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Geographies of Influence: Two Afghan Military Households in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century South India

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

South and Southeast Asian Studies

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Summer 2018

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## Abstract

Geographies of Influence: Two Afghan Military Households in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century South India

by

Hannah Lord Archambault

Doctor of Philosophy in South and Southeast Asian Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Munis D. Faruqi, Chair

“Geographies of Influence” follows the histories of two closely entangled Afghan lineages, the Pannis and the Miyanas, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in southern India to show how households served a crucial role as economically and politically integrative institutions. During a period and in a region commonly seen as tumultuous, households offered continuity by operating as intermediaries between distant courts and local systems of governance. At the same time, households cultivated new connections between northern and southern regional economies.

This dissertation shows how the Deccan and Karnatak territories, separated by the Krishna and Tungabhadra Rivers, operated as distinct yet interrelated political spheres. The Miyanas and the Pannis forged their success on a capacity to move fluently across this frontier. From their bases in the Karnatak, they established secondary strongholds, developed expansive military recruitment networks, and cultivated financial relationships spanning from the northern Deccan capital of Aurangabad to the southeastern Coromandel port cities. Household networks transcended political boundaries and survived the rise and fall of individual states. In the Karnatak, it was the household that operated as the primary unit of political organization. They were sufficiently mobile, flexible, and responsive to flourish across regions with very different local political cultures. Most importantly, they were able to respond efficiently to the highly competitive, fast-paced economic conditions of the Indian Ocean-oriented economy of the southern subcontinent.

I argue that the households’ success was built as much on the cultivation of knowledge and relationships that anchored them in the regions where they operated as it was from their connections further afield. Much of the literature to date focused on these groups’ identities as Afghans, which purportedly marked them as foreign to and therefore separate from the societies in which they operated. Yet it was these households’ capacity to make themselves at home – to cultivate deep alliances with local groups – that undergirded their success. This was especially important in light of turnover at the level of more distant state governments. During the period under investigation, Karnatak territories were subject to Vijayanagara, Deccan Sultanate, Mughal, post-Mughal, and British East India Company claims to sovereignty. Panni and Miyana households relied on the intimate within the region to survive political transitions and retain their influence.

I conclude by tracing the households' marginalization through the middle decades of the eighteenth century as they found themselves sandwiched between rising threats to the north and southeast. A combination of short-term shocks and systemic transformations meant that the Panni and Nawaiyat households were sidelined as newly confident Deccan-based Asaf Jahi and Maratha states began to organize massive campaigns into the Karnatak beginning in 1740. Affairs culminated during the period between 1748-1751, when Hyderabadi contestants to the throne sought prospective allies in the strategically important southern Karnatak. Their competition soon became entangled with a separate contest between French and British East India Companies along the coast. The affair culminated in a daring but ultimately doomed attempt by the Miyana and Panni households to force their way in from the margins of the negotiations. French and Hyderabadi elites together wreaked their vengeance on these groups, producing a political vacuum in the Karnatak that would be filled in the following decades by new kinds of powers: the Mysore Sultanate, the growing Hyderabadi and Maratha states, and finally the British East India Company.

*In memory of my grandmother Cynthia Downes Lord (1921-2015),  
who relished blazing trails.*

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My dissertation has been immeasurably improved by all of the eagle eyes, thoughtful questions, and suggestions posed by its readers. All errors, omissions, and dubious assertions that doubtless continue to populate its pages are entirely my own responsibility.

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## Notes on transliteration, citations and abbreviations

My transliterations broadly follow the example set in Steingass and Platts, using diacritics to mark long vowels, the Arabic ‘ain (ع), and dotted retroflexes in Urdu. For simplicity’s sake I do not distinguish between the Arabic letters ز, ذ, ض and ظ, which are indistinguishable in Persian. I make further exception for the spelling of individuals’ names and titles in the main body of the text, where I follow the closest correspondence between popular usage and faithful transliteration, and omit diacritics entirely (thus Nizam al-Mulk not Nizāmu’l-Mulk or Nizam-ul-Mulk, and Abdul Rahim not ‘Abd al-Rahīm). I retain the more ‘correct’ spelling in the transliterated Persian or Urdu.

Efforts to streamline official spellings of Indian place names have had patchy effect on the modern map and popular usage. Although Kadapa and Karnul are the official names of two cities commonly mentioned in this dissertation, colonial-era spellings (Cuddapah and Kurnool) remain common both in scholarly and popular use. Other place-names like Hyderabad, Arcot or Rayalaseema look significantly different in transliteration (Haidarābād, Ārkāt, Rāyalasīma). A handful of South Indian cities have only very recently changed their spellings (some of them since I began writing this dissertation). Bijapur, Mysore, and Gulbarga have become Vijayapura, Mysuru and Kalaburagi. My approach to this changing map is admittedly haphazard, but my general principle is to adopt the least obtrusive option. Therefore, I use official spellings where they are common (thus the Karnatak, not the Carnatic, and Tiruchirappalli, not Trichinopoly), but bow to convention elsewhere (Bijapur, Mysore, etc.) Where documents reflect variant spellings or pronunciations I reflect the original in transliterations or direct quotes.

The decision to form a new state of Telangana was taken while I was living in Hyderabad. Archivists at the Andhra Pradesh State Archives immediately began dividing documents housed there into collections to be overseen by two entities: the Telangana State Archive and the Andhra Pradesh State Archive. At the time of writing, these collections are expected to remain jointly housed in Hyderabad until such a time as Andhra Pradesh-related modern collections (post-1956) can be rehoused in the new state capital. Based on conversations with the current archive’s Director and others, I believe that all of the materials referenced in this dissertation will remain in the Telangana-based collection in Hyderabad. I have accordingly cited all relevant sources as being property of the Telangana State Archives in the hope of minimizing future confusion.

I have sought to provide all *hijrī* (AH) and *faslī* dates alongside their Common Era equivalents, and made accommodation where appropriate for the shift from Julian to Gregorian calendars.

I.J. Coll. = Inayatjung Collection (National Archives of India, Delhi).

## Introduction

Following the accession to the throne of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1657), the Afghan nobleman Khan Jahan Lodi rebelled against Mughal service and fled southwards into the Deccan. He travelled with an extended entourage, or household, that included not only his immediate blood relations, wives, and servants, but also a considerable number of Afghan *sardārs* (nobility) who had pledged their loyalty to him. Many of these latter figures, like Khan Jahan Lodi himself, had formerly served the Mughal court. Each of these men in turn travelled with similar, albeit smaller, household followings. They hoped, according to Khan Jahan Lodi's one-time servant and later biographer Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, that Lodi would establish an Afghan kingdom in the Deccan, possibly even taking up the reins of the moribund Nizam Shahi Sultanate with its capital at Daulatabad in the northern Deccan. While the Mughal state had been entrenched in northern India for a century, the lands beyond the Narmada River<sup>1</sup> seemed to offer a wealth of opportunity for those seeking escape from the imperial shadow.

Although his followers were heady with ambition, Khan Jahan Lodi himself was overcome by fear of the unknown. In a meeting with his supporters one evening, Lodi wondered aloud about the larger consequences of his actions. He was aging, and his children's talents were as yet untested. He felt the heavy weight of his role as a leader of India's Afghan community. He worried if his rebellion failed, punishment might fall indiscriminately upon the whole.

The Mughals would expel and kill each and every Afghan from the towns and villages. Even the Afghan maid-servants would stand and strike their slipper upon the earth, proclaiming that 'it is on Khan Jahan's head that on account of his shame our condition has fallen thus.' I haven't the strength to bear their cries and wails after my death.<sup>2</sup>

Lodi's companion Bahlul Khan Miyana, whose subsequent career and whose children and heirs sit at the center of this dissertation, stood in disgust to leave at this point, saying:

We abandoned our homelands and imperial service and joined you in the hope that we would attain the rank of 12,000<sup>3</sup> under your kingship. And now, having thus ruined men's households, you have thrown away your shield. What has befallen us that we should be killed alongside you?<sup>4</sup>

Bhakkari's narrative is no doubt shaped by the author's subsequent career in Mughal service (he wrote this account decades later, in 1061AH-1650/1651CE), but his memory nevertheless offers unusual insight into ideas of identity, service, and obligation both to one's own household, and to a larger community. At the core of this confrontation are threads that will recur in the following chapters – of individuals' reputations, of loyalty and disloyalty, and of the promise that economic

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<sup>1</sup> The Narmada River is traditionally termed the boundary between the north, or Hindustan, and the Deccan.

<sup>2</sup> Shaykh Farīd Bhakkārī, *Dhakhīrat al-khawānīn*, ed. S. Moinul Haq (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), Vol. II: 108. The *Ma'asir*'s entry on Khan Jahan is, in many passages, an abridged version of Bhakkari's. Shāhnavāz Khān Aurangābādī and 'Abd al-Hayy ibn Shāhnavāz Khān, *Ma'asir al-Umarā* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888), Vol. I: 716-732. *Mughalī yak-yak Afghān rā az shahr wa qaryāt ikhrāj kunad wa bakushad. Ān waqt har dāb-i Afghān ke bar mīkhīzād pāyi zīr bar zamīn mīzanād ke bar sar-i Khān Jahān bād ke az shūmī-yi o hāl-i māyān chunīn shud. Mā rā tāb-hā-yi zār khwurdan wa āhān-i Afghān pas as murdan nīst.*

<sup>3</sup> Twelve thousand is an astronomically high Mughal *mansabdārī* rank, operating here as shorthand for a successful military career more broadly.

<sup>4</sup> Farīd Bhakkārī, *Dhakhīrat al-khawānīn*, Vol. II: 109. *Bahlūl Khān Mīyāna az majlis barkhāsta wa guft ke mā bā umīd-i bādshāhī-yi tu tark-i watan wa naukarī-yi bādshāhī kardā yakrū shudīm ke dar bādshāhī-yi tu dawāzda hazārī khwāhīm shud. Shumā khwud khāna-hā-yi mardum rā kharāb kardā sipar andākhūd. Mā rā che ufiāda ke hamrāb-i tu kushta shawīm.*

and political opportunity lay to the south, across the next frontier. The future of Khan Jahan Lodi's followers, and of their own houses and followers, was at stake, as was (according to Bhakkari, at least) the future of the Indo-Afghan community. And while Khan Jahan Lodi turned back uncertainly to face the garden walls of the Mughal state and the path that he had abandoned, Bahlul Khan continued to look south towards a brighter future beyond Mughal frontiers. Abandoning his former friend and patron, Bahlul Khan and a handful of others continued south, crossing into the Adil Shahi Sultanate of Bijapur. Khan Jahan Lodi, meanwhile, tarried irresolutely in the northern Deccan borderlands. Mughal forces hunted him down, capturing and executing him on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1631.<sup>5</sup> His death is commemorated in a 1633 painting by 'Abid, a famous artist of Shah Jahan's court, in which the Khan's pallid likeness, mid-decapitation, is captured bearing an expression of resigned defeat.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving behind the pitiful scene of Lodi's execution, this dissertation follows the trajectory of Bahlul Khan Miyana, and those that followed him, as they sought opportunity in the southern-most territory of the subcontinent: the Karnatak. The name today is associated with a political and linguistic space – the modern state of Karnataka was formed as a homeland for Kannada speakers in the southwest corner of India. In strictly geographical terms, the Karnatak territory has also been more narrowly construed as the central highlands around Mysore.<sup>7</sup> Yet the Karnatak was imagined by Deccan Sultanate observers, their Mughal successors, and finally British colonial officials as a far larger territory encompassing the better part of the inland southern Deccan peninsula. It is this larger formulation that occupies this dissertation. The region is bordered by the Eastern and Western Ghats, two north-south mountain ranges that separate the higher ground of the interior (the Karnatak *bālāghāt*, 'above the Ghats') from the low coastal territories (Karnatak *pāyinghāt*, 'below the Ghats').<sup>8</sup> As the names indicate, both highland and lowland regions were considered an intrinsic part of the whole, although the highlands were at its core. The territories of the Deccan 'proper' further to the north are in many respects a continuation of the Karnatak – they form part of the same volcanic plateau. Yet the central Deccan was divided from the Karnatak by a highly contested territory known as the Raichur *doāb* – a sliver of land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra Rivers that served as a long-standing and highly contested boundary between the southern state of Vijayanagara and the northern Deccan Sultanates between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Although the *doāb*'s role as a political boundary becomes more complicated during the period under examination here, I argue that the Deccan-Karnatak frontier continued to play an important role in shaping the trajectory of South Indian politics right up through the end of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>5</sup> Bhakkari offers some fascinating details around the politics of the Afghan households who supported Lodi. He notes that after one of Lodi's most prominent remaining supporters, Darya Khan, died as while Khan Jahan dithered, the dead man's wife, "that lion of a woman" [*ān sher zan*], sent Lodi a furious note denying him sanctuary in her territories. Later, she raised a substantial military force on behalf of the imperial armies who pursued him. Farīd Bhakkārī, 111.

<sup>6</sup> "The Death of Khan Jahan Lodi: Page from the Windsor Padshahnama," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed February 17, 2018, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/76011>.

<sup>7</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla, the General of Aurangzeb*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, 1979), 27.

<sup>8</sup> For more on this distinction see the extended footnote in Munshi Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, trans. S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar (Madras: University of Madras, 1934), 57–58.

<sup>9</sup> Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 64–65.

I show how the Miyanas and the closely affiliated Panni family made themselves at home in the Karnatak. They became expert navigators of this frontier zone, before eventually finding themselves cut off from their former claims northwards in the Deccan. The mid-seventeenth through mid-eighteenth century period was a tumultuous time for southern India. In its early decades, Deccan Sultanate forces, amongst them the Miyanas and Pannis, slowly pushed south into a fragmented Karnatak political landscape of loosely Vijayanagara-affiliated strongholds. Towards the end of the century, Sultanate forces were displaced by the Mughal armies, led by noblemen who extended the Empire's writ, under the Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), almost to the southern tip of the subcontinent for a few brief years. Switching allegiances, the Miyanas and Pannis again adopted the Mughal banner as their own, thereby preserving their regional claims but also opening up new opportunities. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, political power in the Karnatak had again taken a decentralized form, with a range of groups claiming connection to a range of defunct or distant courts: the Mughals, the Deccan Sultanates, and the pre-Sultanate Vijayanagara regime, as well as others who claimed more localized forms of legitimacy, all jostling together for space. Through all of this, Panni and Miyana actors were central players, riding out the rise and fall of successive state systems as they deftly traded service to one court for another. The dissertation concludes, after a close examination of the Hyderabad succession war of 1748-1751, with an Epilogue tracing the further trajectory of the Miyana and Panni lineages into the second half of the eighteenth century. In these later years, Karnatak-based elite households like the Pannis and Miyanas, which had for so long dominated the landscape, were swept aside or pushed summarily into corners. New kinds of states – the Mysore Sultanate, but also northern, Deccan-based powers like the Hyderabadis and the Marathas, as well as the British East India Company, expanded rapidly to fill the void. I argue that the households' status as a hinge institution was called into threat both by changing politics inland, as states like the Marathas and Hyderabadis of the central Deccan gained confidence, but more importantly thanks to the changing face of the Coromandel coastal economy, as the formerly flexible and open market culture of the coastline's numerous small and mid-sized ports was undermined by aggressive European intervention.

By the turn of the eighteenth century if not before, the Panni and Miyana households had settled in three inland strongholds: in the eastern Rayalaseema territory the Pannis were based in Karnul and the Miyanas a bit further south in Kadapa. To the west the twin capitals of Savanur and Bankapur, just a few miles distant from one another, were together governed by another branch of the Miyana household. Each of these three centers shared some important features. They were tucked along the inward edge of the Western and Eastern Ghat mountain ranges, overseeing routes that connected the low coastal flatlands via narrow mountainous tracks to the larger thoroughfares of the drier Karnatak highlands. None of these regions were unusually fertile or productive, but all of them straddled the all-important divide in southern India between 'black' and 'red' soil types that distinguished cotton-growing from less productive soils. As well, the eastern centers of Kadapa and Karnul occupy a region subject to both of the subcontinent's monsoon systems. While more directly affected by the southwestern or summer monsoon familiar to North Indians, they are also to some extent subject to the 'retreating' or northeastern monsoon during the winter months, which batters the southeastern Coromandel Coast. Their proximity to both systems means that their yearly political and economic calendars have historically been closely tied to both systems – with military campaigns scheduled and curtailed to avoid the rainy seasons of nearby territories, and economic opportunities and risks governed by monsoon-governed trade winds and inland harvests.

In the nineteenth century, British officials described all three regions of Savanur-Bankapur, Kadapa and Karnul as scrappy and undistinguished, unpleasantly hot and dry in the summer but well-watered during the rainy months, all of them close to major waterways and divided into hilly or mountainous forest tracts and open flatlands.<sup>10</sup> None of these three regions have ever been major centers. Indeed, few people have heard of these places outside of South India. They were and remain minor population centers – mid-sized towns or small cities, perhaps – that are left off of all but the most detailed of modern maps. If these regions have become marginal to South India’s history, however, it was not always so. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were at the heart of key processes of change in early modern South Asia. They were, to borrow the terminology of Richard Eaton and Phillip Wagoner, ‘secondary centers,’<sup>11</sup> whose significance lay in their role as hinge locations along major trade routes. In Eaton and Wagoner’s account, secondary centers were often small hill forts scattered across the Deccan that stood sentinel over the countryside and ensured the capacity of the so-called ‘primary centers’ to collect surplus wealth from the countryside and direct it towards the capital. “In a very real sense,” they argue, “the political history of the Deccan revolved around struggles by primary centers for control of secondary centers.”<sup>12</sup> Building off Eaton and Wagoner, I argue that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, economic nodes connecting the northern and southern economies came to wield such a surprising degree of influence over better-known ‘primary centers’ that they reversed its orientation. Groups that controlled these ‘secondary centers’ dominated and shaped the politics of both inland Deccan capitals like Bijapur, Golkonda, Aurangabad, Pune, or Hyderabad, as well as southeastwards to the port cities along the Coromandel Coast. At the center of this story were the household that supervised the flow of goods, armed forces, and technologies through and between these regions.

The Coromandel Coast and its hinterlands forms another important landscape in this dissertation. The Coromandel describes an area ranging from as far north as the Orissa coastline South to the subcontinent’s near-juncture with Sri Lanka. My focus in this study, however, centers on a smaller section from the Penner River south to the Kaveri River basin, which has long been a major international trading zone connecting South India with nearly the whole of Southeast Asia and the Bay of Bengal, as well as (to a lesser extent) West Asia, Africa, and Europe. The region’s international prominence is all the more notable in light of the fact that the Coromandel Coast boasts few natural harbors, and has instead relied on the risky strategy of anchoring large ships some distance out to sea and ferrying goods to and fro on small skiffs. Several rivers pour into the ocean here, amongst them the Penner, Palar, Ponnaiyar, and Kaveri Rivers. Each of these waterways is to some degree important for facilitating movement between coastal and upland regions, but given the tendency of even the largest of these rivers to become quite shallow during the dry period, they perhaps shaped the character of the coastline in a more subtle fashion: they provided a perfect arena for the development of weaving and dyeing cotton cloth, which was by far the Coromandel Coast’s most important industry.<sup>13</sup> One of the key characteristics of the Coromandel economy, and an

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<sup>10</sup> J. D. B Gribble, *Manual of the District of Cuddapah in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras: Govt. Press, 1875); Narahari Gopalakrishnamah Chetty, *A Manual of the Kurnool District in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras: Printed by R. Hill, at the Government Press, 1886); *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XXII: Dharwar* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1881).

<sup>11</sup> Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*, xxi–xxii.

<sup>12</sup> Eaton and Wagoner, xxii.

<sup>13</sup> Arvind Sinha, *The Politics of Trade, Anglo-French Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1763-1793* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 24.



important point for this dissertation, relates to its heterogeneous culture. This is perhaps a function of the fact that no one port pre-dominated during the medieval and early modern periods. Merchant groups often maintained representation in multiple ports, and ships often plied their way up and down the coast. The arrival of European trading companies from the sixteenth century on, the Coromandel region played host to virtually every European group. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, in a clear reflection of the region's strategic value and wealth, the French and British East India Companies vied against one another for the predominant position along the southern coast.

In telling the stories of the Panni and Miyana families, I focus on several major themes. Most important is the increasingly intimate dynamic between North Indian and South Indian economies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This process of economic integration is not well represented in much of the historiography, which tends to describe *political* processes, focusing on the conquest of southern India by the Mughal imperial armies in the late seventeenth century, before pausing to question why it was that this conquest failed to stick in subsequent decades. Without getting bogged down here in a recitation of the literature on the rapid decentralization of Mughal authority after the turn of the eighteenth century, scholars share a broad agreement that the imperial foray into the southern Deccan and Karnatak in the late seventeenth century played an important role in weakening central state institutions.<sup>14</sup> While in the course of writing the Panni and Miyana households' histories I may at times shed indirect light on debates around the Mughal state, my primary interests in this dissertation lie elsewhere. I locate the Mughal invasion of southern India within a longer-term set of processes, in which entrepreneurial groups of all stripes, both northern and southern, sought profit in the subcontinent's growing economic entanglement. Within this framework, particularistic concerns around the Mughals' successes or failures take a back seat to a broader question: what was the primary organizing principle of politics in this period?

Here is the second major theme of this dissertation. I argue that in this context, it was the *household* that operated as the primary unit of political organization, rather than the state. Households were sufficiently mobile, flexible, and responsive to flourish across regions with very different local political cultures (the central Deccan versus the southern Karnatak, for example), to move deftly across state boundaries, and to respond efficiently to the highly competitive, fast-paced economic conditions of the Indian Ocean-oriented coastal south. These two elements – the southern economy and the noble household – pick up and extend upon an argument made by Christopher Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam about the rise of 'portfolio capitalism' in the same period and place.<sup>15</sup> Bayly and Subrahmanyam had set out at the time to topple long-held presumptions about a presumed incompatibility between the 'despotic Oriental state' and the beleaguered 'Asian merchant,' drawing scholarly attention to individuals whose careers were built through effective marriage of political and commercial careers. Whereas Bayly and Subrahmanyam focus on the phenomenon of the fabulously wealthy individual entrepreneur, however, my own research sets out to explore the extensive social networks that made these individuals' careers possible. Beyond the

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<sup>14</sup> For a thorough rundown of the scholarship around Mughal state formation and its much-debated fate in the eighteenth century, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., "Introduction," in *The Mughal State, 1526-1750* (Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1–71. For a more recent intervention, see Munis D. Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 1988): 401–24.

purely material or financial aspects of an individual's 'portfolio,' I seek to map out less quantifiable but equally important elements built around shared knowledge – of regional particulars, administrative techniques, cultural expectations, long-standing community conflicts or allegiances, etc. – all of which served as foundation for ambitious actors.

This brings us to a third major theme of this dissertation: norms of comportment both within and across household lines. How did patronage, friendship, kinship, slavery, alliance, and enmity influence and shape outcomes? Although an emphasis on moral codes was nothing unique to southern India, I argue here that the absence of a centralized political framework meant that these kinds of 'informal' relationships took on greater salience.<sup>16</sup> Karnatak-based actors developed informal expectations that governed interactions within and between households. These formed the warp and weft of the regional political ecology, and the ability to move fluently within this environment offered an important measure of one's 'insider' or 'outsider' status.

Frank Perlin's scholarship on Deccan history highlights the central role of elite families in the region, whose support served as the basis for individuals' claims to kingship. While these families were often based in certain strongholds, they built regional influence by collecting "scattered accumulations of offices and rights" across multiple territories, developing along the way expertise in numerous local infrastructures and governments.<sup>17</sup> Perlin suggests that we focus on an evolving "*library* of categories, formulae, words and techniques" that the region's various elite households adopted and adapted to their own circumstances.<sup>18</sup> He examines an economy powered by unevenly distributed resources, and a political sphere shaped, in turn, by an also unevenly distributed knowledge of, and access to, administrative technologies and techniques. States were only one part of this picture; they leaned on the skilled individuals and groups whose facility in working with these techniques could be pulled, for a period, into the orbit of a state's priorities. Over the longer run, states – be they Sultanate, Mughal, Maratha, or otherwise – were often powerless to stop the elites they hired from turning these tools to their own purposes.

While much of Perlin's work has emerged from the administrative record of the Maratha-ruled Deccan, similar patterns turn out to be present in other archives as well. I found this particularly to be true of the records of the Inayat Jang Collection, a collection of perhaps 150,000 surviving Mughal administrative records from the Deccan region.<sup>19</sup> Ironically, these materials have often been treated as evidence of the opposite: namely the Mughal state's bureaucratized central authority.<sup>20</sup> It is well beyond the scope of this dissertation to hazard guesses as to the behavior of Mughal actors and institutions in the northern heartlands, but in the Deccan and in the distant outposts of the Karnatak, Mughal rule looked very little like the abstract vision of centralized

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<sup>16</sup> Others have made similar arguments in contexts marked by political fragmentation. For examples drawn from 17<sup>th</sup>-century France and from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American west, see Brian Sandberg, *Warrior Pursuits: Noble Culture and Civil Conflict in Early Modern France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Frank Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum; Ashgate Pub. Co, 1993), 36–37.

<sup>18</sup> Perlin, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Inayat Jang Collection. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

<sup>20</sup> John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford [Eng.]: Clarendon Press, 1975); M. A. Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D* (Bombay: Jaico Pub. House, 1985); Zakir Husain, "Problems of the Deccan Administration in the Last Decade of Aurangzeb's Reign — Based on Explorations in the Inayat Jung Collection of the National Archives," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 61 (2000): 330–44.

statecraft proposed by the so-called ‘Aligarh school.’<sup>21</sup> By tracing the thread of the Panni and Miyana names through the pages of these records and other collections, my work suggests that Deccan and Karnatak-based households often engaged the Mughal state with an eye to their own priorities, much as they had done under earlier terms of service, and as they would continue to do in the future. These noble households were not, as Mughal sources would have it, merely devoted servants or ungrateful rebels, but rather were ambitious, strategy-minded actors for whom the state *du jour* offered a vehicle that afforded certain opportunities but did not circumscribe their universe of interests.

Like a handful of other elite households in this period, the Pannis and Miyanas sought the establishment of claims in three regions: in the Deccan, one or more inland Karnatak strongholds, and a trading center proximate to the Coromandel Coast. This strategy was a replicable model for success. By way of example, Shahji Bhonsle, father of Shivaji the famed founder of the Maratha state, adopted a similar model within the broad umbrella of the Bijapur Sultanate in the decades before his ambitious son set out to convert the family’s northern claims into more state-like form. Shahji retained household claims in the western Deccan, even while he seized the opportunity of the Sultanate’s Karnatak campaigns to establish an autonomous base in Bangalore, far to the south. He used Bangalore as a springboard to extend his reach even further southeastwards in the direction of the Kaveri River delta, securing preferential access to the Coromandel Coast around the Kaveri delta in the early 1660s (from which he would eventually be displaced by the Miyana household, see Chapter Two).<sup>22</sup>

## The southern frontier

Jos Gommans has argued that the history of the second millennium in South Asia can in large measure be understood through the slow southward movement of horse-based cavalry armies from Central Asia down the subcontinent’s ‘arid spine,’ towards the coveted, wealthy territories of the deep south.<sup>23</sup> This was both an environmental and a technological frontier. The ‘arid spine’ was a narrow strip of marchland that could support large equine populations and at the same time offer sufficient neighboring tax base to feed and clothe an army. Political leaders learned new strategies over time allowing them to put cavalry warfare to more cost-effective purpose in combination with an evolving library of administrative tools. Amongst them were figures like Shahji Bhonsle, whose talents facilitated the movement of state systems in their wake.

This was also an economic frontier, however. For millennia, South Indian port cities had hosted ocean-going merchant communities from Africa, West Asia, Southeast Asia, and China, while South Indian merchants had in turn ventured across the waters to found diasporic communities in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. The high-value trade undertaken in these marketplaces was one of the major reasons why the subcontinent had long since become one of the world’s most renowned precious metal sinks – South India built up vast reserves of gold and silver as eager consumers across the Indian Ocean commercial universe bought up the region’s cheap, high quality textiles, spices,

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<sup>21</sup> The foundational text of the Aligarh school is Irfan Habib’s *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (New York: Asia Pub. House, 1963).

<sup>22</sup> M. A. Nayeem, *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom, 1489-1686 A.D.: A Study in Diplomatic History* (Hyderabad: Bright Publishers, 1974), 255–57.

<sup>23</sup> Jos Gommans, “The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c. A.D. 1100-1800,” *Journal of World History* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–23.

hardwoods, and diamonds.<sup>24</sup> This sophisticated, highly monetized, outward-looking economy had long preferred to look east and westward, rather than overland to the north, towards the Indo-Gangetic plain – the subcontinent’s other major economic hub. This northern center, like its southern counterpart, also looked well beyond its own borders. It was tied at one end to the markets of Central Asia, and at the other to Bay of Bengal – which in turn looked out upon Southeast Asia, the South Indian coast, and points beyond. Yet until the middle centuries of the second millennium, these northern and southern hubs had been only tangentially connected with one another. Numismatic research supports this assessment, demonstrating how, as late as the early-seventeenth century, large tracts of the Deccan remained poorly integrated into neighboring currency markets.<sup>25</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, however, this was changing quickly as Deccan markets saw a growing overlap between the south’s gold-based currency markets, and the north’s silver-based system. This intermingling of formerly discrete currency zones took place at the precise moment that Deccan-based forces – amongst them households like the Bhonsles, the Miyanas, and the Pannis – began to move south into the Karnatak with growing frequency.

The nature of this frontier – a complex zone of intersection between two sophisticated trans-regional economic hubs – has often been mischaracterized in modern scholarship. Perhaps the most common narrative in popular circulation is one that postulated a northern Muslim aggressor against a southern Hindu defender. In the wake of the Babri Masjid destruction in 1992, a wave of scholarship has sought to complicate this picture, combatting stereotypes around forced conversion, temple desecration, and ‘Hindu resistance’ with more nuanced interpretations highlighting widespread cultural experimentation and borrowing, as well as economic and political alliances between religiously diverse groups of like-minded ambition.<sup>26</sup>

Another mischaracterization, which often implicitly undergirds Mughal scholarship on the period, has not been subject to the same revisionist scrutiny. According to this narrative, an ‘undeveloped’ or even ‘backwards’ Karnatak south is often presumed to have fallen under the sway of

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<sup>24</sup> André Wink, “‘Al-Hind’. India and Indonesia in the Islamic World-Economy, c. 700-1800.,” in *India and Indonesia during the Ancien Regime: Essays*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Leiden ; New York: Brill, 1989), 33–72; K. N Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 4 (October 1995): 750–80; Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900*, 171–73. It also appears to have been perceived by actors in the pre-17<sup>th</sup>-century period as a substantial political and cultural frontier. See Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion, ca. 1600: Contemporary Perspectives,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 3 (January 1, 2004): 357–89.

<sup>26</sup> The earlier literature might best be sampled through Aziz Ahmad’s synthesis in “Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83, no. 4 (1963): 470–76. Classics of the revisionist camp include: Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 4 (October 1, 1995): 692–722; Phillip B. Wagoner, “‘Sultan among Hindu Kings’: Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (November 1, 1996): 851–80; Richard M. Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India* (Gurgaon: Hope India Publications, 2004); Finbarr Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*.

the more advanced northern regime.<sup>27</sup> Generations of Sultanate and Mughal historians have too readily relied on uncritical readings in both Sultanate and Mughal-era Indo-Persian accounts that have tended to treat military forays beyond the Raichur *doāb* (the long-standing boundary between Vijayanagara and Sultanate territories until 1565) by recourse to imagery drawn from the Perso-Arabic *‘ajā’ib* (wonder-tales) genre, depicting an untamed wilderness where miraculous things might be encountered and where dangers lay behind every corner (see Chapters 1 and 3). This tendency has been further encouraged by a shortage of administrative records from the pre-Mughal (and more-so pre-Sultanate) south, an absence which has encouraged Mughal scholars to treat it as an administrative *tabula rasa*. Yet, as a healthy literature focused on South India has underscored, the region had developed its own highly sophisticated political culture long before either Mughal or Sultanate intervention.<sup>28</sup> By the Vijayanagara period, if not earlier, large swathes of the inland south were closely tied to the cosmopolitan trading world of the Indian Ocean. By the early sixteenth century, *nāyaka* warrior lineages of diverse background, boasting more or less fluid ties to the Vijayanagara court, had established themselves across the inland capitals in the Tamil-speaking south. There, marinating happily in the wealth of the southern marketplace, they cultivated an increasingly elaborate model of political power modelled around the ruler as ultimate consumer and ‘enjoyer’ of both commodity and culture.<sup>29</sup> Focusing particularly on questions of sovereignty and administration, Chris Chekuri argues that the Vijayanagara-ruled Karnatak was governed by complex administrative and economic arrangements, including systems of nested ‘shares,’ gifts, and reciprocal obligations.<sup>30</sup> These systems were not subject to a centralized bureaucratic authority, but as we well know, centralized bureaucracy is no guarantee of efficiency. Loosely affiliated *nāyaka* households made deep inroads in both coastal and inland territories. The arrival of first Sultanate and then Mughal forces did not wipe away these earlier arrangements but merely added new layers.<sup>31</sup>

In relation to ideas of ‘frontier,’ then, this dissertation sets out to build a portrait of the frontier that foregrounds economic opportunity on both sides. In order to do this, I step away from ‘conquest-based’ notions of frontier, which suggest a zero-sum interaction between victor and vanquished. Instead, I outline a far more complex negotiation between numerous, economically sophisticated groups, whose allegiances and orientations were contingent and shifting. If northern cavalry armies could enforce their authority over the short run through military force, locally-based southern groups possessed resources, knowledge, and connections that they effectively leveraged to

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<sup>27</sup> John Richards’ work offers a particularly elaborated example of this tendency, but there are others as well. Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib: Based on Original Sources*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1972); John F. Richards, “The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707,” *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (1975): 241–60; John F. Richards, “The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (February 1, 1976): 237–56; Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2002), 31–32.

<sup>28</sup> David E Ludden, *Peasant History in South India* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1985); Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions: Making Politics in Early Modern South India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); David Washbrook, “Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1/2 (January 1, 2010): 266–89.

<sup>29</sup> Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance, Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Chekuri, “Between Family and Empire: Nayaka Strategies of Rule in Vijayanagara South India, 1400-1700 A.D.” (University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Washbrook, “Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India,” 284.

their benefit over the longer term. Accordingly, much of the work I do in the chapters that follow revolves around mapping networks amongst groups who specialized in bridging these frontiers.

## Identity, indigeneity, and discontent

Afghans are often presumed to have been alien to South India. Several times while conducting my research, I was informed by well-intentioned archivists, librarians, researchers and others, that I had wandered badly off-track. If it was Afghans I was interested in, I should hurry north, where perhaps I might find more relevant materials. These well-meant efforts to redirect me to more appropriate archival hunting grounds were frustrating in the moment, but they actually reflect something of the apparent oddness of the Panni and Miyana trajectories from our twenty-first century perspective. It was this oddness that first drew me to the project. Indeed, when I embarked on my fieldwork prepared to tackle a question that initially seemed quite reasonable: what did it mean to be an Afghan in South India? How did they, as northern Muslims in a 'Hindu' south, reach an accommodation with their new neighbors? It quickly turned out, however, that these questions, and the unexamined pairings that went with them (Afghan, Muslim, foreign, northern; Hindu, indigenous, southern) provided little traction in the archive. I found few echoes of these sorts of concerns in the materials I encountered. Quite the contrary, they were merely one of any number of groups who had found their way to the Karnatak to make their fortunes. I found it particularly surprising to find that few sources made any effort to tie these groups to their northern 'homelands' in northern India or Central Asia.

