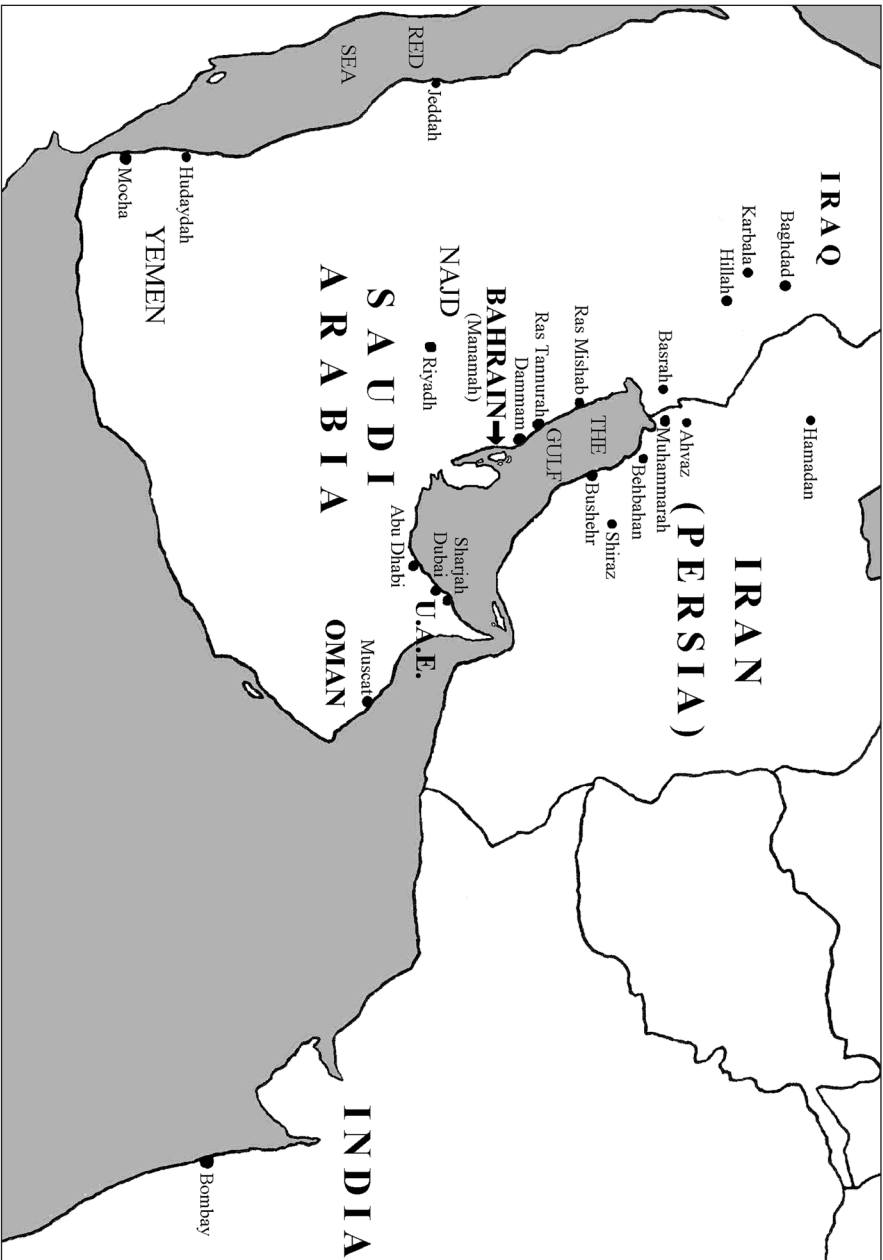


Transnational Merchant Families in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Gulf

James Onley

The Gulf has long been a transnational space, although the nature of that transnationalism has changed over the years. Before oil, the Gulf shaikhdoms looked towards Persia and the Indian Ocean; since the 1950s, their orientation has shifted towards the Arab world and the West. Gulf merchant families were and are one of the most transnational groups in the Gulf. More than any other group, they have connected eastern Arabia to the wider world for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years. They lived and still live dual lives, speaking two or more languages and keeping homes in two or more countries. This chapter examines the culture, activities and transnational connections of two Gulf Arab merchant families over the course of 228 years: the Safar family of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, India and Britain; and the Kanoo family of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Britain and America.



