story. The economy of Bombay city was firmly linked to those of its non-colonial hinterland through, among other things, the activities of Bombay-based merchants such as the Sassoons, the Tatas and the Mirjis. As a result of such activity, the commercial sphere that evolved in Bombay was not confined to the city, the colonial territories or even the empire. While this phenomenon could be framed as a colonial state expanding its reach – an urban colonial economy subsuming those of the princely states – to do so would be to overlook the active role played by princely actors in the development of this integrated economic sphere. In fact, both private and state actors invested in this economy and, as will be illuminated below in more detail, extended their influence beyond the commercial, to help shape the public character of Bombay. As a consequence, Bombay's commercial sphere was remarkably diverse and dynamic. It grew and evolved in response to many environmental factors, including both global events and regional developments. While the American Civil War inspired a massive boom in cotton mill construction in the early 1860s, so too did late nineteenth-century modernization programmes in states like Baroda and Travancore trigger shifts in investment practices. The 'Bombay business class' was less bounded by the confines of its urban – or imperial – environment, and was, in reality, a constantly changing, evolving community firmly rooted within the regional economy. Meanwhile, what we think of as the Bombay economy was inevitably shaped by interests elsewhere. Notably, this colonial city was built, in part, through investments rooted in the economies of princely territories.

### The princely presence in Bombay city

As has been illustrated above, the opium and cotton trades were not the sole purview of Bombay, but consisted of constant flows of resources, capital and information between the city and its hinterlands. The influence of the princely states in Bombay, however, extended beyond being a site of investment and source of capital accumulation for Bombay-based capitalists. The princes themselves were actively invested in Bombay and indeed were frequent visitors to the city itself. The relationship between Bombay and the princely states must, therefore, be seen as integral to the city's character, with capital, labour and information moving in both directions.

Just as the latter nineteenth century brought increasing geographical breadth and diversity to the investment interests of the Bombay-based business elites, so too did this period witness a similar phenomenon in the accounts of both the princely states' governments and the Maharajas themselves. As both policy and competition from British India increasingly squeezed traditional industries such as textile exports,

<sup>33</sup>Special Correspondent, 'New mills for Travancore: foundation stone laid', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 7 Nov. 1936 (accessed 7 Jul. 2018).

<sup>34</sup>Vadodara, CL, *Baroda Administration Report, 1913–14* (Baroda State Press, 1945).

salt manufacturing and opium, many princely governments sought to expand into new arenas. In 1886, as part of a widespread programme of reforms, Sayajirao Gaekwar III (ruler of Baroda, 1875–1939) set up an Industrial Commission to encourage the growth of Baroda industry and to attempt to restrict the flow of capital out of the state.<sup>35</sup> The commission's recommendations involved first, encouraging Baroda entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the state, and secondly, to encourage those from outside of Baroda to similarly invest in Baroda industry. It lastly sought to draw on outside resources, including capital and expertise, in order to further develop Baroda industry.

Utilizing the expertise and resources of Bombay was not, however, a new phenomenon. Just as the Bombay business elite benefited from their connections with the princely states, so too did the states excel at leveraging these connections. One example already noted was the Baroda government's employment of David Sassoon & Co. to act as their opium brokers in Bombay.<sup>36</sup> Though the colonial authorities had long since restricted Baroda's ability to export opium from their own ports, the Baroda government used the Sassoons to retain a certain amount of access to the Chinese opium market. The Jodhpur state similarly capitalized on the numerous Marwari merchants based in Bombay. While Marwaris were able to leverage those networks to build their businesses in Bombay, money they made in Bombay flowed back into Jodhpur. The city of Jodhpur, in particular, grew exceptionally wealthy from the profits generated by those settled in Bombay. Much of the city's construction in the mid-nineteenth century was alleged to have been tied to money flowing in from Marwari merchants operating on India's coasts.<sup>37</sup> Another interesting instance, also connected with the Baroda government, was their hiring of the Bombay merchant broker and future parliamentary MP, Dadabhai Naoroji, to serve as Dewan under the Maharaja Malharrao Gaekwar (ruler of Baroda, 1870–75) in 1874. Malharrao had been accused by the British of widespread misconduct, and the appointment of Naoroji was intended to demonstrate an intention to reform. As a member of the Parsi business community of Bombay – with all their attending wealth and influence, and perceived acceptability to the colonial establishment – Naoroji represented a kind of colonial modernity that was useful to the Baroda government. His hiring as Dewan symbolized Baroda's connections with the Bombay business elite, as well as their intention to adhere to British standards of 'good government'.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Naoroji was not alone among Bombay's Indian bourgeoisie in accepting employment in the princely states. Educated in Bombay, Naoroji and others like him sought such positions because they offered opportunities for career advancement that were precluded within the rigid, racialized, hierarchies of British India.