If the anxieties about religious identity and indigeneity that occupy the minds of modern-day scholars seemingly held little sway in the period, however, contemporary actors did seem to find value in a vocabulary of *qaum*, or 'community' – a term that translates poorly into modern-day language and is sometimes inadequately glossed as 'ethnicity' or even 'nationality.' It roughly correlates, in its narrower sense, with lineage and clan, and in its broader sense, with something like ethnicity, caste, or even one's religious or sectarian orientation. Sources from this period routinely pointed to *qaum-i Afghān*, for example, but also to *qaum-i Hindū*, *qaum-i Sheikhzāda*, *qaum-i Siddiqi*, or *qaum-i Kayasth*.<sup>32</sup> Any discussion of the concept of *qaum* must acknowledge Dirk Kolff's important argument that early modern soldiering identities in particular – Afghan, Rajput, or Maratha, for example – were best conceived as porous categories tied to particular skill-sets and recruitment networks, rather than as given identities from birth.<sup>33</sup> When, as not uncommonly occurred, my sources pointed to presumed characteristics of or distinctions between these groups, it regularly turned out, much in the way that similar presumptions prove problematic in the present, that reality meshed poorly with stereotype.

One of the most common examples of this is the idea that fellow-members of a *qaum* shared an innate sympathy. The problem with such a presumption, and the manner of its debunking, demands that we delve for a moment into the details of one such episode. In his description of a battle between Bijapur Sultanate and Mughal forces in the mid-1670s, the Mughal chronicler Bhimsen Saxsena<sup>34</sup> mentioned that Afghan soldiers in both armies had been inspired by a feeling of

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<sup>32</sup> All of these categories are drawn from my person survey of Mughal-era muster rolls, preserved in the Mughal Records Section of the Telangana State Archives. Article forthcoming.

<sup>33</sup> Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> Conventionally referred to by his first name, as I will do from here forward.

*hamqaumī* [shared community] to cross battle lines and join with one another.<sup>35</sup> Such a moment seems to elevate the importance of *qaum* over the bonds of *naukarī* [service] to either the Bijapuri or Mughal state, and raises challenging questions about how actors understood, and enacted, shared identity. The episode has received some modern scholarly attention, notably in Jadunath Sarkar's classic work and in Gijs Kruijtzter's more recent study, where this line has been used to promote a version of history where ethno-nationalist loyalties turned out to be one of the most important factors.<sup>36</sup> Yet this logic of primordial ties breaks down rather quickly upon closer examination.

As it transpired on this occasion, key leaders on both sides of the battlefield were Afghan. Representing the Bijapuris was Abdul Karim Khan Miyana, while in the Mughal camp we find Ikhlas Khan Miyana (also known as Abdul Muhammad Khan, Abdul Karim Khan's first cousin – see Chapter Two) as well as Dilir Khan Daudzai. A third group of Afghan commanders, whose ultimate loyalties cannot easily be parsed, were the sons of the deceased Khizr Khan Panni (a Bijapuri), in that moment holed up in the fortress of Naldurg. The battle was finally concluded when Abdul Karim Khan captured the fortress, “butcher[ing] many of the inmates,” but apparently not ejecting the Pannis, who were the children of his favored former servant. Not long afterwards, Abdul Karim Khan would try, and ultimately fail, to broker a truce with Mughal forces through a meeting with his estranged cousin Ikhlas Khan. In the same period, the Panni siblings decided to deliver up the fort to the Mughals in exchange for high rank (see Chapter Three) and favorable salaries, an arrangement that was facilitated by their uncle and long-time Mughal servant, Ranmast Khan Panni. These were complex and intimate politics indeed, the precise details of which will likely remain forever opaque to modern scholarship.

What is clear, however, is that Afghan solidarity, or *hamqaumī*, is not the key that unlocks its twists and turns. Rather, Afghan leaders on two (or three?) sides of a complex dispute over a strategic fortress, each of them leading armies that included (but did not only consist of) Afghan soldiers, came to violence, partially due to the priorities of their patrons, but also on account of more personal politics to which we are not privy. Some of Afghan soldiers, spying greener grass across the fence, took the opportunity to switch allegiances. They may have relied on kinship networks or similar avenues to smooth the divide. Efforts to reach peaceful accord at the elite level were also built upon the hope of trust built on blood relationships, but as we can see, to mixed result. Bhimsen's foregrounding of Afghan solidarity to gloss the choices made by some actors in the midst of this engagement seems, in this light, to be fundamentally misleading, as are arguments made by later scholars who have affixed great meaning to this single line at the expense of the larger picture.

Still, *qaum* was a common rhetorical recourse for both chroniclers and actors alike. This was a pattern that seemingly held true across linguistic and literary divides, as David Washbrook's study of Ananda Ranga Pillai's mid-eighteenth century Tamil-language diary, which regularly offered categorical assessments of groups, attests.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, we can even see how around *hamqaumī*

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<sup>35</sup> Bhimsen Sakhsinah, *Tarikh-i-dilkasha [English]*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Bombay: Dept. of Archives, Maharashtra, 1972), 110.

<sup>36</sup> Both authors problematically assert that *qaum* can be translated as ‘nation,’ a misleading characterization that presumes a continuity in the politics of boundary formation that cannot easily be accepted. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. IV: 116-120; Gijs Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2009), 181. For a critical exploration of the complexities of *qaum*, see Chapter 1 of Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> David Washbrook, “Envisioning the Social Order in a Southern Port City: The Tamil Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 172–85.

shaped actors' choices and behavior. Consider these examples: In 1678, the Bijapur Sultanate commander Siddi Masud sent Afghan negotiators to make terms with a group of rebellious Afghan soldiers who had barricaded themselves into the house of their deceased employer, demanding pay. The rebels immediately imprisoned the negotiators. They later narrowly escaped with their lives (see Chapter Two).<sup>38</sup> In the mid-1720s, the exasperated Deccan-based leader Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, trying to convince members of the Panni and Miyana households to join his armies on a southern campaign, sent “reasonable and intelligent men of that group [*fariq*]” to try to win them over. Despite this deputation of communal brethren, the Panni and Miyana household leaders rebuffed his efforts.<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere in this period, a Khweshgi Afghan, Muthawwar Khan, who came to the Deccan during the Mughal governorship of the Amir al-Umara (1715-1719) (see Chapter Four) and later joined Nizam al-Mulk's circle, was reportedly approached by the Miyana and Panni clans as a prospective ally. According to Shah Nawaz Khan, Muthawwar Khan's close friend:

The southern Afghans (who are utterly disobedient), imagined that perhaps on account of their shared community [*hamqaumī*], that he might set aside the affairs of the past and things might receive some more pleasant arrangement. Initially, Bahadur Khan Panni and Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana met him and proposed an alliance. Soon, however, on account of their selfishness and intrigue, a rift came between them.<sup>40</sup>

In the above cases, individuals assumed that shared community could help smooth over conflict. In all occasions, that presumption proved ill-founded. I spend so much time here underlining the inadequacy of an identity-based reading of this history, however, because it continues to serve as a common framework in much of the historiography, especially in the Deccan, where most accounts foreground a long-standing dispute between ‘Deccanis’ and ‘foreigners’ as a fundamental feature of the region's politics (see Chapter One & Two).<sup>41</sup> As the above examples demonstrate, the vocabulary of the sources themselves encourages such a reading, even as subsequent events undermine its logic.

As suggested above, South Indian politics writ large, but Deccan Sultanate politics especially, appear at first to conform to such a *qaum*-centric reading. The sources themselves lead us in that direction. Yet a more careful examination of the household institutions around which regional politics cohered demand that we set our own and our sources' presumptions around identity and community aside. While the elite inner circle of a given household typically consisted of tightly knit family group connected by blood and marriage, a households' success, particularly in the context of South Indian politics, was built on their capacity to build aggressively outwards across religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural lines.<sup>42</sup> In telling the Panni and Miyana households' stories, therefore,

<sup>38</sup> Ibrāhīm Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn* (Haidarābād: Matba'ī Sayyidi, 1310AH), 459–60.

<sup>39</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, “Gulshan-i ‘Ajā'ib” (n.d.), fols. 134b-135b, Add MSS 26236, British Library.

<sup>40</sup> Shah Nawaz Khan wrote in exile from Nizam al-Mulk's mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Hyderabad court. Himself a companion to Muthawwar Khan, Shah Nawaz Khan was deeply suspicious of the Karnatak-based Afghan households. Aurangābādī and ‘Abd al-Hayy ibn Shāhnavāz Khān, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, Vol. III: 782; Shahnnavaz Khan Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnnavaz Khan, *The Maathir-ul-Umara: Being Biographies of the Muhammadan and Hindu Officers of the Timurid Sovereigns of India from 1500 to About 1780 A.D.*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Delhi, India: Low Price Publications, 1999), Vol. II: 333, fn. 2. *Chūn Afūghana-yi janūbī ke khālī az sartābī nabūdand ba-za'm-i ān ke shāyid binābar-i ham-qaumī ba-wasīla-yi o muqadamāt-i guzashta wa hāl rūye ba-rāh ārad wa kadr ba-safū tabdīl yābad ibtidā Bahādur Khān Panni wa ‘Abd al-Nabī Khān Miyāna mulāqat namūda hamrāhī bar gazīdand wa az khwud kāmihā wa gharzmandība zūd ba-iftirāq kashīd.*

<sup>41</sup> For a refreshing exception to this, see Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*.

<sup>42</sup> This was not an unusual strategy for Afghan settlers in frontier zones across the early modern subcontinent. See Indrani Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (New Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford



I hope to help complicate a long-standing presumption in Deccani historiography, namely that a divide between ‘Deccan’ and ‘foreigner’ constitutes the single-most important feature of southern politics. While acknowledging that identities played an important role in the politics of the early modern Deccan, I argue that these categories were always contingent, constructed, and subject to intersection with an array of other categories and priorities.

## The vexing question of the state in southern India

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the colonial historian Robert Orme recorded a story commonly repeated<sup>43</sup> in colonial-era assessments of southern politics about the Deccan-based Mughal commander Nizam al-Mulk’s Asaf Jah, who arrived in the Karnatak in 1743 to set the region’s supposedly ‘chaotic’ politics aright:

[The Nizam was] struck with amazement at the anarchy which he found reigning in every part of the government of the Carnatic. Every governor of a fort, and every commander of a district, had assumed the title of Nawab, and had given to the officers of his retinue the same names as distinguished the persons who held the most considerable employments in Nizam al-Mulk’s service. One day, after having received the homage of several of these little lords, Nizam al-Mulk said, that he had that day seen no less than eighteen Nawabs in the Carnatic; whereas he had always imagined that there was but one in all the southern provinces. He afterwards turned to his guards, and ordered them to scourge the first person who, for the future, should in his presence assume the title of Nawab.<sup>44</sup>

The account was very likely apocryphal, but it has been widely retold in part because it seemed to offer a pithy encapsulation of a wider reality – the proliferation of such ‘so-called’ nawabs,<sup>45</sup> each claiming his own little sliver of kingdom, attested to the disorder not only of the post-Mughal subcontinent, but of South India’s politics more generally. For those sympathetic to the Asaf Jahi state’s founder, it likewise pointed to the Nizam’s purported role as a defender of the old imperial order, an increasingly rare breed, who now almost singlehandedly held India back from descent into chaos.<sup>46</sup> The questions raised by Orme’s portrait of the Karnatak plant us squarely in the middle of two literatures, both of which are of central importance for this dissertation. The first relates to South Indian (as opposed to North Indian) patterns of state formation, while the second

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University Press, 2013), 46–48, 57, 65; Nile Green, “Tribe, Diaspora, and Sainthood in Afghan History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 1 (2008): 171–211; Samira Sheikh, *Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders, and Pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200-1500*, SOAS Studies on South Asia (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70, 72, 90, 92, 155, 188–90.

<sup>43</sup>A representative but by no means complete sampling includes Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India, in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysoor from the Origin of the Hindoo Government of That State to the Extinction of the Mohammedan Dynasty in 1799*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Mysore: Printed at the Govt. Branch Press, 1930), Vol. I: 158; Sir John Malcolm, *The Life of Robert, Lord Clive: Collected from the Family Papers Communicated by the Earl of Powis* (J. Murray, 1836), 16; William Miller, *The Case of His Highness Prince Azeem Jah, Nawaub of the Carnatic, and Soubahdar of Arcot: In Support of the Petitions by His Highness to the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain* (London: A. Burn, 1859), 6; Sir Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (London: J. Murray, 1903), 611; Yusuf Husain Khan, *Nizam ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State* (Mangalore: Basel Mission Press, 1936), 252.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, from the Year MDCCXLV. To Which Is Prefixed a Dissertation on the Establishments Made by Mahomedan Conquerors in Indostan* (London: John Nourse, 1763), 51.

<sup>45</sup> The word *nawāb* is the Arabic plural of *nā’ib*, or deputy. Despite its origins as a term denoting service to another, by the eighteenth century in South Asia the word had become synonymous with the exercise of autonomous power.

<sup>46</sup> Khan, *Nizam ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*; Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.*

addresses the question of the eighteenth century and whether this was a period of economic and political prosperity or one of decline.

One of the foundations of scholarship on precolonial South India is a shared acknowledgement that politics worked differently in the south than in the north. Whereas much of the political history of northern India has centered around the Mughal Empire and sought to understand how and to what extent imperial power operated across its extensive domains, literature on southern politics has contended with an entirely different sort of terrain. Historians of medieval and early modern South India have often been inclined to turn to other regional literatures in order to describe the patterns they encountered. Stanley Tambiah's concept of the 'galactic polity,' first used to describe Southeast Asian political formations, was characterized by the unstable 'pulsation' of regional political constellations whose royal figures claimed and occasionally achieved recognition as godlike protectors of the dharmic order.<sup>47</sup> These centers, according to Tambiah, were typically based around individual charisma, and their sphere of influence faded subtly into their neighbors' terrain. Tambiah's ideas inspired later scholars to build similar arguments focused on the relationship between temple and court in the 'ritual polities' of medieval South India.<sup>48</sup> On a similar vein, Burton Stein's work borrowed the concept of the 'segmentary state,' borrowed from Aiden Southall's work on East Africa, to conceptualize South Indian state formation in medieval Chola-era South India (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>49</sup> According to Stein, the segmentary state was characterized a dispersal of practical power to local leaders who typically boasted hereditary links to the region over which they presided, but who each owed formal obeisance to a distant sovereign. The move towards a more centralized form of government, he argued, took place under Vijayanagara rule as northern Telugu-speaking (and later Muslim) warrior groups moved into the region, forcing local elites to finance more effective military defenses through an increasingly muscular state. For Stein, this process of increasing centralization proceeded more or less continuously until it reached its epoch in the late-eighteenth century Mysore Sultanate, ruled by Tipu Sultan. He argued the Sultanate demonstrated key characteristics of 'military-fiscalism,' a concept also often applied to early modern European politics. These included the centralized control of tax collection, measurement and assessment or reassessment of lands, and reorganization and training of the state military according to a defined syllabus.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, Stein's argument has limited merit in its larger implications. Not only is the example of the Mysore Sultanate in many respects unique in the south (a point implicitly acknowledged by Stein), but the changes he identifies seem to have taken place quite late indeed. Even Tipu Sultan's father, Hyder Ali (r. 1761-1782) pursued a number of power-sharing practices familiar to earlier iterations of South Indian politics. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who has outlined the most direct critique of Stein's arguments about Mysore state formation, argues that right up to Hyder Ali's reign, the Wodeyar Mysore state continued to bear close resemblance to earlier *nāyaka*-era articulations of kingship, while military recruitment strategies continued to be explicitly incorporative and decentralized. This was particularly true of attitudes towards expensive European

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293, no. 1 Anthropology (July 1977): 69–97.

<sup>48</sup> James Heitzman, "Ritual Polity and Economy: The Transactional Network of an Imperial Temple in Medieval South India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, no. 1/2 (1991): 23–54.

<sup>49</sup> Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>50</sup> Burton Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered: Part One," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 3 (January 1, 1985): 387–413.

military technologies, which are often presumed to have served as catalysts for administrative reform. Under Hyder Ali's leadership as well, Mysore's military remained an eclectic and diverse coalition of semi-autonomous interests.<sup>51</sup>

One of the main reasons why much of the debate centers around political forms in the eighteenth century is that South Asian historiography has long grappled with the question of how conditions during this important period, which oversaw the transition from indigenous government to rule by the British East India Company, should be understood. Older arguments which focused on the disintegration of centralized Mughal authority in the subcontinent saw evidence within this process of deep-rooted failings within indigenous political forms that heralded the rise of European colonial power. They saw the eighteenth century as a period of decline and chaos fundamentally vulnerable to outside exploitation.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, revisionist scholarship from the late 1980s onwards has argued that the political reshufflings of the early eighteenth century heralded the arrival of new, more efficient and productive South Asian economic and political institutions.<sup>53</sup> This revisionist argument has tended to focus in on the emergence of 'successor states' that emerged in the wake of the Mughal Empire in response to the shifting demands of a modernizing, if not yet modern, economy. Building off this perspective, scholars have in turn reconsidered the expansion of British colonial rule in the second half of the century, arguing that in fact it was South Asian society's wealth and dynamism that drew Europeans to their shores and eventually inland, as opposed to its chaotic mismanagement.

Questions about the eighteenth century require a somewhat different approach in South India, where the Mughals played a very different role and there was little by way of Mughal administrative groundwork from which successor states might have emerged.<sup>54</sup> The term 'Mughal successor state' seems to be anomalous to sites like Arcot, Mysore, Kadapa or Karnul, something that scholars who have used these terms acknowledge in their work, even as they have continued to use it.<sup>55</sup> The problem, perhaps, lies in a more fundamental problem relating to the concept of the state

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<sup>51</sup> These critiques are outlined in Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, chap. 3: Warfare and state finance in Wodeyar Mysore.

<sup>52</sup> Classic studies include Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*; M. Athar Ali, "The Mughal Polity — A Critique of Revisionist Approaches," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 1, 1993): 699–710; Ashin Das Gupta, "Trade and Politics in Eighteenth-Century India," in *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta* (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 141–79. One of the finest-grained data-driven studies on British East India Company trade and its relationship with Asian markets remains K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>53</sup> Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics Under the Eighteenth-Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997). See generally Richard Barnett, ed., *Rethinking Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002); Seema Alavi, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> The Asaf Jahi state of Hyderabad was a middle ground of sorts between northern and southern political ecologies. As scholars have shown, Hyderabad's founder Nizam al-Mulk was obliged to make concessions to local elites that took it some distance from the Mughal model it claimed to uphold. Karen Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System and Its Participants," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 3 (1971): 569–82; Munis D. Faruqi, "At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad and Eighteenth-Century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 01 (2009): 5–43.

<sup>55</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizamat (1700-1732)," in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 347; Nile Green,

itself in South India. As David Washbrook has pithily put it, “before the British conquest, what ‘the state’ was, and who represented it, were complex questions in South India.”<sup>56</sup>

For earlier scholars, South India’s tendency towards political pluralism or, as they might put it, fragmentation and chaos, meant that South India was less well-situated to fend off avaricious European merchants and colonists. For them, decentralized politics, and along with it behaviors like tax farming, widespread ‘gifting’ of rights and privileges, and multi-layered administrations were signs of rot, evidence that the south was in an even deeper state of decline than the north. Ashin Das Gupta even went so far as to suggest that South India had fallen into “total anarchy” in the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> As with the literature on the eighteenth-century north, these presumptions have been under revision now for several decades. Scholars have pointed out the ways in which the very institutions that earlier scholars treated as evidence of economic ‘chaos’ were in fact sophisticated mechanisms for moving, investing, and transforming wealth. Amongst this work, David Washbrook’s 2010 article on the relationship between economy and politics in the early modern period has been particularly productive for me in thinking through my own material and arguments.<sup>58</sup>

Washbrook argues that the south’s buoyant economy operated in a fashion that thwarted interventions that might have allowed for the development of durable, territorially anchored states. He points to the region’s peculiar geography, where quite different environments coexisted in close proximity, and all of it in easy reach of international market hubs. Local producers and traders from an early date built an economy around promiscuous and ever widening patterns of exchange. Rice growing regions neighbored cotton growing zones and dry highlands, and all were within easy traveling distance of the coast and its ports. Each micro-climate presented certain risks and in any growing season farmers faced the possibility of crop failure; yet under ‘normal’ conditions, South Indian soil typically grew prolific crops. In order to transcend the simultaneous threats of overproduction or crop failure, residents found ways to spread and reduce risk by developing complex networks of trade. Residents of, for example, rice-growing regions themselves habitually consumed rice imported from more distant regions, even as they also consumed their own products.<sup>59</sup> Specialists in exchange itself – bankers, moneylenders, and merchants - developed their own robust strongholds within the economy, most likely earlier than in other parts of the subcontinent. Crucially, these systems removed barriers that might have otherwise dissuaded laborers, merchants, weavers and others from packing up and moving. And they did, voting with their feet at any hint of threat of an invading army or unpopular policy (this was a common trend in my own materials, something I comment on at various points in the coming chapters). Aspiring and actual officials of state found themselves at something of a loss in these circumstances, unable to establish the kinds of dominant role they might have found elsewhere. Instead, aspiring authorities were only able to cling to limited supervisory status by establishing themselves as knowledgeable ‘validators’ of local arrangements.<sup>60</sup>

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“Auspicious Foundations: The Patronage of Sufi Institutions in the Late Mughal and Early Asaf Jah Deccan,” *South Asian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2004): 71–98.

<sup>56</sup> Washbrook, “Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India,” 272.

<sup>57</sup> Das Gupta, “Trade and Politics in Eighteenth-Century India.”

<sup>58</sup> Washbrook, “Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India.”

<sup>59</sup> Washbrook, 271.

<sup>60</sup> Washbrook, 273.

Faced with an oppressive power, labor and capital were inclined to move, *banjara* caravans to take new routes, merchants to seek other markets, bankers to look for other clients. The high levels of movement in the southern economy, which helped it to subsist and survive, also tended to neutralize attempts to create fixed geographical points from which to exercise political power and authority: particular kingdoms were, for the most part, short-lived affairs.<sup>61</sup>

Dilip Menon has made this argument even more starkly. He contends that along the southwestern coast, “monarchy was a superfluous institution.”<sup>62</sup> Under ‘normal’ circumstances, he argues that political power was divided between a plurality of households, some of which faced outwards to the sea and to the profits of maritime trade, and others who fed on the production and movement of goods inland. These houses, which held the purse strings and whose power was based in the diverse streams of commercial enterprise, propped up and brought down aspiring kings as they saw fit. While the example of Malabar must be considered to some degree in isolation from larger political patterns in the subcontinent (proving Menon’s point, the region was comparatively untouched by the Vijayanagara, Sultanate or even Mughal expansion into southern India), it also appears that similar patterns can be observed across the Karnatak. In particular, the ocean-oriented economy must be understood as a major force in shaping South India’s politics, serving as a powerful buttress against the centralization of political authority by dint of its availability as a counterbalance against land revenue.

Menon argued that states emerged in the Malabar region most commonly as a defensive mechanism in response to outside threats. Interestingly, the first polity south of the Krishna River to embrace radically centralist administrative reforms, right at the tail end of the early modern period, was Mysore.<sup>63</sup> It did so almost at the same moment that the Karnatak households that had dominated the political landscape of the south for the past century collapsed after they lost access to the Coromandel coastal markets. Alone amongst other southern political centers, Mysore was landlocked, and its resources were much more closely tied to land revenues than other Karnatak centers.<sup>64</sup> Although both Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sultan made concerted efforts to expand their state into both the Malabar Coast and the southeastern part of the Coromandel Coast around Porto Novo, its power remained strongly centered around the Karnatak’s highland core.

To return to the story of Nizam al-Mulk’s consternation on finding the Karnatak in a state of political ‘chaos’ in the 1740s, which Robert Orme so knowingly affirms, this was a portrait quite far from the truth, although it usefully reflects a frustration, shared between both Deccan courts and European Company officials alike, with the Karnatak’s political culture. This dissertation seeks to make sense of the complex but not chaotic reality of politics that lay behind such a caricature. Towards this end, this dissertation focuses on the military household system and its capacity to navigate this world while also further developing the region’s connections with points northwards.

## False starts and troubling timelines

One of the most challenging problems I faced during my fieldwork was the problem that neither the Pannis nor the Miyanas, apparently, wrote or patronized accounts themselves. Without

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<sup>61</sup> Washbrook, 278.

<sup>62</sup> Dilip M. Menon, “Houses by the Sea: State-Formation Experiments in Malabar, 1760-1800,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 29 (1999): 1997; Binu John Mailaparambil, *Lords of the Sea: The Ali Rajas of Cannanore and the Political Economy of Malabar (1663-1723)* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2012), 33–34.

<sup>63</sup> Stein, *Vijayanagara*.

<sup>64</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 69.

any direct account of how these groups made sense of their own actions, I was left to piece narratives together from a range of outside sources, many of them suspicious or even hostile to the households. I have drawn upon sources in Persian, English, and Urdu (as well as sources translated from Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and French). Contemporary or later chronicles of the period, often written in Persian, are nearly always written from the perspective of courtly centers. By their nature, such accounts perceive groups like the Miyanas and Pannis as relevant only insofar as they either appear to prop up royal authority or else pose a direct threat. Administrative paperwork from the period such as that collected in the Inayat Jang Collection described above, but also Bijapur Sultanate-era documents and to a lesser extent Asaf Jah-era Hyderabad and Wala Jah-era Arcot based documents, all offer valuable assistance in pinpointing household investments, but their territorial coverage is uneven and, like state-sponsored chronicles, their composition presumes that recipients of title, salary, and other perquisites orbited their court alone. European sources, mostly written from the perspective of trading company officials posted in coastal port cities, offer only partial relief. These sources' observations were comparatively unencumbered by the biases of inland courtly politics. They were instead deeply interested in the movements of regional elites along the coast and its hinterlands, but these sources replaced courtly biases with powerful prejudices of their own – competition between European trading groups, alliances with or antagonism towards various local groups and authorities, and the shrill tone of presumed European superiority, which only grows louder the further one progresses into the eighteenth century. At the same time, European sources were often remarkably ignorant of inland affairs, even as they occasionally repeated interesting rumors that were ricocheting around South Indian society.

Throughout the course of this dissertation I have worked in constant awareness that I have written my way around a blank space at its center. The voices of those whose stories I have tried to unfold here have remained largely silent. Occasionally, as with the narrative of Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion and the frustrated interjection of Bahlul Khan Miyanā described by Bhakkari in the opening pages of this introduction, I have encountered possible echoes of their perspectives. These are always mediated, or perhaps even invented, by authorial memory and by political interests. To be clear, the household elites and affiliates whose stories I have sought to piece together here are far from the sorts of 'subaltern' voices whose faint traces in or total absence from the archive concerned a generation of scholars through the 1980s and 1990s. The leaders of these households were powerful figures – men and occasionally women – whose lives and choices in turn shaped the course of South India's history. Their voices carried loudly within their own context. Other elites and non-elites whose lives were bound up in the trajectory of these households, and whose existence occasionally comes to the fore in the lines of sources – were themselves at some level wielders of wealth or of weaponry – they were merchants, bankers, and professional soldiers. This dissertation is not an exercise in unearthing the voices of the oppressed or voiceless, rather it seeks to make sense of actors in the middle levels of society, whose economic and political interests often shaped the trajectory of events more than courtly scribes, chroniclers and their kingly patrons would like to have admitted.

As I sought to piece together these stories around the quiet absence of householders' own voices, I found guidance in a body of material composed in the period immediately after the era this dissertation focuses on: around the turn of the nineteenth century. This was a moment when British and East India Company-employed administrators fanned out across the subcontinent in pursuit of 'useful' information about their new subject populations. In South India, this craze for collecting is

well documented with reference to the ambitious work conducted by Colonel Colin Mackenzie and the Indian researchers who worked with him (for more on Mackenzie see Chapter Five). Mackenzie was only part of a wider efflorescence of historical writing and collecting in this period as actors directly affiliated with the expanding colonial regime, but also others attached to indigenous courts or whose ties cannot easily be glossed, all attempting to make sense of the preceding era.<sup>65</sup> Indians, with deep roots in southern society, wrote most of these sources. While their composition must be understood in the context of the newly established colonial regime and their authors' efforts to improve their own position within it, they also turn out to carry important lessons about the political culture of the region. I have learned to use their insights as a key that has suggested ways in which individual texts might be read as part of a larger regional 'conversation.' These texts have served in this fashion despite the fact that they are often demonstrably false, not just in their details but even in their basic features. Let us consider a few examples.

### *Ahwālnāma-i Karnūl* ('An account of the affairs of Karnul')

In 1808, a resident of the port city of Macchlipatnam on the eastern coast named Muhammad Abdullah put pen to paper in order to provide a striking, if apparently fabricated, version of how the Pannis came to control the stronghold of Karnul. We know almost nothing about the author, barring his antagonism towards the Panni family, and that he concluded with a brief line promising to rewrite it more clearly, should the text's unknown audience desire so.<sup>66</sup> Given the date of its composition and the fact that Karnul was increasingly hemmed in by British administration, it is not implausible that the author hoped to influence British authorities to intervene against Panni interests. The narrative, written in blunt, sometimes ungrammatical Persian, put forward a claim that the Pannis had stolen the region from its rightful owners through an almost farcically elaborate deceit. He began as follows:

The story goes that Shams al-Din Khan was an advisor [*wazīr*] to the Sultan of Bijapur, and he caused command of the fortress [*qila'dāri*] of Karnul to be given to his nephew Sayyid Qamar al-Din Khan. [The latter] brought the country under his control and took up residence in the fort. [During this same period] Ibrahim Khan Afghan [Panni] [...] served the ruler of Bijapur with five hundred cavalry under him. Slowly, he insinuated himself into the good graces of Qamar al-Din Khan. Their friendship increased day by day, and in time, Ibrahim Khan became a regular visitor to the fort. [...] He would sometimes come accompanied by two or three cavalymen, and at other times by ten or fifteen, and would stay as long as a week or two, drinking and eating at Qamar al-Din Khan's table. Over time, Ibrahim Khan even began to collect a salary from Qamar al-Din Khan. He convinced Qamar al-Din Khan of it as follows: "I consider you, Sir, to be like an uncle to me, and I ["this slave"] am ready to abide by your orders in all matters. If you so desire, I will take a salary from you, and if it be the case that on any day give a little more or a little less is given, I will not complain." Qamar al-Din Khan the Sayyid was by nature trusting, and agreed.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Nicholas B Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 4 (October 1, 2003): 783–814.

<sup>66</sup> Muhammad 'Abd Allah, "Ahwālnāma-i Karnul / Historical Miscellany" 1808, fol. 38a, I.O. Islamic 1543, British Library. *Har waqt khwāhand sāf nawīsānand bashawad. Muhammad 'Abd Allah bāshinda-yi Macchlibandar.*

<sup>67</sup> 'Abd Allah, fols. 23a-23b. *Haqīqat īn ast ke Shams al-Dīn Khān wazīr-i bādshāh-i Bijāpūr būd ba-nām-i barādarzāda-yi khwud ke Sayyid Qamar al-Dīn Khān Bahādur īn qila'dāri-yi Karnūl ma'ahu jāgīrāt az huzūr dahānīda būd. Sayyid Qamar al-Dīn Bahādur ba-qila' āmada ba-tassaruf-i mulk pardākhta ba-makān-i khwud būd. Jadd-i Himmat Khān Bahādur ke*

This is a strange opening frame, not least because none of it appears to have been true. Although Ibrahim Khan Panni was a real figure (who will play a key role in the events of Chapter Four) and an important player in the Panni family's early connection with Karnul, contemporary sources place him in Karnul only from the first decade or so of the eighteenth century, rather than during the Bijapur Sultanate period, more than twenty years earlier, when it had been a stronghold for the Siddi household. Moreover, I have been unable to track down any figures – either Sultanate or Mughal – with ties to Karnul bearing the titles Shams al-Din or Qamar al-Din. Still, let us continue.

The text reads more like a morality tale than a historical chronicle. After locating its main actors loosely within the orbit of the Bijapur Sultanate, the narrative afterwards remains intensely centered on a comedy of errors and a series of failed assassination attempts in Karnul itself, with Ibrahim Khan Panni, the Afghan, playing the role of ruthless villain, and Qamar al-Din Khan the guileless protagonist. Although it is abundantly clear from the first lines of the *Ahwālnāma* that Ibrahim Khan was up to no good, our first direct evidence of his ambitions comes in the form of a banquet that the Afghan insisted on throwing in Qamar al-Din Khan's honor at his own house in Karnul. The banquet, it seems, had been organized as part of a plot to imprison the naïve Qamar al-Din, but Ibrahim Khan, perceiving the conditions not quite right for springing the trap, let his quarry go. Thereafter, Ibrahim Khan wasted no time in plotting new strategies. He immediately began to build up friendships with local gentry and military recruiters, whose support, he hoped, would allow him to achieve his nefarious schemes.<sup>68</sup> Ibrahim Khan came and went from Qamar al-Din's court as he pleased, sometimes accompanied by his growing following, at other times alone.

Qamar al-Din Khan's advisors offered him increasingly urgent warnings of the danger he faced. Yet the good-hearted Khan refused to think badly of his new 'friend.' Several more times, Ibrahim Khan concocted plots aimed at trapping Qamar al-Din Khan, on one occasion feigning a prolonged illness. Qamar al-Din Khan, anxious about his friend's condition, sent his own doctors to treat the man, but to no avail, before he himself paid a visit to his friend's house. There, Ibrahim Khan, having taken a dose of purgatives [*jullāb*] for dramatic effect, writhed in his bed in real, if manufactured, gastro-intestinal distress, occasionally dashing to the toilet [*makān-i zarūr*] for relief. Looking every part the mortally ill patient, Ibrahim Khan entrusted his family's future welfare to Qamar al-Din. The heartbroken Qamar al-Din promised solemnly to look after them as his own. Meanwhile, a plot was unfolding off-stage as agents of Panni's nefarious scheme hid in the women's apartments awaiting their moment to spring and murder the innocent quarry. But Ibrahim Khan's

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*Ībrahīm Khān Afghān nazd-i wālī-i Bijāpūr bā pānsad sawār naukar būd. Āhista āhista dostī wa ikhlās bā Qamar al-Dīn sharu' kard ke rūz ba-rūz dost-hā ziyāda namūda kard. Rāh-i āmad wa raft-i khwud dar qila' nazd-i Sayyid Qamar al-Dīn Khān sharu' kard. Wa Qamar al-Dīn nām-i Karnūl Qamarnagar 'urf Karnūl mānda ma'ahu jamiy'at-i khwud wa ra'āyā-i ān khāna ārām-i tamām būd. Ībrahīm Khān gāhī hamrāhī-yi chand sawār mī āmad wa gāhī hamrāhī-yi dah pānzdah sawār mī āmad. Wa gāhī āmada yakhafta dohafta nazd-i Qamar al-Dīn Khān mī mānd wa hamīn jā āb wa tā'ām az khāna-i Qamar al-Dīn Khān mī khwurd wa āhista āhista tankhwāh-i khwud ba-nām-i Qamar al-Dīn girifta ba-Qamar al-Dīn Ībrahīm ba-dostī-yi tamām zaban nashīn karda. Ke man Sāhib rā ba-jā-yi 'amū-yi khwud mī dānam wa banda farmān-bardār-i Sāhib ba-jama'-i āmūr hastam. Agar marzī ba-man tankhwāh-i khwud ba-nām-i Sāhib mī gīrīm ba-bar qism-i ke yakrūz kam wa ziyāda khwāhad dād 'azr na-karda khwāhad girift. Qamar al-Dīn Khān Sayyid bar haqq sāf-sīna būd qabūl kard.*

<sup>68</sup> 'Abd Allah, fol. 23b. *Āhista āhista ba zamīndārān-i ānjā rāh-i dostī paidā kard wa ba-jama'dārān-i ānjā rāh-i ikhlās kard khwud rā dostī wa rafīq-i Qamar al-Dīn Khān kard.*



scheme was again thwarted, and the reader is subsequently guided through several other improbable near misses as the protagonist blundered innocently across the pages.