The Safar Family, 1778–1900

The Safars¹ were prosperous general merchants in the nineteenth century, importing, exporting and shipping goods of every description – from rice to rifles – throughout the Gulf region and beyond.² They also engaged in agency work, representing Messrs Lynch Brothers (a shipping company) and Francis Times and Co. (an arms dealer). The family maintained an extensive business network, with merchant houses in Bushehr (Bushire), Manamah, Muscat, Mocha, Hudaydah and Bombay, and possibly in Hillah and Basrah. These merchant houses operated as a loose conglomerate – sometimes engaged in joint ventures with each other, sometimes operating on their own. Members of the Safar family typically moved from one house to another as their careers progressed, initially working with their fathers, later working on their own or with an uncle. In the nineteenth century, at least three members of the family ranked as Grade I merchants – the wealthiest and most influential men in the Gulf after the local ruling elite.³ The family's prosperity was reflected in its substantial property holdings: date plantations near Basrah and Manamah, and houses and property in Bushehr, Shiraz, Manamah, Muscat, Mocha, Hudaydah and Bombay's prestigious Fort district. Although the family was dispersed throughout Arabia, Iraq, Persia (pre-modern Iran) and India, Bushehr was at the centre of the family's activities in the nineteenth century. The family's principal Bushehr residence was a large, impressive building located on the waterfront in the Kuti district of town next to the residences of the Governor of Bushehr and Britain's Political Resident in the Gulf. The size and prestigious location of the house, known as *Bait Safar* (Safar House), symbolized the family's great affluence.

The ethnic identity of the Safar family in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is difficult to establish, because the Iranian and Bahraini branches of the family do not agree on this aspect of their history. The Iranian branch in Bushehr believes that the Safars originate from Hamadan in western Iran and are, therefore, Persian – possibly Bakhtiyari (a tribal group from western Persia that speaks a dialect of Farsi). Many of the Safars were Persian subjects, and a photograph taken in the late 1890s of the head of the family, Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, clearly shows him wearing a Persian-style turban.⁴ Further evidence of a Persian origin is the fact that virtually all members of the family spoke Farsi (Persian) as a mother tongue and that most had Persian titles such as *Agha* (which they pronounced ‘au’, as only the Bakhtiyari do), *Mirza* and *Khan*.

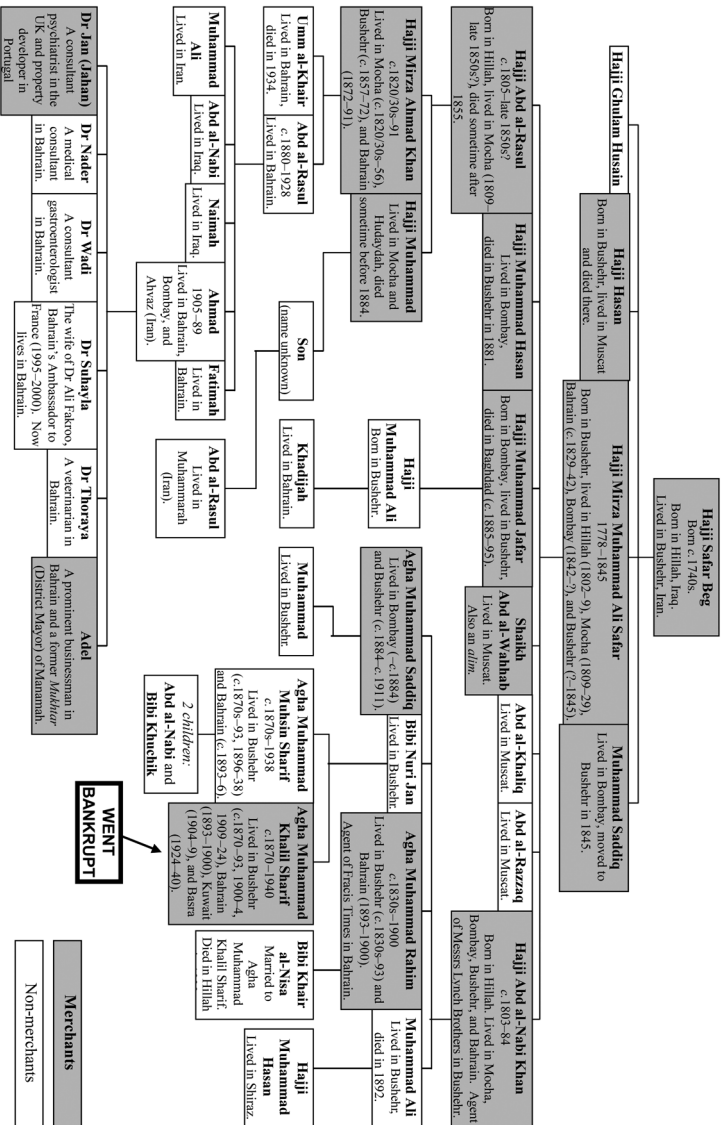
The Safars of Bahrain, however, believe that their male ancestors were Shi‘i Arabs from southern Iraq. This claim is supported by none other than Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar himself, who once explained: ‘I am of Arab descent, but my family has been many years resident in Persia.’⁵ The family tree drawn by him shows him to be the great-grandson of Hajji Safar, a Shi‘i Arab born in Hillah, thirty-five miles south of the Ottoman provincial capital of Baghdad.⁶ Although Hajji Safar later moved to Persia, his nineteenth-century descendants maintained a strong connection with Iraq and Arabia: many were born there, many lived there, many owned property there, many were buried there and many spoke Arabic. A closer inspection of the photograph of Muhammad Rahim reveals that, although he is wearing a Persian-style turban, he is also wearing an Arab *abbah* or *bisht* (cloak). All things considered, it seems that the best description of