Another part of this initiative to expand the state government, and to draw on the resources of Bombay and other parts of British India for this purpose, was the

<sup>35</sup>A. Khade, 'Industrial development in the Baroda state (1875–1950)', Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Ph.D. thesis, 2009, 7.

<sup>36</sup>Vadodara, CL, 'Opium', *Selections from the Records of the Baroda Government*, Dewan Kersasp Rustamji to Lieutenant Colonel M.J. Meade (Baroda, 13 Jul. 1904).

<sup>37</sup>Howard, *Memoir by Director*.

<sup>38</sup>Vadodara, Maharaja Sayajirao University Baroda, Department of History Archive, 'Claiming compensation from Maharaja Sayajirao by Haribhakti family', *Administrative Report of Baroda* (Aug. 1895).

founding of state banks and credit societies. The allegedly ‘corrupt’ Malharrao Gaekwar, for example, had greatly sought to expand the powers of the state as a lender, establishing eight new banks between 1870 and 1873. Of these, two had their headquarters in Bombay, and one was headquartered in British Surat. In so doing, he sought to capitalize on both the available capital and the security of these locations; should he be deposed (as he eventually was), he theorized, he would be able to transfer his personal wealth out of the Baroda state, where it would be secured by local investors, out of reach of the state’s lenders.<sup>39</sup> Later, in 1907, the State Bank of Baroda not only also had a headquarters in Bombay, but was formally registered to operate in Bombay as well as throughout the Gujarat region. The Bank of Baroda financed cotton mills and other industrial initiatives both in Baroda and in Bombay. It supported the business activities of Baroda citizens in Bombay, as well as those of Bombay’s own resident entrepreneurs. Such activity served to inextricably connect the finances of the Baroda state with Bombay industry and the activities of the Bombay business elite.<sup>40</sup>

Princely states not only sought to extend the reach of their entrepreneurs and banks beyond their borders, but were often themselves actively invested in the Bombay economy. It was common, for instance, in the princely states as in Bombay to maintain a diversified investment portfolio. This diversity was focused within their own borders and in foreign territories. As well as maintaining investments in Europe and in other British Indian cities, owning shares in Bombay interests, and accounts with Bombay agents and banks, were both common. In Jodhpur, for example, the Maharajas maintained both personal and state investments in Bombay banking, as well as holding shares in the city’s cotton dyeing and spinning factories. The state itself invested in urban development projects in Bombay, while the Maharaja held private shares with the Imperial Bank of India in Bombay Development Loans.<sup>41</sup>

Opportunities in Bombay for property and land acquisition similarly attracted investment from the princely states. Near the end of the nineteenth century, population and industrial booms placed pressure on already cramped conditions in the city. As a consequence, as land became more scarce, its value increased significantly. This attracted speculative investment that, as Ritu Birla has illustrated, became increasingly formalized as a ‘legitimate’ form of investment within the colonial system during the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> Speculative investment in Bombay land attracted both internal and outside investment. Civic agencies like the Bombay Improvement Trust, and members of the business elite, all took advantage of the opportunities for profit posed by the rising value of land in Bombay. As evidenced by the governments of Baroda and Hyderabad, which both purchased multiple properties in Bombay, outside investors were similarly interested in speculative opportunities for profit on the Bombay property

<sup>39</sup>D. Tripathi and P. Misra, *Towards a New Frontier: History of the Bank of Baroda 1908–1983* (New Delhi, 1985), 33.

<sup>40</sup>Khade, ‘Industrial development’, 193.

<sup>41</sup>Jodhpur, District Archives of Rajasthan (DAR), *Investment – Durbar*, Mehkma Khas records (1890–1932).