The blade finally fell on the night of a feast, laid out in celebration of Ibrahim Khan's 'miraculous' return to health. Men in Ibrahim Khan's service shared food and drink with Qamar al-Din's followers, observed the entertainments, and some were even invited into the innermost chambers of Qamar al-Din Khan's fortress, the women's quarters. Late in the night, as the party roared on, Ibrahim Khan signaled his men to attack Qamar al-Din Khan's unsuspecting soldiers. They quickly seized control of the fort, killing Qamar al-Din Khan. His supporters were offered two options: accept new employment under Ibrahim Khan or flee with their lives. Having secured the fortress, Ibrahim Khan next sent out letters to his allies amongst the local gentry [*zamīndārān*], who obligingly arrived bearing tribute and ready to join his ranks. By these means, concluded the viscerally bitter Muhammad Abdullah, "a great deal of wealth and riches came into Ibrahim Khan's hands," and the family's foundations in the region were firmly established.<sup>69</sup>

Muhammad Abdullah's account, although flagrantly and perhaps intentionally misleading, still offered important lessons respecting the nature of regional politics in the century or so that had preceded, in particular the importance and dangers of friendship. In early modern South India, informally constituted friendships and allegiances, whether based on real feeling or on mutual convenience, played powerful roles alongside and in combination with, more formal ties built on blood, marriage, and employment. These informal connections were shaped by widely accepted but rarely explicitly articulated expectations for how these relationships ought to be negotiated. For participants in South India's fast-moving, multi-polar political universe, survival demanded a capacity to navigate these connections fluently, and to be constantly aware of the threat that they were being misled.

### *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* ('A memoir of the regions and authorities')

A separate important account offers further elaboration on this point. The text is titled the *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* (c. 1800), authored by a former servant of Tipu Sultan named Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani. The author's family traced their history in southern India back for several generations. The chronicle's very structure serves as a reflection of South India's political landscape. Rather than selecting as its main subject any particular kingdom or dynasty, the text instead weaves geographical and genealogical narrative together into the form of a 'bouquet' [*sūrat-i guldastagī*], where the nobility and kings [*umarā wa rājahā*] of the various Balaghat (Karnatak highlands) courtly centers were gathered in appealing arrangement. Usefully for the purposes of my own research, the Panni and Miyana households play a major role in the text, and the *Tazkira* is without a doubt the single most detailed attempt to write their stories. The text has not been widely used by modern historians, however, and it is not clear how widely it was circulated at the time of its composition.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps this is because the author took something of a permissive attitude to the tyrannies of chronology. Well-known figures in the *Tazkira*, the details of whose biographies one

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. fol. 23b-27a. *Gharaz māl wa amwāl-i bisiyār ba-dast-i Ibrāhīm Khān āmada...*

<sup>70</sup> Mir Husain 'Alī Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām" (1215AH/1800CE (copied 1224 AH /1809-1810CE), fols. 1b-2a, 152, Telangana State Archives Library. The translator of the English edition, Shafi Ahmed Shariff, has identified four extant copies, of which three are in the author's own handwriting, while the fourth was transcribed in 1846 at the request of a member of the Panni family in Karnul. Mir Husain Ali Kirmani, *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w'al Hukkām*, trans. Shafi Ahmed Shariff (Mysore: Aftab-e-Karnataka Press, 1996), 2-3.

might expect to have been well-known to an educated writer like Kirmani, instead skate freely across historical epochs, turning up unexpectedly at events long before their birth or after their death, and undertaking service for courts whose authority would only extend to the region decades later.<sup>71</sup> Still, portions of his work made it into Colin Mackenzie's collection, indicating that if he was after British attention, he found it. Kate Brittlebank suggests that he received a British pension, but indicates that in writing his histories, Kirmani may have hoped to find patronage with one of Tipu Sultan's sons.<sup>72</sup>

As we have already seen from Abdullah's account, friendship was considered both a danger and an important resource in the region. Towards this end, Kirmani's account provides a striking, and apparently unique, attempt to explain the deep connection between the Panni and Miyana households, even as its framing raises serious factual red flags. The author describes how, when the Emperor Aurangzeb came south to the Deccan, he had in his company Bahlul Khan Miyana. One day, Khizr Khan Panni, "the first of the chiefs of Karnul," [*auwal-i hākīmān-i Kannūl*] came to Aurangzeb's camp to join his services.

Khizr Khan Panni Budizai, whose forebears had been of the same homeland, neighbors and even classmates of the forebears of Bahlul Khan Savanuri [Miyana], had held a *mansab* of 2,000 and had come to serve Aurangzeb. When these two old friends [Khizr Khan and Bahlul Khan] met, they bemoaned the length of their separation, such that the Savanuri Khan [elected to stay in] the tent of Khizr Khan.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, nothing from this frame story holds up under examination. Neither 'Bahlul Khan' (perhaps a reference to Abdul Karim Khan Miyana, sometimes titled Bahlul Khan) nor Khizr Khan Panni (see Chapters One and Two) probably ever served the Mughals. Moreover, the placement of Bahlul Khan in an implicitly subordinate relationship to Khizr Khan (by his going to stay in Panni's tent) inverts what we know about Khizr Khan Panni's service to Abdul Karim Khan during the 1660s-1670s (Chapter Two). Kirmani later projects a relationship between Khizr Khan Panni and Karnul, where his successors would later settle, a reference which pre-dates the Pannis' actual arrival in Karnul by several decades. These details are less important than the underlying map of relationships that the *Tazkira* lays out for its audience. The text serves as a primer documenting key features of South India's political geography, within which the Miyana and Panni households' deep affiliation across more than a century demanded explanation. The precise nature of these figures' ties (beyond acknowledging a general connection) to the Mughal court was less important. Across the *Tazkira's* pages, Kirmani demonstrates a deep attentiveness to social ties and painting detailed portraits of historical relationships that help him to explain the machinations of later politics. Chapter Five will focus closely on these stories, arguing that they reflect the Karnatak's evolving political culture in the eighteenth century, built upon densely interwoven remembered sovereignties and obligations of friendship and service.

<sup>71</sup> Kirmani, *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w'al Hukkam*, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12–13.

<sup>73</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 65b. *Khizr Khān Pannī Būdīzāi ke [...] jadd wa ābā'ish ham-watan wa ham-sāya wa ham-maktab-i jadd wa pidar-i Bahlūl Khān Sāvanūrī būdand do hazārī mansab dāsht wa ham-rikāb-i Sultān Aurangzīb āmada būd chūn har do dūstān-i qadīm bāham mulāqāt namūdand bar judā'ī-i chandīn maddat bā yakdīgar afsūs-hā khwordand chunānke Khān Savanūrī ba-khāima-yi Khizr Khān farūd āmada būd.*

### *Buying allies*

Where the bonds of friendship were insufficient (and they often were not), cash was the primary lubricating element in negotiations. This was a fact that northern observers pretended to find exceedingly distasteful, despite the fact that southern wealth was what had drawn them to the region in the first place. Mughal sources reporting on the Karnatak campaigns of the late seventeenth century were deeply uncomfortable, for example, with the strategies employed by the Mughal general Zulfiqar Khan, whose successes in the Karnatak were often obliquely tainted by the methods he adopted. Mughal observers were highly suspicious, for example, of the fact that Zulfiqar Khan's Maratha opponent, Shivaji's son Rajaram, was eventually allowed to slip the confines of a years-long, languorously maintained siege of the fort of Jinji, during which years Zulfiqar Khan and his various deputies lined their pockets with profits from various Coromandel-based investments.<sup>74</sup> Subsequently, Zulfiqar Khan's most prominent deputy, the Panni leader Daud Khan, was reported to have commonly bought off prospective antagonists with gifts of cash instead of choosing a more 'honorable' military confrontation (see Chapter Three). This theme is revisited again in Chapter Four, when Nizam al-Mulk was cornered into paying vast sums to Karnatak households in exchange for their support on a campaign, and again in Chapter Six, when Hyderabad forces entered the Karnatak to prosecute a succession war.

European observers commented on a related tendency in the south, namely to constantly reevaluate one's allegiances in light of shifting offers and opportunities. In the Pondicherry hinterlands, Francois Martin observed: "within [the past two months, local rulers] have broken and remade alliances ten times at least, sometimes for and sometimes against each other. It is indeed, difficult to conceive of such fickle temperaments as are possessed by these Hindu rulers." Martin went on to complain that this habit was even shared by local Muslims, although he thought they at least offered pretense at a more 'honorable' form of politics.<sup>75</sup> It is not surprising (as we shall see in Chapter Two) to find that one of the French Company's closest allies in the Pondicherry region, the Miyana householder Sher Khan Lodi, was lauded for demonstrating his faithfulness to the friendships that he cultivated, both with the French and with other local actors.

If South India's history was marked by nearly constant conflict over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wars only intermittently took the form of violent clashes on the battlefield. Frequently, armed encounters turned out to be elaborately staged opportunities to negotiate terms, a point underscored by the northern chronicler Bhimsen when he commented wonderingly of military culture in the southwestern territory of Malabar:

Whenever there is any dispute on the border and the kings of the country have to wage war, they draw up their troops in line of battle on both sides, the *barqandazes* [musketeers] of both sides advance to the attack and fire their muskets in the air. In the meantime the venerable Brahmins try to make peace, and the armies retire to their own countries – no body is wounded or put to any loss.<sup>76</sup>

Bhimsen was exaggerating, perhaps in a bid to make the south appear more exotic. Violence was a routine feature of South Indian politics, just as anywhere else. At the same time, as authors like Gommans have noted, it was not only in South India that battle lines and siege warfare served as a

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<sup>74</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 300–301.

<sup>75</sup> François Martin, *India in the 17th Century, 1670-1694 (Social, Economic, and Political): Memoirs of Francois Martin*, trans. Lotika Varadarajan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), Vol. I, Pt. 2: 471.

<sup>76</sup> *Tarikh-i dilkasha* [English], 196.

stage backdrop for mundane diplomatic negotiations back in camp.<sup>77</sup> Still, this style of protracted negotiation seemed to have achieved the status of an art form in South India on account of its deeply decentralized political landscape. In Chapter Six, we shall see this propensity extended to its *n*-th degree, as a diverse collection of European and indigenous interest groups spent more than two years (1748-1750) encamped in the hinterland districts of the Coromandel coast, engaged in an elaborate series of negotiations between an array of shifting local and transregional factions whose result, much more than the ever-so-brief battles that punctuated this affair, would reshape South India's political landscape in the years that followed.

Texts such as Muhammad Abdullah's *Ahwālnāma* and Kirmani's *Tazkira*, therefore, must be read as primers which offer a window into the language of politics that governed this period, even if they offer us little guidance as to the specifics of events. They relay the dangers of innocence in the face of southern political strategies, and of the necessity in building fluency in such methods and of building, in the face of such shifting political sands, reliable friendships where they could be found. These lessons shape the chapters that follow.

## Outline of the dissertation

Chapter One outlines the Miyanas' early history as they fled Mughal North India, entered service with the Bijapur Sultanate, and established bases within the Karnatak (1630-1665). This chapter draws upon seventeenth-century Persian sources that portrayed the region in terms that were at once awed, opportunistic and anxious, in order to conceptualize the Karnatak as a frontier zone. Much of the existing scholarship on this period of Sultanate history treats the Karnatak as marginal to Sultanate politics, instead focusing mainly on the Sultanates' northern frontier with the Mughals. I show here how some of the most powerful nobility in Bijapur's court invested themselves heavily in the south, establishing along the way mutually beneficial relationships with the region's many formerly Vijayanagara-affiliated nobility.

Chapter Two outlines arrangements that allowed for these Karnatak-based noble households to rise to the apex of courtly politics in Bijapur before finally securing, in some cases, safe passage into Mughal service as the Sultanate collapsed (1665-1686). The chapter focuses squarely on the institution of the household itself and develops the concept in the context of the Sultanate-ruled south. This chapter also introduces the Panni family, whose name first enters the scene at this time. The Miyanas and Pannis used their investments in the Karnatak to wield immense power in the Bijapur capital, where by the 1670s they had largely seized control of the state itself. The Miyana family (and to a lesser extent the Pannis) enjoyed such a startling rise to power in large measure because they were able to plug their own household investments along the southeastern Karnatak coast directly into shaping affairs in Bijapur and northwards along the Mughal frontier in the central Deccan, some 500 miles distant. I build this argument by undertaking a close examination of the Maratha leader Shivaji Bhonsle's well-known campaign into the Karnatak in 1677. Whereas conventional accounts have tended to ascribe to Shivaji the ideological goal of resuscitating a 'Hindu kingdom' in the south, I argue that Shivaji's main priority was to undermine the Miyanas' power in the Deccan by destroying their dominant position in the Coromandel coastal hinterlands. Shivaji's strategy was successful – within a short period, helped along by the death of the Miyana patriarch Abdul Karim Khan, the Miyana household's power had collapsed.

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<sup>77</sup> For discussion of the Mughal context, see Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 144–45.

In Chapter Three, I focus on the character of Daud Khan Panni, a powerful Mughal nobleman who built his career out of close ties to old Sultanate networks and the new Mughal regime between 1685 and 1715. I locate him within a network of family, friends and allies across the Karnatak territories upwards into the Mughal Deccan. The chapter relies upon the sorely underused Delhi-based Inayat Jang Collection in order to map the expansion of Miyana and Panni interests under Mughal patronage. Drawing on the one hand from detailed administrative records, and on the other from richly evocative memorials of Daud Khan Panni's career, this chapter considers the interrelated moral and economic imperatives of military labor recruitment and household investment. The Pannis and Miyanas adapted Mughal administrative mechanisms to manage territorial and commercial holdings even in areas well outside of imperial control, and used them to underwrite financial obligations to their followers. The chapter also shines light on an emerging, hybrid, Mughal-Sultanate administration in the south.

Chapter Four outlines the disintegration of Mughal power in southern India between 1715-1739, and the evolution of the Karnatak households' autonomous ambitions in the Karnatak as members of the northern Mughal nobility competed over the Governorship of the Deccan. This period witnessed the collapse of an as-yet delicate thread first established by Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni in the years straddling the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, connecting together for the first time territories and markets ranging from northern India to the southeastern coast, via the Deccan Governorship. These men's deaths, in 1713 and 1715, sparked a decade-long competition over this control over this network as northern actors fought for access to Karnatak wealth. Meanwhile, southern households, amongst them the Miyanas and Pannis, seized the opportunity of political uncertainty in the Deccan to strengthen their own local claims. This period ended in 1724, when the Mughal nobleman Nizam al-Mulk defeated an alliance of Deccan and Karnatak-based powers, and established his authority in the Deccan. The Nizam's 'victory,' however, had unintended consequences. The Karnatak houses retreated south of the Krishna River, strengthening a resurgent Deccan-Karnatak frontier that would help define regional politics through the end of the 1730s.

Chapter Five considers the development of a peculiarly Karnatak political culture in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by the co-existence and practical functioning of Vijayanagara, Deccan Sultanate and Mughal sovereign memories in the absence of centralized authority. I argue that the retreat of centralized Mughal power from the region afforded an opportunity for the development of what Sneath has described in the Central Asian context as a 'headless state' (2007). Rule by a loose consortium of aristocratic houses in the Karnatak demanded the development of a shared acknowledgment of the co-existence of multiple legitimating frames. Such a system helped to ensure the participation of a wide array of regional interest groups. It also facilitated a system organized around shared claims to territories and resources.

Finally, Chapter Six examines the growing crisis of the household system through the 1740s and 1750s as the Karnatak households were cut off from the southeastern sea ports and faced, in the same period, an emerging concordance of interests between European trading companies and the Hyderabad leadership. The crisis would take the form of a succession struggle between two claimants to the Hyderabad throne (1748-1751), who chose to fight, not in the Deccan, but rather in the distant southeastern Karnatak territories, where both parties sought to leverage alliances with Karnatak households and with European trading companies. The conflict exposed an important shift in regional power dynamics. As European companies expanded their reach up and down the coast, the Karnatak households lost vital access to the coast. Even as Miyana household leaders continued

to steer the trajectory of South India's history – killing first one contestant to the Hyderabadi throne and propping up his opponent, before killing the second contestant as well – it was clear that without access to the sea ports, the households were doomed to collapse. The sixth chapter ends with the killing and scattering of the Panni and Miyana leadership, and with them, the end of the Karnatak household institution that had developed over the past several decades. In their place would rise a new, increasingly centralized model of state formation that turned towards inland revenues as port cities and their hinterlands fell into European hands.



Map 1: Early 17th c. South Asia

## Chapter One: Frontier

This first chapter traces the early history of the Miyana family's arrival in the Deccan and their establishment in Bijapuri service. It places their arrival into the context of the Deccan Sultanates' expansion southwards into the Karnatak territories from the late sixteenth century on. I examine the Karnatak territory, a region extending southwards from the west-east-flowing Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, as it is portrayed in Sultanate chronicles of the period. At once a frightening and an alluring prospect in these state-sanctioned texts, the Karnatak proved a welcoming space for entrepreneurial figures in pursuit of opportunity. It is unsurprising to find that Bahlul Khan Miyana, whose dramatic departure from Mughal Hindustan has already been described in the Introduction, moved very quickly into the Karnatak after being accepted into Adil Shahi service in 1631. Buoyed by fortune and access to the wealthy marketplaces of the Karnatak, the Miyana name continued to rise until in the mid-1670s, when Bahlul Khan's grandson Abdul Karim Khan (d. 1678) became the most powerful man in Bijapur, and one of the Mughals' most formidable opponents.

The first and second chapters work together to lay out the foundations of the Miyana and Panni households' stories in the late Bijapur Sultanate era. The first chapter draws on the early history of the Miyana household to illustrate the central importance of the Deccan-Karnatak frontier to South India's history, while the second chapter turns to the concept of the military household itself. The politics of these households – their aspirations, internal and external conflicts, and their organizing structure, which allowed them to efficiently organize distant resource bases, markets, patronage and recruitment networks – were fundamental to understanding the politics of southern India in the final decades of the Deccan Sultanates, and would continue to shape South India's politics for more than a century to come.

First as Commander-in-Chief of the Bijapur army, and later as Regent for the child king Sikandar Adil Shah (r. 1672-1686), Abdul Karim Khan's conflict with Khawas Khan (d. 1676) and Siddi Masud, two Siddi (sometimes known as Habshi, or Abyssinian) commanders at court, came to play a central role in the final years of the Sultanate. Earlier attempts to make sense of the later decades of the Bijapur Sultanate's political history have underlined the importance of the rivalry between the groups, typically glossed as the 'Afghan' and 'Siddi' factions. Their intra-court contest is blamed for having undermined the institutions of state, leaving little more than a husk for the Mughals to deliver the *coup de grace*. This rivalry, moreover, is understood to have been a tale in miniature of the Deccan Sultanates courts' enduring polarization between so-called 'Deccani' and 'foreign' interests, which had structured Deccan history from the birth of the Bahmani Sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. While I have my doubts about the manner in which these politics may have played out in the earlier Sultanate period, my focus in these first two chapters is on the middle decades of the seventeenth century before the Mughal invasion, when both Bijapur and Golkonda Sultanates expanded southwards into the southern Karnatak territories. In doing so, the boundaries of indigeneity and foreignness, doubtless already highly contingent, were complicated yet further. I argue that what others have considered in terms of ethnic factionalism in this period is better conceptualized in terms of competing multi-ethnic household conglomerates that were nevertheless identified by the ethnic identity of the families that formed their nucleus.

I begin with a close examination of the Karnatak frontier and its role in Sultanate history during this period. I make the case that its importance has been underplayed in existing scholarship. Whereas the southern frontier is usually treated as an afterthought in efforts to make sense of late Sultanate politics, I show that it was at the center of things. The Karnatak's real (and imagined)



wealth of resources, in particular its close ties to the Indian Ocean economy, became a primary field for elite politics. Competition between elite members of the court, as well as key sources of funding for these factions, had their source in the region. To the extent that the Sultanate nobility's investments in the Karnatak have been acknowledged, they have most often been mourned for their supposedly damaging effect on the state's integrity. My primary interest, however, is not with the Bijapur Sultanate court. Instead, I look at the larger field of politics in South India and the more important forces that shaped it.

## Identity politics in Deccan historiography

Despite their longevity and central position (surviving over a period of more than four hundred years and covering a large swathe of South Asia's insular geography), scholarship on the Deccan Sultanates has often been squeezed to the margins by the outsized claims of their neighbors. Popular histories of Vijayanagara and Maratha polities to the south and northwest have typically cast the Sultanates in the role of villain, while the states' overbearing northern Mughal neighbors attracted the lion's share of analysis from the sixteenth century onwards. Beyond problems of neighborhood, Sultanate scholarship has also had to contend with a considerable dearth of source material.<sup>78</sup> Still, beginning in the 1990s, scholars began to make strides in underlining the Sultanates' important place in the subcontinent's history and beyond. Much of this work has taken its cue from a vocabulary that is readily available in Sultanate-era sources, which seems to underscore a division between indigenous and foreign actors. While scholars have focused on the Sultanates' extensive economic ties to Central Asia the Persian Gulf and beyond, their arguments have often formed within this assumed dichotomy.<sup>79</sup> While much of this work has simply accepted these categories, other recent work has actually doubled down on them, making the case that these were in fact primarily motivators in shaping conflict during this period.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, others have begun to complicate this understanding, in part by drawing our attention to the cultural realm and to Deccan actors' engagement with the past. This has led to important new insights in how Deccan societies embraced hybridity and produced incorporative and cosmopolitan literatures and other creative works.<sup>81</sup> These insights have yet to be considered in the context of the Sultanate's later political history.

Earlier analyses promoted the view that Deccani Muslims, cut off from the rest of the Muslim world, adopted vernacular cultural and literary traditions that gave them a sense of the Deccan as a 'homeland.' This work in some cases went so far as to imply that Deccani Muslims were, thanks to cultural mixing, less authentically Muslim. By contrast, Persian-speaking foreigners,

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<sup>78</sup> For an extensive discussion of available sources see Roy S. Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates, 1565--1636" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Elite Migration and Early Modern State Formation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (May 1, 1992): 340–63; Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*. The book has not gone without critique, see Nile Green, "Review of Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no. 4 (2011): 589–92.

<sup>81</sup> Phillip Wagoner and Richard Eaton's recent monograph is also an important example of this type of work. Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*. In the short period since its publication it has already inspired promising new directions in Deccan scholarship, see the articles included in the special issue of *South Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2016): "Reuse of the Past: Producing the Deccan, 1300-1700."

recruited both for their connections to distant courts and marketplaces as well as their disinterest in local politics, purportedly sneered at vernacular languages and instead cultivated their attachments to prestigious foreign capitals.<sup>82</sup> More nuanced perspectives, particularly in recent years, have sought to underscore the ways in which such boundaries were contextually constructed.<sup>83</sup> One of the most fascinating examples of this can be found in the Deccan-based Siddi community. Siddis, also sometimes called Habshis, were elite Ethiopian military slaves, converted to Islam and imported in large numbers into the Deccan Sultanates. Having arrived in the Deccan, some of these men rose to the highest ranks of politics.<sup>84</sup> Cut off entirely from natal kinship networks, their value was thought to have lain in their absolute alienation and thus reliably dedicated service to the throne. Yet as elsewhere, military slaves moved quickly to establish more expansive social resources, in this case by building bridges to Deccani networks.<sup>85</sup>

Roy Fischel's 2012 dissertation invites us to consider the geographic imaginary of the Deccan itself. His study explores the ways in which different groups, namely Deccani Muslims, foreign Muslims, and Deccani non-Muslims each retained distinct but overlapping spheres of activity as they participated within a larger, loosely interwoven Sultanate system.<sup>86</sup> As with being Deccani, one's claim to foreignness was to some degree about who one fraternized with, and in turn influenced one's sphere of influence. Fischel emphasizes the care with which foreigners controlled social affiliations through practices like marriage. This not only preserved valuable ties to the *wilāyat*, or home country,<sup>87</sup> but also, according to Fischel, allowed for greater mobility. He argues that it was identity as a foreigner that allowed someone like the Mir Jumla, perhaps the most famous member of the seventeenth-century Golkonda Sultanate nobility, to pack up shop and leave when opportunities seemed brighter elsewhere. He was recruited by Mughals in the 1650s and went on to pursue a profitable career as one of the empire's highest-ranking noblemen. Fischel pushes the argument even further elsewhere. He draws upon the career of Sayyid Murtaza, another Iranian who took service under Deccan and Mughal employ in the late sixteenth century and eventually was responsible for a vicious attack on the city of Ellichpur (previously his own Deccan stronghold) to suggest that foreigners who intentionally avoided establishing local ties would have been more willing to deploy violent tactics against localities for short term gain.<sup>88</sup> This latter assertion seems difficult to prove. Nevertheless, it raises important questions about how one's affiliation with different social networks influenced his or her political strategy.

Afghans have always posed a particularly tricky challenge to Deccan historiography's desire for neat categories. Twentieth century scholars, reflecting modern understandings of Afghans as a Central Asian people, have typically identified them as foreign.<sup>89</sup> This categorization finds support in

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<sup>82</sup> See for example D. C Verma, *History of Bijapur* (New Delhi: Kumar Bros., 1974), 7.

<sup>83</sup> Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761*, 67–68.

<sup>84</sup> Eaton, chap. 5: Malik Ambar (1548-1626).

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of military slavery in the Delhi Sultanate context, see Sunil Kumar, "Bandagi and Naukari: Studying Transitions in Political Culture and Service under the Sultanates of North India, 13-16th Centuries," in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, ed. Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 60–108.

<sup>86</sup> Fischel, "Society, Space and the State in the Deccan Sultanates."

<sup>87</sup> Subrahmanyam, "Of Imarat and Tijarat."

<sup>88</sup> Fischel, "Society, Space and the State in the Deccan Sultanates," 208.

<sup>89</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *House of Shivaji (Studies and Documents on Maratha History: Royal Period)*, 3d ed. (Calcutta: M.C. Sarker & Sons, 1955); Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*; Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978).

well-thumbed contemporary European sources such as John Fryer's travelogue and Francois Martin's record as head of the French East India Company at Pondicherry. While Fryer specifically identifies the Siddis as Deccani and the Afghans as foreign,<sup>90</sup> Martin more ambivalently refers to Deccani and Pathan factions in his commentaries on regional politics, seeming to implicitly distinguish 'Pathans' (Afghans) from other groups like the Iranians.<sup>91</sup> Their observations are reflected by wider discourses in South Indian society – contemporary Persian sources habitually refer to the *dakaniyān* (Deccanis) and the *gharbiyān* (Westerners/Foreigners). While often associated with the latter faction, Afghans had long been considered to possess many of the same attributes as other regional interest groups. Following an attempted coup by the Deccani Kamal Khan early in Ismail Adil Shah's reign in Bijapur (r. 1510-1534), the king decreed that only 'Mughals' (best glossed as 'Central Asian,' given that the North Indian dynasty known by this name had yet to enter the subcontinent)<sup>92</sup> would receive employment. He made an oath that

[...] no Deccani or Habshi or son of a foreigner would receive employment [in his court]. For twelve years it remained, without any change, until the 'Mughals,' reaching an agreement amongst themselves, petitioned for the enlistment of their offspring. [The king] agreed even to the extent that Rajputs and Afghans might also find service, but under no circumstances the Deccanis or Habshis...<sup>93</sup>

Ismail Adil Shah's paranoia around any group with a hope of regional ties seems plainly evident, but for him, foreignness and Deccaniness seem to have existed on a spectrum. Afghans, like Rajputs, were more Deccani than the offspring of foreigners, but less Deccani than the Siddis, not to mention Deccanis proper. Like others, Afghans were a particularly threatening group in terms of their capacity to build local networks.

If in the sixteenth century one's identity evolved out of one's ties or lack thereof to the Deccan soil, we must ask how categories like 'Deccani' and 'foreigner' were further destabilized by the Sultanates' early seventeenth-century expansion outside of the Deccan proper and into the Karnatak, a region that for most of Deccan Sultanate history fell well beyond the familiar boundaries of the Sultanate world. All major groups in Deccan politics, whether Iranian, Maratha, Siddi, Afghan or otherwise, were 'foreign' to the Karnatak. All of these groups shared, in addition to the urgent necessity of building local alliances, their experience of participation within the Sultanate system and the benefits of such an affiliation. The Karnatak frontier posed numerous challenges. Sultanate newcomers who hoped to find success were necessarily flexible and willing to build ties with local elites. At the same time, Sultanate nobilities' experience of shared participation within a political system provided a platform for their mutual negotiation even as they pursued competing interests in the region. These circumstances, along with the collapse of centralized authority in

<sup>90</sup> John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia: Being Nine Years' Travels, 1672-1681*, ed. William Crooke, vol. 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1909), 44.

<sup>91</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol 1. Pt. 2: 507-508.

<sup>92</sup> Firishtah, who wrote his history at the turn of the seventeenth century, specifically uses the term *Mughulān*. His application of the word to a period before the rise of the northern Mughal Empire raises questions of interpretation. The term might have signified the larger quasi-ethnic Central Asian community of 'Mongols' and affiliated descendants of Chingizid power, or it could have been a shorthand for any northern 'foreigner' recently arrived from north Indian territories associated during Firishta's time with Timurid (Mughal) control.

<sup>93</sup> Muhammad Qāsim Hindū Shāh Astarābādī Firishtah, *Tārīkh-i Firishtah* (Bombay; Pune, 1831), 2: 31. ...*Dakanī wa Habshī wa Mughulzāda rā naukar nagīrand wa dawāzda sāl in hukm mumtadd shuda taghīr wa tabdīl dar ān rāh nayāft tā ānke Mughulān itifāq namūda iltimās-i nigāhdāshtan-i farzandān-i khwud kardand wa o ba-darja qabūl uftāda hukm shud ke Rājput wa Afghān nīz naukarī gīrand ammā Dakanī wa Habshī rā hīch gūna nigāh nadārand.*

Bijapur Sultanate, afforded ideal conditions for the consolidation of Sultanate military households in the decades before the Mughal conquest.

### The legacy of the Deccan-Karnatak frontier

I have already described in the Introduction the Karnatak's broad division between a drier highland interior (the Karnatak Balaghat) and fertile coastal flatlands (Karnatak Payanghat), demarcated by two north-south mountain ranges to east and west. This distinction was further complicated by a political divide between 'Bijapuri' and 'Hyderabadi' Karnataks carved out after the two Sultanates signed a treaty of mutual cooperation in 1646. More than two-thirds of the Karnatak territory fell into a Bijapuri sphere of influence, including the southernmost part of the Coromandel Coast. The remaining eastern districts known today as Rayalaseema as well as most of the central and northern Coromandel Coast were granted to Golkonda.<sup>94</sup> This division proved remarkably durable, surviving in Mughal and even post-Mughal geographical conceptions of South India well into the latter decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>95</sup> The Raichur *doāb* between the Krishna and Tungabhadra Rivers marked the northern boundary between the core Sultanate territories and the 'newly conquered' regions further to the south. In the earlier period between 1362 and 1512, eleven wars had been fought over this narrow stretch of land.<sup>96</sup> After the Battle of Talikota in 1565, which saw the combined Sultanate forces band together in alliance for just long enough to defeat Vijayanagara and force the Aravidu dynasty's retreat southwards to the fortress of Penukonda, the Krishna River remained an important conceptual boundary line. Sultanate forces were slow to move southwards, contenting themselves for many decades with periodic campaigns into a territory now governed by loosely affiliated, competing regional polities led by lineage groups known in contemporary sources as *rājās* (kings), *nāyakas* (often Telugu-speaking military commanders), and *palaiyakkarārs* (*pālīgār* in Persian, used to describe local leaders who, in the Sultanate period, were firmly associated with inaccessible forested strongholds). Many of these groups continued to affiliate themselves with some articulation of the still-surviving Vijayanagara political dispensation.

For much of the twentieth century, historians tended to conceptualize the Sultanate-Vijayanagara frontier in terms of a religious clash of Muslim aggression against Hindu civilization on the defensive.<sup>97</sup> Yet even a brief consideration of the record shows that the often-feuding northern Sultanates more commonly sought alliance with their southern Vijayanagara neighbor in order to one-up their co-religionist neighbors up through the sixteenth century. Indeed, the alliance that won the Battle of Talikota (c. 1565) was an aberration. It was the only occasion in which Sultanate courts made common cause against their southern neighbor. Recently, scholars have begun to argue that far from reflecting a clash of religious cultural orientations, Vijayanagara and the Sultanates were co-participants in a shared political culture. Phillip Wagoner's study on forms of courtly dress and royal title, for example, illustrates the extent to which Vijayanagara's ruling elite bought into Indian

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<sup>94</sup> Nayeem, *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom, 1489-1686 A.D.*, 103–4.

<sup>95</sup> See for example Mu'nim Khān al-Hamadānī Aurangabādī, "Sawānih- Dakkan" (1197AH/1782-1783CE), 221, Telangana State Archives Library.

<sup>96</sup> Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*, 64–65.

<sup>97</sup> See for example C. K. Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*, ed. C. S. Srinivasachari (Annamalainagar: The University, 1944); K. Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1966); Verma, *History of Bijapur*; Abdul Majeed Siddiqui, *History of Golkonda*, 1st ed (Hyderabad: Literary Publications, 1956).

Ocean-wide Islamic norms of kingship.<sup>98</sup> Elsewhere, Cynthia Talbot has argued that the depiction, exemplified in the seventeenth-century *Rayavacakamu*,<sup>99</sup> of a three-part division of political geography between those territories ruled by the ‘Lord of Horses’ (the northern Sultanates), the ‘Lord of Elephants’ (the eastern Gajapati kingdom in Orissa), and the southern ‘Lord of Men’ (Vijayanagara), reflected the contemporary assumption that all three typologies were legitimate participants in the world of politics, and that their religious identities were unimportant in comparison with other qualities such as their respective martial specializations.<sup>100</sup> Most recently, Wagoner and Eaton’s *Power, Memory, Architecture* uncovers a shared revival, in both the Bijapur Sultanate and Vijayanagara, of the memory of tenth through twelfth century Chalukya culture.<sup>101</sup> The development of a shared aesthetic between these states demonstrates that they were not, as earlier scholars had believed, two discrete and incompatible civilizations. Rather they were political and cultural siblings, squabbling over the same tracts of land and resources.

Despite strong evidence of these states’ overlapping cultural orientations, Sultanate forces were nevertheless quite slow to expand southwards. What slowed Sultanate movement into formerly Vijayanagara-held territories? Part of the answer lies in strategic concerns. In the early decades of Karnatak expansion after the Battle of Talikota, Sultanate campaigns in the Karnatak were cut short by crises back in the political capital. The increasingly urgent problem of Bijapur’s relationship with its floundering northern neighbor, the Nizam Shahi Sultanate of Ahmadnagar, also demanded much of Bijapur’s attention.<sup>102</sup> Finally, Sultanate armies encountered an unfamiliar landscape, difficult to navigate and disconcerting. This comes through clearly in descriptions of the period. If Deccan Sultanate and Vijayanagara courts had together developed as part of a shared or overlapping political culture, points of overlap and familiarity was unevenly distributed.

The road south from the Deccan into the Karnatak was not only a political frontier but an ecological one, which posed substantial challenges to North Indian and Deccani cavalry-led armies alike.<sup>103</sup> Sixteenth-century Vijayanagara had sat almost atop this ecological boundary. Along its northern flank, it participated in the cavalry-based military culture of the semi-arid Western Deccan plateau, importing a substantial number of cavalry horses by sea in order to meet this purpose. But Vijayanagara’s territorial claims also dipped into the dense landscape further south, for which the state drew upon the Karnatak’s vibrant military market in foot-soldiers. Yet further south in the Tamil country – in Thanjavur, Jinji and Madurai – sixteenth and seventeenth-century *nāyaka* rulers ambiguously associated with Vijayanagara sovereignty enjoyed near *de facto* independence.<sup>104</sup> These rain-rich southernmost territories, at a safe distance from the tail end of the semi-arid highland that served as a thoroughfare for cavalry-based armies, had long sheltered beyond the reach of northern forces.

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<sup>98</sup> Wagoner, “Sultan among Hindu Kings.”

<sup>99</sup> There is some disagreement in dating this text. See fn. 41 in Chekuri, “Between Family and Empire,” 45.

<sup>100</sup> Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self.”

<sup>101</sup> Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*.

<sup>102</sup> Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 129–48.