many of the nineteenth-century Safars is that some of them were Persianized Arabs (similar to the *Hawwalah*⁷) and some of them were Arabized Persians. Here, 'Persian' refers to the indigenous inhabitants of Persia who speak Persian (Farsi) as their mother tongue.

The Arab–Persian hybridity of the Safar family is evident from their marriage patterns. Of the known spouses between 1778 and 1900, twenty-one were Persian, ten were Arab, four were Abyssinian slaves and one was Indian. In the twentieth century this hybridity gradually disappeared. The Safars of Bahrain in the early twenty-first century have an Arab identity – they were born in Bahrain to a Shi'i Arab mother from Karbala in southern Iraq, speak Arabic as their mother tongue and think of themselves as Arabs. The contemporary Safars of Bushehr have an Iranian identity – they claim Persian roots, speak Farsi as a mother tongue, and think of themselves as Iranians. The Iraqi, Yemeni, Omani and Indian branches of the family, which are no longer in touch with the Bahraini and Iranian branches, may similarly define their identity in relation to their locale.

The founder of the Safar family, Hajji Safar, was born in Hillah around the 1740s and appears to have been a man of considerable status and wealth. On the Safar family tree drawn in the 1960s, he is given the title of *Beg* (Chief), a title used by both the Ottomans and the Bakhtiyari. At some point before 1778, he moved to Bushehr, Persia's principal port in the Gulf, which suggests that he was a merchant. He had four sons, Hajji Mirza Muhammad Ali Safar, Muhammad Saddiq, Hajji Hasan and Hajji Ghulam Husain, three of whom became merchants, as can be seen from the Safar family tree.

Safar family tree (abridged)



Notes:

1. The family changed its name to al-Safar in the 1960s.
2. This table is based on a family tree drawn by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar in 1898 (LP&S/7112, India Office Records, British Library, p. 21) and a family tree drawn by Ahmad Al-Safar in the 1960s (Jan al-Safar collection, Altrincham, Cheshire, UK).

The eldest son, Hajji Mirza Muhammad Ali Safar, was born in Bushehr in 1778. In 1802, at the age of 24, Muhammad Ali moved to his father's home town of Hillah. He lived there for six or seven years, during which time he purchased two large date plantations near Basrah. These estates remained in family hands for over a hundred years and were worth nearly a quarter of a million rupees by the late nineteenth century. In 1809 Muhammad Ali moved to Mocha, where he established a merchant house, known locally as *Bait al-Ajami* (the Persian's House). After trading for twenty years in Yemen, he handed the business over to his second-eldest son, Hajji Abd al-Rasul (c.1805-?), who remained there for the rest of his life. From Mocha, Muhammad Ali moved to Bahrain, where he established another merchant house, Bait Safar. In 1842 he moved to Bombay, where his brother Muhammad Saddiq lived. He may have purchased his substantial properties in Bombay's Fort district at this time. In the last year or two of his life, Muhammad Ali moved back to his home town of Bushehr, having established an extensive family business network with sons in Bushehr, Mocha, Bahrain and Bombay. Hillah and Basrah may also have been included in this network, as was Muscat, where another merchant house was managed by Muhammad Ali's brother, Hajji Hasan.

After Muhammad Ali's death in 1845, his son in Mocha, Hajji Abd al-Rasul, carried on as before; his two sons in Bombay, Hajji Muhammad Jafar and Hajji Muhammad Hasan, looked after the family's business interests in India; and his eldest son, Hajji Abd al-Nabi Khan, took over the family business in Bushehr. Hajji Abd al-Nabi Khan had been born in Hillah around 1803 and had worked under his father in Mocha, Bahrain, Bombay and Bushehr. By the

1850s Abd al-Nabi had become one of the principal merchants of Bushehr. Abd al-Nabi maintained substantial business interests in Bushehr, Bahrain and Bombay. He resided mainly in Bushehr from the 1840s to the 1860s, but in the 1870s and 1880s he also lived in Bahrain for a large part of every year. In Bushehr he was assisted by his son Agha Muhammad Rahim, and in Bahrain by his nephew Hajji Ahmad Khan (son of Hajji Abd al-Rasul in Mocha), who had moved to the Gulf from Mocha many years before.