<sup>42</sup>R. Birla, ‘Speculation illicit and complicit: contract, uncertainty, and governmentality’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 35 (2015), 392–408.

market.<sup>43</sup> The Nizam of Hyderabad owned several properties around Bombay and maintained a Bombay Palace on valuable real estate in the wealthy Malabar Hill area, which were continually maintained by the government of Hyderabad until 1948.<sup>44</sup>

Ownership of such property and involvement in Bombay-based business ventures facilitated visits to the city. Many of the princes were seasonal or occasional residents of Bombay. The Gaekwars of Baroda, for instance, like the Nizams of Hyderabad, also maintained property in the city of Bombay. Sayajirao Gaekwar III and his family would relocate to the city to escape periods of famine and sickness at home.<sup>45</sup> Their home, Bombay Palace, served not only as a base in the city for the Gaekwar and his family, but also for other Indian royal households. The Maharaja of Mysore, for instance, made use of the property during a visit to Bombay.<sup>46</sup> Nawab Ibrahim Khan III (ruler of Janjira, 1848–79) similarly was noted not only for spending prolonged periods in Bombay, but also for spending lavishly while he was in residence. In fact, his behaviour while in Bombay was used by state sirdars to justify an attempt to remove Ibrahim from power and replace him with his own son.<sup>47</sup> Indian princes not only maintained a financial presence in Bombay, but also a physical one. As a consequence, they, like the city's more permanent residents, had both a financial and a personal stake in the well-being of the city, and were visible as influential figures in the construction of the public spaces of Bombay.

Princely visits to Bombay were often met with much fanfare, transforming public spaces into celebrations of Indian kingship through methods acknowledged and approved of by the British. Ganpatrao Gaekwar's (ruler of Baroda, 1847–56) visit to Bombay in 1850 was a lavish affair. He was received with naval honours by the commander in chief of the Indian Navy. A procession of carriages, followed by 'a party of troopers of the Governor's Escort and a military band' then made its way to the Town Hall. There, the Gaekwar and the governor 'embraced' and entered the hall 'which was prepared as a Durbar'. On entering and exiting the hall, the Gaekwar and his party were met with a gun salute delivered by the guard of honour stationed outside, as well as by the cheers of the gathered crowds.<sup>48</sup> Similar pomp was employed during the visits of senior princely officials. In 1884, Salar Jung II (prime minister of Hyderabad state, 1884–87) arrived in Bombay to an official greeting party consisting of a representative of the colonial government, as well as several of Bombay's prominent Indian businessmen. In front of a large crowd, garlands of flowers were exchanged before the entire party processed

<sup>43</sup>E. Beverley, 'Beyond colonial urbanism: state power, global connections and fragmented land regimes in twentieth-century Hyderabad city', in this Special Issue.

<sup>44</sup>'Nizam's Bombay Palace', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 21 Sep. 1948 (accessed 15 May 2019).

<sup>45</sup>Vadodara, CL, *Baroda Administration Report, 1917–18* (Bombay, 1919).

<sup>46</sup>Sayajirao Gaekwar to the Maharaja of Mysore, 'Letter 1105', in E. Pagar (ed.), *Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad: Selected Letters*, Part II (Mumbai, 2017), 337.

<sup>47</sup>'The administration of Jinjeera', The Asiatic Society of Mumbai Digital Archive, *Bombay Gazette*, 4 Sep. 1871 (accessed 29 Aug. 2018).

<sup>48</sup>London, BL, IOR/R/2/494/91, Crown representative's records – Indian states residencies, 'Visit of H.H. the Gaekwar to Bombay', No. 63, Jan. 1850.

onward.<sup>49</sup> Such displays transformed public spaces in Bombay through a ‘language’ of kingship both familiar and palatable to British authorities. In a manner similar to that adopted by the business elite – and through practices within which Indian *shettias* actively participated – Indian princes utilized this behavioural language to achieve social and political recognition under colonialism.<sup>50</sup>

Rulers of India’s princely states likewise used philanthropic donations to shape Bombay’s physical environs. They selected causes in a manner similar to the city’s capitalist class and often collaborated with prominent Indian businessmen on philanthropic projects. Items of civic infrastructure, public healthcare and education were all common subjects of philanthropic donations, serving to improve both public facilities in the city (for the benefit of both business and local communities) and the donor’s personal status within the colonial social hierarchy. The Begum of Janjira (wife of the Nawab) in 1898 was among donors who contributed toward the purchase of a harmonium and a collection of music for the Panchgani Convent School for girls. Also on the list of donors were a number of European women, as well as several women from the Indian business community.<sup>51</sup> Khanderao Gaekwar (ruler of Baroda, 1856–70) also gave a gift of Rs. 200,000 to support the opening of a Sailor’s Home in Bombay. Though construction actually commenced in 1872, after the Gaekwar’s untimely death in 1870, his gift (given in commemoration of the duke of Edinburgh’s visit) was described by British observers as a lasting testament to his dedication to the improvement of Bombay.<sup>52</sup> The gift was, however, less well received in some of the city’s vernacular newspapers, which suggested that the donation served only to honour an establishment that showed a ‘censurable partiality to its own race’.<sup>53</sup>