<sup>103</sup> Two studies focusing on, respectively, the far southern region of Tirunelveli and the western Deccan offer powerful insights on the central role of the ecological frontier in shaping historical processes in the larger region, but neither sheds light upon the specific area in question. Ludden, *Peasant History in South India*; Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>104</sup> Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 43.

That Sultanate armies were at first ill-equipped to take advantage of this landscape was plainly indicated by frustrated accounts such as the one which follows, describing a campaign led by Ali Adil Shah I in 1575 to the hilly tracts of the western Kanara region, well known for its valuable trade in pepper, hardwoods and other spices.

[The king] left his army at Chandragutti and together with Mustafa Khan and some five or six thousand cavalry he went to Karur [probably Kollur]. The fort is located in a mountainous territory amongst dense forest and the path of entrance and exit is so narrow that in most places only one horseman can pass at once. In this terrifying place most of the men became frightened and desired to return. The Asylum of Justice [Adil Shah] in accordance with their wishes entrusted the fortress of that place to Shankara Nayak and returned to Chandragutti.<sup>105</sup>

If forests and mountainous terrain could block the armies' path, monsoon-flooded rivers proved equally hazardous for northern armies. For most of the year, the Karnatak's many rivers, almost all of which flowed along a west-easterly course, were little more than a trickle.<sup>106</sup> However during the rivers' monsoon spate, Deccan-based armies faced the threat of being trapped on their southern banks, unable to return to or protect their home territories. The Sultanate occupation of Vijayanagara's territories on the southern banks of the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers after the Battle of Talikota was cut short, for example, by the impending threat of the rainy season.<sup>107</sup> In the later part of the 17th century, the Bijapuri general Sher Khan Lodi faced a similar quandary along the more southerly Kollidam River.

Sher Khan had seized two forts belonging to the Nayak of Madura. He had, however, been forced to relinquish these, being obliged to withdraw across the river Coleroon [Kollidam] in order to secure the protection of his own territories. This river has its source to the northeast of the kingdom of Bijapur. With heavy rains in the catchment area [on the western side] during the months of May and June, the level of the river rises. Sher Khan feared that if he stayed on the other bank for too long, it would be impossible for him to recross, in which case the other princes might take advantage of this opportunity to attack his territory.<sup>108</sup>

The problem of monsoon floods proved a perennial one throughout the period under investigation in this dissertation. As late as 1740, British observers reported that a Maratha army returning north from a campaign in the Karnatak were obliged to wait at least four months "till the waters of the Kistna are fallen, which being swelled at present hinders their return to their own country."<sup>109</sup>

The Karnatak was a territory demarcated by significant, albeit not insurmountable barriers. As I describe below, actors who hoped to surmount these boundaries had to be willing to root themselves to some extent within the Karnatak itself, building local connections that allowed them to overcome differences in landscape and military culture and to establish allegiances that were crucial to one's survival in the radically multi-polar politics of the southern territories. As these kinds

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<sup>105</sup> Firishtah, *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 2: 84. 'Alī 'Ādil Shāh lashkar-i khwud dar Chandragūttī nigāh dāshta ba itifāq-i Mustafā Khān bā panj-shash hazār sawār ba Karūr [Kollūr] raft wa ān qil'a dar kūhistānī wāqa' shuda ke mushtamal ast bar ashjār-i besiyār wa rāh-i dukhūl wa kharūj-i ān chunān tang ke aksar-i jāhā ziyāda az yak sawār namitawānad raft banābar īn dar ān mauza'-i hawbnāk aksar-i mardum dilgīr gashta khwāhān-i murāja'at shudand wa 'adālat panāh muwāfiq-i khwāhish-i khalā'iq-i dargāh qil'a-i ānjā rā ba Sankar [Shankara] Nāyak arzānī dāshta ba Chandragūttī mu'āwadat namūd.

<sup>106</sup> Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> Mīr Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī, "Tazkira al-Mulūk" 1020AH/1611-12CE, fol. 51a, Caps. Or. A. 5, Bodleian Library.

<sup>108</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, pt. 2: 525.

<sup>109</sup> Madras (India : Presidency), ed., *Selections from Public Consultations: Letters from Fort St. George and Fort St. David Consultations, 1740*, Records of Fort St. George (Madras: Government Press, 1916), 50 (13 Jun., 1740).

of local connections began to be forged, however, some Deccan observers, including courtly chroniclers who described early campaigns, fretted that those who cultivated associations in the Karnatak seemed to display a conflict of interest.

Early seventeenth-century Sultanate chroniclers tasked with recounting military forays offer conflicting portraits. On the one hand, their authors seem to have found an opportunity to indulge in the literary cliché of *'ajā'ib*, or 'wonders.'<sup>110</sup> The region's wondrousness, in part, came from its supposed location outside the realm of Islam – this was certainly a land far beyond the familiar Islamicate cities of the Deccan. Nor were they depicting the more familiar shared Islamicate courtly culture that would formerly have been visible in the urban capital of Vijayanagara, now largely abandoned and in ruins.<sup>111</sup> The authors painted a romantic vision of a wilderness dotted with temples and populated by people of strange and unfamiliar habit. It was a landscape where one might happen upon curious, even miraculous things. A postscript to Rafi' al-din Shirazi's *Tazkira al-Mulūk* (1020AH/1611-12CE) informs its readers, for example, that there is a type of plant outside of Bankapur that grew over the course of five months into the shape of a boy of twelve years. Those who investigated an un-dried specimen would find the stomach filled with a yellow fluid similar to that found in pumpkins.<sup>112</sup> Such stories suggest the extent to which chroniclers wrote towards the expectations of genre, which likewise called for a romantic portrait of the conquering and civilizing army of Islam, prepared to wipe away the twin scourges of infidelity and wildness.<sup>113</sup> On the whole, local groups are described in only the haziest and exoticized of terms. The texts offer us little to help flesh out the individuals and groups whom Sultanate actors encountered. Still, the chroniclers could not disguise the fact that for many of the people who accompanied the Sultanate armies – merchants, soldiers, Sufi wanderers and other adventurous souls, the Karnatak was no mystery but rather a welcoming and familiar place filled with known business partners and prospective allies. The groups they encountered in the Karnatak were by no means homogenous. Although later chapters will lend more granular detail, it is worth noting here that in the highlands Sultanate armies would have encountered, apart from Kannada, Telugu and Tamil-speaking groups who mixed agricultural and soldiering pursuits, merchants both local and of more distant provenance – specialists of the coastal trade or of inland routes, and forest-dwelling communities who may have mixed hunting and gathering, trade, and 'slash-and-burn' agriculture. Muslims in substantial numbers had already come south to seek their fortunes in the both before the fall of Vijayanagara and in the decades afterwards. Many who joined the Sultanate's armies did so with an eye to pursuing their own opportunities.

There is a clear tension therefore, between the chroniclers' efforts to paint a clear distinction between Sultanate armies and the territories and people they encountered (one which matched

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<sup>110</sup> On which, see Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>111</sup> For an interesting recent study on the city's destruction and its historical treatment, see Mark T. Lycett and Kathleen D. Morrison, "The 'Fall' of Vijayanagara Reconsidered: Political Destruction and Historical Construction in South Indian History 1," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 56, no. 3 (January 1, 2013): 433–70.

<sup>112</sup> Mīr Rafi' al-Din Shīrāzī, "Tazkira al-Mulūk" 1020AH/1611-12CE, f. 239b, Bodleian Library.

<sup>113</sup> Literature on genre conventions and the challenge of composing (and reading) for form versus pragmatic realities particularly in the context of 'Hindu-Muslim encounter' in early modern South Asia, see Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India; Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing* (London: Luzac, 1966); Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (New Delhi ; New York, NY: Penguin, Viking, 2004); Ali Anooshahr, "Mughal Historians and the Memory of the Islamic Conquest of India," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 43, no. 3 (2006): 275–300; Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in India C. 1500-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Flood, *Objects of Translation*.

expectations of genre), and the reality of preexisting entanglements and entrepreneurial individuals who actively sought to build connections. Shirazi tried to reconcile this tension by leaning upon a narrative of decline. He described an earlier period under the famed Vijayanagara ruler Krishnadevaraya (r. 1509-1529) and Aliya Rama Raja (r. 1542-1565) in glowing terms. These wise rulers had won Muslims into their service, making them eaters of their salt by undertaking their training and patronage [*tarbiyat wa ri'āyat*] and granting them protection. Things had come to such a pass that even the great nobles of Islam [*umarā-yi Islām*] had turned disobediently from service to their Muslim emperors [*az pādshāhān-i Islām rū gardān shuda*], with the intention of more profitable service with the king at Vijayanagara. An area of the city was set aside, which came to be known as Turkwāla, and the Qur'an was even given a prominent place in the court.<sup>114</sup> In intervening years, he depicted the Karnatak as having fallen on hard times. By the time Shirazi visited the environs of the ruined city of Vijayanagara sometime after the Battle of Talikota, the country's people had been reduced to shameful straits, living in caves in the surrounding hillsides and venturing out by cover of darkness to collect some means of subsistence. With remarkable forthrightness, Shirazi recounts learning that it was possible to waylay these unfortunates on their nocturnal forays, torturing them into revealing their hiding places and with it, the wealth they were rumored to have hoarded. He and his companions decided to entertain themselves in this fashion. Their captives led them deep into a confusing warren of tunnels until they reached a narrow place where suddenly their 'guides' began to cry out to unseen companions and, hearing the sounds of men and weapons around them, they realized they had walked into a trap. They fled backwards following a trail of burning coals with which they had marked their path to safety. The account ends, ominously, with the observation that "most of the mountains of that country have these sorts of caves."<sup>115</sup>

Such strained narrative was present in other accounts as well, including Fuzuni Astarabadi's later *Futūhāt-i 'Ādil Shāhī* (1054AH/1644-1645CE). Here, a portrait of the territories around Bidnur and Ikkeri describes how "its jungle was of great harshness; its mountains inspired dread."<sup>116</sup> In some places, the multitude of trees was such that daylight could not even shine through. Yet against this backdrop, the Sultanate army at times came across settlements of astonishing wealth and beauty. The fortified city of Ikkeri was described as a 'wonder of the country' [*'ajab-i mulkī*], the fortress ringed by a great quantity of buildings and gardens and other novelties [*ikhhtar'āt*], not to mention grand reservoirs, moats, and other waterworks.<sup>117</sup> It is not all that surprising then to find that some of the men in the Sultanate armies were quite prepared to embark on mutually profitable ventures with Karnatak-based locals. Adam Khan Afghan, a soldier under Sultanate pay, had been entrusted with securing the fortress of Ikkeri. During the king's brief absence on a southward expedition to Malabar, this Afghan made terms with the locals [*bā būmiya sākhta*] and sold the 'heaven-like' country to a group of itinerants [*guwārān*].<sup>118</sup> Important here is not just the Afghan's

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., f. 28a–29b.

<sup>115</sup> Mīr Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī, fol. 50b. *Ma'lum shud ke mardum-i bisiyārī dar rakhna hastand wa sadāyi-i asliha bagūsh-i mā rasīd wa sar-i nīza-yi chand numāyān shud. Az bīm-i ānke mabādā bīrūn āmada bar mā ghalaba kunand az ānjā ma'yūs bar gashā az 'alāmāt-i siyāhī ke bar sanghā karda būdīm jāyi basalāmat bīrūn awurdīm wa aksar-i kūh-hāye ān wilāyat īn qism-i rakhna dārad.*

<sup>116</sup> *Jangalash dar kamāl-i sakhtī ast wa kūhha-yi bashikūhash az īn sakht-tar ast.* Fuzūnī Astarabādī, "Futūhāt-i-'Ādil Shāhī" 1054AH/1644-1645CE, fol. 376b, Add. 27251, British Library.

<sup>117</sup> Astarabādī, fols. 402a-402b.

<sup>118</sup> Astarabādī, fols. 399b-400a. *Ān chunān wilāyat-i bihisht nishānī rā ba andak hajūmī ke az guwārān-i ān mulk dīda būd shahr wa hisār ba īshān farūkhta būd.* Steingass suggests 'gypsy' for *guwār*.



disloyalty, but also the degree to which the author perceived his entrepreneurial attitude as having conformed to the Karnatak's purportedly chaotic and petty political environment.<sup>119</sup>

Such accounts were experimentations within the *'ajā'ib* genre, to be sure, but they were also attempts to make sense of real differences in culture and ecology, and to guard against the region's enticements: valuable products included locally produced textiles, precious metals and gems, forest products, as well as goods imported into southern ports from the far corners of the Indian Ocean. Also of interest for military specialists was the prospect of employment in one of the region's many courts, the possibility of rapid advancement in a favorable labor market, and even (given the unstable political environment) the prospect of one's self attaining a foothold as a local ruler. The authors of these early-seventeenth century Sultanate chronicles seem to have understood that these seductive opportunities were a risk to their royal patrons based in the royal courts of the central Deccan, in Bijapur or in Golkonda.

### The move south

The tension between risk and opportunity in the Karnatak south was almost certainly a major reason why Sultanate forces waited as long as they did to move into the region. It was only the final collapse of the northern Nizam Shahi Sultanate of Ahmadnagar in 1636, along with the growing pressure of Mughal expansion along its northern flank that forced a reassessment of the Sultanates' hesitant Karnatak policy. The reign of Muhammad Adil Shah (r. 1627-1657) in Bijapur saw a rapid expansion southwards after the late 1630s, when campaigns brought under Sultanate control a string of strategic forts along a swathe of territory sweeping southeastwards towards the Coromandel Coast, including Ikkeri, Baswapatan, Sira, Bangalore, Srirangapatnam, Vellore, Jinji and others. In this same period, the Qutb Shahi Sultanate likewise found traction, capturing, under the command of the famed Mir Jumla, a number of strategic fortresses in Rayalaseema, along a southerly strand ending in the Penner River watershed. Amongst these were Siddhavat (near Kadapa), Nandiyal, Ganjikota, Gutti, and Udayagiri.<sup>120</sup> Yet local groups continued to regularly and successfully challenge Sultanate claims; territorial control was generally limited to the immediate environs of these fortresses.

Existing scholarship does not tell us much about how this southern expansion might have affected Bijapur's political and financial circumstances. Unlike the long-held territories of the Deccan 'proper,' much of the Karnatak remained un-assessed even after the Sultanate regimes began to expand their reach southwards. Direct Sultanate governance was limited to a small handful of fortress garrisons, while practical day-to-day control remained in the hands of local *palaiyakkarārs* and *nāyakas*, who offered *peshkash*, a form of tribute collected in lump sum.<sup>121</sup> Such an ad-hoc system by definition meant a high degree of revenue fluctuation and the expense of strong military force to persuade recalcitrant local rulers. In *Sufis of Bijapur* (1978), Richard Eaton argued that

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<sup>119</sup> The story of Adam Khan Afghan offers striking parallel to an account from the Qutb Shahi Karnatak of an Afghan nobleman named Rahim Dad Khan who, in league with his companion Hindu Bhalirao, led a rebellion against Golkonda in the vicinity of Kondavidu in the 1590s. Anonymous, "Tārīkh-i Sultān Muhammad Qutb Shāhī" 1026AH/1617CE, 518–522, Tarikh #85, Salar Jung Museum. The episode is addressed at some length in Fischel, "Society, Space and the State in the Deccan Sultanates," 192–93.

<sup>120</sup> Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, 27–72.

<sup>121</sup> Some 'new' Adil Shahi territories such as the region around Bankapur, appear to have been more successfully incorporated in the Bijapur Sultanate. See Hiroshi Fukazawa, *The Medieval Deccan: Peasants, Social Systems and States: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5–7.

southwards territorial expansion under Muhammad Adil Shah took place at the expense of the state's financial and political stability. Despite the substantial injection of fresh revenue these new territories offered (according to the nineteenth-century *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, in 1648 the Bijapur army hauled back from the newly conquered fort at Jinji an astonishing 40,000,000 *hūn*, or approximately Rs. 140,000,000), the state would soon show signs of financial stress. In 1654 there was a major devaluation of the *hūn*, which Eaton interpreted as evidence that the move southward had introduced new stresses to Bijapur's economy by overexpansion, as the state was unable to maintain command over both its Deccan and Karnatak territories. The Karnatak conquests were thought to have distracted Sultanate attention away from the northern frontier where the rising threat of the young Maratha leader Shivaji (the rebellious son of the Adil Shahi commander Shahji) and Mughal expansion formed a dangerous admixture.<sup>122</sup>

Certainly, the Adil Shahi dynasty itself appeared inadequately prepared to simultaneously negotiate such far-flung frontiers, more so after a debilitating illness left the ruling Sultan, Muhammad Adil Shah paralyzed for the final decade of his life. I argue, however, that if southern expansion produced mixed dividends for the courtly center, it proved a boon for the Sultanate nobility. It is not enough to dismiss Bijapur's expansion into the Karnatak as merely an unfortunate distraction for Bijapur at a time when it should have been focused on its northern border. Indeed, the region's reputed wealth had long since reached the ears even of the Mughals, whose occasional commentary on the topic suggests that the Karnatak was seen even by the middle decades of the century as a crucial part of their long-term ambitions in the south. In May of 1665, for example, the Deccan-based Mughal nobleman Raja Jai Singh's *munshi* wrote:

Now all the *zamindars* of the Karnatak and wild people of Barkol [?] and Kanul [Karnul] etc. have sent their agents, just as one captured deer draws many wild and forest deers. And they are waiting for hints or signs and for the sake of the Bijapur expedition it is absolutely necessary to conciliate them and give them hope to get their *watan* (homeland).<sup>123</sup>

Later in December of the same year Jai Singh's secretary again commented that, "...[k]nowing that the conquest of Bijapur is the preface [*muqaddama*] to the conquest of all Deccan and Karnatak Qutb-ul-Mulk and other *zamindars* of the south have thrown the veil over the face of devotion and obedience and they have united their interests..."<sup>124</sup> Years later in a letter to his commander Zulfiqar Khan, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb picked up this same theme, commenting:

Thank God that we have accomplished the work (of conquering the Deccan). But the expenses incurred [...] are defrayed from the treasury of the Northern India. [...] I have heard that in the Karnatic large and old treasures are hidden and buried under the ground. [...] Its revenue is said to have been estimated by the late Masud Khan [Siddi Masud] at seventy or eighty lacs of 'huns'. Why don't you take possession of this kingdom?<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700*, 179–80.

<sup>123</sup> Munshī Udairāj, *The Military Despatches of a Seventeenth Century Indian General; Being an English Translation of the Haft Anjuman of Munshi Udairaj, Alias Tale'yar Khan (Benares Ms. 53 b-93b)*, trans. Jagadish Narāyan Sarkār (Calcutta: Scientific Book Agency, 1969), 78, 118.

<sup>124</sup> Udairāj, 78, 118.

<sup>125</sup> Aurangzeb, *Ruka'at-i-Alamgiri; or, Letters of Aurungzebe, with historical and explanatory notes*, trans. Jamshedji Hormasji Bilimoriya (London: Luzac, 1908), CLXII.

Clearly, the Karnatak was not a distraction but rather a core part of mid-seventeenth century subcontinental geopolitics. While much of the historiographical attention has focused on the major lines of military confrontation in the central Deccan, these battles were fought with an eye to a more distant prize: the richly imagined wealth of the Karnatak.

### The Karnatak mapped

Despite its frustrating inaccessibility for northern armies and its portrait in Deccan Sultanate chronicles, the Karnatak was far from an untamed wilderness. In fact, the Karnatak had long been overlaid by well-trodden routes connecting inland markets with busy coastal ports that joined South India to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, as well as the Deccan and North India. It is not without reason that one of the Vijayanagara ruler's titles was 'Lord of the Eastern and Western Oceans.' Jean Deloche's work maps major north-south trade networks connecting sixteenth-century Vijayanagara's capital to southern markets, with routes converging from the ocean ports both east (to Pulicat) and west (to Goa and Honavar via Bankapur), as well as to the population centers directly southwards on the upper Kaveri River (such as Srirangapatnam) and the temple centers of Kalahasti and Rameshwaram to the far southeast. A second southern network filtered almost all east-westerly movement along the western coast between the gap of Palaghat between the Nilgiri mountains and the Anaimalai hills, with few other opportunities before one reached the northern route via Bankapur. By contrast, the southeastern coast of Coromandel with its comparatively gentle terrain was densely tracked, with a web of routes connecting inland territories to the plethora of ports strung along this coastline.<sup>126</sup> Both politically and economically, the northern and southern Karnatak were interconnected but not unified.

The decline of Vijayanagara probably saw a coinciding slowdown of trade along the north-south routes connecting Karnatak to Deccan, but there is no reason to believe it had much effect on the southern Karnatak routes connecting inland markets to sea-based ports.<sup>127</sup> Coastal networks, served by small ships, also accounted for a great deal of movement and connected markets along the eastern and western coasts in the south, redistributing major goods like rice from surplus to deficit regions and also ferrying export-oriented goods to larger ports. Asian and European merchants of a variety of backgrounds navigated between south Indian ports and the major ports of Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, and Europe. With them travelled numerous specialists in banking, translation, religion, commerce, etc. Of material goods, rice was perhaps *the* major good traded along both country and export routes, but one also finds large amounts of paddy, various foodstuffs, lumber, raw cotton and textiles amongst bulky lower-value goods, while other items included indigo (particularly from Rayalaseema), pepper (from Kanara), tobacco, etc. Trading ships from the Coromandel to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, while carrying the ever-present rice, also commonly carried tin, elephants and pepper. The exploitation of Rayalaseema's diamond mines, particularly from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century forward, saw a valuable trade in diamonds both for export and otherwise.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Jean Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1: 73-81; Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 10.

<sup>127</sup> Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 78-79; Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, 1: Map X, 62-72.

<sup>128</sup> Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*.

As Sultanate actors began to move south into the Karnatak, they revitalized older north-south trade links while combining commercial enterprise with military brawn. Mir Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani, known as the aforementioned Mir Jumla (d. 1663), stands out as a preeminent example of such a 'portfolio capitalist' who successfully combined commercial and military talent in this period.<sup>129</sup> Arriving from Iran as a small-scale trader in Golkonda, he proceeded to build a career that combined political ambition (he would eventually become, under Abdullah Qutb Shah, r. 1626-1672, the king's foremost military commander and advisor) with a vast network of commercial interests, ranging from the control of some of the world's most productive diamond mines to the Coromandel cotton textile trade, ownership over numerous ships charting courses to the ports of Southeast Asia, as well as a stake in the thousands of pack animals ranging the overland trading routes through the region. As the Sultanate's chief deputy in the Golkonda-controlled territories of the Karnatak, he exemplified an increasingly common phenomenon glossed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher Bayly as 'portfolio capitalism,' reflecting the strategy of threading together diverse portfolios of interest across varied geographies and in both political and commercial spheres. Mir Jumla's 'foreignness' is often offered up to account for his willingness to abandon his Karnatak enterprise in favor of Mughal service in 1656.<sup>130</sup> However his successes were also testament to his capacity for network-building with regional actors whose knowledge and resources granted him needed access to trading routes and manpower. The central role of network-building – of establishing and cultivating relationships, of finding trusted interlocutors, of sharing risks and profits, and of bridging differences – has not yet been sufficiently explored. Although Mir Jumla's biography has received the lion's share of scholarly attention, he was only one of a number of individuals who sought and found fortune in the region during this period. Towards that end, let us return at last to Bahlul Khan Miyana, whom we last saw departing the company of Khan Jahan Lodi in disgust, ready to set out with his own followers and find service in one of the Deccan Sultanates.

### **Bahlul Khan's early years**

The Miyana family's early path from northern India to the southeastern Coromandel Coast was in many ways typical of the era. Bahlul Khan's early career started promisingly enough in Mughal North India, where he followed his father Hasan Khan Miyana into Mughal service in the early seventeenth century. He began his own career under Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627), during whose reign he rose rapidly through the imperial ranks to hold, after 1622, a 4000/3000 posting.<sup>131</sup> His hitherto smooth upward trajectory was abruptly derailed, however, after his patron, the Mughal Prince Khurram fled towards the Deccan in 1624 in rebellion against his father. His rebellion did not fare well, and like many other bedraggled and disappointed followers of Khurram, Bahlul Khan fell insubordinately behind, trailing the prince's camp at a considerable distance. When he was confronted and questioned by a more steadfast servant of Khurram's, a battle ensued between the two men and their followers in which the steadfast servant and one of his companions were killed.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> I draw for his biography from the following sources: Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*; Subrahmanyam and Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India"; Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 322–27.

<sup>130</sup> Fischel, "Society, Space and the State in the Deccan Sultanates," 199–200.

<sup>131</sup> Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, ed. W. M. Thackston (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 234–235, 378. Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Lahori's Padshahnamah*, trans. H. A. Qureshi (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2010), 1: 71.

<sup>132</sup> Jahangir, 409.

We do not know for sure what immediate consequence this confrontation had for Bahlul Khan's career, but it seems clear enough that after Prince Khurram was crowned as the new Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658), he was unable to imagine much of a future for himself at court. He took the road south with Khan Jahan Lodi, perhaps seeing more prospect of upward mobility on that path than at the Mughal court.

After leaving the ill-fated Khan Jahan Lodi behind, Bahlul Khan may have briefly served the Nizam Shahi court of Ahmadnagar in its final years before its collapse in 1636. It was during this early period that his name became tightly entangled with Siddi and Maratha figures, amongst them Siddi Yaqut, Khairiyat Khan, Randaula Khan, Shahji Bhonsle and others, all of whom moved relatively freely between the Nizam Shahi and Adil Shahi courts during these years. These groups fought a disorderly but energetic campaign to preserve the northern Sultanate's territories from falling under Mughal control. Lacking the resources for more direct confrontation against Mughal forces, Sultanate-affiliated forces contented themselves with kidnappings and skirmishes, in which Bahlul Khan often played a major role.<sup>133</sup>

The energy that Bahlul Khan spent in these early years in trying to maintain a political footing in the northern Deccan needs to be considered with reference to the fact he and his family had formerly maintained a *jāgīr* in the region [a territory whose tax revenues are assigned to cover the expenses of Mughal nobility]. Although *jāgīrs* were ostensibly subject to regular revocation and reassignment as a means of discouraging the establishment of local roots, it seems probable that Bahlul Khan's holding in this Mughal frontier zone in the district of Balapur (*sarkār* Narnala, not far northeast of Khirki and Daulatabad), would not have been subject to regular reassignment.<sup>134</sup> The region more generally appears to have hosted sizable Afghan settlements ranging north up through Mandu, where Lodi himself maintained an estate.<sup>135</sup>

Even after the Nizam Shahi dynasty was extinguished, Bahlul Khan remained in the Deccan for a few years. A royal order (*farmān*) dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1640 finds Bahlul Khan at the border of the *pargana* of Phaltan, near Shivaji's future stronghold of Rajgarh in the Western Ghats.<sup>136</sup> Very quickly thereafter, however, Bahlul Khan abandoned whatever ambitions he formerly cultivated in the Deccan. His name disappears for several years from the archival record.

In this period, many of the Bijapur Sultanate's Siddi and Maratha nobility who had formerly been prominent in northern affairs in the Nizam Shahi territories now moved south into the Karnatak. Bahlul Khan must have followed this movement southwards, for when he resurfaced in 1646, he had abandoned Bijapuri service in favor of employment with a claimant to the all-but-defunct Vijayanagara throne, Sriranga Rayal III, based in the southeastern Karnatak near Vellore (a fortress located directly inland from Chennai). Sriranga Raja himself had engaged in some strategic service-hopping a few years earlier. In 1638, seeking refuge against his uncle and rival Venkata III, he had joined forces with the Bijapur army and served for a time under the Adil Shahi commander Randaula Khan. Probably it was during this period that Bahlul Khan came into contact with

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<sup>133</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Lahori's Padshahnamah*, trans. H. A. Siddiqi (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Dilli, 2010), 1: 116, 160–68, 240.

<sup>134</sup> Lahori, 1: 378.

<sup>135</sup> Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *The Dhakhiratul-Khawanin: A Biographical Dictionary of Mughal Noblemen*, I.A.D. Religio-Philosophy (Original) Series, no. 41 (Delhi, India: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1993), Vol. II: 26.

<sup>136</sup> Unlabeled *farmān*, Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal (BISM) Collection, 14 Shawwal 1049AH/ 7 February 1640. A later copy.

Sriranga Raja. In 1642 after Venkata III's death, Sriranga abandoned Adil Shahi service in order to claim the throne at Vellore, and Bahlul Khan accompanied him.

In 1646, an Iranian Bijapuri general named Mustafa Khan, accompanied by Shahji Bhonsle and others, led a major campaign into the southeastern Karnatak against Sriranga III. En route, a number of Karnatak-based rulers and their armies, including the Nayak of Malnad and the Raja of Harpanahalli, joined them. The Desais of Lakshmeshwar and Kopbal provided ten thousand foot soldiers each [here and elsewhere, please see Figure 2 at end of this chapter]. These role played here by these small Berad or Bedar polities, who offered military labor, likely in exchange for security, as well as payments both to the regional ruler and in promised salaries or shares in loot, will become a familiar pattern through subsequent chapters of this dissertation (see especially Chapter Five). These were some of the key Karnatak recruitment pools; they served any number of different northern commanders regardless of faith or ethnicity. Such forces, recruited locally along the path through the western and central Karnatak, must have been overwhelmingly non-Muslim, a detail that did not bother the *Muhammadnāma*'s author, Zuhur bin Zuhuri, in the slightest when he titled Mustafa Khan's forces the 'Army of Islam.' There is a pleasing symmetry to be found when one turns to examine Sriranga Rayal's armies, led by the Afghan Bahlul Khan (designated 'Shahjahani' in the *Muhammadnāma*), Dilawar Khan (almost certainly of Deccani or northern origin), and Raghu Brahmin Nizamshahi, whose name indicates that he had formerly been part of the Maratha party that had battled to preserve the Ahmadnagar Sultanate against the Mughals.<sup>137</sup> Sriranga Raja's choices in military leadership reflect the long-established pattern of South Indian polities actively recruiting northerners who brought with them admired skillsets characteristic of northern military cultures as well as recruitment networks to supply needed cavalry. At the same time, northern armies necessarily sought hired muscle from communities who combined part-time duty as foot soldiers with agricultural work in other months of the year.

As we have already seen from his earlier years in the Deccan, Bahlul Khan was perfectly willing to engage former employers in combat. Following the first day of battle between the Bijapur army led by Mustafa Khan and Sriranga Raja's forces, Bahlul Khan and a group of his men [Zuhuri designates them as 'rebels' *mutamarriḍān*] attempted a surprise attack against the Bijapur army's baggage train from the hill country behind the fort. Unfortunately for Miyana, the attack was thwarted and his men scattered. Only after Vellore was taken and Sriranga Raja defeated did Bahlul Khan again approach the Bijapuri camp, but this time he was seeking forgiveness. Familiar faces in Mustafa Khan's camp, including Shahji Bhonsle and Randaula Khan (who had fought in earlier years alongside Bahlul Khan on the northern frontier), no doubt smoothed Bahlul Khan Miyana's reincorporation into Bijapur's service.<sup>138</sup> It appears that he was a sufficiently valuable commander that the Bijapuris were eager to forgive and forget. Zuhuri comments that Mustafa Khan spent a total of two days in 'consoling and comforting' [*dilāsā'ī wa tassallī*] the wayward Afghan before they continued on their way.<sup>139</sup> In fact, Bahlul Khan's years of experience serving in Sriranga Raja's army would have only burnished his *curriculum vitae*. It translated into invaluable familiarity with the

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<sup>137</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, "Muhammadnāma" 1067AH/1656-57CE, f. 344b-345a, Mss. 4226, Panjab State Archive, Patiala.

<sup>138</sup> Also, possibly, a fellow Miyana clansman named Hasan Khan about whom nothing else is known. Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, fol. 333b.

<sup>139</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, fols. 348a-351b, 361a.

territory and people of the southeastern Karnatak, and to personal connections and relationships forged in this period.

### The Karnatak and the court, mid-17<sup>th</sup> century

The Sultanate had turned its attention wholeheartedly to its southern frontier, and yet in 1648 Muhammad Adil Shah (r. 1627-1656) fell ill with a paralysis that left him bedridden for most of the remainder of his reign. While only the bare outlines of political events in the Karnatak at this time can be traced, several of Bijapur's leading nobility seized this opportunity to establish or strengthen bases in the Karnatak. Military campaigns headed by Bijapur's highest-ranking commanders Mustafa Khan and Khan Muhammad faced regular internal challenge from sub-commanders whose priorities were increasingly at variance with central authority. In particular, these men seemed drawn towards opportunities with or near the Wodeyar-ruled Mysore state, which in this period was expanding southwards and eastwards into new areas of the Tamil country and seems to have been more or less holding its own against Sultanate forces to the north.<sup>140</sup>

In 1648, for example, Mustafa Khan arrested Shahji Bhonsle on the eve of a siege against Jinji after the latter threatened to abandon the Bijapuri army and decamp with his men to his own stronghold in the southern Karnatak in the environs of Bangalore near the border with Mysore. According to the *Muhammadnāma*, Shahji had asserted that "...grain is very expensive in the camp and the soldiers haven't the energy [needed] for fighting. At such a time what need is there for permission? I will go without permission to my own country."<sup>141</sup> Sometime later, Ambar Kala, one of Siddi Raihan's most prominent servants, likewise threatened to abandon his station in order to retreat with his men to Sira near Mysore, where 'urgent business' called his attention.<sup>142</sup> Not long after, Khan Muhammad was again forced to turn his attention to Siddi Raihan's sons, likewise based in Sira, who had given themselves over to "pride and rebelliousness" [*sarkashī wa mutamarridī*]. It turned out that the brothers had joined forces with the Raja of Mysore, a powerful leader that Zuhuri estimated could field 400,000<sup>143</sup> foot soldiers and four thousand elephants, and turned their attention to retrieving the western Karnatak for their new employer, an area only recently seized by Mustafa Khan.<sup>144</sup>

We know very little about the activities of Bahlul Khan Miyana or his associates through most of the 1650s, but it seems likely that Bahlul Khan died during this period, as we hear nothing more of him. His sons, Abdul Rahim Khan and Abdul Qadir Khan, received at least two brief mentions in connection with their service to Muhammad Khan, first aiding in the capture and imprisonment of Ambar Kala and again in a difficult siege of the fortress of Krishnagiri, southeastwards of Bangalore and southwest from Vellore in an area known as the Baramahal

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<sup>140</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, chap. 3: 'Warfare and State Finance in Wodeyar Mysore'.

<sup>141</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, "Muhammadnāma," 399. *Dar lashkar ghalla nihāyat girān ast wa sipāhiyān ziyāda az īn tāb-i mahnat wa shuddat nadārānd dar īn waqt che ibtiyāj-i rukhsat ast? Bīrukhsat ba wilāyat-i khud khwāham raft*. Gajanan Mehendale discusses this event in some detail. He turns to the *Shivabharat*, a Maratha source, which indicates that Mustafa Khan's antagonism towards Shahji arose out of Shahji's chummy ties with Karnatak rulers including the Rajas of Mysore and Madurai. Gajanan B. Mehendale, *Shivaji: His Life and Times* (Thane: Param Mitra Publications, 2011), 138–40.

<sup>142</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, "Muhammadnāma," 443. *Mārā ta'alluqī dar qīlā'-i Sira pīsh āmada ast ke ba har nau' wa ba har nahj dar ānjā raftān zarūr ast agar shumā rukhsat nadāhand bīrukhsat khwāham raft*.

<sup>143</sup> 4 lakh.

<sup>144</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, "Muhammadnāma," 447.

district.<sup>145</sup> Decades later, beginning around the turn of the eighteenth century, the Miyana name would quite suddenly become closely associated with the Baramahal districts (see Chapters Four through Six). It is very probable, particularly in light of the portrait of entrepreneurial adventurism demonstrated by Sultanate nobility like Shahji Bhonsle and others during this decade, that the Miyanas put down their first roots in the region in this period.

