

The Role of Commodities in the British Empire Building Process: The Significance of Calico

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Introduction

When Britain started building its empire, so did many of the fellow major powers of Europe. The major powers tried to gain advantages over each other to increase their respective influence around the world. Sometimes they fought against one another, and sometimes they cooperated. Through certain struggle, Britain was able to take the lead in the process of the empire building in the end. Britain in fact was even able to embrace the period of “Pax Britannica” through making one of the most significant empires in history.

This paper focuses on various factors associated with the process of British empire-building. Needless to say, there are plenty of academic literature on this subject and one may ask why another paper on the process. The answer is simple. As will be discussed in the first section of this paper, most of the previous studies focus on the political and economic aspects of the empire building process. Some of the studies focus on social and cultural aspects as well but, there are only a few studies that focus on specific factors such as the role of commodities in the process. For this reason, this paper attempts to fill the gap of the academic studies on the British Empire by focusing on the role of commodities in the empire building process. In particular, the role carried by calico in the early stage of the process will be discussed extensively. Through such an analysis, this paper attempts to argue that Britain did not expand its empire to capture various commodities but, the very existence of the commodities made Britain expand its empire.

The first section will focus on some of the leading studies related to the studies of the British Empire. Through examining and analyzing the previous studies related to the British Empire thoroughly, the purpose and the aim of this paper will be determined and validated clearly.

The second section will discuss the importance of calico as a commodity in general. Before discussing its significance in the context of British empire-building, it is necessary to assess the value associated with calico itself. In other words, this section will attempt to discover why calico was regarded as one of the most treasured items of trade in our history.

The third section will then focus on the strategic importance of calico in the process of British empire-building, especially in the early stage of the process. Calico is a valued commodity even today but, it was regarded as the vital strategic commodity in the early stage of British empire-building. This section will examine the significance of calico from various perspectives to reveal its strategic importance in the process.

Through the above analysis, the relevance of commodities, especially the significance of calico, in the process of building the British Empire will be discussed extensively. In the end, it is the aim of this paper to bring a new dimension to the studies of the British Empire to assert that certain commodities played the vital role in the empire building process.

1. Leading Studies on the British Empire and the Significance of Calico

Of all the studies related to the process of the empire building, the British Empire seems to attract the attention of a great number of scholars. For this reason, there are numerous studies focusing on the British Empire itself and the process of building it. In this section, some of the leading previous studies will be examined to test the validity of the central argument asserted in this paper. The section will be divided into three parts. The first part will examine the studies on the British Empire in general. The second part will focus on the studies that discuss the significance of calico as a valuable commodity. The third part will examine the studies that treat calico as a strategic commodity in the process of British empire building.

Let us first focus on the leading studies on the British Empire. As stated previously, there are numerous studies that place focus on the British Empire as a whole. In the

work *Understanding the British Empire*, Ronald Hyam examines the nature of the British Empire from various perspectives. The studies that focus on the British Empire itself usually examine the empire from the political and or the economic perspectives however, this work, in addition to these perspectives analyzes the empire from social and cultural perspectives. According to Hyam, in order to understand the significance of the British Empire fully, it is necessary to “examine the determinants of imperial management” (17). In other words, in order to understand the nature of the British Empire, as well as focusing on the framework and the dynamics of the empire, it is important for one to determine the main components of the empire.

In the work *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781-1997*, Piers Brendon takes an issue-based approach in understanding the British Empire. He discusses various issues related to the empire to illustrate how Britain struggled to build and maintain its empire. Brendon asserts the following:

The deeds that won the Empire, and even those that lost it, were sometimes valiant ... Just as the collapse of Rome has a perennial relevance, so too has the decline and fall of (to employ the inescapable cliché) the greatest empire that the world has ever seen. In this book, above all, I try to convey the full fascination of the momentous saga (Location No. 257).

In the work *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, John Darwin attempts to make a systemic analysis of the British Empire. He claims that since 1840, “the British Empire formed the core of a larger British ‘world-system’ managed from London” (1). Furthermore, such a system became global in three separate spheres. First, the presence of the system was evident throughout the world both in the commercial sense and the military sense. Second, the main purpose in creating such a system was to bring the idea of integration to various parts of the world. Third, such a system was not only maintained by the Britain’s global interests or strategies but also by various global events that occurred at any given point in time (2).