Khanderao also paid for a marble monument dedicated to Queen Victoria to be placed on the Esplanade in Bombay. This monument, which was uncovered in 1872, was described by one observer as ‘so beautiful...that it would seem as if a description of it could only be treated poetically’.<sup>54</sup> Its main feature was a carved marble statue of Victoria, which was seated on a pedestal. In a position of prominence on the front of this pedestal was a royal coat-of-arms, while in the centre of the covering marble canopy was a star of India, above which was carved an English rose mingling with an Indian lotus. Around these symbols were inscribed the mottos ‘God and my right’ and ‘Heaven’s light our guide’. Beside these were carved oak and ivy leaves to symbolize friendship, as well as the oak and ivy entwined with the lotus. On each side of the pedestal were panels detailing the history of the statue and the Gaekwar’s gift in four different languages.<sup>55</sup> The value of making such a gift is self-evident, with its focus upon Indian–British relations,

<sup>49</sup>Arrival of H.E. Nawab Salar Jung’, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 27 Sep. 1884 (accessed 10 Sep. 2018).

<sup>50</sup>The ways in which the business elite used similar methods has been described in Palsetia, *Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy of Bombay*.

<sup>51</sup>Article 2 – no title’, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 8 Feb. 1888 (accessed 12 Sep. 2018).

<sup>52</sup>J.M. Maclean, *A Guide to Bombay: Historical, Statistical and Descriptive* (Bombay, 1885), 189–90.

<sup>53</sup>Untitled’, *Arunodaya*, 20 Mar. 1870, quoted in Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise*, 182.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

demonstrating dedication to Queen Victoria as empress of India while simultaneously highlighting the role of the Indian states as partners to the crown.

Museums and exhibitions similarly attracted donations from the princely states. Notably, they often featured the states and their rulers themselves as subjects which, akin to the public celebrations, indicated a certain preoccupation with the princes and the notion of Indian kingship that permeated public culture in Bombay. In 1881, for instance, the Portrait Gallery of Bombay designed a full exhibition around the new young Maharaja of Mysore, including both images of Maharaja Chama Rajendra Wodeyar Bahadur and items lent to the museum by the royal household.<sup>56</sup> In 1886, both the Mill-Owners' Association and the Bombay Chamber of Commerce were also instrumental in putting together the Bombay Presidency's contributions to the Royal Colonial and Indian Exhibition. Alongside these municipal organizations, among those who made financial contributions in support of the exhibitions were the durbars of Baroda and Kutch. The Gaekwar of Baroda, the Rao of Kutch, the Thakor Saheb of Bhavnagar and numerous other rulers of western Indian states also donated items to the exhibition.<sup>57</sup>

Sporting events such as cricket and polo matches were also important community-building events in Bombay. Prashant Kidambi has noted the role of elite networks, comprised of Indian businessmen and princes, as well as British officials and civilians, in facilitating the growing popularity of cricket, both within Bombay and beyond. This 'alliance between money and power' was instrumental in developing cricket as an organized sport, with teams initially drawn along caste or community lines, though ultimately resulting in the creation of an Indian national team.<sup>58</sup> In 1877, a Parsi team became the first Indians permitted to play cricket in the racially exclusive Bombay Gymkhana. A few years later, a number of Parsi businessmen spearheaded the founding of a Parsi gymkhana, which occupied prominent ground close to the Bombay Gymkhana. Among those involved in the project were Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Dinshaw Manockji Petit and Pherozechah Mehta.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, perhaps most famous among the princely supporters of the sport was Ranjitsinhji (ruler of Nawanagar, 1907–33), who began playing cricket at the University of Cambridge in the 1890s and later played for the England cricket team. He was a frequent visitor to Bombay, often playing cricket in the city while also engaging in the city's political and economic life. As a consequence, he was described in 1916 by Lord Willingdon, then governor of Bombay, as 'my oldest Indian friend'.<sup>60</sup> Maharaja Bhupinder Singh (ruler of Patiala, 1900–38) was likewise a principal member of the elite consortium that founded the Cricket Club of India (CCI) in 1933, alongside Indian businessmen like Sir Nowroji Saklatvala, and Lord Brabourne, then governor of Bombay.<sup>61</sup> For Bhupinder, sport was an important

<sup>56</sup>Maclure and Macdonald, 'Our portrait gallery', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 6 Jun. 1881 (accessed 10 Sep. 2018).