Starting in the late 1650s, the Miyana name begins to appear more frequently in the archive. By this time, they held the strategically important fort of Bankapur and the surrounding region directly southwards from Bijapur in the Karnatak territory of Malnar.<sup>146</sup> The region had long been a major conduit between the coastal and inland districts, notably the major port of Karwar, as well as to Hanovar, Mirjan and Goa on the western coast.<sup>147</sup> According to the traveler John Fryer in 1676, despite having no major industry of its own,

...Lies conveniently for the Markets of Pepper, Beetle-Nut, or Arnach [Areca nut]; Cloath, as Potkaes, Soffaguzes, from Hubly [Hubli, a cloth production center near Bankapur], six days Journy hence; Diamonds from Visiapour [Bijapur], ten days Journy. [...] Here are good Returns to be made from this Port to Persia, and back again; as likewise from Mocha, from whence are brought Horses for War.<sup>148</sup>

Bankapur also hosted a mint producing Sultanate-stamped coins, underscoring its centrality to regional economic networks.<sup>149</sup> More than an economic center, it had also served as the jumping off point for military campaigns further south since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was, moreover, one of the very few areas in the Karnatak that was subject to a regularized tax assessment (as opposed to relying on tribute collections alone).<sup>150</sup> Its governors enjoyed a diverse revenue stream. Consequently, the Miyanas were well placed to flex their muscles both within and against Bijapur's royal dictate.

Adjacent to Bankapur along the coast, the major ports of the Kanara coastline were by the 1660s under the control of the Siddi commander Rustam-i Zaman (son of Randaula Khan, who had fought alongside Shahji Bhonsle and Bahlul Khan on both northern and southern fronts in the 1630s and 40s). Turning south and eastwards, Shahji Bhonsle continued to build a regional powerbase in and around the fortresses of Bangalore, Chik Balapur and Jinji right up to his death on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1664. Shahji's territories were of particular geostrategic significance. They bridged the inland southern Karnatak and followed the itineraries traced by earlier Bijapuri armies (such as Mustafa Khan's campaign against Vellore in 1646) on the path towards the Coromandel Coast.<sup>151</sup> From at least the late 1650s onwards, Shahji used this base to launch campaigns against the wealthy southern kingdoms of Madurai and Thanjavur.

To the northeast in Rayalaseema, the fortress town of Karnul (later to fall into the hands of the Panni household, see Chapters Three & Four), was situated at a major crossroads near the confluence of the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers. In the seventeenth century, Karnul was a Siddi

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<sup>145</sup> Zuhūr bin Zuhūrī, 442, 474.

<sup>146</sup> For more on Bankapur's history see Chapter 4 of Eaton and Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture*.

<sup>147</sup> Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, 1: 76.

<sup>148</sup> Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 2:83.

<sup>149</sup> William Foster and F.O. Danvers, eds., *The English Factories in India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 10: 243.

<sup>150</sup> Fukazawa, *The Medieval Deccan*, 5–7.

<sup>151</sup> See generally Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*; Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 48–90; Mehendale, *Shivaji*, chaps. 4–5.



stronghold, first claimed in the century's early decades by a figure known as Abdul Wahhab.<sup>152</sup> Like Shahji's center in Bangalore, Karnul enjoyed important strategic strength. It oversaw both the inland route down the eastern coast between Golkonda and the southern Karnatak, but was also a major hub along the route connecting the western and eastern territories of the northern Karnatak frontier. Karnul was at something of a remove from Bijapuri politics – more so perhaps than other Karnatak strongholds. This is probably a result of its location, as it was nearly on the southern doorstep of the Golkonda Sultanate.<sup>153</sup> By 1660 Siddi householders had expanded their control of Raichur-based forts leading westwards in the direction of Bijapur, including Adoni, Torgal and Mudgal.<sup>154</sup>

The Karnatak was divided into several spheres of influence, but they were not autonomous fiefdoms. Quite the opposite. This argument sits in direct contradiction to an early assessment, made by Jadunath Sarkar, that the Karnatak in this period was carved up into autonomous fiefdoms.<sup>155</sup> Prosperity for the households that presided over these regions was contingent upon cooperation both within and across them, since South India's economy relied upon closely interwoven relationships across geographical zones. Thus Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana based in his inland Bankapur headquarters retained warm ties with the Siddi commander Rustam-i Zaman, facilitating the free movement of goods between coastal ports and inland markets. The degree of these men's mutual trust was sufficient that, in 1665, Rustam-i Zaman arranged for Abdul Rahim Khan's mother's passage to Mocha (Yemen) on one of his own ships, and Abdul Rahim's trusted servant Sher Khan Lodi was deputed to the port to arrange the send-off. The trip was only cancelled after Shivaji unexpectedly turned up with a plundering army headed southwards along the coast. Anxious to protect the area's commercial interests, Sher Khan organized a 'gift' from the port's leading merchants to buy off the Maratha leader, successfully purchasing theirs and their wares' safety and demonstrating the reach of Sher Khan Lodi and his master's reputation in this Siddi-controlled port town.<sup>156</sup>

In the southeastern Bijapur-held territories around Jinji and towards the southern coast and the frontiers of the Madurai and Thanjavur kingdoms, a similar nexus of cooperation amongst Sultanate actors drew together Shahji Bhonsle, Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana, and Neknam Khan, an Iranian Qutb Shahi commander based near the Kadapa region in southern Rayalaseema. These three men collaborated in a series of offensives against the Nayakas of Madurai and Thanjavur, and even against Dutch East India Company interests along the coast in the early 1660s.<sup>157</sup> The extent of these men's entwinement is hinted at in a much later chronicle, the *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* (c. 1800), where Abdul Rahim Khan's son Abdul Nabi Khan is described as the *hamshirazāda* or sister's son of Neknam Khan.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Possibly in 1623. See the discussion in Z.A. Desai, "Some Unpublished Inscriptions from Kurnool," in *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement 1951 and 1952*, ed. Z.A. Desai (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1956), 35–37.

<sup>153</sup> Its location possibly helps to account the for later willingness of the Karnuli commander Siddi Masud to embrace Qutb Shahi interventions in Bijapur's politics during the later 1670s. Discussed elsewhere.

<sup>154</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 389–90.

<sup>155</sup> Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, 4: 107–108.

<sup>156</sup> March 1665. Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 12: 77–79.

<sup>157</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel, 1605–1690; a Study in the Interrelations of European Commerce and Traditional Economies* (s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1962), 63; Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*, 87–95; Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 11: 174; "Extracts from the Dutch Diaries of the Castle of Batavia," *Journal of the Bombay Historical Society, Monumenta Historiae Indiae* III (1930): 86–102.

<sup>158</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 53b.

Such was the state of affairs when the young king Ali Adil Shah II (r. 1657-1672) came to the throne.<sup>159</sup> The official version of his coronation, given in the *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī* reports that Ali was the child of one of the queen’s attendants, and that the queen, Bari Sahiba, sought and received permission to raise him as her own. There were also widespread rumors that Ali Adil Shah was a product of the Queen’s extra-marital liaisons.<sup>160</sup> The young king’s tenuous claim to the throne, and along with them Bari Sahiba’s dominant position at the court, were challenged by an assortment of actors. Shows of dissent by an array of Bijapuri noblemen who refused to come to court to pay allegiance, amongst them Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana, Shahji Bhonsle, Siddi Jauhar and Rustam-i Zaman (son of Randaula Khan), highlight the degree to which the balance of power had shifted southwards during Muhammad Ali Shah’s long illness.<sup>161</sup>

This early challenge to Adil Shah’s authority was eventually resolved thanks in part to a coincidence of interest between Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana and the young king. During this period Siddi Jauhar of Karnul had embarked upon a serious rebellion during which, amongst other sins, Jauhar ceded the Deccan fort of Parnala to Shivaji and illicitly provided gunpowder to the also-rebellious Siddi Yaqut, commander of the fort of Torgal, which sat along the road between Bankapur and Bijapur.<sup>162</sup> Abdul Rahim Khan and the *wazīr*, Abdul Muhammad Khan, oversaw the ensuing campaign against Siddi Jauhar.<sup>163</sup> After Siddi Jauhar’s death, his son Abdul Aziz and son-in-law Siddi Masud approached Abdul Rahim Khan and the *wazīr* to facilitate their reincorporation into the king’s good graces. At the Khans’ instigation, the Siddis were forgiven and allowed to retake possession of their father’s property at Karnul.<sup>164</sup> The resolution to this episode lends further support to a portrait of Karnatak politics that relied upon a foundational willingness to negotiate terms and share power amongst all major Karnatak households in the pursuit of mutual stability.

If Abdul Rahim Khan and others eventually made terms with their young king, it seems probable that the Karnatak territories had become the domain of the noble households. The Adil Shahi sovereign only set foot in the region on terms set by the Karnatak-based noblemen themselves. According to an English Factory letter from Rajapur dating from the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1663, a Mughal contingent in hot pursuit of Shivaji came within a few leagues of Bijapur. Fearing for their lives, the Queen and young King reportedly fled with only a hundred cavalymen to Bankapur. According to the report,

...[The] King, Queen, and all the nobles in Vizapore are gone to Bunckapore, where they are denied entrance by Bulla Ckan's [Bahlul Khan] mother, by reason Bulla Ckan and the King are at great variance.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>159</sup> For the official narrative of Ali Adil Shah’s adoption by the childless Bari Sahiba, see Nūr Allah ibn ‘Alī Muhammad Husaynī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī*, ed. Sharīf al-Nisā Ansārī (Haidarābād: A’jāz, 1964), 16–20. For rumors that Ali Adil Shah was the product of the Queen’s liaisons see Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 10: 250. For commentary see Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700*, 182; Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 161.

<sup>160</sup> Nūr Allah ibn ‘Alī Muhammad Husaynī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī*, 16–20; Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700*, 182; Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 161.

<sup>161</sup> Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 10: 250. The English records list Abdul Rahim Khan, Shahji, Shivaji and Rustam-i Zaman amongst the dissidents, but as the *Basātīn* (fn. below) indicates, the rebellion extended to include Siddi Jauhar of Karnul as well.

<sup>162</sup> Siddi Jauhar’s story is afforded much ink in Zubayrī’s account. *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 371–91.

<sup>163</sup> This Abdul Muhammad Khan bore no relationship to the Abdul Muhammad Khan who was Abdul Rahim Khan’s cousin and receives mention in the second chapter.

<sup>164</sup> Nūr Allah ibn ‘Alī Muhammad Husaynī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī*, 139–41; Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 389.

<sup>165</sup> Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 11: 235, 242.

According to a subsequent letter, this embarrassing turn of events was smoothed over by the interventions of Shahji, who, chosen as a likely conciliator by the king, convinced his friend Abdul Rahim Khan to return to court. Abdul Rahim Khan left the southwestern Karnatak “in the command of his deputies” and hurried north with Shahji towards Bankapur.<sup>166</sup> This embarrassing early draft of history was later revised in subsequent letters, which indicate the emergence of a new narrative in which the king’s trip from Bijapur to Bankapur was all part of a planned excursion against the Nayak of Bidnur.<sup>167</sup> Yet even the possibility that a rumor so vividly portraying the king’s powerlessness against the Miyana household could gain traction is itself telling.

In a campaign launched almost immediately afterwards against the Rajas of Sunda and Bidnur, who controlled the mountainous regions directly west of Bankapur that separated the region from the coastal ports, Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana acted as a primary negotiator, thus suggesting the likelihood that Miyana and the Raja were already on familiar terms. He extracted a favorable arrangement for the yearly payment of *peshkash* (no doubt to Abdul Rahim Khan himself, as the nearest Karnatak-based Sultanate representative), and then returned control of the region to the Raja.<sup>168</sup> Abdul Rahim Khan successfully turned the king’s arrival in the Karnatak to his advantage.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the Karnatak and Bijapur’s court underwent a major transformation over the course of the middle decades of the seventeenth century. From its earlier role as a somewhat distant and even frightening territory mostly left to the devices of local powers, Muhammad Adil Shah engineered a major re-orientation of state priorities as the politics of Bijapur’s northern frontier were remade by Mughal aggression. Yet within the space of two decades, the benefits of Sultanate expansion into the Karnatak, if indeed they had ever filtered north to the court, had fallen almost entirely into the hands of its military commanders, who established strongholds along the region’s most important strategic zones. They mostly displaced Nayaka rulers and other more or less-distantly associated affiliates of the earlier Vijayanagara regime. Having settled into their Karnatak strongholds, this new generation of Sultanate-affiliated arrivals appear, as the earlier Nayakas had done in places like Jinji, Madurai and Thanjavur during the sixteenth century, to have operated with substantial autonomy from the northern court they purportedly represented. This repetition in the political pattern indicates something of the ecology of the Karnatak region and its political and military relationship to the Deccan north. Profitable investment in the region demanded a strong degree of investment within in the territory that one could not sustainably command the Karnatak from the northerly urban centers of the Deccan.

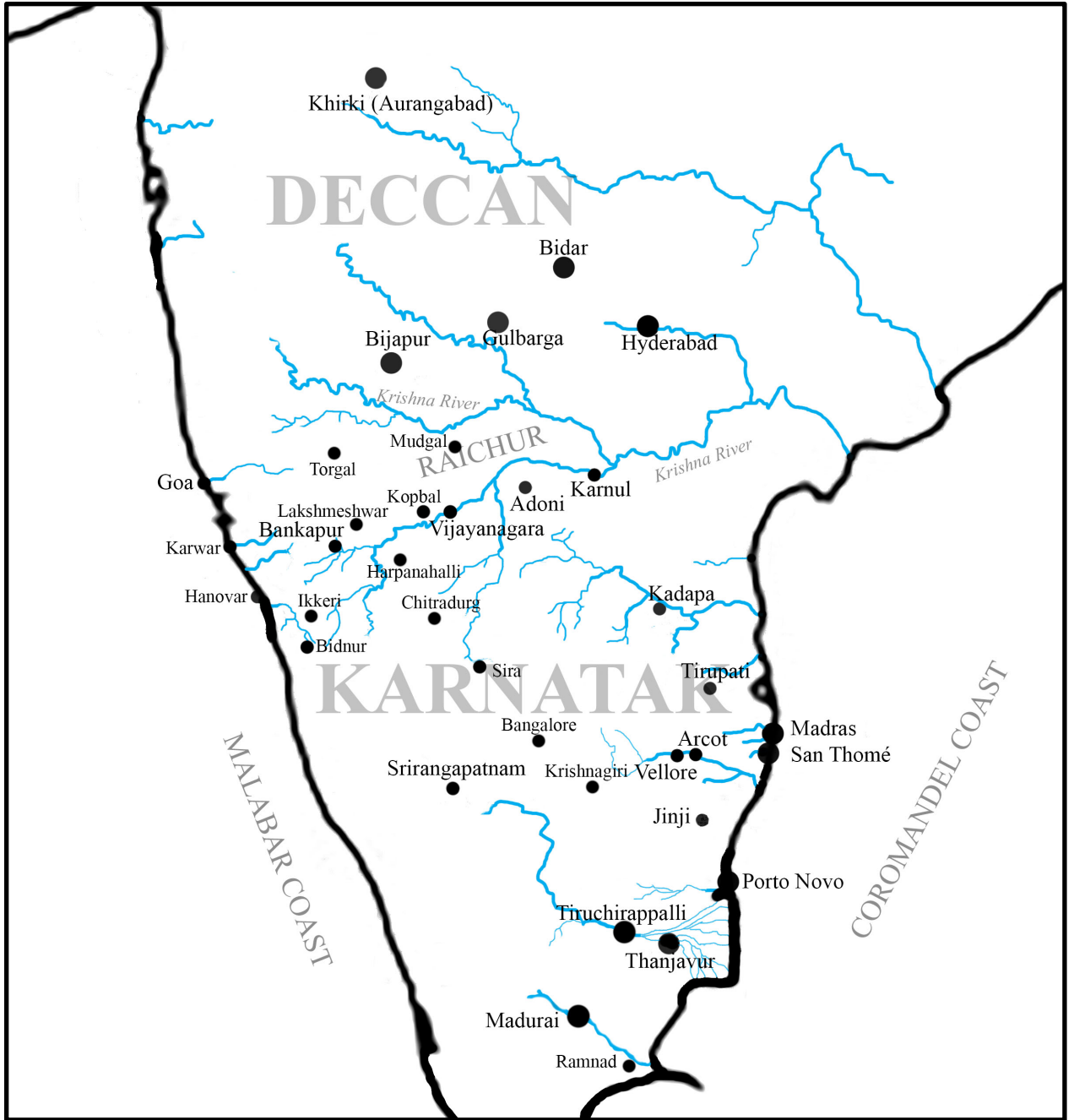
As this process progressed into the 1660s, a cadre of Siddi, Maratha and Afghan noble households with long-established mutual relationships from their history of cooperation first in the Nizam Shahi territories and later in the Karnatak campaigns, would establish increasingly firm roots in the region. By the 1660s, the most powerful actors in Bijapur’s court almost all boasted significant

<sup>166</sup> Ibrahim Zubayri, *Basātīn al-Salātīn* (Haidarābād: Matba‘-i Sayyidi, 1310AH/1892-93CE [original -1822]), 391. *Bahlūl Khan bamujarrad-i wasūl-i farmān-i mahābat ān taraf ba-zima-i nā’ibān-i khwud guzāshta bā shahāmat āsar Shāhji Bhosla waghera bar janāh-i isti’jāl rawāna shud.*

<sup>167</sup> This is unsurprisingly also the preferred version in official chronicles. Zubayrī, 391–95. Zubairi’s account is based largely upon the florid contemporary *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī*, but is eminently more readable. I have consulted both. Nūr Allah ibn ‘Alī Muhammad Husaynī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāhī*, 142–74. July 20<sup>th</sup> 1663, Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 242.

<sup>168</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 394–95.

Karnatak connections. If the Bijapur Sultanate had set out to conquer the Karnatak, it seems possible to argue that it was the Karnatak that had in a sense conquered the Sultanate instead. The consequences of this conquest are explored in the following chapter.



Map 2: South India, mid-17th c.

## Chapter Two: Households

This chapter focuses on the concept of the military household and its politics as I trace the Miyanas' meteoric rise and subsequent fall over the course of the 1670s and 1680s. As central authority in Bijapur broke down, noble households increasingly came to dominate the politics of the central court, at the expense of the ruling Adil Shahi dynasty itself. These households' capacity to organize resource flows across long distances, including the delivery of much-needed funds into the Sultanate capital and the northern frontier from the southern Karnatak, helped to preserve the Bijapur state as a formal entity even as it fed the corrosion at its core. During the 1670s, the southern Coromandel Coast became, despite its geographical distance from the state's capital, a major arena for Sultanate politics in its final years. As the state finally collapsed, Sultanate-based houses sought through various strategies to preserve themselves. In the process, they would carry forward aspects of the Sultanate system into the Mughal regime that succeeded it.

In sketching a portrait of Sultanate households during this period, much remains unanswerable. Our sources shed only limited light on the day-to-day aspects of domestic life at the center of the household. Women certainly controlled important economic resources, operated as leading voices in negotiations and intrigues, and served as a last line of defense during sieges and other operations (and I make a point of highlighting their contributions throughout the course of this dissertation wherever I encounter them). Yet if chroniclers are at times cornered into mentioning their contributions, we rarely learn their names, let alone their pre-marital social identities or the wider networks of operation. Similarly, only the coincidence of a major soldiers' riot in 1678 allows us a glimpse, during this period, of the significance of non-elite actors to household politics. These 'common' soldiers likewise go unnamed and are otherwise allowed to drop from the narrative. Such eruptive moments of violence are of importance to us because they (albeit all too briefly) illuminate otherwise obscure relationships and to visualize the complex negotiated arrangements between individuals and groups up and down the hierarchy of social prominence.

I focus on the military household as a key unit of analysis in this period, but it must be admitted that chroniclers largely avoided acknowledging these entities. With rare exception, chroniclers preferred to refer to the nobility as atomized individuals whose primary orientation was always assumed to be towards the court they served. Doing otherwise would have jeopardized the fiction that absolute authority rested with the ruling dynasty – the ostensible core of any court-sanctioned narrative. Yet in the final decades of the Bijapur Sultanate, these households became so central to the politics of the region that they could not entirely escape mention. Their operations can be partially traced through casual references and the occasional commentary of European observers. The primary goal of this chapter, apart from narrating the broad trajectory of historical events during this period, is to offer a glimpse of the Miyana household as a trans-regional system during this period. Even if its many component pieces cannot be diagrammed, something can still be said of the method and logic of its operations.

I rely in this chapter on four main sources – the first and most important is the *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, also known as the *Tārīkh-i Bijāpūr*. Although rich in details, it was written around 1822, almost one hundred and fifty years after the fall of the Sultanate. Given its very late composition, it is therefore important to offer some justification for my reliance on it here. It is true that this text has not gone without critique. Scholars like Gajanan Mehendale have even raised questions about such foundational features as dates and locations provided in the text. I have endeavored to approach Zubayri's account warily. Wherever possible, I have read the text in conjunction with other sources.

Despite its possible pitfalls, however, the *Basātīn* proves to be a very useful source in particular for making sense of the final decades of the Sultanate period. In many cases, it offers us a detailed account of even day-by-day activity in and around the court during a period when other sources are not available. Many of these details were probably derived from another contemporary source, now lost to us, composed by Shaikh Abul Hassan on Ali Adil Shah II and Sikandar Adil Shah's reigns (r. 1657-1672 & 1672-1686).<sup>169</sup> A colorful scattering of reported speech and detailed accounts of Bijapur's urban life somewhat different from the tone taken elsewhere in the *Basātīn* suggests these stylistic elements may have had their origins in Abul Hassan's lost chronicle. Reading the *Basātīn* in concert with near-contemporary sources supports my confidence in these sections' probable origin. Zubayri's narrative is mostly demonstrably loyal to those earlier accounts.

The other primary Persian source for this period, the *Tārīkh-i Dilkushā* was written by the contemporary Mughal author Bhimsen. It concentrates mainly on the affairs to the northern side of the political frontier. The *Dilkushā* nevertheless occasionally offers opportunity to lend support to or complicate somewhat the *Basātīn*'s version of affairs. Two other contemporary sources, namely the English Factory Records, a collection of letters written from various trading hubs concentrated mainly along the western port cities, and the diary of Francois Martin, governor of the French port of Pondicherry on the southeastern Coromandel Coast, offer a refreshingly detailed if occasionally confused perspective. These latter European materials tend to privilege the local politics of the regions in which their authors were based, giving invaluable insight into the activities of Sultanate actors beyond the Sultanate capital. They are further supplemented by the travelogue of John Fryer, who trudged across the Deccan and Karnatak in the middle of the 1670s. I am not aware of any contemporary sources in South Indian languages that offer significant insight on the politics of the Karnatak-based Sultanate households during this period. Many of the materials translated and preserved in the Mackenzie Collection in Britain relating to this era, which often do reflect upon these households, date from a later period. Their remembrances of this period are described in Chapter Five. Near contemporary Marathi sources such as the *Śivabhārata* and the Jedhe chronology, focused on the character of Shivaji Bhonsle and on the politics of the core areas of the Deccan, offer little insight on the households under consideration here.

## Household typologies

The household was central to the politics of pre-colonial South Asia. Yet not all households behaved according to the same logic. One well-known contrast can be found between the highly formalized hierarchy characteristic both of Mughal imperial state and of regional polities like the Rajputs in their 'mature' forms, versus the comparatively egalitarian modes of power-sharing illustrated in these states' earlier histories. G.D. Sharma has traced the movement from a so-called '*bhai-bant*' system of fraternal power-sharing within which the Rathor Rajput clans, each of whom

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<sup>169</sup> For earlier portions of its narrative, the *Basātīn al-Salātīn* relies on known accounts such as Rafi' al-Din Shirazi's *Tazkira-ul-Mulūk* and Sayyid Nurullah's *Tārīkh-i 'Alī 'Ādil Shāh-i Sānī*, where the *Basātīn* typically offers a slightly condensed summary of the earlier text. For the final years of the Sultanate's history, Zubayri often took his cues from the *Muhammadnāma*, by Mulla Zuhur, as well as the unnamed chronicle described above, authored by Shaikh Abul Hassan. Zubayri complained that even in the early nineteenth century, both Abul Hassan's work and Mulla Zuhur's *Muhammadnama* (covering the Muhammad Adil Shah's reign 1627-1656) were nearly untraceable [*kamyāb balke nāyāband*], but some scattered sections of both were painstakingly gathered together for consultation. Today, Abul Hassan's text is entirely lost, while the *Muhammadnama* is hardly easier to get a hold of today than in Zubayri's time. Zubayri, 4.

presided over their own regional stronghold, conceded pragmatic allegiance to a clan leader. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Rathors began to transition to a more narrowly defined and territorially contained sovereignty as Jodhpur-based Rao Maldev sought to assert more formal authority over his recalcitrant brethren.<sup>170</sup> A comparable if distinct process can be traced in the Mughal dynasty as well, where an earlier appanage system granting princes stable territorial holdings was replaced over time by a peripatetic household model that helped to center power in the hands of the ruling sovereign.<sup>171</sup> The maintenance of more formalized hierarchical systems demanded a higher order of resource input and maintenance, and the pressures inherent to the transformation from one system to another had potentially wide-ranging repercussions. In the Rajput context, household elites' efforts to order reproduction and claims to inheritance in an increasingly high-stakes arena ensured that caste-based hierarchies were sharpened while women's ties to their natal households were perceived as increasingly dangerous.<sup>172</sup> The politics of who was 'in' and who was 'out' of the household were, it seems, quite different when the household moved from a decentralized network of elite co-sharers to a strict hierarchy with room for only one at the apex.

Households also organized non-state enterprises, including the so-called 'family firm' characteristic of early modern commerce. Scholars have indicated that port-based traders and inland merchants alike sought to expand business operations through reliance upon expansive kin-cum-caste based networks.<sup>173</sup> For family firms, like royal households, a complex tension developed between the impetus to build one's network outwards, cultivating allegiances through marriage, patronage and friendships in order to extend access to new markets, and the (inter-related) need to concentrate wealth and retain one's reputation through selective marriage practices, socially restrictive conventions relating to ritual purity, etc. Christopher Bayly's work highlights the manner in which North Indian kinship-based commercial houses also incorporated unrelated actors such as the *munim*, a clerk often of different family background, who handled the day-to-day management of business affairs and whose expertise, it was widely acknowledged, often kept the enterprise afloat.<sup>174</sup>

Both royal households and family firms sought similar goals – including facilitating access to scattered markets and resources as well as concentrating power and wealth within a more or less limited elite cluster. Commercial houses might be distinguished however from royal houses insofar as family firms were typically willing to share the marketplace with others even as they competed against one another. By contrast a royal household asserted, with varying degrees of success, exclusive

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<sup>170</sup> G. D. Sharma, *Rajput Polity: A Study of Politics and Administration of the State of Marwar, 1638-1749* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977).

<sup>171</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*.

<sup>172</sup> Ramya Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan," in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 46–72.

<sup>173</sup> Ghulam A. Nadri, "The Maritime Merchants of Surat: A Long-Term Perspective," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 2/3 (2007): 235–58; Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*; Stephen Frederic Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Earlier scholarship by Ashin Das Gupta, by contrast, tends to foreground what he describes as a peculiar preference in South Asian commerce for the so-called 'autonomous man' of the bazaar – an independent streak in business ventures that accompanied a fundamental distrust of the category of 'employee.' Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70, 71, 76.

<sup>174</sup> Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*, 377–78.



rights over a territory (even if those rights were in practice shared with subordinated houses with *de facto* local authority).

Such a principle of mutual co-existence was likewise true of a third form of household organization in South Asia, the military household.<sup>175</sup> Like the others, it was organized around a family group, but also incorporated military retainers (*naukars*), as well as personal servants and a larger network of more distant relatives and friends. Gommans argues that such households, typically identified by the ethnic identity of their leadership, marketed their ties to specific recruitment networks. A Rajput commander, then, would be expected to be able to provide Rajput soldiers to fight his patron's wars (although doubtless many others fought in his ranks as well). Different ethnic groups were known for their unique battlefield style, and South Asian armies were infamously diverse collectives, and multiple households would be expected not only to co-exist but also cooperate with one another. In a different context but same time period, Jane Hathaway's work on Ottoman-Egyptian military households shows how, more than mere provisioners of soldiers' labor, military households could also become autonomous political actors, forging alliances and building factions to increase their influence. Houses offered the prospect of security to dependents during moments of upheaval through personalized relationships to their leaders. Through their social reach across elite and non-elite spheres, they were able to influence the direction of events at court and to influence the activities of merchant- and artisan-collectives.<sup>176</sup>

As I argue in this chapter, while both Gommans and Hathaway concentrated upon military households as they operated *within* particular state systems, in the south Indian context and likely elsewhere in the subcontinent as well, these houses also used kinship and friendship as mechanisms by which to cross state boundaries. In the final years of the Bijapur Sultanate, even as a steady stream of nobility left for Mughal service, individuals preserved household ties across the border. Such connections offered scope for the reconstitution of the household in Mughal service. It also allowed for the smoother flow of resources across political boundaries, and opened avenues for negotiation. These connections ensured the prolonged survival of household actors remaining in Bijapur and may have improved the career trajectories of those who had moved north.

### **The inner circle: Abdul Karim Khan (d. 1678) takes the helm**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1665, Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana died a few days after returning to the Bijapur court from the Karnatak. A violent conflict immediately erupted over who should succeed to the leadership of the household and the title of Bahlul Khan. According to English observers based in the port at Karwar:

[Abdul Rahim Khan died,] leaving his sonne and brothers sonne with 9 or 10 thousand house of their owne in Vizapore ; which the King being jealous of, used all meanes possible underhand to set them together by the eares [...] All goes to rack between the two Bullul Caunes, who dayle quarrell, and were it not that the Mogull

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<sup>175</sup> Jos Gommans, who provides the only formal description in the South Asian context that I am aware of, refers to it as the "chief or warlord's household." Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 69. An earlier study by Dirk Kolff acknowledged the existence of the military household without explicitly mapping its key features. *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy*, see especially p. 96.

<sup>176</sup> Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

was so nigh, would fight it out. The King begins to share stakes with them, having seized on some of their country, though durst not be to[o] bold.<sup>177</sup>

Although the king of Bijapur would eventually find the means to produce a preferred outcome, the limits of his power were all too evident. When one of the two Miyana cousins killed the elephant of the Mahdawi nobleman Sayyid Ilyas (aka Sharza Khan), Ali Adil Shah sought an explanation for the provocative attack. He was supposed to have received the following answer: “if he [the king] came in such a dru[n]ken condition himselfe, they would use the same way to make him sober; which without doubt did a little trouble His Majesty...”<sup>178</sup> In the end, the intra-household contest was resolved. The title of Bahlul Khan upon Abdul Rahim’s son Abdul Karim Khan, rather than his cousin and competitor Abdul Muhammad Khan. But this outcome was not universally accepted. A rumor circulated as far afield as the Mughal camp that Abdul Karim Khan was considered by some Afghans to be “not so true-born as Abdul Muhammad, son of Abdul Qadir.”<sup>179</sup> To what extent the king’s selection was an expression of his strength as sovereign, however, is unclear.

A Mughal audience along the northern frontier observed this dispute keenly. The Mughal commander Raja Jai Singh hoped to turn it to his advantage, and to this end deployed an Afghan Mughal general named Dilir Khan Daudzai, whose father Darya Khan had once been a close associate of Khan Jahan Lodi and by extension also an associate if not an intimate of the first Bahlul Khan during his youth in northern India,<sup>180</sup> to negotiate a settlement with Abdul Muhammad Khan. The Mughals’ sophisticated manipulation of these social ties had the desired effect. Abdul Muhammad Khan Miyana entered Mughal service with high rank (5000/5000), a lump payment of 50,000 rupees and a valuable *jāgīr* in Sultanpur in the region of Nandarbar northwest of Daulatabad. In spite of consummate efforts of the Mughals, however, Abdul Karim Khan, newly head of the Miyana household in Bijapur, refused all efforts at similar recruitment.<sup>181</sup>

It is probably no coincidence, given the contentiousness of Abdul Karim Khan’s rise to power in Bankapur, that two new names begin to appear in close association with his tenure – Khizr Khan Panni and Jamshid Khan. These men, both recruited from outside the inner circle of Bankapur’s Afghan elite, served as Abdul Karim Khan’s right- and left-hand men in subsequent years, and likely allowed this new Bahlul Khan (for he had taken, as had his father before him, his grandfather’s title) to outmaneuver disgruntled supporters of his uncle in Bankapur and elsewhere.

Not much is known about Jamshid Khan’s background, but both Persian and European sources describe him as a ‘slave’ [*ghulām*] of Abdul Karim.<sup>182</sup> Given this categorization, he was

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<sup>177</sup> Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 12: 82.

<sup>178</sup> The king, as the volume’s editors note, was a famous drunk. Foster and Danvers, 12: 82.

<sup>179</sup> Unfortunately I have been unable to consult an original Persian copy of this text to confirm the translation for ‘true-born.’ Udairāj, *Haft Anjuman*, 106.

<sup>180</sup> See the biographies of Darya Khan and his sons Bahadur Khan and Dilir Khan Daudzai in the *Ma’āsir al-Umarā* for more details. It is said that Dilir Khan’s elder brother Bahadur Khan, who fought on the side of Mughal forces against his brother Darya Khan and Khan Jahan Lodi in 1630, was at one point unhorsed by Lodi’s men. He saved himself from death pleading that he was the son of Darya Khan and one of the ‘houseborn’ (*khānazād*) of Khan Jahan Lodi. Such an account highlights the rich tapestry of remembered familial and social relations that shaped noble politics across formally acknowledged political boundaries. Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnava Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, 340–48, 455–57, 495–505.

<sup>181</sup> Udairāj, *Haft Anjuman*, 106–7.

<sup>182</sup> *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)* (Poona, Shiva Charitra Karyalaya, 1931), sec. 285; Bhimsen Sakhsinah, “Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy)” (1140), fol. 64b, MICROFILM 79289, University of California at Berkeley.

almost certainly not Afghan but was either of East African extraction, i.e. a Siddi, or possibly of local, Karnataki origin. A study of South Indian nawabi households, although focusing on a later period in the early nineteenth century, for example, shows that Muslim elites in South India habitually purchased the offspring of destitute local families for domestic service.<sup>183</sup>

By comparison, we know a fair amount about Khizr Khan Panni. He was formerly an Afghan merchant who, having first appeared in the guise of a *jama'dār* (the chief or head of a body of cavalry) in Bijapuri *farmāns* dating from as early as 1666, rose quickly through the ranks until by 1675 as *madār al-muhāmm* (manager of affairs) for Bahlul Khan, Khizr Khan was arguably the most important public face of the household beyond Abdul Karim himself. Contemporary sources are mute about the backdrop for the intimacy between Khizr Khan and Abdul Karim Khan. The *Tārīkh-i Dilkushā* merely insinuates that such a connection did exist.

Previously Khizr Khan Panni had been engaged in trade for some time. He then went to Bijapur and by the intercession of Abdul Karim Miyana better known as Bahlul Khan had over a period arrived at eminent rank and become the head of a body of soldiers.<sup>184</sup>

A later chronicle, however, recalls that these men shared a close ancestral background, even if they were not actually kin. The two were described as 'old friends' [*dostān-i qadīm*] whose forefathers [*jadd wa abāyish*] were purportedly of the same country and were neighbors, even 'schoolmates' [*hamwatan wa hamsāya wa ham-maktab*].<sup>185</sup> While it is beyond the reach of our sources to confirm or deny this version of their 'reunion,' such an account, particularly in light of the close allegiance that Khizr Khan and Abdul Karim Khan and their offspring would subsequently cultivate, is rather compelling and points to the importance of recruitment networks that connected ancestral homelands to distant courts – such networks often went unremarked in contemporary materials.