When Abd al-Nabi died in 1884, Ahmad continued to run things in Bahrain while Muhammad Rahim took over the family business in Bushehr. When Ahmad himself died in 1891, Bushehr's economy had begun to decline while that of Manamah's was prospering. In 1893, therefore, Muhammad Rahim decided to move to Bahrain and make the island the new centre of the family's business operations in the Gulf. He left affairs in Bushehr in the hands of his Christian business agent, John Zaytun, and moved into Bait Safar in Manamah, where his cousin, father and grandfather had lived before him. Like Bait Safar in Bushehr, Bait Safar in Manamah commanded a prominent position on the town's waterfront. It was reputedly large enough to have accommodated a thousand safety-seekers during the Battle of Manamah (1842) in the first Bahraini civil war. When Muhammad Rahim died in 1900, the family returned to Bushehr, while Muhammad Rahim's cousin, Abd al-Rasul bin Ahmad, remained in Bahrain. His descendants still live there, but they have long since lost touch with their cousins in Bushehr, Shiraz, Basrah, Hillah, Muscat, Mocha, Hudaydah and Bombay.

The Safar family's great mobility in the nineteenth century had a demonstrable influence on its members. Hajji Mirza

Muhammad Ali Safar (1778–1845) was born in Bushehr; lived in Hillah, Mocha, Bahrain, Bushehr and Bombay; was a Persian, Ottoman and possibly British Indian subject; wrote his letters in Farsi and Arabic; and spoke Farsi and Arabic. His eldest son, Hajji Abd al-Nabi Khan Safar (c.1803–84), was born in Hillah to a Persian mother from Bushehr; lived in Mocha, Bushehr, Bahrain and Bombay; was a Persian subject; used the Persian title of *Khan* (Esquire, Gentleman); kept his business records in Farsi; and spoke Farsi, Arabic, English and possibly Hindi. His brother, Hajji Muhammad Jafar, was born in Bombay to a Persian mother from Shiraz, lived in Bombay and Bushehr, was a British Indian subject, dressed in the style of an Indian merchant in Bombay, and probably spoke Farsi, Arabic and Hindi. Abd al-Nabi's son Agha Muhammad Rahim (c.1830s–1900) was born in Bushehr to a Persian mother, lived in Bushehr and Bahrain, was a Persian and Ottoman subject, used the Persian title *Agha* (Commander, Gentleman); dressed in a hybrid Persian–Arab style; wrote in Farsi and Arabic; and spoke Farsi, Arabic, English and possibly Hindi.

Hajji Mirza Muhammad Ali Safar's second-eldest son, Hajji Abd al-Rasul (c.1805–?), was born in Iraq to a Persian mother from Bushehr, grew up in Hillah, lived in Mocha, wrote his letters in Farsi and Arabic, was described by the British as 'Persian' and was probably a British Indian subject. Hajji Abd al-Rasul's eldest son, Hajji Mirza Ahmad Khan (c.1820/30s–91), was born in Mocha to a Persian mother from Bushehr, lived in Bushehr and Bahrain, was a Persian and British Indian subject, wrote his letters in Arabic, spoke Arabic and Farsi and used the Persian titles of Mirza and Khan. Ahmad's eldest son, Abd al-Rasul (c.1880–1928), was born in Bushehr to a Persian mother, lived in Bahrain, wrote

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his letters in Arabic and Farsi, and dressed in the style of a Yemeni merchant (possibly in the fashion of his father). Abd al-Rasul's son Ahmad (1905–89) was born in Bahrain to a Persian mother from Behbahan in southwestern Persia, spoke Farsi as a mother tongue, dressed in a Persian style in his youth, was educated in Bombay, lived in Iran and Bahrain and was a Bahraini citizen. Ahmad's children were all born in Bahrain to an Iraqi Arab mother from Karbala, speak Arabic as a mother tongue and are Bahraini citizens. Ahmad's eldest son, Jan (Jahan), now lives near Manchester. Jan's four children were born to British mothers, speak English as a mother tongue, live in Britain and have a British–Arab identity.