In the work, *Igirisu Teikoku no Rekishi Ajia kara Kangaeru (History of the British Empire: Perspectives from Asia)*, Shigeru Akita asserts that the British Empire was the largest European empire that ruled the world in the 19th century (Location No. 38). Through this work, Akita attempts to analyze the British Empire as the empire that was

used by many to establish various global correlations and relations (Location No. 349). He asserts that in the end, the British Empire became an entity that went beyond the notion of empire and became a global hegemon which influenced the world by its vast amount of political, economic, and cultural power (Location No. 3002).

In the work, *Daiei Teikoku to Teikoku Ishiki (The British Empire and the Empire Identity)*, Yoichi Kibata analyzes the significance of the British Empire from the perspective of identity formation. He claims that a type of identity recognized as “empire identity” is formed when one country possesses a vast amount of power and influence over the other countries in the world (4). By ruling and controlling the global affairs, the British Empire established such an empire identity and British people embraced such an identity (10).

From the analysis so far, it can be observed that without a doubt that the British Empire was a significant entity. However, the significance of it, has been discussed and interpreted from various different perspectives and dimensions.

Let us now examine some of the leading studies that discuss the significance of calico as a valuable commodity in itself. In the work *The Chaos of Empire: The British Raj and the Conquest of India*, Jon Wilson states that as early as in the 1590s, calico, along with other important items such as spices were already regarded as “popular, profitable products” (32). However, because of the unstable global condition in certain parts of the world, it was not easy bringing these commodities to Britain. According to Wilson, this factor prompted the establishment of English, later British East India Company (32).

P. J. Thomas in the work *Mercantilism and the East India Trade* states that “towards the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a remarkable change in the fashions of men’s and women’s clothes in England” (25). In addition to the already established spice trading in India, new popular trade items emerged. It was the cotton-based commodities such as calico and chintz. According to Thomas, calico, whether it was plain, printed, or painted, men and women of all tiers in England started to value this cotton-based commodity for clothing (26). “The list of goods to be provided annually had been hitherto made up chiefly of saltpeter, indigo, pepper and other commodities; but after 1678, textile goods of various kinds almost monopolised the space on the list; indigo and the spices were relegated to a corner” (38).

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In the work *The Art of Cloth in Mughal India*, Sylvia Houghtelling asserts that cotton products from India in general were one of the most treasured items in Europe for their easy to treat feature. She states as follows:

In the standard narrative, by the late seventeenth century, Indian painted and printed cottons stirred up a 'craze' among European women who were delighted with the exotic patterns, the wild flowers, and the materiality of the light and color-fast cotton that was easier to wash than wool and silk and brighter when dyed than linen (Location No. 4679).

As can be seen from the above, calico was not only treasured for its beauty but for its ease of handling as well.

In the work "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," Maxine Berg discusses the significance of calico from a slightly different perspective. Berg asserts that luxury items that came from Asia, such as calico were vital in supporting the development of British society (99). The author states as follows:

Indian and Chinese cottons, especially muslins and printed calicoes and silks, porcelain tea sets, lacquer cabinets, screen and tea tables, wallpapers and fans. Some of these goods on their transfer to Europe found consumer settings in new social practices of dress, display, and dining and drinking rituals associated with porcelain cabinets, taking tea, coffee-house culture, male drinking clubs and family dinner services (98-99).

According to Berg, these valued commodities formed the basis of the modern consumer culture in Britain (99).

From the above, it is observed that calico was regarded as a significant commodity in general. It was not only valued for its significance as a type of cloth but also valued because it gave certain influence towards the development of British and other societies.

Let us now turn to some of the leading studies that assess such a valuable commodity for its strategic value. In the work *The British in India: Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience*, David Gilmour writes that the commodities from India such as calico

were regarded as vital consumer goods domestically in the early stage of the empire building.

For the British at home the most visible and tangible products of Indian trade were fabrics arriving at the London docks such as calico, silk and finely woven muslin from areas around the Brahmaputra River. Merchants could make large sums of money from calculating the size of the British appetite for such things (33-34).

Lizzie Collingham in the work *The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* asserts that the cotton products from India were important domestic consumer goods for all tiers of British society. "The wealthy were enchanted by the exquisite hand-painted chintzes, while the poorer valued the calicoes because their vibrant dyes did not fade in the wash, besides being much easier to clean than woollens" (78). In this sense, the cotton-based products from India were enjoyed by all tiers of the British society.