Khizr Khan Panni was the brother of a certain Shaikh Ali, later titled Ranmast Khan (and finally Bahadur Khan) who departed Bijapur in 1665, very likely in the same caravan as the disgruntled Abdul Muhammad Khan Miyana.<sup>186</sup> Ranmast Khan *né* Shaikh Ali rose through the ranks of the Mughal system under the patronage of Ruhullah Khan, an influential nobleman from Yazd, during almost exactly the same period as his brother found success under Abdul Karim Khan's umbrella in Bijapur.<sup>187</sup> The simultaneous establishment of these Panni brothers on either side of the Sultanate-Mughal frontier, alongside the defection of Abdul Muhammad Khan and the prominent role of Dilir Khan Daudzai (whose own father and uncle had similarly found themselves on opposing sides during Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion), opened up new channels of communication between Sultanate and Mughal forces. This pattern of social entwinement across the border would only become more conspicuous in subsequent years. It is probable that more than just a coincidence of the long-standing confrontation along this frontier, the promotion of fraternal ties across camps

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<sup>183</sup> Sylvia Vatuk, "Bharattee's Death: Domestic Slave-Women in Nineteenth-Century Madras," in *Slavery & South Asian History*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 210–33.

<sup>184</sup> "Tārīkh-i dilkushā (microfilm copy)," fol. 64b. *Khizr Khān Pannī ke qabl az īn dar tijārat wa saudāgarī auqāt ba sar mī burd. Dar Bijāpūr rafta naukarī bawasātat-i 'Abd al-Karīm Miyāna ma'rūf ba Bahlūl Khān dar aiyām-i murūr be mudārij-i 'ālī rasānida sāhib-i jam'iyat gashta...*

<sup>185</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 65b.

<sup>186</sup> Udairāj, *Haft Anjuman*, 42.

<sup>187</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaḥ Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, 1: 459.

constituted to some degree a strategic choice on the part of these career soldiers. The opportunities afforded by such a strategy would become apparent over the following decades.

In the shorter term, the death of Ali Adil Shah II and the enthronement of his only son, the five-year old Sikandar Adil Shah (r. 1672-1686) set in motion a new and deadly phase in the politics of Bijapur's Sultanate. It was during these years that the military households not only reached the height of their powers, but also began to crest downwards. Two major rival groups, one led by Khawas Khan, a powerful Siddi nobleman, and the other led by Abdul Karim Khan, vied for control over the young king. Khawas Khan controlled the Regency over the infant king and Abdul Karim Khan commanded the state's armies. Rising tensions eventually burst to the fore at the end of 1675 when, following word of negotiations between the Mughal general Bahadur Khan Kokaltash and Khawas Khan, Abdul Karim Khan instigated a coup. Abdul Karim Khan had Khawas Khan kidnapped, taken to Bankapur and imprisoned, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November took the Regency for himself. A rapidly spiraling tit-for-tat now emerged between the rival groups. High-ranking allies of Khawas Khan were expelled from their positions and forced from the city, only to be replaced by Afghans and other allies and/or relatives of Abdul Karim Khan [*Afghānān wa muntasibān*].<sup>188</sup>

Available sources provide contrasting versions of the events that followed. According to the *Dilkushā*, Abdul Karim sent his loyal subordinate Khizr Khan to the river Krishna with the secret order to kill Shaikh Minhaj, a prominent Dakkani general and opponent. Khizr Khan threw a feast where he intended to assassinate Minhaj, but the Shaikh, hearing of the plot, drew his dagger first and killed the Khan.<sup>189</sup> The *Basātīn*, by contrast, suggests that Panni's main mission was to secure regional fortresses.<sup>190</sup> While on the road, he encountered Shaikh Minhaj and several other malcontents [*jigarsokhtagān-i īn mu'āmala*]. Khizr Khan, seeing the need for reconciliation, decided to throw a banquet. When he came out to meet the Shaikh, the latter plunged a dagger into the Khan's stomach. Either way, the better part of Khizr Khan's panicked body of followers were killed in the ensuing massacre. One of Abdul Karim's closest relations [*aqrab-i aqārib*], Abdul Majid Khan, escaped and brought the news to court. His death probably took place on or around the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1676.<sup>191</sup>

According to the *Basātīn*, Abdul Karim Khan's response was swift and violent.

When he heard this dangerous turn of affairs he left the darbar with wet eyes, entered the women's quarters and sat with them in mourning. Oppressed by the weight of this grief, which was heavier than Mount Qaf [a mythical mountain imagined to encompass the world], and in protection and guardianship of his own self, he gave none other than his kith and kin access.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 447.

<sup>189</sup> Bhimsen may have been a contemporary observer but as he was based on the Mughal side of the frontier at a significant distance from the Bijapur court his account cannot always be considered reliable. *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 106.

<sup>190</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 447. *Ba mu'tamadān-i khwīsh sipurda nāmūs wa 'iyāl wa amwāl wa ajnās-i khwīsh dar ānjā guzāshā*. The late 18<sup>th</sup>-century *Ma'asir al-Umara* prefers the *Dilkushā* version of events. Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnava Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, 459.

<sup>191</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 449.

<sup>192</sup> Zubayrī, 448–49. *Chūn az īn wāqī'a-i jāngāh wa hādīsa-yi hosh bā khabar yāft bā chashm pur az nam sar-i darbār barkhwāsta andarūn-i haramsara āmad wa dar ma'tam nīshast bār-i īn gham burdanīsh girāntar az Qāf uftāda dar hifz wa hirāsāt-i khwud dar āmada khair khwīsh wa qaum-i khwud dīgar rā gard-i khwud bār namīdād.*

He sent urgent orders to Bankapur for Khawas Khan to be killed.<sup>193</sup> The sister's son of Khizr Khan, a man named Jamal Khan, arrived shortly afterwards at court to demand revenge [*akhz al-sār*] for his uncle's death, heralding the start of a civil war. Shaikh Minhaj hurried to Adoni, where he met Siddi Masud, Sayyid Makhdum Sharza Khan (Mahdawi), and other discontents of Miyana rule.<sup>194</sup> A battle ensued between the two sides, ending in Afghan victory on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. The defeated negotiated an alliance with the Mughal Bahadur Khan. In the process the feud expanded and took root in the Mughal camp. Dilir Khan Daudzai, unsurprisingly, took the Miyanas' side. The better part of the next two years, according to most narratives, was then taken up by political standoff and a series of inconclusive skirmishes between the afore-mentioned factions. This conflict would draw to a close only at the end of 1677, when Abdul Karim Khan, bowed finally by a mortal illness, agreed in negotiations with his rival Siddi Masud to hand off the Regency and control of Bijapur's affairs to Masud and return to his old duties as Commander of the Army [*sardār-i fauj*].<sup>195</sup>

### Competing interests in the Bijapuri Karnatak

Although not an untrue account of events during this period, the court-centered history of the period summarized above offers a flattened, even distorted perspective of its politics. If we turn our attention to what Richard Eaton and Phillip Wagoner would term the 'secondary centers' of the Sultanate Karnatak, it is possible to develop a more nuanced understanding of the conflict that drove the Sultanate towards its final fall under the wheels of Mughal expansion. Bhaskar Mehendale has correctly observed that the distant, Adil Shahi-held territories of the Coromandel Coast became crucial to the Bijapur Sultanate system in the 1670s.<sup>196</sup> Its growing importance was a consequence of the rising conflict between the Maratha leader Shivaji and the Sultanate's noble households – most particularly the Miyanas. After Shivaji had targeted the Sultanate's western ports in the early 1670s, Bijapur's Karnatak-based households turned their energies increasingly to the southeastern coast to carry on their business. Not so easily shaken, Shivaji likewise turned his attention in 1676-1677 to the Coromandel Coast. In doing so he tightened a tourniquet around the Miyana household's economic lifeline, prompting the household's dramatic disintegration, and in turn spurring a further weakening of Bijapur itself.

The figure of Shivaji rests somewhat ambiguously within the sphere of Sultanate politics. With the benefit of hindsight, most scholarship on Shivaji treats him as qualitatively different from other Sultanate nobility – his actions inevitably studied through the lens of state building and the success of the Maratha polity in the eighteenth century. Yet although he had, as of 1674, undertaken a coronation ceremony marking his evolution from nobleman to sovereign, he remained in many important respects a product of the Sultanate's political ecology. Contemporary observers continued

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<sup>193</sup> No definitive timeline for this complicated series of events seems possible. Francois Martin, the Governor of Pondicherry, suggests that Khawas Khan may have died much earlier, sometime in December of 1675 as part of a palace coup possibly involving the Queen Mother. Martin's account does not mention either Khizr Khan or Shaikh Minhaj, however, thus leaving unanswered questions about the overall narrative. Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 507-508. The English records also do not clear things up. According to a letter from Rajapur to Surat dated 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1676, rumors circulated that "the Nabob Buleil Caun now raines lord of all, the young King in his possession, and it is likewise talked keeps Coons Caun [Khawas Khan] in prison; but the better sort of people doe believe Coons is killed by him. *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, II: 138, 77.

<sup>194</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 449–50; *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 106.

<sup>195</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 454–56.

<sup>196</sup> Mehendale, *Shivaji*, chap. 16 'The Karnatak Campaign'.

to perceive him as a Bijapuri nobleman of sorts (albeit an unusually ambitious and troubling specimen). As the traveler John Fryer observed in a list that he compiled of Bijapur's major nobility, "Seva Gi is reckoned also as a diseased Limb of Duccan, impostumated and swoln too big for the Body; in some respects benefiting, in others discommoding it..."<sup>197</sup>

Himself a product of the Sultanate system, Shivaji understood its intricacies well. His actions through the 1670s are best understood not as a broad-brush policy aimed at the Bijapuri state as a whole, but rather as a concerted effort to isolate and either strangle or bring under his own control the Sultanate's surviving households. In order to do so, he dedicated his attention to the households' access to seaport trade.

[...] Inland [Shivaji] hath not much, the Gaot [Ghats] seeming to be a Natural Line of Circumvallation to the Up-Country, where it is Campaign though below Hilly; so that you ascend to it by Mountains piled on one another, over which Seva Gi hath total Dominion, the Duccanees [here the 'Deccanis' may have referred either to the Siddi households who dominated the western ports (see Ch. 1, or to the Bijapuris as a whole) not striving to retake anything, for all he hath blocked up their Ports, which may prejudice them for the future; an irreparable Damage, (Arab Steeds being the Life of their Cavalry); they having only Porto Novo beyond Tutticaree left them free.<sup>198</sup>

Thus, in 1673-4, during an extended campaign along the western coast and through the coastal territories of Belgaum and Kanara, Shivaji Bhonsle blocked inland access to the western ports. These included settlements like Karwar, which had formerly served as a major point for the Miyana family's shipping interests. In response, high-ranking representatives of Bijapur's households doubled down on their holdings along the Coromandel Coast, where rising tensions began to flare between local representatives of these houses. Khawas Khan's own brother Nasir Muhammad (d. 1677?) commanded Jinji, while Sher Khan Lodi (d. 1681), described by Francois Martin as belonging "to the house of Bahlol Khan" could at times muster five thousand cavalry and twelve thousand footsoldiers.<sup>199</sup> For a historian familiar with Mughal cavalry warfare, such a headcount seems insignificant, but by this period, few Sultanate noblemen could claim even a few thousand cavalry, making Sher Khan one of the Sultanate's most powerful noblemen.<sup>200</sup> Perhaps more importantly, Karnatak military culture was far less reliant on cavalry than on infantry power, which for these Sultanate actors was typically 'borrowed' at need from local *palaiyakkarār* and *nāyaka* potentates for a price. The political environment in which they operated, although formally divided between Adil Shahi and Qutb Shahi spheres of influence, remained in many respects, beyond the confines of the high roads and strategic fortresses, under the control of local groups. According to Francois Martin, a keen observer of Coromandel life during this period,

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<sup>197</sup> Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 2:57.

<sup>198</sup> Fryer, 2:57-58.

<sup>199</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol 1, Pt. 2: 508, 524. This is very likely the same Sher Khan who had organized Abdul Rahim Khan's shipping interests and governed the territory of Bankapur in his absence in the 1660s. The Factory records, probably wrongly, suggest that Sher Khan was poisoned by the king in 1665 not long after Abdul Rahim's death. Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 12: 79. Jadunath Sarkar, I believe erroneously, identifies the Sher Khan of the 1660s as the son of Muhammad Khan-i Khanan, (a Habshi commander and relative of Khawas Khan. See *House of Shivaji*, 94; *Shivaji and His Times*, 6th ed. (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1961), 232-33, 295-97.

<sup>200</sup> Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 2:56. Although his figures are probably best understood as semi-educated guesses, they nevertheless give some sense of prevailing conditions. Abdul Karim Khan Miyana: 20,000 cavalry/100,000 foot; Sharza Khan Mahdawi: 3,000 cavalry/10,000 foot; the Raja of Sunda: 3,000 cavalry/12,000 foot; Shambaji (Shivaji's brother): 10,000 cavalry/20,000 foot; Ekkoji: 2,000 cavalry/8,000 foot; Siddi Masud: 5,000 cavalry/10,000 foot.

People who are anxious for the safety of either their persons or their property seek shelter in the woods to this day. The Nayak [of Ariyalur, located southwest of Pondicherry] treats all those who come for refuge with much kindness. There is a large settlement inside the woods in which many rich merchants carry on their trade. It is by no means easy to traverse the route leading to the settlement. Every now and again, the traveler has to cut through barricades which are defended by doughty musketeers.<sup>201</sup>

The Sultanate representatives who settled in the Coromandel region placed themselves within a complex cultural, economic and political environment in which they sought to establish a harmonious balance between diverse interest groups ranging from port based merchants, some of them European, to forest-dwelling chieftains (*pāliḡārs*, from the Tamil: *palaiyakkarār*). These Sultanate actors, it seems, were in the business of coordinating and defending privileged access to regional economic networks that found outlet through the coastal ports of Coromandel.

Sometime towards the end of the 1660s, Sher Khan Lodi moved away from his former supervisory role in Bankapur and to the territories inland from Porto Novo, Cuddalore, Devanapatnam and Pondicherry, where the Miyanas had some time previously already established a base (see Ch. 1). The region was known for its cloth production, but also for rice and raw cotton (the latter in the higher elevations). It was known for its comparatively strong links to inland markets – unlike the central Coromandel around Madras and Palicat, whose hinterland routes were littered with tolls, trade seems to have moved with relative smoothness inland to the major centers of Bangalore, Mysore and Salem.<sup>202</sup> Lodi expanded his interests along the region's waterways, building a network of fortified centers around the mouths of the Ponnaiyar (South Penner) and Kollidam (Coleroon) rivers. Inland territories such as Valudavur, Tiruvaddi (Tiruvati in the text), Bhuvanigiri, Palaiyamkottai and Valikondapuram protected the inland flank [Map 3]. From his headquarters at Valikondapuram, Sher Khan oversaw the shipment of goods on boats owned both by himself and Abdul Karim Khan Miyana. Although the two often engaged in short-range trade in rice and elephants between the mainland and Sri Lanka, they also partook in long-distance trade with Southeast Asian ports. Their ships followed a number of routes, with some tracing a coastal itinerary between Goa and Porto Novo, while others set out for destinations in Malacca, Bantam, Aceh, Bengal, Sri Lanka, Manila and other major Southeast Asian ports.<sup>203</sup> On these longer routes, their ships would have carried cotton cloth, tin, ivory, and possibly diamonds, all items associated with so-called 'Pathan' or Afghan traders at Madras and Sao Thomé a few decades later in the Madras-based English Company records.<sup>204</sup>

Sharing the general space of the Bijapuri Coromandel Coast with Sher Khan was his rival Nasir Muhammad, Khawas Khan's brother, based in the fortress of Jinji (the fort had at some point in these years fallen out of Shahji Bhonsle's control). Under Nasir Muhammad's command were a number of other Siddi actors including Siddi Darwez, the son of Siddi Masud (mentioned above) who controlled the countryside around Jinji and eastward to the coast.<sup>205</sup> Less can be gleaned about the Siddis' commercial undertakings in this region, but it is possible they had interests in Adoni and Karnul, two Siddi-held market centers to the north in Rayalaseema, where cotton, textiles, and diamonds were the major commodities.

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<sup>201</sup> January 1677. Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, 561.

<sup>202</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 106–7.

<sup>203</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol 1, Pt. 1: 328, 340, 360, 365, 376, 385, 417, 430; Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 517, 526-517.

<sup>204</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 169.

<sup>205</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 230, 232.

There was a third powerful actor in the region as well: Ekkoji (sometimes spelled Vyankoji) Bhonsle, a son of Shahji Bhonsle and a rival and half-brother of Shivaji. Inland and westwards, based in his father Shahji's old territories, Ekkoji oversaw a swathe of territory running from the central highlands around Bangalore and Chik Balapur southeastwards to the southern borders with the Nayaka kingdoms of Madurai and Thanjavur. Apart from his privileged hold over east-west trade across this important route, Ekkoji nursed ambitions for the agricultural revenue of the famously productive southern kingdoms of Madurai and Thanjavur [Map 3].

Northwards, Qutb Shahi/Golkonda affiliates dominated the eastern coastline southwards from their port at Masulipatan (Macchlipatnam) all the way south to Madras, over which they had sought to assert control via treaty as early as Mir Jumla's time. Throughout the 1660s the Qutb Shahi General Neknam Khan (d. 1672) had based himself in and around the region of modern-day Kadapa, a strategic site that allowed oversight of both inland and coastal routes between north and south. By the 1670s, he was replaced by a certain Baba Sahib, who is often found touring the inland territories of Madras with his armies. Baba Sahib's compatriot Chinnapalli Mirza based himself at San Thomé but also kept an envoy permanently at the Bijapuri fortress of Jinji.<sup>206</sup> Further south were the Nayakas of Madurai and Thanjavur, whose rich territories – well-watered rice-growing agricultural areas in close proximity to the southernmost Coromandel ports – were objects of competition both amongst one another and also between the various Sultanate generals based to their north. Within this complex mapping, European merchants – Dutch, English and French – plied the coasts and local chieftains played important roles as Sultanate governors and independent *nāyakas*. Each sought to shift the balance of power in their favor.

Crucial to Sher Khan Lodi's success in this region were his carefully cultivated ties both inland, where he built up a strong alliance with the Nayaka of Ariyalur, and at the coast, where he cultivated a close association with the vulnerable, newly arrived French East India Company. Indeed, Sher Khan Lodi played a crucial role in the French Company's establishment at Pondicherry, gifting them the territory and encouraging them to establish a trading center there in 1672.<sup>207</sup> Lodi's gift was invaluable. The French soon afterwards lost their only other regional holding at San Thomé in 1674. Lodi adopted something of a proprietary attitude towards the French newcomers, regularly encouraging them to adopt cozier ties with the Nayaka of Ariyalur and his people, emphasizing the strategic benefits of such a relationship. When, in the early 1670s, the French found themselves cornered between the Dutch and their Qutb Shahi allies, Sher Khan Lodi offered a gentle critique of French strategy:

He [Sher Khan] was not sufficiently strong to protect [the French] against three powers such as the king of Golconda, the Duke of Gingee [Nasir Muhammad of Jinji] and the Dutch. Had we accepted his advice and withdrawn to the woods, he could have ensured that were not attacked.<sup>208</sup>

Sher Khan's choice to align himself in very public fashion with the French perhaps deserves closer examination, particularly in light of their exceedingly precarious foothold in the region. For Sher Khan, the great value of his French allies may well have boiled down to their not being Dutch. The Dutch East India Company during this period was, in alliance with Qutb Shahi interests in

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<sup>206</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 361.

<sup>207</sup> Danna Agmon, *A Colonial Affair: Commerce, Conversion, and Scandal in French India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 8; Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol., Pt. 1: 120.

<sup>208</sup> Francois Martin and his men did, however, send the bulk of their munitions into the woods for protection. April 23-24, 1674. Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 365.



Golkonda and, to a lesser degree, with Sher Khan's competitor Nasir Muhammad at Jinji, moving aggressively to expand its holdings along the southern coast. Even as vulnerable as the French were, Sher Khan doubtless saw their potential as a counterbalance against a Golkonda-Dutch alliance dominant along much of the Coromandel Coast. Still, Sher Khan was impatient that the French keep a low profile.<sup>209</sup> Dutch power particularly in Southeast Asia meant that Sher Khan's association with the French might, and in the end would, negatively impact Lodi's trading interests. In March of 1674 Lodi turned down a Dutch offer to grant passports for all of his ships, allowing him access to the Southeast Asian markets of his choice, including Malacca, Bantam, and even the southern Spice Islands, jealously guarded by the Dutch. In exchange he would have to eject the French from Pondicherry. Refusal, the Dutch warned, would result in the denial of passage to any of his ships.<sup>210</sup> Such threats were repeated in August, when Martin reported that one of Abdul Karim Khan's ships was denied a passport to Aceh so long as French merchants were not removed from Porto Novo. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, another ship, scheduled to sail from Cuddalore to Bengal, had to offload its goods for the same reason.<sup>211</sup>

Sher Khan made his support for the French clear, but he was also a pragmatist. When the Dutch came to Sher Khan for permission to attack Pondicherry, he had, unsurprisingly, refused them. Similarly, he refused French requests to expel the Dutch from Devenapatnam, long controlled by the Dutch. He sought to maintain, it seems, a policy of balance between these two merchant groups.

He was willing to concede complete freedom of action on the high seas but he would not tolerate any hostile action emanating from either one of the two parties on territory which belonged to him. [...] Just as he had refused us permission then, he would do the same now in order to keep the scales evenly balanced between the two nations.<sup>212</sup>

The world of the southern Coromandel Coast was at once intimate and distant to the politics of the capital, marked by a plurality of claimants, their arenas of influence overlapping in complex ways. In this multi-polar environment, power was expressed by the maintenance of wide-ranging alliances, only some of which took the familiar asymmetrical form of patron-client relations. One's reputation and the promise of one's friendship were powerful and subtle tools, just as much if not more so than one's brute military capacity.

Sher Khan prided himself on keeping his word. He was particularly careful with merchants in this respect being desirous of attracting them to trade in his territories. Sher Khan indicated to the persons who had spoken to him on my behalf [regarding Martin's proposed detainment of a Spanish ship] that he would be unable to give me satisfaction as the action I had suggested would cost him the reputation which he had built up for himself.<sup>213</sup>

In order to effectively conduct their business, Sher Khan and his associates relied upon the military capabilities of the Coromandel hinterland's many local polities. As suggested by earlier accounts of Sultanate military excursions in the Karnatak, Deccan-based armies relied on foot soldiers often recruited from local forest communities, known in Tamil as *palaiyakkarār* and in Persian as *pālīgārān*. Francois Martin's observation, that musketeers guarded the roads leading into

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<sup>209</sup> Martin, Vol 1, Pt. 1: 340-344.

<sup>210</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 328.

<sup>211</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 417, 430.

<sup>212</sup> 11 June 1674. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 389.

<sup>213</sup> June 1676. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 525-526.

the territory of Ariyalur, confirms an argument made elsewhere by Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam to the effect that from the sixteenth century onwards, firearms became a key feature of south Indian warfare, with small arms particularly in vogue for ambush-style attacks mounted from the safety of wooded territories.<sup>214</sup> The close association between small-arms technology and the densely forested geography of the hinterland also points to the specialization of military technology and knowledge to suit the diverse landscapes of the region.

In the extreme southern kingdom of Marava, the Nayaka was purported to lead fifty thousand foot-soldiers, although their practical use on the battlefield was curtailed by landscape. They “could only be deployed in the woods, in narrow defiles and other places where the cavalry could not operate,” and were thought to have wielded a curious sort of hardwood weapon which, when accurately thrown, could kill “a hare in flight [at] a distance of fifty feet,” not to mention break horses’ legs.<sup>215</sup> A chilling rumor also circulated that the ruler of Mysore encouraged his soldiers to cut off and collect the noses of their enemies.<sup>216</sup> Such rumors, which found currency amongst both northern and European observers, highlight anxieties about the dangers that lurked in the impenetrable lands beyond the high roads. However they also suggested possibility – of building allegiances with these forest-based polities.

Thus, Sultanate-affiliated Karnatak-based armies quickly became elaborately diverse collectives. To take Sher Khan Lodi’s forces as an example, in 1676, he led an army of some five thousand cavalry and between ten and twelve thousand foot soldiers.<sup>217</sup> Apart from the expected Afghan cavalrymen within these ranks, Sher Khan’s forces also included Rajputs<sup>218</sup> and Brahmins,<sup>219</sup> not to mention large numbers of ‘Karnatak soldiers’ recruited from territories like Ariyalur (it is not clear, in Martin’s account, whether this latter category would have been counted as inclusive of Sher Khan’s own foot soldiers, or would rather have constituted a separate unit under autonomous leadership). In 1676, Sher Khan also began to actively recruit disgruntled and underpaid Siddi cavalrymen deserting Nasir Muhammad’s ranks.<sup>220</sup> Such diversity was explicitly cultivated, since it showed one’s political reach. Thus, in March of 1675, Sher Khan asked the French to contribute some of their men to his party during a visit to Nasir Muhammad at Jinji. He did so in order that he might “demonstrat[e] thereby to the Duke [Nasir Muhammad] his ability to count on [French] support.”<sup>221</sup> A Karnatak army was best understood as a coalition of interests and a snapshot of the political landscape with different groups represented in different forms and degrees of investment. Shifting political tectonics at the wider regional level were reflected in local actors’ willingness to vote with their feet. European observers found such behavior baffling.<sup>222</sup> What they failed to understand

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<sup>214</sup> Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, chap. 6: “The Art of War Under the Nayakas”.

<sup>215</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 651.

<sup>216</sup> Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, 2:43. This rumor seemingly had wide currency, since Manucci repeated similar tale decades later. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor; or, Mogul India, 1653-1708*, ed. William Irvine, vol. 4 (London: J. Murray, 1907), 99.

<sup>217</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 524.

<sup>218</sup> Despite their northerly associations, Rajputs, like Afghans, are commonly found across the Deccan and Karnatak during this period. April & September 1676. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 485–486, 539.

<sup>219</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 547.

<sup>220</sup> October 1676. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 541.

<sup>221</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 479.

<sup>222</sup> Martin actually discusses the politics of so-called ‘petty princes’ versus ‘Muhammadan’ interests, but given that the ‘Hindu’ Maratha actor Ekkoji was broadly Sultanate in their orientation his meaning seems clearer if considered in terms of local vs. regional/Sultanate. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 471.

was the way in which such freedom of movement demanded of commanders like Sher Khan Lodi a commitment to negotiation and to the cultivation of mutually beneficial ties with local actors.

### Between court and Coromandel

When Abdul Karim Khan Miyana seized from Khawas Khan the Regency of Sultan Sikandar Adil Shah in Bijapur, becoming the most powerful man in the Sultanate, the implications of this move had immediate and far-reaching effect. The stalemate that had formerly characterized the relationship in the Coromandel hinterlands between Sher Khan Lodi and the Siddi Nasir Muhammad, brother of the murdered Khawas Khan, devolved into open warfare. Nasir Muhammad's sudden political isolation became a financial vulnerability as wealthy merchants fled his territories in fear of being pressed for contributions. By contrast, Sher Khan's camp grew by the day as he welcomed companies of disgruntled cavalry from Nasir Muhammad's armies into his own ranks.<sup>223</sup> Like Nasir Muhammad, Sher Khan also sought loans from local *palaiyakkarārs* but met greater success, using the funds in turn to levy more troops.

Relations between Sher Khan and Ekkoji were more complicated. Taking advantage of the shifting balance of powers, Ekkoji had captured the fortress of Thanjavur from the Nayaka of Madurai.<sup>224</sup> Twice, proposed allegiances between Sher Khan and Ekkoji, first against the Nayaka of Madurai, in the spring, and then against Nasir Muhammad Jinji in the fall, fell through. According to Martin, this was likely because Ekkoji understood that it would be in his interests to maintain a more even balance of powers in the country.<sup>225</sup> Despite his best efforts, however, by early 1676 Sher Khan Lodi was indisputably the most powerful actor in the region.

While there is little in the way of direct evidence for financial flows between the Coromandel Coast and the Bijapur court at this time, Martin's account attests to Sher Khan Lodi's supervision of Miyana's regional financial interests, including his oversight of funds ferried between the two regions and as far north as Surat. Lodi at the same time maintained his own financial relationships to places like Bengal.<sup>226</sup> Lodi's demonstrated ability to supervise and channel funds across these networks points to the probability that the Miyana household's aggressive territorial expansion in the Coromandel over this period, granting access to fresh resources while squeezing Sultanate rivals, helped pay for a series of Miyana victories against the united forces of Shaikh Minhaj, Sharza Khan Mahdawi, the Siddi household of Karnul, and even Mughal forces under the command of Bahadur Khan Kokaltash in the first half of 1676. In the end, it was only a decisive intervention by Shivaji in the southeastern Karnatak that slowed the Miyanas' momentum.

Shivaji's invasion of the Karnatak has often been explained either in culturalist terms – as an attempt to reclaim the southern territories for a renewed Hindu dominion – or it has been dismissed in narrowly economic terms as nothing more than a glorified raiding party. The reality is that Shivaji's Karnatak campaign was the capstone of a long-running strategy aimed at the Sultanates' major political households and helps us to visualize the complex transregional politics of these entities. By extending his military forces as far south as the areas around Porto Novo and Jinji, Shivaji sought to destabilize rival Maratha and Siddi actors but his primary target was, it seems clear, the machinery of the Miyana household.

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<sup>223</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 511, 524, 541.

<sup>224</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 511.

<sup>225</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 546.

<sup>226</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 310-311, 377-378, 657, 686.

Shivaji's plan took the better part of a year to roll out. He gathered his forces and entered the western Karnatak in early October of 1676, attacking the main fortresses of the Belgaum and Bankapur territories, left undefended while Abdul Karim Khan was busy elsewhere. Shivaji proceeded from there along a leisurely eastward path, following the broad sweep of the Tungabhadra River. In January of 1677, he attacked Kopbal, where Abdul Karim Khan's kinsman Husain Khan Miyana was based, taking him prisoner.<sup>227</sup> From Kopbal, Shivaji led his army to Golkonda, where he arrived in March of 1677. In Golkonda, he secured the support of the ruler Shah Abul Hassan, negotiating an agreement that included financial aid as well as cavalry and infantry led by the Qutb Shahi general Mirza Muhammad Amin.

It is also probable that their agreement included a promise that a portion of the Adil Shahi Karnatak conquered by Shivaji would eventually be given over to Golkonda. Gajanan Mehendale disputes this, arguing that Shivaji was in cahoots with Abul Hasan's Brahmin minister, Madanna. The two supposedly secretly intended instead to "restor[e] the Karnataka [...] to indigenous Hindu predomination."<sup>228</sup> While there seems little evidence to support the suggestion that Madanna and Shivaji were conspiring to renew the foundations of Hindu kingship in the Karnatak, it might have been possible that Madanna and his brother and fellow nobleman, were hoping to secure or extend their own interests in the Karnatak in the name of their king. Land grant records collected from the Kadapa region at the beginning of the nineteenth century suggest the pair were aggressively gifting tax-free grants to claimants in this period.<sup>229</sup> Either way, Shivaji did not hold up his end of the bargain. A letter from Fort St. George on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, comments that

[Shivaji has] come hither with an army of 16 to 20 thousand Horse and severall thousands of foot, raised and raising amongst the woods, being unfortunately called in by the King of Golconda or Maddana, to help them to take Gengy, Vealour, and Pamangonda [Jinji, Vellore and Penukonda], the remainder of the sea part of the Cornatt [Karnatak] country as far as Porto Novo [...] Also that he has ordered letters to be wrote to all this part of the country, the sea coast especially, to borrow moneys to the extent of pagodas 200,000, 50,000 whereof from Paliacat and as much from Hence, which [he] not being like[ly] to find credit [to that extent] will serve him for a pretence to play his old pranks, especially now that there begins to arise jealousies between him and Golconda, on his keeping Gengy and all that he gets in his own hands, and Golconda thereupon stopping the promised payment of pagodas 3,000 per diem...<sup>230</sup>

Shivaji and his army, hovering anywhere between twelve and twenty-four thousand cavalry and anywhere between a 'few thousand' and forty thousand foot soldiers,<sup>231</sup> arrived in the Adil Shahi Karnatak in the beginning of May. He took Jinji from the embattled Nasir Muhammad without a struggle. The Siddi commander had been besieged by Sher Khan Lodi's troops inside Jinji since September the previous year, but for months prior to Shivaji's arrival, rumors circulated that Nasir Muhammad secretly negotiated with the king of Golkonda, perhaps via messages smuggled in and out of the fort, to hand over Jinji to the Qutb Shahis. Upon Shivaji's arrival, he readily accepted Shivaji's offer of an undisclosed sum and control over the surrounding territories (some of which

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<sup>227</sup> Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 100. Sarkar relies upon the Marathi-language *Jedhe Chronicle* for this account.

<sup>228</sup> Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 526–28.

<sup>229</sup> This evidence will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Miscellaneous Records #18018 – Cuddapah Inams, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1815, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai.

<sup>230</sup> Foster and Danvers, *The English Factories in India*, 184.

<sup>231</sup> The wild discrepancy in foot soldiers can be accounted for by active recruitment along the way. Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 523.

were under Qutb Shahi administration) with an annual revenue of 50,000 crowns, ‘in perpetuity.’<sup>232</sup> When later it became apparent that Shivaji would not hand over Jinji to the Qutb Shahis, the officials in the Golkonda-affiliated territories in turn refused to hand over their land to Nasir Muhammad. “Stripped of his former grandeur, [Nasir Muhammad] took this duplicity so much to heart that he died within a short time.”<sup>233</sup>

Having established his headquarters at Jinji, Shivaji turned his attention towards Sher Khan Lodi. While Lodi had for months massed his troops around Jinji fort, Shivaji’s arrival had prompted them to retire southwards. At the same time, Sher Khan suddenly faced a crisis of support. Having seen the scale of Shivaji’s armies and contrasted them with the strength of Sher Khan’s troops,<sup>234</sup> local powers began to negotiate peace with Shivaji.<sup>235</sup> By June, almost all the lowland territories were under the control of Shivaji.<sup>236</sup> Without access to the countryside, Sher Khan’s men could not be paid or fed, leading to a growing number of desertions.

As early as January of 1677, when rumors began to circulate of an impending invasion, Sher Khan had been preparing for the possibility that he might have to seek refuge with his ally, the ruler of Ariyalur. In May, he sent his family and personal property into the woods.<sup>237</sup> On June 28<sup>th</sup>, Francois Martin and a small delegation of Frenchmen met with Sher Khan, his uncle, and his eldest son Ibrahim Khan at Tiruvaddi, not far from Pondicherry. The conversation centered round what Lodi should do. Martin’s opinion, supposedly shared by Sher Khan’s uncle, was that he should try to garrison the fortresses that remained to him, and to retreat with his remaining forces into the woods at Ariyalur to wait it out. Martin pointed out that Shivaji could only stay in the region for a couple of months at most, as he had his territories in the Deccan to consider (with the end of the southwest monsoon, the campaigning season would soon begin to the north, signaling at the same time the impending arrival of the northeast monsoon along the Coromandel coast). After Shivaji’s departure Sher Khan could then pick up the pieces and recover his position.<sup>238</sup> Sher Khan did not want to adopt such a defensive posture and risk losing the territories that he held, however. Instead he sought to maintain the status quo in his own territories and pin his hopes on a changing tide in Deccan politics. He asserted that Abdul Karim Khan and Siddi Masud were on the verge of patching up their differences, and that Qutb Shah would subsequently rescind his support for Shivaji at any moment. “The results,” he said, “would become quite evident even before the end of the next fortnight.”<sup>239</sup> This projected truce between Bahlul Khan and Siddi Masud, however, was prematurely forecast by several months. And only a few days later, Shivaji defeated Sher Khan at Tiruvaddi. Lodi’s forces retreated hastily to Bhuvanigiri. His other fortresses were abandoned and on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July Sher Khan reached a settlement with Shivaji that he would cede all his possessions and pay some 20,000 pagodas [*hūn*] in exchange for his life. He gave his son Ibrahim Khan as a hostage until the money could be raised.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 576.

<sup>233</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 577.

<sup>234</sup> In 1675 and 1676 Sher Khan had something on the order of five thousand cavalry, but by spring of 1677 he could muster only a small fraction of that figure. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 483. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 585.

<sup>235</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 575.

<sup>236</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 578.