<sup>57</sup>H.T. Ommanney, 'The Indian exhibition', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 7 Jul. 1886 (accessed 6 Jul. 2018).

<sup>58</sup>P. Kidambi, *Cricket Country: An Indian Odyssey in the Age of Empire* (Oxford, 2019), 66.

<sup>59</sup>P. Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920* (Aldershot, 2007), 185.

<sup>60</sup>R. Wild, *The Biography of Colonel His Highness Shri Sir Ranjitsinhji* (London, 1934), 164.

<sup>61</sup>Jodhpur, DAR, File C12/29, *Investment – Cricket Club of India, Bombay*, Mehkma Khas Records (1938).



arena within which to prove legitimacy; following accusations of misconduct, he used cricket as a means of regaining his voice in imperial affairs.<sup>62</sup> In the years that followed, both political and private capital continued to be important in supporting the CCI; the Tata company offered large donations to the club, as did both Bhupinder Singh's successor in Patiala and Maharawal Lakshman Singh (ruler of Dungarpur, 1918–47).

Polo also attracted the interest of the princes, with several investing in the sport or travelling to Bombay to view matches in person. The Nawab of Janjira, for instance, owned several polo horses, which he bought and sold through auction houses in Bombay.<sup>63</sup> The Maharajas of Jodhpur, likewise, were also famed polo supporters, not only owning several horses themselves, but were actively involved in the importation of polo horses for general sale. Such horses were imported from overseas, mainly from the Middle East, through Bombay, for auction and sale to teams across India.<sup>64</sup> Jodhpur also hosted their own major polo tournament, and their teams would travel to participate in the Bombay tournaments. In fact, the Bombay Polo Tournament of 1894, which was held at the Bombay Gymkhana, hosted the Jodhpur team among the competitors and, playing for the Jodhpur polo team, was actually the Maharaja himself.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, as one reporter noted, an 'immense crowd of spectators' had assembled to witness the game, while 'the private enclosure of the Gymkhana was packed with the elite of Bombay society'.<sup>66</sup> The Indian princes were thus active participants in the creation of public culture through sport, investing and participating alongside Bombay's permanent residents.

It is also worth noting the indirect influence of the Indian princes and their states in formulating public culture through newspapers in Bombay. It is well established that many members of the business elite were active within the literate arm of the public sphere, managing newspapers and becoming personally involved in the creation of Indian public discourse as both authors and subjects of interest in the media.<sup>67</sup> Though not actively involved in funding or writing for newspapers, the princes were also a clear point of interest. Writers covered many of the princes' activities both in Bombay and in their home states, commenting on and critiquing everything from the prince's leisure activities and travel plans to major infrastructural projects in the states. For instance, vernacular newspapers, such as the Gujarati publication, *Bombay Samachar*, published a number of editorials over the years, debating issues related to the justice, fairness and efficiency of Gaekwar rule in

<sup>62</sup>Kidambi, *Cricket Country*, 324–5; for further details on the formation of the Cricket Club of India, and its continued significance in post-independence India, see V. Rajji, *CCI & the Brabourne Stadium, 1937–1987* (Cricket Club of India, 1987).

<sup>63</sup>'Classified ads', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 18 Oct. 1890 (accessed 4 Apr. 2017).

<sup>64</sup>'Article 12 – no title', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 16 Jan. 1886 (accessed 16 May 2019).

<sup>65</sup>'Bombay polo tournament', ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *Times of India*, 29 Sep. 1894 (accessed 12 Sep. 2018).

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1894 (accessed 12 Sep. 2018).

<sup>67</sup>For a more general overview of the relationship between Indian elites and publishing in Bombay, see Dobbin, *Urban Leadership*. For more on the specific role of the press in Bombay and elsewhere, see B. Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, 1966); and S. Hazareesingh, 'The quest for urban citizenship: civic rights, public opinion, and colonial resistance in early twentieth-century Bombay', *Modern Asian Studies*, 34 (2000), 797–829.



the Baroda state.<sup>68</sup> The *Bombay Gazette* similarly featured a section reporting on events in the princely states.<sup>69</sup> The visits of Indian rulers to Bombay and their public activities was all covered and commented upon in local newspapers. Indian public discourse in Bombay was thus not merely focused on events at home or in the empire, but was actively preoccupied with the Indian princes and their states. In some way, the activities of the princes helped to direct public discourse in Bombay. Most importantly, however, this evidence indicates that this arena of civic intellectualism, which is so vital to the narrative of Bombay public culture, was inherently entangled with the wider Indian community. There is a tacit acknowledgment that the princely states and their rulers were relevant and important to Bombay and worthy of discussion in a public forum.