The case of the Safar family offers us a rare glimpse into eighteenth and nineteenth-century Gulf society, long before the politicization of Gulf Arab identity, revealing a far more transnational elite culture than that promoted in the Gulf Arab states today. In contrast to twenty-first century Gulf merchant families, a nineteenth-century transnational family did not have to Arabize to gain acceptance and become influential. Family members did not merely reside in the ports of Arabia, Iraq, Persia and India; they were connected to these places through culture, language, marriage and birth. The result was a blending of cultures into a complex transnational family identity.

*The Kanoo Family, 1900–2006*⁸

Present-day eastern Arabia remains a transnational space, but the nature of that transnationalism has changed. Iranians and Indians still live in Gulf Arab ports, but few Gulf Arabs now have connections with Iran or India. The predominant foreign influence is now British and American. Most Gulf Arab elites have strong

ties with Britain or America, or both: they spend their summers there and have degrees from British and American universities. Many in the smaller Gulf states became Westernized between the 1940s and 1970s – speaking English, adopting some Western ways and wearing Western attire (from the popular blazer-and-*thob* combination to the full suit and tie). Buildings constructed during this time were often designed by Western architects and built along Western lines. This process of Westernization was reinforced by the presence of large Western expatriate communities in the Gulf.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Gulf Arab states underwent a further cultural reorientation. During this time most Gulf Arab elites abandoned Western attire and adopted Gulf Arab national dress in an assertion of regional Arab identity. One of the reasons for this was the perception that Westernization had begun to threaten their cultural identity. Another reason was the growing need to distinguish between themselves and the ever-expanding number of expatriates in the Gulf, especially Arab expatriates. National dress became the hallmark of citizenship in the Gulf. The oil wealth of the 1950s and 1960s (and, in the case of Bahrain, of the 1930s and 1940s) had released the ruling families from their dependency on the merchants and enabled them to build a modern state infrastructure. To consolidate their new power base, the rulers granted the vast majority of government positions to members of their own families or to other Arabs of similar descent and tribal affiliation – often from elite merchant families. (The ruling families of the central and northern Gulf claim Najdi descent, while most of the ruling families of the southern Gulf claim Yemeni descent.) They also promoted a Gulf Arab national identity as a necessary prerequisite for participation in government and a desirable

identity for all citizens, especially the elites. With the sole exception of Oman, Persian and Indian-style headdresses were replaced with a purely Arabian headdress: the Najdi *agal* (head rope), worn with either the Najdi *shmagh* (the red-and-white chequered head scarf of central Arabia) or the white *ghutrah* indigenous to eastern Arabia. Since the 1980s, the ruling families have strongly emphasized the importance of Gulf Arab culture, tribal lineage and Sunni Islam (Ibadi Islam in Oman). The results of this can be seen everywhere: in the wearing of ‘traditional’ Arabian bedouin clothing for all but the most junior members of government; in the creation of national museums celebrating the heritage of Sunni Gulf Arabs (Ibadi Arabs in Oman); in the construction of vast Sunni mosques (Ibadi mosques in Oman); and in the Arabesque design of new buildings. Persian and Indian-style buildings continue to dominate the historic districts of the port cities, but their architecture is now described as ‘Arabian’. At the Portuguese fort in Bahrain, a large sign greeting visitors to ‘Bahrain Fort’ gives an explanation of how the fort is not Portuguese, but Arab. Multiculturalism among Gulf citizens is downplayed everywhere, and intermarriage between Gulf Arabs and non-Arabs is discouraged. Arab–Persian or Arab–Indian hybridity and the blending of cultures that once characterized transnational Arab merchant families in the Gulf are now rarely seen

This explains why Gulf Arabs with historical transnational connections, such as the House of Kanoo⁹ – the focus of our second case study – have begun to downplay their non-Arab heritage, as an article by the Deputy Chairman of the Kanoo Group UAE/Oman, illustrates. Mishal Kanoo writes: ‘[The Gulf] is an area that thrives because of its Indian industrialists, its Iranian merchants, its Sudanese lawyers, its Jordanian brokers,

its Palestinian professionals, its Pakistani bankers, its Filipino engineers, and its Gulf Arab conglomerates.¹⁰ But what impact does this multicultural environment have on Gulf Arabs? Mishal Kanoo tells us:

In the Gulf, we are more of a *mixing* pot than a *melting* pot since each racial identity still keeps true to itself even after years of interacting together ...we still retain our own identity, which makes us unique ... So while I am likely to know Hindi or Farsi and enjoy the foods, customs, and celebrations of their peoples, I am still an Arab of the Gulf and that will always be true of me.¹¹

Note his emphasis on a self-contained Gulf Arab identity, uninfluenced by other cultures.