Jonathan Eacott states in his work *Selling Empire: India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830*, that calico was used as an important strategic tool in promoting India as a vital part of the British Empire (16). "Demand for new fashions, such as cotton calicoes, needed to be carefully cultivated, much like the growth of commodities needed to be cultivated in new colonies and trade itself needed to be cultivated to open sources of supply and drive down prices" (16). Eacott further asserts that the commodities from India including calico were treated as important tools in shifting the empire policy of England in the seventeenth century (16-17).

In the work *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, Philip J. Stern states that the commodities from India including calico were not only important for the domestic market of England but also for English trade with Europe. The use of these commodities in trade was regarded "as an extremely effective way of ensuring a cheap and reliable supply of goods for its European trade, particularly calico" (37).

From the above, it is clear that calico and possibly other cotton-based commodities were used as strategic tools in the empire building process both internally and externally. It can also be observed that calico and other cotton-based commodities were

used to promote the importance of India as one of the vital parts of the British Empire. In other words, the cotton-based commodities including calico were regarded as the important strategic tools in the process of building the British Empire.

In this section, some of the leading studies related to the British Empire were examined. The first part examined the studies on the British Empire in general. The second part focused on the studies that discuss the significance of calico itself as a valuable commodity, and the third part examined the studies that treat calico as a strategic commodity in the process of the empire building. Through the analysis, it has been discovered that there are numerous studies that discuss the importance calico. However, in most of the studies, the significance of calico is seemingly treated as an independent factor in assisting the process of the empire building. In other words, the role carried by commodities such as calico and other related cotton-based commodities was a peripheral factor in building the British Empire. This paper will instead take a holistic approach in explaining and describing the significance of calico in the process of British empire-building.

2. Discovering the Value of Calico

The main purpose of this section is to evaluate the importance of calico from general perspectives. In order to recognize the significance of calico in the context of the British Empire, it is necessary to understand its common value. For this reason, the value of calico will be examined and evaluated from various angles in this section.

Textile related commodities have always been regarded as one of the crucial commodities to have connected the world but in particular, textiles from India supported the development of the global economy (Houghteling 10). Cotton-based commodities such as calico was not an exception. Calico was regarded as one of the most valued commodities that came from India.

In northern India, these finer fabrics take the form of muslins and damasks, usually with a pattern or border of coloured silk or gold thread. In the south, calicoes and chintzes predominate, either printed from blocks or painted by hand. It was these last that attracted the early European traders (Herbertson and Howarth 153).

In the seventeenth century, calico and other cotton-based commodities were not only prized for their economic practicality but also for their beauty as well. Furthermore, these commodities were valued for the fact that they originated in India. “The exotic provenance of cottons … emanating from an Indian Ocean trade then associated by Europeans with mystique and danger, excited fascination; there was a sense of unknowable technologies, of secret processes, and enhanced value” (Berg *Quality* 397).

So far, it has been discussed that calico and the related cotton-based commodities were valued because they were regarded as practical, beautiful, and exotic commodities. Let us now further elaborate on these values. First, let us examine its practical value. At first, calico and the related commodities from India were used as something to be placed in house such as drapes, curtains, or carpets. However, these commodities eventually became something to be worn.

Thus men came to use shirts, neckcloths, cuffs, and pocket-handkerchiefs made of Indian calico, and this was even called popularly by its Tamil name, Rumal. Women used Indian stuffs for head-dresses, hoods, sleeves, aprons, gowns, and petticoats … Most people used Indian socks and stockings, and their dressing-gowns were made of calico (Parakunnel Thomas 207).

In other words, Indian calico was used by people of all ages in England that calico and the cotton-based commodities established essential positions in English society.

Another important practical value associated with calico and the cotton-based commodities is that the cotton industry as a whole, including the production process of calico, helped British society modernize its technology as the industry increased the productivity level by introducing the idea of mechanization. Partly because of such an advancement of technology, Britain was able to realize its industrial revolution (Berg *Quality* 398). In this respect, calico and the related cotton-based products made the British industrial revolution possible.

Moreover, the cotton industry brought the sense of innovation to British industry.

The cotton industry in Britain mechanized and grew in response to the incentives offered by world import and export markets in cotton textiles, and the real challenge was in producing

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goods to match their quality and variety. This was a story of product innovation fundamentally integrated into process innovation (Berg *Quality* 401).

As such, British industry was able to make various innovations necessary to improve itself and enhance its capabilities.