The civic public, as we see it, was therefore a dynamic body, built through ties to Indian capital and constitutive in its membership, not only of permanent residents of the city but also of visitors and even distant investors, who were bound up in the socio-economic life of Bombay in a multitude of different ways. The business elite traditionally identified in scholarship was, itself, both financially and personally invested in these links to Bombay's regional hinterland. They drew on capital raised thusly to invest in, and shape, spaces that enabled the furthering of their economic interests and a flourishing of Indian intellectual culture. This was, moreover, a culture not merely focused on Bombay itself, but rather likewise served as an intellectual thoroughfare that fed information on the princely states to the Bombay public at large.

In addition to the financial influence of the princely economies, and the intellectual influence of their state affairs, princely rulers played a personal, vital, role in the creation of public culture in Bombay. The Indian princes did not stand as an official or 'state' counterpoint to the 'civic' public, but rather actively engaged in the creation of public culture alongside permanent residents of the city. Ceremonial occasions brought princely culture to the streets of Bombay. The princes funded public institutions and monuments to British–Indian co-operation, and participated with private elites on public bodies. They shaped leisure activities, promoting the arts and actively engaging in public sporting culture. They used language and rhetoric – both through public speaking and carved on the monuments they built – to promote the notion of princely kingship within public discourse and, most importantly, to create spaces within imperial frameworks amenable to princely interests.

### Blurred boundaries: rethinking 'princely' and 'colonial' urbanism

Acknowledging the impact of the princely states and their rulers in Bombay – one of the central bastions of British colonial rule in India – forces us to rethink 'colonial' and 'princely' urbanisms. Rather than seeing princely India and British India

<sup>68</sup>'Untitled', *Arunodaya*, 20 Mar. 1870; 'The anarchy in the kingdom of the Gaikwad', *Bombay Samachar*, 23 May 1868, translated in New Delhi, National Archives of India, *Native Newspaper Reports, Bombay April–Dec. 1868*.

<sup>69</sup>'The administration of the princely states', The Asiatic Society of Mumbai Digital Archive, *Bombay Gazette*, 4 Sep. 1871 (accessed 29 Aug. 2018).

as separate, bounded spheres, better understanding networks that transcended these boundaries forces us to problematize them. It suggests that economic and social systems spanned political borders, blurring the lines between ‘princely’ and ‘colonial’ spaces. Moreover, this mutual imbrication points to the active role played by princely actors within this process; as they adapted to colonial influences, they not only reconfigured princely systems but also influenced the development of the colonial sphere.

The princely states were prominent within the networks that tied Bombay to its territorial hinterland; states’ economies, diasporic communities and even the rulers themselves all played a key role in the socio-economic development of Bombay. For the princes, investment in Bombay provided access to international capital networks and financial security. Involvement in the social sphere, meanwhile, supported both political and economic agendas, offering business connections and legitimacy on an imperial stage. For Bombay, links with the states helped to create a city not only moulded by European imperialism but also by local configurations. Persistent ties to princely communities created a distinct sense of place in Bombay, characterized by both imperial and regional influences.

Highlighting these connections is useful for shedding light on the enduring, and complicated, influence of the local within colonial spaces. Much has been made of the impact of colonial modernity in the reformation of practices amongst Indian communities. However, what the enduring influence of links with the princely states demonstrates is that long-standing connections, and means of accessing investment and patronage through those networks, had a lasting place within the commercial culture of western India. Methods of negotiating these networks remained vital to the development of Indian business interests, even within colonial cities. They also fed public culture, creating a dynamic civic public inextricably bound up in local flows of migration and capital.

Ultimately, the nature of the princely influence within Bombay points to a broader blurring of the boundaries between the princely and British Indian spheres. In considering the importance of local networks to the colonial economy, this case-study undermines narratives that focus solely on the gradual subsumation of princely institutions under colonial paradigms. Rather, it suggests that the movement of individuals, capital and knowledge between these two arenas was steady, and flowed in both directions. This argument is further supported by the stories of individuals such as Bhupinder Singh and Ibrahim Khan III who moved freely between these two contexts, investing in Bombay and participating in the public and associational culture of the colonial city. This article thus pushes back against the colonial–princely binary, identifying the importance of cross-border flows in the formation of the colonial urban.