So who are the Kanoos? The family originates from Najd, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were Persianized Arabs (that is, *Hawwalah*) living on the southern Persian coast.¹² The family's long residence in southern Persia undoubtedly had a strong influence on its members. The family name, for instance, comes from *kanoon* (Farsi for 'law').¹³ After the Kanoos' move to Bahrain in the mid-nineteenth century, their Arab–Persian hybridity, like that of the Safars, would have faded with successive generations. In the early twenty-first century the Kanoos have an Arab identity – they were born in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia or the UAE to Sunni Arab mothers, speak Arabic as their mother tongue, and think of themselves as Arabs.

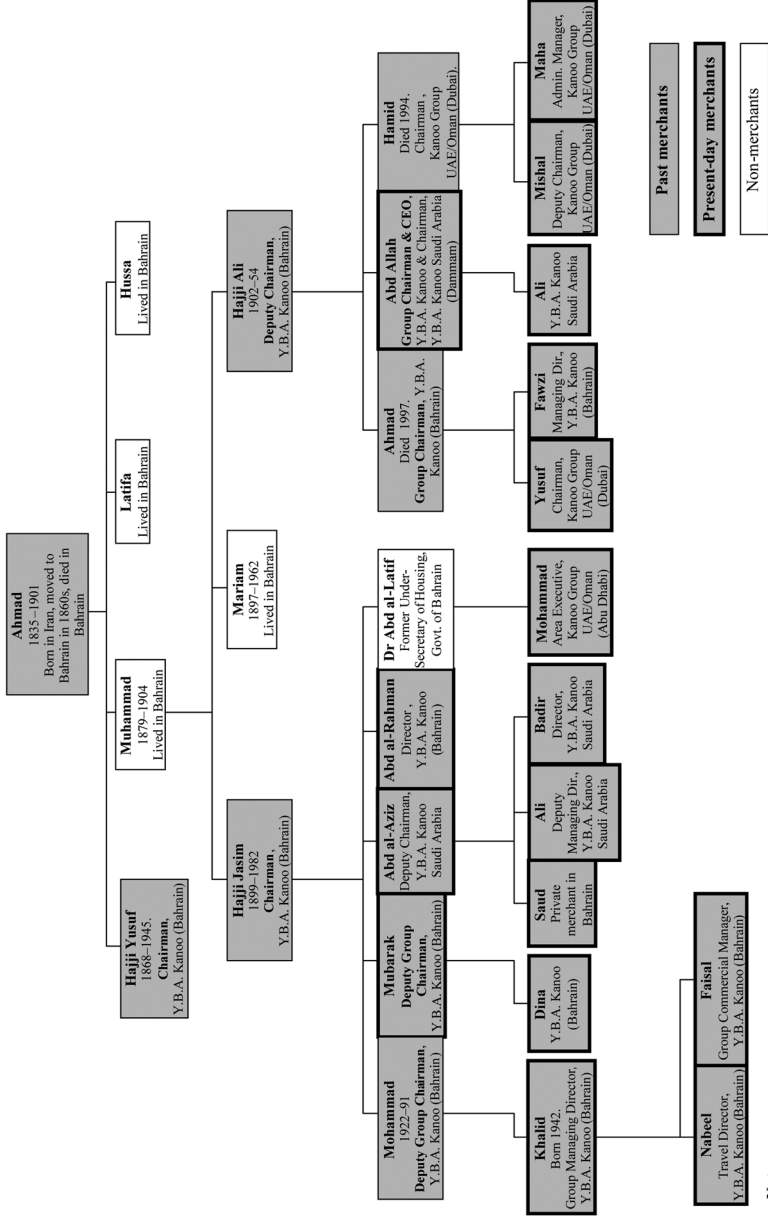
The founder of the Kanoo family business was Hajji Yusuf bin Ahmed Kanoo (1868–1945), who, interestingly enough, got his start by working for Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar in Bahrain in the 1890s.¹⁴ Yusuf was born in Bahrain soon after his family

moved to the island from Persia.¹⁵ He began as a small general merchant in 1890 at the age of twenty-two, importing goods from India. For most of his life, he would go to India on annual business trips for four to six months. Twenty-five years later, he was the largest merchant in Bahrain, still importing goods from India, but he was now the largest banker on the island with a branch office in Bombay, and the Bahrain agent of major companies like British Petroleum (then known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company), the Bombay and Persia Steam Navigation Company, the Kerr Steamship Company, Studebaker and Ford. Yusuf's roots and business pursuits had a corresponding influence on him: in addition to Arabic, he spoke Farsi, Hindi and English.¹⁶

Yusuf's company began as a simple private family business. He had no business partners and no sons of his own. In his sixties, therefore, he handed over the day-to-day running of his company to his two adopted sons, Hajji Jasim and Hajji Ali (the sons of his late brother, who had died thirty years before). When Yusuf died in 1945, Jasim and Ali inherited equal shares in the company, turning the business into a partnership. In time, the House of Kanoo evolved into a conglomerate of companies: Y. B. A. Kanoo (headquartered in Bahrain), Y. B. A. Kanoo Saudi Arabia (headquartered in Dammam) and the Kanoo Group UAE/Oman (headquartered in Dubai) – a similar arrangement to the House of Safar in the nineteenth century. Together, they form the Y. B. A. Kanoo Group of Companies, overseen by a Group Chairman and CEO: Abd Allah bin Ali Kanoo, who is also Chairman of Y. B. A. Kanoo Saudi Arabia.