<sup>237</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 561, 575.

<sup>238</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 583.

<sup>239</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 583.

<sup>240</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 587, 590.

Sher Khan now turned to his old ally the Nayaka, retreating into the Ariyalur woods accompanied by twenty of his men and some affiliated merchants from the market town of Bhuvanigiri. Despite threatening letters from Shivaji, the Nayaka refused to send any of Sher Khan's companions back. The merchants of Bhuvanigiri escaped the fate of some other 'Moorish' traders associated with Sher Khan in Porto Novo, who were subject to extortion and imprisonment.<sup>241</sup> In the following weeks Shivaji and his men proceeded to track down even seemingly minor traces of the Miyanas' former establishment. A horse that had been in the possession of one of Sher Khan's relatives, but which had been sent to Pondicherry for safekeeping, was discovered and commandeered. A Brahmin in French service was persecuted because his brother had formerly acted as Abdul Karim Khan's agent in the city of Porto Novo. The English at Madras were also pressured to give up Sher Khan's affiliates who had sought refuge in their port, although they refused to do so.<sup>242</sup> Petty as such points might seem, Shivaji was not just engaging in paltry revenge but systematically cutting threads that tied the Miyana household to the region. If he was content to unceremoniously lever the Siddis from their precarious perch in Jinji, the Miyanas seemingly needed to be pulled up by the roots.

Shivaji adopted yet another strategy in dealing with his half-brother Ekkoji. Shivaji established a camp on the northern bank of the River Kollidam in July.<sup>243</sup> From there, he sought to negotiate with his half-brother Ekkoji, hoping to win control over half of their father Shahji's Karnatak territories. Although Ekkoji came in person to discuss the issue, he soon realized that negotiations would not bear fruit. He snuck away from the camp at night and fled southwards, finding refuge with his erstwhile rivals the Nayakas of Madurai and Mysore, as well as local *palaiyakkarār* powers whom Martin glossed as 'other woodmen.'<sup>244</sup>

Shivaji proceeded with a thorough administrative reorganization of the region, destroying small garrisons in the countryside surrounding Jinji and strengthening the fortress itself, while at the same time deploying an army of surveyors and tax collectors into the surrounding territories. Even after Shivaji's departure from the region in September of 1677, he left behind an army with orders to protect his administrators and to continue applying pressure along the borders of the southern Nayaka kingdoms, near to where both Sher Khan and Ekkoji had retreated.<sup>245</sup> After several further clashes between the armies of Ekkoji and Shivaji, a treaty was finally signed in March or early April of 1678, returning the better part of Ekkoji's land which had been seized from him to the north of the Kollidam River in exchange for an annual tributary payment of 300,000 pagodas.<sup>246</sup>

In January of 1678, Sher Khan's son Ibrahim Khan was finally freed. The ransom, interestingly, was given freely from the purses of local elites. "...[T]he local princes, activated either

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<sup>241</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 593.

<sup>242</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 592-294.

<sup>243</sup> Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 537.

<sup>244</sup> *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, II: 246, 134.

<sup>245</sup> Shivaji's approach to administration alienated not only the French at Pondicherry but the English at Fort. St. George as well. Martin's narrative takes on a strikingly anti-Brahmin tone around this period, a reflection of the fact that accountancy and tax administration were the pervue of this caste group. Mehendale suggests that the Europeans were unfairly critical of Shivaji's more efficient methods because they were invested in the permissive former regime. Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 542-44. Moreover, it was not only the Europeans who enjoyed favorable ties with the old regime. In September of 1678 Martin recorded that Shivaji's men had contravened an agreement with the powerful Reddi caste, who were associated in the region with land assessment. The Reddis retreated thereafter into the woods in protest. Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 628.

<sup>246</sup> Mehendale, *Shivaji*, 548.

by friendship or compassion, managed to raise the amount. This they did after several months by means of voluntary contributions.”<sup>247</sup> Francois Martin’s phrasing here raises questions – what did he mean by “voluntary contributions”? Were these truly freely given, and if so, what did that mean? While the latter-day reader can only guess at what transpired, I believe that local elites may very well have been inclined to support Sher Khan Lodi’s family in this way, particularly in light of the widespread unhappiness evident in these same circles about the Maratha occupation. I believe it also reflects Sher Khan’s earlier success in establishing durable social bonds amongst these groups, the value of which now became evident as his own fortunes melted away.

Ibrahim Khan’s release seems to have represented a moment of opportunity in these negotiations, albeit opportunity that was never realized. Around this time Shivaji’s agents also suggested the possibility that Sher Khan might take Cuddalore and resume his trading activities, and even to continue construction of a mosque he had begun to build at the port. Such an arrangement would presumably have demanded in exchange a promise on Sher Khan’s part to pay tribute to the Maratha leader. The offer, made under pressure at a moment when Shivaji believed that Mughal forces would combine with both Bijapuri and Golkonda forces against him, turned out to be a mere flash in the pan. This possibility evaporated without further comment as northern politics continued to evolve.<sup>248</sup> Instead, Sher Khan stayed in the Ariyalur forest through early 1678. During which time the men of Ariyalur conducted nearly nightly raids upon Shivaji’s army encampment, eventually taking four or five hundred horses.<sup>249</sup> Shivaji had managed through overwhelming force to seize the better part of the southern Coromandel territories, but many local actors clearly preferred the more familiar policies represented by Sher Khan and the shared leadership of the other Sultanate houses.

Shivaji had achieved his goals. The Miyana household’s network of Coromandel-based affiliates and alliances was almost completely destroyed. Sher Khan even owed money to the French, who, savoring the unusual experience of finding themselves at the creditors’ end of a relationship, pursued their former protector with remarkable vigor up to the early months of 1680.<sup>250</sup> In accordance with the terms of agreement for the release of his son, Sher Khan retreated southwards across the River Kollidam, eventually finding service with the Nayaka of Marava. Up until the end of 1680, however, regular rumors spread through the region that Bijapur would soon be sending an army to resurrect Sher Khan’s administration. Lodi’s periodic communications with the French indicate the Afghan’s sincere belief that this would be the case. In December of 1678, rumors were so strong of a Bijapuri army’s impending arrival that even Shivaji’s Brahmin administrators began to send away their valuables for safekeeping; Shivaji’s deputy Santaji sent forces to patrol the passes that led into the territory, waiting to repel an army that never arrived.<sup>251</sup> In September of October of 1679, Sher Khan, completely destitute, set off on a journey northwards along the coast and through Golkonda west to Bijapur to try to find service with his former master’s children. In a final testament to his deep ties with the Nayaka of Ariyalur, Lodi left his remaining family members under the Nayaka’s protection.<sup>252</sup> A few stray references in Martin’s memoirs suggest that by early 1681, he had found service again with what remained of the Miyana household at Bijapur. Even at

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<sup>247</sup> July 1677. Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 590.

<sup>248</sup> Martin, Vol. I, Pt. 2: 611.

<sup>249</sup> August 1677. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 596-597.

<sup>250</sup> Martin, Vol. I, Pt. 2: 616, 619, 621, 627, 640, 655, 657, 661, 669, 673, 686.

<sup>251</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 647, 722.

<sup>252</sup> Martin, Vol. I, Pt. 2: 673.

this late date, his son Ibrahim Khan, serving under the auspices of the Nayaka of Madurai, waited expectantly for his father's triumphant return to the Coromandel.<sup>253</sup> Sometime around November of 1681, Sher Khan Lodi died.<sup>254</sup> As late as 1694, however, records attest to his sons' continued assertion of claims to the port of Devanapatnam.<sup>255</sup>

The Miyana household's reversal of fortunes in the Coromandel region correlates with a rapid deterioration of their endeavors along the northern frontier. Almost exactly at the same time as Sher Khan fled into the Ariyalur woods in the first weeks of July, Abdul Karim Khan made, for the first time, a serious gesture of conciliation towards the Mughal court. This was a major shift for a man who had, for the better part of his career, staked his reputation on intransigent opposition to Mughal aggression.<sup>256</sup> The *Basātīn al-Salātīn* indicates that it was Dilir Khan Daudzai who opened a line of communication with the Mughal court on his behalf. Supporting the likelihood that a formal agreement was made, in September Dilir Khan and Abdul Karim Khan led a united force against Golkonda. Superficially a show of strength, this was actually probably an act of desperation for Abdul Karim Khan. Even the combined forces of Abdul Karim Khan and Dilir Khan were uncertainly matched against the Qutb Shahi forces, joined as the latter were by the Siddis and Mahdawis, and his men were in poor condition, underfed and unpaid. Abdul Karim Khan and Dilir Khan finally came to a hard-won victory near Malkhed southeast of Gulbarga in late October, but it was short-lived.<sup>257</sup> Abdul Karim Khan's soldiers were dying of starvation. By November, Abdul Karim Khan himself was mortally ill.

Either at the behest of Dilir Khan or Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, a meeting was arranged to broker a peace between Bijapur's warring parties.<sup>258</sup> It is not clear why either the Mughals or the Qutb Shahis would have been invested in such an outcome, since both were ostensibly interested in a weaker, rather than a stronger, Bijapur. But there may have been good cause. At the time of Dilir Khan's death in 1683, he was rumored to have held 'excessive' (read: untaxed) wealth. Under imperial orders one of his servants, an unlucky Afghan named Pir Muhammad, was tortured in hopes of tracing these illicit funds, but to no effect.<sup>259</sup> The investigation was eventually dismissed, but the story raises questions about how Dilir Khan's role in commanding the Mughal armies in the Deccan might have enriched him personally. Bijapur's premature collapse would, under such circumstances, not have been in his interests. As for Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, Deccani rulers had a centuries-long tradition of mutual support *in extremis*, and Abul Hasan would have well understood that without Bijapur in their sights, the Mughals would quickly turn their attention to his own court.

At the core of the ensuing negotiations between the rival Bijapuri parties was the problem of some six hundred thousand hun in back-pay owed to Abdul Karim Khan's soldiers. The Miyana household was bankrupt, their Coromandel Coast lifeline broken. Abdul Karim Khan's only

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N<sup>253</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 721-722.

<sup>254</sup> Martin, Vol. 2, Pt. 1: 823.

<sup>255</sup> January 30th, 1694. Madras Record Office, *Letters from Fort St. George*, Records of Fort St. George (Madras: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Press, 1915), Vol. IV, 88.

<sup>256</sup> It was purportedly Khawas Khan's willingness to negotiate with the Mughal commander Bahadur Khan Kokaltash that prompted Abdul Karim to have him arrested. Word of Khawas Khan's death prompted Aurangzeb himself to demand that Abdul Karim Khan be delivered, 'dead or alive' to the imperial court. *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 105, 107.

<sup>257</sup> Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. 4, 121-122.

<sup>258</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 452-53; *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 118.

<sup>259</sup> *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 141.



remaining bargaining chip was the explosive powder house of his hungry followers, who, unless somehow paid, would erupt sooner or later in unpredictable violence. Using this leverage, he seems to have secured for himself a safe exit from Bijapur back to his stronghold at Bankapur and his renewed service as the commander of Bijapur's armies, while Siddi Masud would take the position of Regent and chief minister. It was agreed that Siddi Masud, having been entrusted with the fort of Bijapur, would also undertake to pay the salary demands of Abdul Karim's soldiers.<sup>260</sup> Since Siddi Masud himself did not have the funds, Qutb Shah, who had his own reasons for wanting to smooth Bijapur's politics, offered a promissory note for the full sum. This he entrusted to Siddi Masud.<sup>261</sup> After the accord was reached, Siddi Masud and Abdul Karim Khan's camps traveled together in the direction of Bijapur. However the arrangement was not to be. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1677, Abdul Karim Khan died in the vicinity of Hirapur, not far from Gulbarga.<sup>262</sup>

### Things fall apart

Amongst those present at Abdul Karim Khan's death were Dilir Khan, Siddi Masud and Sharza Khan Mahdawi. Along with them was Akkanna, a powerful Brahmin minister from the Golkonda Sultanate and brother to Madanna, who we already met during his negotiations with Shivaji some months previously. According to the *Dilkushā*, Dilir Khan entrusted Miyana's eldest son Abdul Rauf Khan, who was in his early teens, to the care of Siddi Masud so that he could receive appropriate training and one day fill his father's former position at court as Commander of the Army.<sup>263</sup> This rather surprising arranged fosterage is supported by other contemporary and later sources, albeit with varying degree of confusion over the details. The English factory records suggest that Abdul Karim Khan entrusted his two sons to Sharza Khan. They paint a sentimental portrait of the dying Miyana leader, who "before hee closed up his eyes [...] putt his two sons in the tuition of Serja Ckaun, who gladly seemed to accept them, forgetting all differences formerly between him and their father."<sup>264</sup> Francois Martin also got wind of the arrangement from a compatriot based in Golkonda.

He informed me that a few days after the conclusion of the treaty, Bahlol Khan had died. Before his death, he had exhorted all the grandees of the kingdom to remain loyal to the King and to restore the kingdom to its erstwhile splendour. He also entrusted his children to their care. The Deccanis promised to uphold the succession of the children to the offices held by the commander-in-chief and to the property possessed by the latter.<sup>265</sup>

The *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, although it never refers to any formal agreement of fosterage, clearly indicates Abdul Rauf Khan's close association with Siddi Masud (rather than Sharza Khan) from the

<sup>260</sup> *Qil'a-i Bijāpūr hawāla-i Ma'sūd namāyad wa o rā talab-i sipāh-i 'Abd al-Karīm*. "Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 71b.

<sup>261</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 454–56.

<sup>262</sup> Zubayrī, 457.

<sup>263</sup> *Dilīr Khān 'Abd al-Rauf pīsarash rā hawāla-i Siddi kard ke tarbiyat namāyad wa bajā-yi pidar sardār-i fauj bāshad*. "Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 71b.

<sup>264</sup> *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, II: 279, 153. The Bombay factors cannot have had a very reliable source, since the deathbed adoption was purportedly organized "in a Castle whilst it was besiedged by the Deccanics," a tale unsupported in any other narrative. A subsequent story in which Jamshid Khan of the Miyana household made secret alliance with Shivaji and Siddi Masud ingeniously gained entry into Bijapur by feigning his own death seems similarly to have been concocted from whole cloth. See *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, II: 322, 175.

<sup>265</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 608.

time of his father's death onwards. But what can explain such a move? Why would Abdul Karim Khan, or indeed Dilir Khan, have allowed Abdul Rauf to be placed under the control of his bitter rival? Would not (particularly in light of more conventional understandings of ethnic rivalries in Deccan politics) Dilir Khan have been a more plausible adoptive caregiver? Indeed, such an adoption would have offered the young Miyana the prospect of future employment within the Mughal system. Yet Dilir Khan himself was supposedly the agent of his friend's child being handed over to his long-time rival.

Before turning to the exigencies of the moment at hand, it is worth contextualizing this act, for the consignment of one's offspring or the acceptance of another's was comparatively common practice. Over the course of only a three-year period, Francois Martin recorded three such incidences. First, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1674, the French garrison at Pondicherry was approached by a man purporting to be the descendent of the last ruler of Vijayanagara, a certain Raghunath Teva, son of Raghunath Setupati.<sup>266</sup> He sought a loan from the French in order to raise an army of Rajputs and Karnatak foot soldiers, which he promised would in turn help the French to raise the siege on Sao Thomé. Lacking any other form of collateral, he offered to hand over his wife and children as hostages until such time as he could secure money to repay them. The French, themselves short of cash, turned the man away. In November of 1676, as the Siddi Nasir Muhammad at Jinji sought to negotiate a settlement with Sher Khan Lodi, the two agreed that Nasir Muhammad's son, along with some five hundred cavalrymen, would go over to serve in the Afghan's army. As Sher Khan's luck and finances ran dry in May the following year, Nasir Muhammad's son, along with his soldiers, again decamped for Jinji, indicating that Sher Khan had been expected to pay the men's salaries.<sup>267</sup> Not long afterwards, Sher Khan Lodi was similarly forced to part with his own eldest son Ibrahim. There are further parallels to be drawn with Abdul Rahim Khan Miyana's (d. 1665) earlier reinstatement of the rebellious Siddi Jauhar's son and son-in-law (Abdul Aziz and Siddi Masud himself, respectively) into the king's good graces in 1662, despite jousting between the two households. Whether forced or entrusted, such exchanges suggest an acknowledgment of temporary subordination or indebtedness within which an assumed future resumption of the balance of powers was neatly enfolded. In the acceptance or the offering of responsibility for one's child, one propped open doors for future opportunity.

For Dilir Khan, if there was ever any question of his 'adopting' the young Miyana, several considerations might have stayed his hand. First, acceptance of the young Miyana into his care may have implied his assumed responsibility of his deceased friend's debts.<sup>268</sup> At the same time, Dilir Khan may have seen reason to trust in the natural mechanics of disintegration already well underway in the Bijapur Sultanate. As fellow Afghans and close affiliates, Dilir Khan and Abdul Karim Khan Miyana probably drew upon closely related recruitment networks. The probability that the Miyana household's men would sooner or later seek more secure sources of income in the ranks of Dilir Khan's army would only be hastened by Dilir Khan's non-intervention. Finally, Dilir Khan may have seen it as in his interests to maintain a Miyana presence within the Bijapur Sultanate, where it could offer him a convenient avenue for future negotiations across the Sultanate-Mughal frontier.

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<sup>266</sup> Ramoudounaique and Tripachissenapanaique in the original French. Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 1: 403-404, 413-414.

<sup>267</sup> Martin, Vol. 1, Pt. 2: 554, 570.

<sup>268</sup> A comparable episode following the death of Siddi Khairiyat supports such a reading. Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnava Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. 2: 995.

Deccan politics by this point had evolved such that the most meaningful points of alliance and fracture were not between states but rather between groups across state boundaries.

By contrast, Siddi Masud had already accepted responsibility for the payment of Abdul Karim Khan's soldiers and held Abul Hasan Qutb Shah's promissory note by which to accomplish that feat. For him, Abdul Karim Khan's son must have seemed a uniquely valuable resource by which he might hope to undertake the daunting prospect of corralling tens of thousands of newly leaderless soldiers who, even after being delivered of their payment, must have presented a major impending crisis.

Warning signs of what was about to come arrived almost immediately afterwards. As Siddi Masud and his camp made their way towards Bijapur, the previously mentioned Miyana householder and slave Jamshid Khan, in whose power Abdul Karim Khan had left the fortress of Bijapur during his absence, sent a message to Siddi Masud.

...Now [Abdul Karim Khan] has died and you have come intending to conquer the fort, but first two things [must be addressed]. Firstly, that an arrangement be reached after which nothing more shall be asked of me, [and that] whatever it be in should accord with Abdul Karim Khan's orders. Secondly that six lakh [600,000] hun be entrusted to me in accordance with the contract so that after the consignment of the fort there shall be no further debate. Unless these two points are [agreed] if you come one step closer there will be war.<sup>269</sup>

In spite of Jamshid Khan's fervent desire that things not devolve into endless negotiation, that is precisely what transpired. Siddi Masud talked his way into the fortress on the basis that Qutb Shah's promissory note could be relied upon, whereupon Jamshid Khan retreated to the *haveli* of Abdul Karim Khan outside of the fort, waiting for the funds to be delivered. Unfortunately, however, Qutb Shah was perhaps less interested in Bijapur's internal affairs now that Abdul Karim Khan was dead, or else he had never intended to pay Abdul Karim Khan's soldiers to begin with, or maybe he too had run short on cash. Regardless, he failed to forward the promised funds, leading to a breach between Qutb Shah and Siddi Masud. The Afghan soldiers of Bijapur continued to present their claims to both Siddi Masud and to the dependents and relations [*muta'liqān wa muntasibān*] of Abdul Karim Khan. Despairing of quieter methods, they soon seized the home of their former master and, using it as their base, adopted more violent tactics. A remarkable account of this moment survives in the *Basātīn*, which deserves quoting at length.

They behaved with Jamshid Khan and with the offspring of Abdul Karim Khan in all manner of disrespectful ways in order to collect money. From the guardroom and the storehouse and the other offices of the Nawab they took whatever came to hand; even the wooden pots of the kitchen were not overlooked. They imprisoned Jamshid Khan's child and Mabīn(?) and Malhārī and Bhān Khan the caretaker of the storehouse, etc., all men attached [or] appointed by the Nawab Abdul Karim. Each day they were immersed in water and hung above hot rocks in order to extract money from them, and not being satisfied with that they grabbed men in the service of the government and the merchants from all sections of the city, and the inhabitants of the city, and anyone of even modest means. By the bite of the whip their wealth was taken. They came unannounced into the homes of men and engaged in all manner of oppression. [...] The Afghans sent a message [to Siddi Masud] that if he sent the army against them first they would kill Hakim Shamsa (a respected man associated with the Mughal representative in Bijapur whom they held hostage) along with his dependents, after which they would kill themselves. [...] They [entered] the *haram* of Abdul Karim Khan and roughly seized Abdul Rauf Khan the son of Abdul Karim Khan and laid him upon a bier of thorns and forced him to sit upon fire and began to

<sup>269</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 457. *Auwalan do amr ba-jā ārand yakī ān ke 'abd wa qism ba-miyān ārand ke ba'd az īn hīch bāz purs dar hīch amrī az man nakunand ke har che bar hukm-i 'Abd al-Karīm Khān shud wa duyum ān ke shash lakh hūn ba-mūjīb-i qarār dād bi'l-fi'l ba-man sipārand tā ba'd az tafwīz-i qil'a hīch guft wa shunūdi dar miyān nabāshad bidūn-i wuqū'-i īn do amr agar qadam pīsh guzārānd kār ba-jang khwāhad uftād.*

torment him beyond limit. Masud Khan [Siddi Masud] [sent] Mulhari Pandit and Hassan Khan Rohilla and Abdul Karim Daudzai to the *haveli* in order to negotiate. When Mulhari Pandit was granted permission to examine the accounts of the Afghans, a lengthy debate took place. In the end, the Afghans, behaving badly, struck Mulhari repeatedly and detained him. Hassan Khan and Abdul Karim Khan Daudzai rescued themselves from that terror and fled. They sent a message to Masud Khan that the Afghans were utterly rebellious and disobedient.<sup>270</sup>

As I have discussed earlier, the *Basātīn* dates from a much later period. The degree of detail offered in this section, however, offers indication that this portion may have relied closely on the now-lost contemporary account by Shaikh Abul Hassan. At the same time, the passage places on full display its elite anxiety about this breach of the normative social order. In the end, Siddi Masud sent troops to besiege the Afghan soldiers in the Miyanas' *haveli*. When the soldiers, finding themselves without alternative, sued for peace, Abdul Karim Khan Daudzai and Hassan Khan Rohilla were again sent as intermediaries. One hundred and sixty thousand hun remained unpaid of the men's salaries, of which Dilir Khan, the Mughal general, purportedly offered some thirty thousand, while the remainder was to come from Siddi Masud, upon which the sons of Abdul Karim Khan and others would be freed. At this point, a certain Venkatadri, described as a companion and close affiliate of Siddi Masud's [*mu'tamad ilaihi-i daulatkhāna-i Mas'ūd Khān*], registered his dissatisfaction with this arrangement. After extensive further negotiation a paltry symbolic sum of one hundred and five hun was settled upon. The Afghans, apparently resigned to failure, delivered up their hostages to Venkatadri at the adjacent *haveli* of the deceased Khizr Khan Panni. The *Basātīn*'s narrative is supported by the *Tārikh-i Dilkushā*, whose author pauses only long enough to comment in horrified disgust on the uproar in Bijapur that

Because Siddi Masud was negligent in his repaying the salaries of the soldiers of Abdul Karim the Afghans insulted Abdul Rauf in all manner of ways that he did not deserve. Even though Abdul Karim had nothing amongst his goods, they withdrew their service from [the son?] and disrespectfully took whatever he had. If they do so amongst their own people who knows [what they would do] to others.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>270</sup> Zubayrī, 459–60. *Bā Jamshīd Khān wa farzandān-i 'Abd al-Karīm Khān ba anwā'-i bī hurmatī pīsh āmada zar ba wusūl mī awardand wa az jāmdārkhāna wa toshakhāna wa dīgar kārkhānajāt-i Nawāb har che badast mī uftād mī giriftand tā ānke deghā-yi matbakh-i hīzum ham naguzāshtand wa farzand-i Jamshīd Khān rā wa Mābīn rā wa Mulhārī wa Bhān Khān hawāladār-i toshakhāna mardum-i abl-i tā'alluqāt waghaira az mansūbān-i Nawāb 'Abd al-Karīm rā qaid wa band namūdand har rūz dar āb ghota hā dada wa bālā-yi sanghā-yi garam nishānada zar wusūlāt mī namūdand bar hamīn qadr iktifā' nakarda mardum-i khwush-bāsh wa saudāgarān-i atrāf wa sākinān-i shahr wa hark e gumān-i zar mīdāshat badast awūrda bazarb-i shalāq az [wai] mīgiriftand wa dar khānahā-yi mardum bilā tahāsha dar āmada izā hā-yi gūnāgūn mīrasānīdand [...] Afghānān paighām firistādand ke agar fauj bar mā tā'īn shawad auwal Hakīm Shamsā rā bā mā'ahu tābī'ash bakushīm ba'd az ān khwud hā kusha shawīm. [...] 'Abd al-Rauf Khān pisar-i 'Abd al-Karīm Khān rā sakht giriftand wa bar takhtagī- khār hā farsh namūda bar ātish mī nishānadand wa 'azāb-i bihad namūdan āghāzīdand. Mas'ūd Khān bar darwāza-i Shāhpūr bar āmada Mulhārī Pandit wa Hassan Khān Robilla wa 'Abd al-Karīm Daudzāi rā ba hawelī-i Nawāb 'Abd al-Karīm Khan nazd-i ishān barāye suwāl wa jawāb wa rū wa badal rawāna namūd chūn Mulhārī Pandit dar tashkhīs-i hisāb-i Afghānān rukhsatī dar āmada miyān-i o wa Afghānān rū wa kad batūl ānjāmīd ākhīr Afghānān nāhinjārī rā kārista Mulhārī rā zada zada dar band kardand Hassan Khān wa 'Abd al-Karīm Khān Dāwudzāi az ān ashob khwud hā rā nijāt dada bīrūn āmadand w aba Mas'ūd Khān paighām firistādand ke Afghānān bar tamarrudī wa nāhanjārī kamāl āmada.*

<sup>271</sup> "Tārikh-i dilkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 71b. *Chūn Siddi Mas'ud dar dādan-i talab-i sipāh-i 'Abd al-Karīm tasāhul wa tahāwun namūd Afghānān 'Abd al-Rauf rā anwā'-i khaffat ke lā'iq nabūd rasānīdand. Har chand 'Abd al-Karīm dar basāt chīzī nadāshat lekin har che būd wa nabūd [mss. unclear—maybe bāz pūr] khidmat-ash ba bīhurmatī kashīda giriftand. Har gāh dar hamqaumī chunān kunand az dīgarān [che] ma'lūm.*

Several key points are immediately apparent. First, surviving representatives of the Miyana household were specifically targeted by the rioting soldiers, who only turned to other, perhaps more randomly selected victims after they had thoroughly shaken down Abdul Rauf, Jamshid Khan, and others. The physical home of the Miyana family itself was commandeered by the household's former dependents, underscoring the extent of the hierarchical reversal. Second, the question of who counted as one of the 'Afghans' in the narrative was by no means straightforward. Although certainly 'Afghan' in the sense of their ethnicity, Abdul Karim Khan Daudzai and Hassan Khan Rohilla were sent by Siddi Masud as trusted intermediaries to negotiate with the soldiers. There was apparently little danger that these men would be swayed by some primordial well of *hamqaumī* to join their brethren in riotous violence. Indeed, although their shared ethnicity was doubtless a reason for their selection as negotiators, and while it possibly saved them from wrath not spared for their fellow negotiator, the unfortunate Maratha Brahmin Mulhari Pandit, it did not seem any guarantee of safety. This distinction points to the reality that even if contemporary observers like Bhimsen made sense of Afghans' behavior in terms of ethnic character, the real explanation of their violence was to be found in broken promises from the Miyana household. Finally, the Afghans' threat of suicide, in conjunction with their apparent final acceptance of puny reparation, points to the soldiers' vulnerability. For these men, their bodies and capacity for violence constituted their only real resource and avenue for negotiation. By marketing these resources, they had hoped to forge a living. Denied compensation, they could only redirect this violence. When that too did not work, all that was left to them was the most desperate option – the threat of self-destruction.

Yet these unpaid dependents of the Miyana household did not commit suicide. Instead, most of the remaining Miyana mid-level leadership, hoping to forestall total dissipation of the household's rank and file, turned in desperation to Mughal service. While Zubayri's narrative doesn't tell us how these men had occupied themselves during the soldiers' riot, one can imagine the limited options that had faced them. As the *Basātīn* has it, these men once again turned the threat of a leaderless body of soldiers into a bargaining chip.

...The brothers and paternal nephews and the sons and the chiefs of Abdul Karim Khan and the other nobility and troop leaders remained in hope of the wellbeing of the Sultanate endured a period of time unemployed, waiting in difficulty and distress. When the severity of their poverty and hunger reached extremes and no sign of hope was in sight, they became intent upon leaving. Malik Barkhwurdar [an associate of Hakim Shamsa the Mughal diplomatic resident in Bijapur] petitioned the Emperor Aurangzeb: "Abdul Karim Khan had gathered a serviceable army and with its strength he had resisted Shivaji and often emerged victorious. Now without employment everyone is preparing to scatter in all directions, and wherever they go grain in that region will become expensive. It would be good if they having been brought into the service of the [Mughal] court be sent after Shiva[ji]." Alamgir approving of this suggestion placed them under the command of Dilir Khan and Malik Barkhwurdar...<sup>272</sup>

<sup>272</sup> Zubayri, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 469–70. *Chūn barādarān wa 'umzādagān wa pīsarān wa sardārān-i 'Abd al-Karīm Khān wa umarā-yi dīgar wa jamā'dārānke ba ūmīd-i bihbūd-i Sultānat mānda aiyām-i bikāri bā īn intazārī ba 'usrat wa taklīf ba sar mī burdand chūn az shuddat-i tangdastī wa gurusnagī tāqat tāq shud wa sūrat bihī bihbūd hīch nazr namīāmad har kudām qasd ba dar raftan ba har taraf musammam kardand Malik Barkhwurdār sūrat-i hāl ba Bādshāh 'Ālamgīr 'arzdāshī kard ke 'Abd al-Karīm Khān lashkar-i kār āmadānī jam' awarda dast ke ba quwwat-i īn lashkar bā Siva muqāwamat mīnamūd wa aksar bar ghālib mīāmad al-hāl az pīkār har kas ba har taraf irāda namūda and wa īn lashkar ba har taraf ke nazūl kunad pala-i ān taraf girān khwāhad shud. Sawāb-i ān ast ke īnhā rā dākhl-i bandahā-i dargāh sākhīta bā-īshān pusht kamar-i Sīvā bāyad shikast. Bādshāh 'Ālamgīr īn rāy' rā ba istihsān musharraf sākhīta abkām batākīd-i tamām dar nigahdāshītan-i īn fauj ba Dilīr Khān wa Mālik Barkhwurdār asdār farmud.*

Amongst those who left to serve under Dilir Khan were Abdul Karim Khan Miyana's brothers Abdul Ghafur, Abdul Shakur, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Nabi and Abdul Salam, as well as the paternal nephews Abdul Majid, Abdul Faiyaz, and Abdul Hakim, and more distant Miyana kin. Others presumably not related by blood included an undefined number of *bairāgiyān*, or armed Hindu ascetics, men whose names imply possibly Mahdawi or Nawaiyat backgrounds (Sayyid Bayazid, Sayyid Miran, Abdul Jalil son of Mulla Mansur), an individual named Pari Shah 'Sīmāh chatrī'(?), likely a Sufi holy man, Lashkar Bhai "and other well-known people of this sort."<sup>273</sup> The list offers some insight into the makeup of leadership of the Miyana household, which apart from blood relations also included a fair number of non-Afghan and non-Muslim representatives.

Conspicuously absent was Jamshid Khan's name. Instead, he somehow preserved under his leadership a fraction of the Miyana's forces, and marched with them towards his deceased master's stronghold in Bankapur, which he soon made himself master of. By mid-August of 1678, he commanded three thousand cavalry, 'daily taking more' and met with Salim Khan, 'owner of the town [of Bankapur].' The two prepared to face off against Shivaji's forces, which continued to plunder the region. At the end of August, Jamshid Khan purportedly led some ten to twelve thousand cavalry, while back in Bijapur Sharza Khan and Siddi Masud together commanded not many more: perhaps fifteen thousand. Not long after, Jamshid was reported to have led eight thousand cavalry, while Sharza Khan at the capital controlled some thirty thousand.<sup>274</sup> These fluctuating troop numbers reflect the suddenly fluid military landscape in Bijapur. With the break-up of the state's largest military household, the countryside was awash with soldiers seeking livelihood.

Jamshid Khan's decision to return to the Karnatak and to the Miyana stronghold of Bankapur rather than following the bulk of the Miyana leadership into Mughal service is possibly indicative of his background. If Jamshid Khan were of Karnatak or even Siddi heritage, his ethnicity would have done him few favors in the Mughals' ranks, where skin color and class/caste background were evaluated by different criteria than in the Sultanate world.<sup>275</sup> Instead, he turned his hand to regional politics. In the summer of 1679 Jamshid Khan intervened in a dispute between the ever-competing rulers of Sunda and Bidnur. He chose the former's side, forcing the Rani of Bidnur to return the fortresses of Sira, Mirjan and 'Sirsy,' [possibly Shirhatti] all formerly under Miyana control, to Jamshid Khan's forces.<sup>276</sup> A Bijapuri *farmān* dating from February of 1685, although badly damaged, nevertheless indicates that he remained active in a 'newly-conquered' country (i.e. the southern Karnatak), where the document granted him a *jāgīr*.<sup>277</sup> For the remaining years in which the Bijapur Sultanate tottered towards its final end, Jamshid Khan carried on the work of

<sup>273</sup> Zubayrī, 470.

<sup>274</sup> *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, secs. 322, 325, 341, 343.

<sup>275</sup> For a discussion around the case of Pidiya Nayak see Richards, "The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan"; Muhammad Hāshim Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, ed. Maulvī Kabīr al-Dīn Ahmad and Maulvī Ghulām Qādir (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1869), Vol. II, 369-370. Also see for example the *Bahādur Shāh nāma*, where the author puns of several Mughal-employed Siddis that a (quite modest) increase in their imperial *zāt* rank "caused the darkness (or nighttime) of hopelessness to arrive at the morning of success." [*Shab-i na-umīdī rā ba sobh-i kāmyābī rasānīdand.*] Ni'mat Khān-i-'Ālī, "Bahādur Shāh Nāma [Photocopy]" (1196AH 1782), fol. 48a, SSEA Libr. DS461.8.N36 1782a, University of California at Berkeley. I discuss the possibility of racially motivated policies further in Chapter Three.

<sup>276</sup> 29 July 1679. *English Records on Shivaji (1659-1682)*, sec. 179.

<sup>277</sup> Unlabeled Adil Shahi *farman*, Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal (BISM) Collection, 3rd Rabi al-Auwal, 1096AH.

patching together the Miyanas' Karnatak holdings as best he could, while his former master's son Abdul Rauf Khan stayed close by Siddi Masud's side in Bijapur.

### Household forms and trajectories: some other examples

The disintegration of centralized Adil Shahi power in Bijapuri territories coincided with the rising power of military households like the Miyanas. Weak control by the sovereign at court, combined with rising opportunity further south constituted ideal conditions for the growth of powerful, extended household networks that held the practical reins of power. In the face of rising insecurity, however, these military households, rooted in the wealthy territories of the Karnatak, sought to prop up and retain the exoskeleton of the old regime. In particular, the Siddi and Miyana households that vied most effectively for dominance within the court itself relied upon their delegates on the centrally important Coromandel Coast to coordinate commercial interests that in turn supported their northern efforts against Mughal and Maratha threats.