In addition, the cotton related products helped Britain becoming the center of global trade. Because of the cotton related products including calico and other products such as food and spice from India, London was able to become the “universal mart for the products and manufactures of the East” (Rosenberg Location No. 4253). As the cotton-based commodities heavily influenced British economy, some even claim that cotton formed the basis of the British Empire. “It was coal, cotton and capital, not derring-do or district officers, on which Britain’s world empire was built” (Darwin *Unfinished* 394).

Second, let us discuss the importance of calico and the related commodities for their beauty. As was discussed, calico and the related cotton-based commodities were valued for their practicality. However, they were valued for their beauty as well. For example, Queen Mary II was well-known for her fascination towards fine Indian calicoes (Houghtelling 194). As such, fine calicoes were not only admired by the royals but also by the common people of England around that time.

The beauty of the cotton-based commodities was not only appreciated in England. It was also appreciated throughout Europe. During the seventeenth century, the cotton-based commodities including calico were regarded as modern yet fashionable items. They were appreciated by people of all tiers. They became one of the most successful commodities that were brought from Asia to Europe. These commodities also represented the rich culture of Asia (Akita 42).

In reference to the rich culture of Asia, the beauty of calico reflected the culture and thoughts of India where it originated. The third Mughal emperor Akbar projected the vast influence over the art of calico.

Emperor Akbar had an eye for color and was fastidious about cloth and cloth dyeing. Within Akbar’s imperial wardrobe, textiles were assigned a rank base on their hue. Akbar’s historian Abu’l Fazl listed thirty five colors ... The colors in Abu’l Fazl’s list make reference to the

flowers and birds of Kashmir and northern India, regions over which Akbar had steadily asserted control during the latter half of the sixteenth century (Houghtelling 27).

This episode confirms that the beauty of calico and the cotton-based commodities that were exported from India very much contained the cultural values of India.

Third, let us discuss the exotic value of calico and the related cotton-based commodities. As was stated previously, calico and the related cotton-based commodities were valued as they came from India. In other words, these commodities were regarded highly for the fact that they came from “foreign” places. By 1800, British people were “already addicted to a range of exotic new tastes both cultural and physical, and easily tempted with more” (Darwin *The Empire* 649). British people were not the only people that appreciated the exotic value attached to calico and the related commodities. Elsewhere in Europe, especially women appreciated fine exotic calico.¹

The exotic nature of calico and the luxury commodities from Asia influenced the social practices of Europe as well. Commodities from India and China, especially the cotton-based commodities such as muslins and printed calicoes were exported to Europe to influence “consumer settings in new social practices of dress” (Berg “In Pursuit” 98). Furthermore, these commodities not only influenced the social practices of Europe but also the fashion system of Europe as well. “The exotic provenance of these imports also made them into luxuries in Europe … They formed part of the early to mid eighteenth-century fashion for the rococo, and they were highly adaptable to the frequent design changes demanded by the European fashion system” (99). As can be seen from the above, the exotic nature of calico and the related commodities appealed to Europeans in many ways.

In this section, the significance of calico as a valuable commodity was discussed and examined from various perspectives. Calico and the related cotton-based commodities were valued for their practicality, beauty and exotic nature. These commodities were not only highly valued and appreciated in Britain. Rather, they were regarded as important commodities in several respects throughout Europe.

3. The Strategic Importance of Calico in the Empire Building Process

The third section focuses on the strategic importance of calico in the empire building process of the British Empire, especially in the early stage of the process. Calico is a valued commodity even today but, it was regarded as one of the vital strategic commodities in the early stage of British empire-building. This section evaluates and analyzes the significance of calico from various perspectives to reveal its strategic importance in the process of the empire building. The section will be divided into two parts. First, the economic significance of calico in the context of the empire building will be discussed. Second, the political aspects related to the significance of calico will be examined.

First of all, let us focus on the economic significance of calico in the process of British empire-building. As was discussed in the previous section, calico and the related cotton-based commodities were highly appreciated and valued commodities already in the seventeenth century.

There is widespread agreement that the arrival on a large scale Indian cotton cloth in Britain in the seventeenth century had a substantial effect on the domestic textile industry. Indian patterns and designs quickly became fashionable and forced domestic textile producers to react, on the one hand lobbying for protection, and on the other hand, imitating through printing on wool, linen, and calico (Broadberry and Gupta 282).