Like the House of Safar, the Kanoos are general merchants, engaging in a wide range of activities. Under Yusuf bin Ahmad

Kanoo family tree (abridged)



Note: This table is based on the Kanoo family trees in Field, *The Merchants*, p. 280 and Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, p. 310.

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Kanoo, the company specialized in shipping, importation and agency work – just like the House of Safar in the nineteenth century. In time, the House of Kanoo became far more diversified than the House of Safar. After the Second World War, the company expanded into travel (1946), lighterage/tug boats (1948), aviation (1950), insurance (1950), construction (1951), labour (1952), oilfield supply (1958), aircraft services (1958), ship repair (1963), chemicals (1968) and retail (1990) – with each enterprise run as a subsidiary of the Kanoo Group of Companies. The Kanoo Group of Companies is currently one of the largest independent, family-owned group of companies in the Gulf region. It has a vast range of operations in general trading, retail, shipping, cargo, machinery, logistics, chemicals, oil and gas, power, real estate and property development, information technology, business support, joint ventures, personnel training, exhibitions, travel and holidays. Its logo is: ‘Many opportunities, one address: kanoogroup.com.’

Like the House of Safar, the House of Kanoo is transnational, with main offices in several countries.

Country	Office Location	Established
Bahrain	Manamah (HQ)	1890
Saudi Arabia	Ras Tannurah	1950
	Ras Mishab	1950
	Dammam (HQ)	1953
	Riyadh	1963
UAE	Jeddah	1968
	Dubai (HQ)	1963
	Abu Dhabi	1963
Oman	Sharjah	1963
	Muscat	1975
USA	Houston, Texas	1975
UK	London, England	1978

The House of Kanoo displays a great deal of horizontal mobility between these locations, just as the Safars did in the nineteenth century. While offices are national in their focus and recruitment (members often being citizens of the countries they work in), family members still move from one country to another and from one company to another as their careers progress. For example, Mishal Kanoo, the Deputy Chairman of the Kanoo Group UAE, was born in Dubai, but all the other senior Kanoos in the UAE – Yusuf, Maha and Abd al-Latif – were born in Bahrain. Khalid Kanoo was born in Bahrain and worked in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE for twenty-five years before returning to Bahrain in 1994 to become the Group Managing Director of the Kanoo Group of Companies (see the Kanoo family tree accompanying this chapter). Like the Safars, virtually all the family members have been educated overseas: at first in India, later in Lebanon and Egypt, and more recently in England and America. Khalid received his high-school education in England, where he became the captain of his school cricket team. He received his university education in America. The Kanoo biographies website tells us how most of the Kanoos were educated in America.¹⁷ Yusuf Kanoo was awarded his MBA by the University of Houston, Texas; Mishal Kanoo his MBA by the University of St Thomas in Houston, Texas; Abd al-Latif Kanoo his BA from the University of Texas at Austin and an MA from the American University in Washington, DC; Maha Kanoo her BA from Sweet Briar College in Virginia. All the Kanoos speak Arabic and English, and some still speak Farsi and Hindi.

Unlike the Safars, however, the Kanoos continue to prosper. There are at least four internal factors that can cause a family

business to split apart or collapse. The most common is the death of the company chairman, resulting in a succession dispute or the appointment of an incompetent chairman. Another is strong disagreement with the chairman's decisions. A third is the chairman's inability to find suitable and satisfying positions within the company for each new generation, leading the younger generations to set up their own companies that ultimately compete with the family business. The last is envy, caused by inequality of distribution within the family.¹⁸ The first factor spelt the end of the Bahrain–Bushehr branch of the Safar family business. After Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar's death in 1900, his successor, Agha Muhammad Khalil Sharif, proved a poor businessman. He made a long series of bad business decisions, and the Safar fortunes dwindled until he went bankrupt. There was no one to take over from Muhammad Khalil when his incompetence became apparent early on, because Muhammad Rahim had failed to recruit and train another member of the family to continue the business after his death.