From this statement, it can be observed that calico and the related commodities from India brought both positive and negative aspects to British economy. Such a perception of luxurious commodities from Asia is confirmed by an observation made by Maxine Berg as well. Berg claims that “[t]here was a long history of associating the exotica of the Orient with the threat posed by Asian luxury in Europe” (Berg “In Pursuit” 95). From these observations, it can be asserted that calico and the cotton-based commodities were regarded as contentious commodities in Britain. On one hand, the arrival of such commodities may have been embraced for these commodities brought the new technology such as a new technique of printing. On the other, the arrival of the commodities in a large amount of quantity meant for the domestic cotton industry of England to face a major competition.

In general though, India was regarded as one of the most important trading partners for Britain to improve its economy. The trade with India in general had an important part in the process of the consumer culture building in England and Europe in the seventeenth century with the introduction of goods and commodities including calico and the related cotton-based commodities which were valued highly in many parts of the world (Eacott *Selling* 9). Goods and commodities from India were introduced, adapted, and sometimes rejected to shape the consumer culture of Britain which heavily influenced the process of British empire-building. In other words, trade with India was a vital part of the process.

The politics of consumer society connected people and things, ideas and experiences, and spaces and places. Decisions about buying, owning, using, and rejecting goods factored into decisions about domestic manufacturing and protectionism, trade policies, and the maintenance of social, racial, and sexual hierarchies. The acts and ideas associated with consumer goods, moreover, were part of debates over justifications for imperial rule and the conversion of other peoples to Christianity (Eacott *Selling* 11).

From this statement, it could be asserted that the trade with India was one of the central factors in making the British Empire a successful empire, and the commodities from India including calico and other commodities were significant economic tools in maintaining the prosperity and the stability of the British Empire.

As described above, trade was one of the main factors in maintaining the empire in the seventeenth century. As such, some scholars describe the period between 1600 to 1750 as the extended seventeenth century which Britain adopted the policy of “mercantile capitalism” (Cain and Hopkins 76). This form of capitalism “helped to promote expansionist forces of investment, commerce and migration throughout the world, including Europe and the United States. Its main dynamic was the drive to create an international trading system centred on London and dedicated by sterling” (60). For this reason, calico and the related cotton-based commodities were treated as the vital economic commodities in the seventeenth century.

The economic factors such as the trading of valuable commodities such as calico was the central factor in managing the British Empire in the initial stage of the empire

building. However, as the empire enlarged, the political factor, namely imperialism became equally an important factor in maintaining the stability of the empire. “Put simply, overseas expansion and the imperialism which accompanied it played a vital role in maintaining property and privilege at home” (Cain and Hopkins 61). With this realization, let us shift our focus to the second focus of this section, which is to evaluate the strategic significance of calico and the related commodities from the political perspectives.

In discussing the strategic importance of calico and the related commodities from the political perspectives, the focus will be placed on the triangular relations between Britan, India and the rest of Europe. The reason for focusing on this particular political aspect is because this relationship between the three parties can clearly illustrate the strategic importance of calico in the political sphere.

From the British perspective, the reexporting of Indian calico and the related cotton-based commodities was strategically used to gain more silver from other European countries. In order to purchase the cotton-based commodities including calico from India, Britain used silver for its payment (Matthews Location No. 1539) and therefore, it was crucial for Britain to possess a sufficient amount of silver. For this reason, these commodities were once imported from India, then reexported to Europe. The “reexports of India goods to ‘France, Holland, Spain, Italy, Turkey, etc.’ brought back more value in goods and money” (Eacott *Selling* 59). Through such a practice, Britain was able to attain silver that it needed to continue its overseas trade, especially with India.

As described previously, Britain was not the only country in Europe that highly valued calico and the related cotton-based commodities. These commodities were also valued highly in other parts of Europe as well. Because of their popularity, certain domestic industries of some European countries were endangered. “One European government after another came under pressure to check this tide of cheap and popular cloth which threatened to overwhelm established woolen, linen, and silk industries” (O’Brien 400). To counter such a condition, Scotland banned the use of calico in 1681; by 1701, France banned the import of Asian textiles (O’Brien 400).

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, English and Dutch governments were the only governments that were able to overcome such trade problems by putting certain tariffs on imported commodities including calico from Asia (O’Brien 401).

However, England was no longer able to regulate the use and the circulation of calico and the related commodities unless certain political decisions were made. The decision made by England then was to regulate the flow of calico and the related cotton-based commodities from India through the framework of law.

As such, in 1700, the first political decision to regulate the import of calico was made in England. The first Calico Act was introduced to ban the circulation and consumption of the cotton-based commodities such as calico and also silk from India in England. The important part of this act was that the act did not ban the circulation and the use of such commodities in the Atlantic colonies. This part of the act that excluded the use in the Atlantic colonies was a crucial part of the act. “In omitting the colonial markets from the ban to help offset the East India Companies’ loss of the English market, Parliament gave legal support to the notion that colonial consumers differed fundamentally from domestic English consumers” (Eacott “Making” 744).

This part of the act was also important for the protection of the textile industry within England as well. “Worries about competition from India in the British market led to pressures for protection” (Broadberry and Gupta 282). Because the British cotton industry was relatively small during the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century, such a pressure mostly came from other industries producing the commodities related to woolens and linens as they were regarded as alternative materials for finely crafted calico from India (282).

Nevertheless, this part of the act provided England with some opportunities as well. Because the circulation was not prohibited in Atlantic colonies, England could still use calico and the related cotton-based commodities as its essential tools of trade. In this sense, “[p]lan for producing Asian raw materials in the Atlantic colonies for export to England did not end, but they were partly displaced in the empire’s power center by the new plan to use colonists, both English and those of other European empires, to consume Asian goods” (Eacott “Making” 745).

With the introduction of the first Calico Act, the debate over the prohibition of Indian cotton-based commodities seemed to have toned down. However, several riots emerged again in 1719 as some of the weavers did not approve the exception clause of the Atlantic colonies in the first Calico Act (Eacott “Making” 732). As a result, British Parliament introduced the second Calico Act in 1721, to prohibit the circulation of both

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Indian and English printed calicoes in Britain. The circulation in American colonies were not banned however, only the reexported calicoes from Britain was allowed to be circulated in these colonies. This was the best that British Parliament could do as it strongly desired to protect its vested interest of making profits through the trade handled by East India Company.

In accepting the Calico Acts and the East India Company monopoly in the early eighteenth century, colonists accepted the making of an imperial compromise that rendered them outlets for goods seen as immoral by many in Britain ... On the surface, the compromise gave every contingent something of what they wanted – including the colonists, who kept the right to buy Indian calicoes, only because of the company. (Eacott *Selling* 116).

As can be seen from the above, calico and the related cotton-based commodities were regarded as politically significant commodities in the early stage of British empire-building.

In this section, the strategic significance of calico and the related cotton-based products were examined from both economic and political perspectives. These commodities were effectively used to enhance the economy of the British Empire in its early stage of formation. Furthermore, they were regarded as significant political commodities in the sense that they were used as vital diplomatic tools in maintaining the global status of the British Empire.

Conclusion

The main task of this paper was to examine and evaluate the significance of calico in the process of British empire-building. The paper was divided into three parts to achieve this task. The first section examined the leading studies related to the significance of calico in the context of the empire building. The second section attempted to reveal and discuss the value of calico itself. The third section analyzed the strategic significance of calico from both economic and political perspectives. Let us review some of the key elements in each section.

In the first section, the focus was placed on examining some of the leading studies related to the studies of the British Empire itself, and the significance of calico from

various perspectives. Although there are numerous studies that focus on the British Empire in general, it was discovered that only a few actually place the main focus on commodities. Furthermore, it was also discovered that calico was not the central theme in discussing and analyzing the process of British empire-building in most of the previous studies.

In light of the findings in the previous section, the second section focused on the importance of calico as a commodity in general. It was realized that before discussing its significance in the context of British empire-building, it was necessary to assess the value associated with calico itself. For this reason, this section attempted to evaluate the significance of calico from various perspectives. Through the analysis, it was discovered that calico and the related cotton-based commodities were valued for their practicality, beauty and exotic nature in Britain as well as in the rest of Europe.

The third section focused on the strategic importance of calico in British empire-building, especially in the early stage of the process. The strategic significance of calico and the related cotton-based commodities were examined from both economic and political perspectives in this section. Through the analysis, it was revealed that these commodities were used as effective tools in improving the economy of the British Empire significantly in its early stage of the formation. Furthermore, it was also discovered that these commodities were used as significant strategic political commodities to consolidate the influential position of the British Empire in the world.

Through various influential activities undertaken, the British Empire became one of the most successful empires to control the global affairs at one time in history. There were numerous factors that supported this success of the British Empire. The role carried by calico and the related cotton-based commodities can be recognized as one of these vital factors that made the British Empire a successful global empire.

Notes

¹ The works of Houghtelling and Berg discuss the details related to the widespread appreciation of fine calicoes in Europe extensively.

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