The reason for the House of Kanoo's continuing success, generation after generation, is that it operates as a more tightly knit conglomerate, with activities coordinated centrally. The reason for this cohesion and centrality is the family ethos, which Yusuf bin Ahmad Kanoo instilled in Jasim and Ali and their sons. The family must always act together, he told them; when disputes arise, the minority must respect the decisions of the majority.¹⁹ As Khalid Kanoo explains: "The continued success of the family company must not be jeopardized by personal ambition. If there is a conflict of interest, then the company comes first."²⁰ There is also a strong sense of egalitarianism in the family: members who work

for the company draw the same salary; members who do not, draw a smaller salary; and all have their education, housing, food and travel paid for by the company. Profits are kept in the company rather than distributed.²¹ This prevents both envy within the family and financial drains on the company. The longevity of the House of Kanoo is exceptional, however. Mishal Kanoo has observed: 'Statistically, the odds against family-owned and controlled businesses continuing to thrive through successive generations are astronomical. Less than 1 per cent reach the fifth generation.'²² The House of Safar sustained itself for four generations, as their family tree shows. The House of Kanoo is currently in its sixth generation, with every prospect of continuing into the seventh.²³

Notes

1. For a more detailed study of the Safar family and source references omitted from this abridged version, see James Onley, 'Transnational Merchants in the Nineteenth Century Gulf: The Case of the Safar Family', in Madawi al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf*, London 2005, pp. 59–89.
2. For an explanation of how general merchants in the Gulf operate, see Michael Field, *The Merchants: The Big Business Families of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States*, Woodstock, NY, 1984, pp. 292–310.
3. A Grade I merchant was an international wholesale trader who maintained a large fleet of cargo ships, employed an international network of commercial agents, and had a minimum annual income of Krans 500,000. (A *Kran* is one-tenth of a *Toman*, Persia's principal unit of currency, written *Qran* in Farsi. They were replaced by *Rials* in 1932. For more details, see James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth Century Gulf*, Oxford 2007, appx. c.
4. For photos of the Safar family, see Onley, 'Transnational Merchants'.
5. Statement by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 11 Nov. 1898, register no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (India Office Records, British Library, London), p. 21.
6. Safar family tree by Agha Muhammad Rahim Safar, 11 Nov. 1898, register no. 364/1899, L/P&S/7/112 (India Office Records, British Library,

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- London), p. 21; Safar family tree by Ahmad Safar (Jan al-Safar collection, Altrincham, Cheshire).
7. The *Hawwalah* (singular: *Holi*) are Sunni Arabs from southern Persia who link themselves genealogically to one of the tribes of Arabia. Many could be described as 'Persianized Arabs' in the nineteenth century. For more details, see John G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia, 2: Geographical and Statistical*, Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing 1908; reprinted by Archive Editions 1986, pp. 754–5; Fuad I. Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*, Chicago 1980, pp. 2, 4.
 8. For more detailed studies of the Kanoo family, see Khalid M. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo: A Century of an Arabian Family Business*, London 1997; Field, *The Merchants*, pp. 265–310.
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. Mishal Kanoo, 'The Gulf Mixing Pot', *The Kanoo Column*, www.kanoogroup.com (accessed 3 Dec. 2006).
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. See note 8 above; also Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, p. 1.
 13. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, p. 1.
 14. Khalid Kanoo mistakenly identifies Muhammad Rahim as Abd al-Rasul, as does Michael Field. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, p. 4; Field, *The Merchants*, p. 266.
 15. The date of Yusuf's birth is debated. Khalid Kanoo states that Yusuf was born in 1868, while Michael Field states 1874. Kanoo, *House of Kanoo*, p. 3; Field, *The Merchants*, p. 265.
 16. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, pp. 1–97; Field, *The Merchants*, pp. 265–78.
 17. Kanoo biographies, www.kanoogroup.com/new_version/html/pkit.htm (accessed 3 Dec. 2006).
 18. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, pp. 259–9; Field, *The Merchants*, pp. 299–301.
 19. Field, *The Merchants*, p. 287.
 20. Kanoo, *The House of Kanoo*, p. 261.
 21. Field, *The Merchants*, p. 288.
 22. Mishal Kanoo, 'The Gulf Mixing Pot', *The Kanoo Column*, www.kanoogroup.com (accessed 3 Dec. 2006). Mishal's source is a much longer passage in Khalid Kanoo's *House of Kanoo*, p. 263.
 23. For interviews for and assistance with this chapter, I am most grateful to Ali Akbar Bushiri (caretaker of the Safar family papers), Nadir Safar, Jan Safar and Khalid Kanoo (caretaker of the Kanoo family papers).