Only those Bijapur-associated households survived that could rely upon autonomous resource bases, well beyond the physical ambit or control of the court, and put their strongholds to use in shaping courtly politics to their interests. Those who failed to establish such arrangements invariably disappeared from political view. One such example was Ali Adil Shah II's former *wazir* Abdul Muhammad Khan (not to be mistaken for Abdul Karim Khan's cousin Abdul Muhammad Khan Miyana), the descendent of an influential noble lineage of 'foreign' extraction, whose political failure co-related with the inability to create a base in the Karnatak. By contrast, a 'Deccani' group known as the Nawaiyats mostly left Bijapuri service in 1665 under the leadership of Mulla Ahmad. They had formerly been based in the coastal Konkan region, but their territories fell under the control of Shivaji. A turn to Mughal service offered these men the promise of renewed security over lands formerly held in their name under the Nizam Shahi regime.<sup>278</sup> The Mahdawi household, like the Nawaiyats, were based relatively further north than other late-Sultanate noble houses and were accordingly vulnerable to pressure from Shivaji. Unlike the Nawaiyats, however, they were able to maintain a precarious foothold in the northernmost Karnatak district of Belgaum along the coast, sandwiched between the Miyana-dominated regions around Bankapur and Shivaji. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Sayyid Ilyas Khan (d. 1663) and his son Sayyid Makhdum Khan successively headed the Mahdawis. Both took the title of "Sharza Khan". Like the Miyanas and the Siddis, the Mahdawis remained tied to the Bijapur court until the final surrender of the kingdom in 1686. Yet while Jadunath Sarkar and Gijs Kruijtzter have characterized the Mahdawis as staunch allies of the 'Deccani' cause against the 'Afghans,' Sharza Khan II's political biography hardly seems to warrant such a claim.<sup>279</sup> Indeed, in order to maintain their delicate territorial foothold, the Mahdavis' political strategy was almost hyperactively fickle. They formed successive alliances with nearly the entire spectrum of Deccan-based actors (with the notable exception of Shivaji): Khawas Khan, Bahadur Khan Kokaltash (Mughal), Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, Siddi Masud, Dilir Khan Daudzai (Mughal), and finally in the final years of Sikandar Adil Shah's reign, Abdul Rauf Khan Miyana.

Sultanate military households were principally organized around a nucleus of kin who in turn cultivated ties with trusted agents, both kin and non-kin. Each house cultivated these relations according to an internal logic that distinguished it in some measure from the others. While the Miyanas drew upon both blood relations and Afghan and non-Afghan outsiders to build its

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<sup>278</sup> Udairāj, *Haft Anjuman*, 84.

<sup>279</sup> Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 176; Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 98–99.

operations, the Siddis drew more heavily upon enslavement as an organizing principle of their house, and at the same time possibly offered more opportunity for aspirants of comparatively humble (but free) origin to rise through the ranks. Siddi Masud, although nominally a slave of the Sultan, was also considered to be “from amongst the slaves of Malik Abdul Wahhab” who was in turn a son of Malik Raihan, a well-known servant of Muhammad Adil Shah.<sup>280</sup> It is unclear whether Malik Raihan and Abdul Wahhab were themselves Siddi, although they certainly surrounded themselves with Siddi allies and dependents. When Abdul Wahhab died presumably sometime in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>281</sup> his slave Siddi Jauhar imprisoned Abdul Wahhab’s son, Malik Raihan II, and seized Karnul for himself, building around him a network of allies that included Siddi Masud, whom he fostered [*tarbiyat mikard*] and married to his own daughter [*ba dāmādi girift*]. Siddi Masud in turn took power after the death of Siddi Jauhar (aka Salabat Khan), but he did so only after a competition (interestingly assisted by the widow of Abdul Wahhab) with Siddi Jauhar’s son Siddi Abdul Aziz in the mid-1660s. He abandoned the fort of Karnul in favor of the nearby fort of Adoni, where he surrounded himself with a diverse group of trusted agents. These included fellow Siddis, some of whom were described as slaves to Masud himself (he entrusted one such ‘slave’ by the name of Siddi Ambar to the task of supervising the fortress of Adoni and its surrounding environs while he was at court). Others such as Siddi Alam were family – Siddi Alam had been married to another of Siddi Jauhar’s daughters. Masud also relied upon a certain Venkatadri, a Kulkarni Brahmin described as a Persian scribe in the regional administration near Raichur, but who was also considered a skilled horseman and eventually a competent manager of Siddi Masud’s affairs. Other members of Masud’s inner circle came from more humble backgrounds. Muhammad Ji Saqa, who had served him from childhood, probably started out as a cupbearer. Hiraji Bahalban (related to the Hindi *bahalwān*) began his career as an oxcart driver. Zubayri’s inventory of the membership of Siddi Masud’s household, despite its sniffy elitism, offers a clear illustration of how the Siddi household built itself outwards through master-slave ties, marriage and the patronage of low-status hopefuls.<sup>282</sup>

Whatever their mode of internal organization, Sultanate military households were complex political entities which, while operating at one level as a cohesive unit of organization, at another level could become a political target from outside or within. Thus Shivaji Bhonsle quite intentionally directed his forces towards the destruction of Miyana interests first in the western Bankapur region and some years later along the Coromandel coastline. As the Miyana household collapsed in 1678, the soldiers who had formerly fought on its behalf turned their fury on its leadership.

## Conclusion

In Gijs Kruijtzter’s recent study of Deccan politics in the seventeenth century, he begins by admitting this his project had become “an attempt to understand xenophobia, the fearful distrust of the strange(r)...”<sup>283</sup> One of his case studies, the focus of the fourth chapter of his book, concentrates on the rise of Shivaji and of ‘Deccani nationalism,’ much of which was purportedly oriented towards the ‘foreign’ figures of the Afghan nobility, led by the Miyana family, that had come to dominate Bijapur’s politics in the 1670s. As I have shown, the Miyanas’ conflict with Shivaji and with the

<sup>280</sup> Not to be confused with Siddi Raihan, who was titled Ikhlas Khan under Muhammad Adil Shah. An interesting account of Siddi Raihan’s origins is given in Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 312–13.

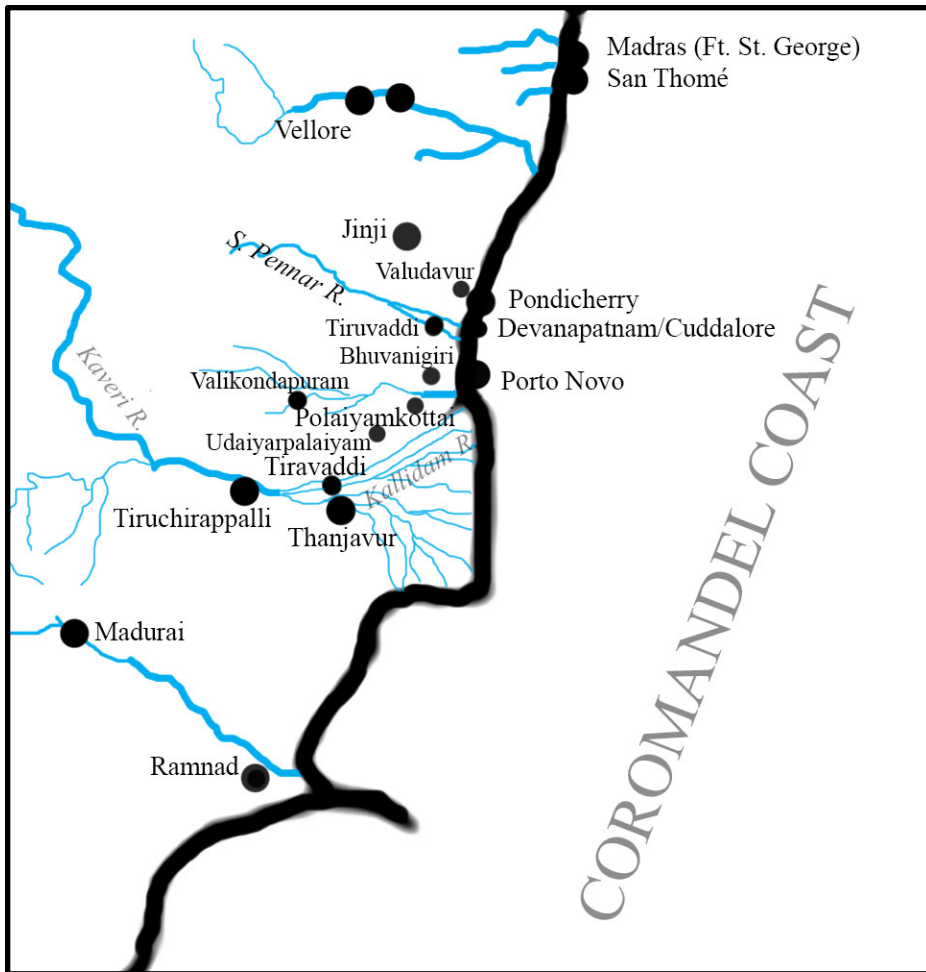
<sup>281</sup> His impressive and well-preserved tomb remains not far from the center of the city in Karnul today.

<sup>282</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 524–25.

<sup>283</sup> Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 1.



Siddi household under Siddi Masud was not a result of the Miyanas' 'strangeness' to the Deccan, or of a xenophobic hatred between two discrete ethnic groups, or even of the fear of the stranger. Rather the conflicts that arose between Sultanate actors in this period evolved out of the fundamental similarity of their historical trajectory. The Miyanas, the Siddis and the Marathas under Bhonsle leadership had together shared first the experience of the loss of Nizam Shahi territories around Daulatabad in the 1630s, and then the opened door of opportunity offered by the southern Karnatak frontier from the 1640s onwards. If Shivaji himself had made his claims in the western hills of the Konkan, his father and half-brother, along with the Miyanas, Siddis and to some degree the Mahdawis, all found refuge and resources in the Karnatak. As Sultanate actors in this frontier zone, they shared a collective outsider status. Together, they alternately competed and cooperated with one another as they sought to establish themselves in this new landscape, building local allegiances and negotiating access to trade routes and military support. The households themselves, if commonly identified by contemporary and later observers by the ethnic identity of their leadership, were multi-ethnic entities that actively sought, particularly in the Karnatak context, to strengthen their ties to an array of groups both local and trans-regional. By the late 1670s, when conflict between these groups broke into open conflagration, these groups were not strangers to one another but rather deeply familiar. They had been playing the same game alongside one another for generations.



Map 3: Detail of territories associated with Sher Khan Lodi

## Chapter Three: An empire of influence

In this chapter, I consider the rising fortunes of the Panni household after the Mughal conquest, contrasting it with other households rooted in the Bijapur Sultanate. I concentrate particularly on the career of Daud Khan Panni (d. 1715), whose career, deservedly, has already received attention in earlier studies. While others have approached him individually, this chapter seeks to contextualize him within an expansive network of friends, family and allies whose foundations were rooted in equal measure within Sultanate and Mughal contexts. In particular, this requires an examination of Panni as ‘public’ personality – a man whose reputation not so much at court but amongst diverse soldiering communities, was at the core of his success. Thus this chapter, having outlined the economic and territorial features of his and his household’s political ambitions and his biography, concludes with an investigation of the colorful stories that built up around him both during and after his life.

With the important exception of the Marathas, whose combative relationship with the Mughals is well known, Mughal scholarship has tended to sideline the issue of how other southern interest groups were incorporated within the imperial system. Common wisdom suggests that Muslim nobility were effortlessly absorbed, while Hindu groups, mainly Maratha but also Telugu, Kannada and Tamil-speaking *nāyaka* and *palaiyakkarār* warrior groups faced a rocky transition.<sup>284</sup> However the contrasting trajectories of formerly Sultanate-affiliated Muslim households clearly indicate that religious identity was only one of several factors that shaped Sultanate affiliates’ fates: social ties and ethnicity also played important roles. Even where Mughal service was embraced, former Sultanate actors continued to prioritize their own interests. In the process, they substantially influenced the trajectory of Mughal power in the south. The Pannis, often with the Miyanas at their side, took advantage of imperial administrative mechanisms in order to facilitate the movement of trade and military resources across formerly discrete arenas between the central Deccan and the most southerly stretches of the Karnatak territories, in the process accelerating the integration of regional economies.

This chapter draws together evidence from three different regions – the southeastern Coromandel Coast, the southwestern territories in and around Bankapur, and the central Deccan region around Aurangabad and Burhanpur. A complex cast of characters moves between and across these regions, constructing interlocking networks that drew distant territories into closer relationship. At the heart of this web was Daud Khan Panni. He is remembered by contemporary Europeans, who encountered him at their coastal ports in the Coromandel region, as an unpredictable, often-violent figure, prone to turning up unexpectedly at their gates. In Mughal sources, he is by turns a jewel of Aurangzeb’s court and paragon of imperial fidelity, an untrustworthy co-conspirator with the Maratha enemy, and the Afghans’ most prominent leader. A surviving Marathi-language account depicts him as an ideal military leader whose qualities drew men of diverse backgrounds to his service.<sup>285</sup> By addressing Panni within his wider social, political and

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<sup>284</sup> Richards, “The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan.”

<sup>285</sup> This is the anonymously authored eighteenth-century *Dāūdkhānpannīchī Bakhar*. I work from two iterations of the text. The Marathi language “Dāwud-Khān Pannīchī Bakhar,” *Sanshōdhan* 18, nos. 3-4, Sept.-Dec. 1949, pp. 113-127 is an edited version based on a manuscript copy held by the Rajwade Shanshodhan Mandal at Dhulia, while the “Memoir of the War of Daood Khan and Hassan Ali Khan on the Borders of the Deckan [...],” (British Library, OIOC Eur. Mss., Mackenzie General, #41, nos. 15-16) was preserved and translated into English by Narayana Rao and Subha Rao, research assistants of Colin Mackenzie, in 1807.

economic context, this chapter seeks to account not only for perceived discrepancies between the above characterizations but to also help explain why contemporary sources were fascinated by him.

## Doors opening and closing: former Sultanate households in the new Mughal order

Bijapur's last Sultan, Sikandar Adil Shah, surrendered to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1686. At his side were Sharza Khan, head of the Mahdawi household, and Abdul Rauf Khan, the young leader of the Miyana household, whose story has been outlined over the past two chapters. For their part in the negotiations Aurangzeb awarded them the respective titles of Rustam Khan and Dilir Khan (both will be referred to from this point forward by their Mughal titles) and granted them *mansabdārī* ranks of 7000.<sup>286</sup> Others, including Jamshid Khan, the former slave of Abdul Karim Khan, were also awarded high rank.

As Mughal forces moved into the territories formerly held by the Sultanates, they contended with an array of groups that had formerly enjoyed different kinds of ties to the Sultanate courts. Although some (as above) sought to make the best of the situation by joining the Mughal camp, others remained wary. In his work on the Mughal conquest of southern India, John Richards argued that something resembling racial bias might help explain the Mughals' limited success or disinterest in incorporating some groups.<sup>287</sup> Thus groups like the Bedars (also known as Berads – see more in Chapter Five), who controlled the kingdom of Sagar located midway between Hyderabad and Bijapur, were dismissively described in terms we might describe today as racist, while other Hindu actors in the Karnatak were, according to Richards, alienated by Aurangzeb's purported intention to demolish regional temples.<sup>288</sup>

Certainly Pam Nayak, the leader of the Bedar community, was poorly served by the Mughal state. The Bedars had never considered themselves subjects of Bijapur, but their court, headquartered midway between Golkonda and Bijapur, had often aligned itself with Bijapuri interests when it suited them. In the final years of the Sultanate, the Bedars had been amongst Bijapur's most committed defenders and were amongst the most powerful groups in the region. According to the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī*, their ruler had

...held up his head as the equal of the kings of Bijapur and Haidarabad. [...] Muslims adoring him as a leader considered him as their mediator and defender in evil days, so that at the siege of Bijapur he had the audacity to send 6,000 fighting footmen...<sup>289</sup>

Following the defeat of both Hyderabad and Bijapur, Pam Nayak surrendered his fort in exchange for the promise of service. He and his family were, however, openly ridiculed for their dark complexion and cultural differences. The author of the *Ma'āsir-i 'Ālamgīrī* (c. ~1707-1712), for

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<sup>286</sup> *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 156–57. Despite the potential confusion distinguishing between the newly deceased Dilir Khan Daudzai and the newly titled Dilir Khan Miyana, I will from this point forward refer to Abdul Rauf as Dilir Khan, as he was subsequently universally known.

<sup>287</sup> Richards, “The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan.”

<sup>288</sup> Richards, “The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707,” 245.

<sup>289</sup> Sāqī Musta'idd Khān, *Maasir-i-'Ālamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzib-'Ālamgir*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1942), 185.

example, described Pam Nayak (but identified as Pīd Nayak, possibly a reference to his son, Pidiyah Nayak) as “a wonder of outlandish appearance.”<sup>290</sup>

From the wildness of his form – vexation and astonishment  
From the ocean of his malevolence – a blue vapor  
Night has been made miserable by comparison made to him  
The day, by the attack of that dark cloud, fell into night  
To the bear and the boar a thousand disgraces by his resemblance  
To the washer of corpses, his sinister form brought abhorrence.<sup>291</sup>

Saqi Mustaid Khan concluded that “I do not know where in the darkness of his heart a light flickered that from amongst the servants of that most luminous moon [the Emperor] he would gain fortune.”<sup>292</sup> He did in fact receive an audience, but it was hardly an honor. He died under mysterious circumstances a few days later while still at court. There seems little doubt, in this case, that many Mughal elites were unable or unwilling to bridge the cultural gap between them and this formerly powerful regional actor.<sup>293</sup> In the decades to come, his son Pidiyah Nayak would continue to wage a low-level guerilla campaign against Mughal interests.

Conceivably, Mughal elites felt a comparable distaste for the Indo-African Siddis, despite their shared religion. In the *Bahādurshāhnāma*, for example, Nimat Khan-i Ali, well known for his satire,<sup>294</sup> puns of several Mughal-employed Siddis that a (modest) increase in their imperial *zāt* ranks had “caused the night [or darkness] of hopelessness to arrive at the morning of success,” a reference that takes on particular resonance when considered in conversation with Saqi Mustaid Khan’s verses above.<sup>295</sup> But Mughal courtly culture, when the circumstances merited it, had long since proven its willingness to incorporate darker-skinned participants. Indeed, during Aurangzeb’s own career as a prince, he had actively courted high-ranking Deccan-based Siddis, seeking to incorporate them into his household.<sup>296</sup> Aurangzeb’s princely open-handedness, however, did not survive his transition to the position of Emperor. Although a small number of Siddis were promoted to high *zāt* ranks under Aurangzeb, none played important roles in Mughal affairs.<sup>297</sup> This is remarkable given the central role this group had played under the Sultanates and deserves explanation.

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<sup>290</sup> Sāqi Musta‘idd Khān, *Ma‘āsir-i ‘Ālamgīrī*, ed. Ahmad ‘Alī Ahmad Mawlavī (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1870), 186. *Pīd Nāyak u’jūbah būd gharīb al-khilqa*.

<sup>291</sup> Khān, 186.

*Z sabrā-yi fatan farā ghubārī / z daryā-yi hasad nīlī bukhārī  
shab az tashbīh-i o ba-rūz siyāh nishasta / rūz az hajūm-i ān siyāh abr shab gashta  
khīrs wa khūg rā az nisbatash hazārān ‘ār / murda-shū az surat-i nahs-i o bizār.*

<sup>292</sup> Khān, 306–7; Khān, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 186. *Nadānam dar zulmatkada-i dilash īn nūr kujā tāfti ke az mulāzimān-i anwar az har nasība yābad*

<sup>293</sup> Richards, “The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan,” 245–46.

<sup>294</sup> Abhishek Kaicker, “Unquiet City: Making and Unmaking Politics in Mughal Delhi, 1707-39” (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2014), chap. Five: The pen is mightier than the sword, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1524022503?accountid=14496>.

<sup>295</sup> Ni‘mat Khān-i-‘Ālī, “Bahādur Shāh Nāma [Photocopy],” fol. 48a. *Shab-i nā-umīdī rā ba-sobh-i kāmyābī risānīdand*

<sup>296</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 172.

<sup>297</sup> Athar Ali does not distinguish Siddis in his list but they are often identifiable by name. The following are the sum total of Mughal *mansabdārs* of obviously Siddi extraction ranked above 1,000. All of those ranked above 2,000 entered service after 1680, when *zāt* inflation was in full effect. Siddi Masud (7,000/7,000), Habsh Khan (7,000/7,000), Siddi Salim Khan (5,000/4,000), Siddi Yaqut (2,000/1,000), Siddi Faulad aka Siddi Qasim (1,500/1,200), Siddi Ibrahim (1,000/500). M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Rev. ed (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

In my opinion, however, there were other more pragmatic reasons for the Siddis' lessened status under the Mughals. They were, during this period, being slowly starved of access to western sea ports, through which they had not only long enjoyed a profitable trade in material goods but also in the flow of new migrants from the East African coast destined for military slavery in the southern courts. From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, the Marathas, as they had with other Sultanate groups, sought to prise control of western port cities from Siddi hands. By the turn of the century, the Siddis' last stronghold, Janjira, was largely cut off from inland routes by firmly-held Maratha territories.<sup>298</sup> In this light, the surrender by Siddi Masud, former Regent of Bijapur and Abdul Karim Khan's competitor for control of the court, of his fortress stronghold at Adoni in 1688 might be considered the end of a long era of Siddi power in southern India.<sup>299</sup> He was granted a high *mansab* rank, as well as a *faujdārī* posting and *jāgīr* in Moradabad, near Agra.<sup>300</sup> This allowance, which might have been a plum posting for nobility with ties to the north, was nothing of the sort for a nobleman born in and with a long-standing interest in South India. It can only be read as an effort to further isolate and disarm this well-connected southerner. Others from Siddi Masud's household fled into the Karnatak where they sought refuge with local rulers.<sup>301</sup>

Like those described above, some members of the Miyana household saw fit to hold out against the Mughal regime right up until Bijapur was conquered. Although a steady trickle of Miyanas had begun to migrate into Mughal camps from as early as 1665 and with increasing frequency following the death of Abdul Karim Khan in 1677 (see Chapter Two), these migrants seemed unable to achieve traction within the Mughal system. Men like Abdul Muhammad Khan (titled Ikhlās Khan), Abdul Ghafur and Abdul Faiyaz Khan, all of whom had transferred allegiance well before 1686, lived out undistinguished careers - while some were granted high rank and *jāgīrs*, their names are hardly mentioned in the histories. Their lackluster experiences may have contributed to remaining members' reticence about abandoning their valuable Sultanate holdings.

Following the Mughal conquest, Karnatak holdings were systematically removed from the control of Sultanate-affiliated nobility, while northerners were brought in to replace them. The goal seems to have been to remove those who had formerly moved freely between the Sultanate courts and Karnatak-based holdings. Aurangzeb ordered that so-called '*zamīndārs*' of the Karnatak (*nāyakas*, *nayyars*, and *palaiyakkārārs*, in local parlance) whose purview was entirely local and whose acquiescence was foundational to effective tax collection, were to be left alone.<sup>302</sup> In 1691-92 in the Bijapuri Karnatak, Aurangzeb's administrators undertook a survey of the territories in and around Bankapur, listing the names of local rulers and their reported annual tribute, or *peshkash* (a good portion of which would have been formerly payable to the Miyanas).<sup>303</sup> Soon afterwards non-Sultanate-affiliated nobility were put in control of Bankapur and its environs.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>298</sup> Faeza Jasdanwalla, "African Settlers on the West Coast of India: The Sidi Elite of Janjira," *African and Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 41–58.

<sup>299</sup> Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. 2, 372.

<sup>300</sup> Khān, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 191.

<sup>301</sup> Anonymous, "Ahkām-i 'Ālamgīrī" (n.d.), fol. 38b, 421, Telangana State Archives Library.

<sup>302</sup> John Richards describes the process in the context of the Hyderabadī Karnatak. Richards, "The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707," 243.

<sup>303</sup> It would be useless to attempt a calculation, however, since we neither know precisely over which territories the Miyanas held power, nor do we have any sense of pre-Mughal rates of success in extracting revenues. I.J. Coll. I/34/0-40 – 0-60. Relevant materials continue between I/34/0-126 – 0-130 & I/41/6-59.

<sup>304</sup> I.J. Coll. I/43/1-43, I/43/11-12, I/43/6-32, I/43/2-66, I/44/2-20, I/45/1-90, I/45/3-12, III/1/10-159.

After Dilir Khan and Jamshid Khan were transferred out of Bankapur both received *jāgīrs* in Nander and Parenda in the Berar region of the central Deccan [see Map 4]. Dilir Khan would also be granted a *faujdārī* in Khair, a district of Berar. As in the earlier example of Siddi Masud, these grants were aimed at extracting the Miyanas from their familiar networks and territories. This despite the fact that both had served in the siege of Golkonda in 1687.<sup>305</sup> Interestingly, others bearing the Miyana name, likely the offspring of Abdul Muhammad Khan Miyana who had defected for Mughal service back in 1665, were also granted *jāgīr* holdings in Berar. These included Kotgir, Narsi, Pandiabedgaon, and Ankalkot.<sup>306</sup> These cousins, despite their geographical and genealogical proximity, seemingly failed to make common cause. Their names do not appear in any of the archival materials pertaining to either Dilir Khan or his affiliates. The distance maintained between these cousins, perhaps, reflected continued antagonisms held over from their parents' and grandparents' bad blood (see Chapter Two), and offers a marked contrast to the Pannis' history, recounted in the following pages. Instead, Dilir Khan and his supporters bided their time, waiting for an opportunity to return to their strongholds in the western Karnatak. A thin paperwork trail from the last years of Aurangzeb's reign petitioning for return suggests their continued optimism that this might transpire.<sup>307</sup>

## A Mughal sultanate?

In March of 1707, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb died. Almost immediately, documentation began to flood into Aurangabad, then capital of the Mughal Deccan, about individuals and groups who were abandoning their posts to join Prince Kam Bakhsh in Bijapur, widely considered by both contemporary observers and later historians to have been the weakest of the princely candidates to replace Aurangzeb. This seems not to have dissuaded many southern interest groups. The Mughal *qil'adār* [fort commander] at the strategic fort of Udgir complained that all but fourteen of the fort's retainers [*abshām*] had absconded for Bijapur, and begged his superiors to send money so that he could hire replacements.<sup>308</sup> Complaints of absconding, intermingled with a rash of opportunistic crimes, were so copious that for a period of several months they seemingly took up the bulk of administrative energy in Aurangabad.<sup>309</sup> Such a tide of support is remarkable in light of Kam Bakhsh's reputation for incompetence and instability.

Or perhaps, it was precisely Kam Bakhsh's limitations that made him a worthwhile investment. It was widely believed that Aurangzeb had, seeing his youngest son's weakness, sought to preserve Kam Bakhsh from the inevitable succession war by carving out a southern province for him to rule.<sup>310</sup> Or, to put it in Nimat Khan-i Ali's ungenerous terms,

<sup>305</sup> Khān, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 173, 180.

<sup>306</sup> I.J. Coll. I/45/1-145, I/45/1-206, I/45/2-114, I/45/2-115, I/51/11-183.

<sup>307</sup> I.J. Coll. I/43/11-12, I/51/12-144.

<sup>308</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/9-91, III/1/9/92.

<sup>309</sup> Box number 46 of the Inayatjung Collection, containing at least a hundred documents, is in large measure given over to these complaints, while boxes 47-50 each contain significant numbers as well.

<sup>310</sup> See for example the first of Aurangzeb's purported wills, translated in Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzib* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 307.

Aurangzeb in consideration of [Kam Bakhsh's] inward and outward despicableness, had granted him the territory of Bijapur, which is a territory at the edge of the dominion of the Empire, and a shoreline secure from the dashing of the dangerous ocean's waves [i.e. the hurly-burly of meaningful politics].<sup>311</sup>

Formerly Sultanate-affiliated nobility, it seems, saw an opportunity to resurrect a system that resembled the old regime. Siddi Masud's son Siddi Murtaza left his place in the imperial army to join Kam Bakhsh along with a group of supporters.<sup>312</sup> The Bedar leader Pam Nayak joined Kam Bakhsh, despite his family's history of conflict with the Mughals in the region.<sup>313</sup> In early April of 1707, Dilir Khan along with his sons and other associates also left their posting at Nander, in Berar, to head to Bijapur. He and his men first headed south to Kalyan, relieving the district of some seventy thousand rupees and some cattle before turning west to Sholapur, where they again ransacked the countryside before finally moving south to Bijapur.<sup>314</sup> Miyanas serving on the southeastern front in Daud Khan Panni's army did likewise. Amongst them, Abdul Quddus Khan Miyana (Dilir Khan's younger brother) reportedly left Panni's camp on an unspecified mission to the outpost of Salmar [possibly Salambar, also known as Chidambaram, a market center near Porto Novo with a strong Miyana presence] along with one thousand cavalry and two thousand foot soldiers. The report was quickly amended after word was received from camp spies that Abdul Quddus was on his way to join his brother Dilir Khan in Bijapur.<sup>315</sup> Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana and Shamshir Khan Miyana soon followed suit.<sup>316</sup> Daud Khan Panni himself seems to have remained agnostic about the prince's chances until quite late in the game. Although his patron, Zulfiqar Khan, had a long and famously acrimonious relationship with the prince, Panni himself had served for a period as Kam Bakhsh's deputy when the prince was *sūbadār* [governor] of Hyderabad, and might have seen some potential in the arrangement that presented itself.<sup>317</sup> He was, at least, seemingly willing to allow his Miyana companions to depart camp with large bodies of troops to support the prince, even if he himself kept his distance, hedging his bets.

Ultimately, Prince Kam Bakhsh proved too unstable a vehicle for his supporters' interests, and the support flowing his direction did not last long. As early as March of 1708, some seven hundred soldiers who had at first sought service with Kam Bakhsh reconsidered their priorities and returned to Aurangabad. They were welcomed and granted rewards in proportion to their status.<sup>318</sup> They were part of a returning tide of disappointed parties straggling back to the newly crowned Bahadur Shah's camp. Kam Bakhsh showed signs of increasing psychological instability, exemplified by a paranoid distrust of his apparently faithful captain Ahsan Khan, whom he eventually imprisoned, tortured, and finally had murdered.<sup>319</sup> Kam Bakhsh himself would die on the 13<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>311</sup> Ni'mat Khān-i-Ālī, "Bahādūr Shāh Nāma [Photocopy]," fol. 110a. *Hazrat Khuld Makān nazar bar haqārat-i sūrī wa ma'nawī-yi o nisbat ba ikhwān-i Bījāpūrī rā ke gūsha ast az mulk-i mamlikat wa kinār ist ma'mūn az talātum-i daryā-mahlakat ba-mashār ilaihi bakhshīda...*

<sup>312</sup> I.J. Coll. III/2/3-88.

<sup>313</sup> Ni'mat Khān-i-Ālī, "Bahādūr Shāh Nāma [Photocopy]," fol. 189a.

<sup>314</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/6-44, III/1/7-96, III/1/0-22.

<sup>315</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/8-3, III/1/8-4 (November 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 1707).

<sup>316</sup> Muhammad Hādī Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salātīn-i Chaghatā: tazkirah-i jānishīnān-i Awrangzīb*, ed. Muzaffar Alam (Bombay; New York: Asia Publishing House, 1980), 42; William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, ed. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta, M.C. Sarkar & sons, 1921), Vol. I: 59.

<sup>317</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 299; Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1972), 6.

<sup>318</sup> I.J. Coll. III/2/1-88.

<sup>319</sup> Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I: 59.



January 1709 near Hyderabad, when he and his few remaining supporters undertook a suicidal attack against Bahadur Shah's vastly superior forces. It would be Daud Khan Panni and several of his Afghan captains who had marched northwards from the Karnatak to join the imperial camp, who finally encircled the prince and brought him, fatally injured, off his elephant.<sup>320</sup>

Although Kam Bakhsh's ambitions did not pan out, the Miyanas nevertheless got much of what they wanted from the contest. Their leader Dilir Khan sought and received pardon from Bahadur Shah for his 'disloyalty.' The household made no attempt to return to their erstwhile holdings in the Deccan territories. Instead, they dug themselves back into their old Karnatak stronghold. The districts in Berar that had been granted them under Aurangzeb were quickly taken over by others.<sup>321</sup> By the later years of Bahadur Shah's reign, when regular administrative reports resumed from the old Bijapur territories, the Miyanas were firmly entrenched again in Bankapur.<sup>322</sup> They established their credibility as representatives of the regional Mughal system, in part, by sending regular reports on the collection of *peshkash* from local powers, glossed in Mughal paperwork as '*zamīndārs*.'<sup>323</sup> How much of these revenues made it back to central treasuries in Aurangabad and Delhi, however, remains an open question, particularly in light of surviving paperwork reminding Dilir Khan and other Karnatak-based actors that they were not to spend the tribute they had collected but instead to send it directly to the emperor.<sup>324</sup> On the other hand, the Miyanas were not shy about asking for material support from the court. In August of 1711, they requested (and were granted, with the approval of Zulfiqar Khan, whose deputy Daud Khan Panni may have had a hand in matters) cash for the salaries of their troops, as well as gunpowder and other provisions for a number of fortresses around Bankapur.<sup>325</sup>

Having secured their old territories, they pushed aggressively outwards. Parts of Torgal (a district between Bijapur and Bankapur), which in Sultanate times had been a Siddi stronghold, and in recent years had been claimed by an Afghan named Purdil Khan, were captured. The territory had, according to the passive language of the paperwork that recorded this transfer, slipped back into *pā'ibāqī* (lands held in reserve for imperial salary assignment) during Kam Bakhsh's bid for power, and was thus, in 1711, awarded to Dilir Khan.<sup>326</sup> The *Tārīkh-i Dilīr Jangī* (c. 1846) recalls that in 1712/13 Dilir Khan won a series of battles to the northeast in the Raichur doab against *zamīndārs* in Kosnur [Koknur?] and Kanakgiri, on the road towards Adoni and Karnul.<sup>327</sup> In March of 1718, Dilir Khan would even attempt to claim the Governorship of Bijapur itself, a title held that year by Rustam Khan (aka Ghalib Khan), son of his old rival Sharza Khan Mahdawi.<sup>328</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that this request, made on the basis of Ghalib Khan's excessive 'high-handedness,' was granted. Nevertheless, by the mid 1710s, the Miyanas were firmly back in control of their western Karnatak strongholds.

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<sup>320</sup> Irvine, Vol. I: 63.

<sup>321</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/8-17, III/1/10-159, III/1/11-129.

<sup>322</sup> I.J. Coll. III/3/0-2, III/5/6-5, III/5/9-6, III/5/11-3, III/5/11-4, III/5/0-13.

<sup>323</sup> See for example a series of documents between III/6/5-1 and III/6/5-31 relating to *peshkash* owed by *zamīndārs* in the districts of Bankapur and its environs.

<sup>324</sup> I.J. Coll. III/5/9-6.

<sup>325</sup> I.J. Coll. III/5/0-21, III/5/6-5. Named fortresses included Bankapur, Dharwad, Shamshirgadh, Daulatgadh, Parasgadh, Mardangadh, [?], Rattihalli, Shirhatti, Raichoti, Badshahpur, 'etcetera.'

<sup>326</sup> I.J. Coll. III/5/11-4.

<sup>327</sup> Muhammad 'Azim al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Dilīr Jangī* (Jāmi' al-akhbār, 1846), 18-19.

<sup>328</sup> I.J. Coll. V/6/4-140.

## Seizing opportunity within empire

In contrast to the Miyanas, who treated their posting in the Deccan as time in exile, the Panni household built their success upon an eager trans-regional embrace which, from the beginning, sought to capitalize upon simultaneous entrenchment across political boundaries and discrete geographies. This strategy, which can be traced back to the mid-1660s, formed a core feature of Panni politics for the next half century. In 1665, the brothers Khizr Khan and Shaikh Ali simultaneously took service with Bijapur and the Mughals, respectively. A decade later in 1676, a younger generation of Panni brothers – Khwaja Daud, Sulayman, and Ibrahim – sons of the recently assassinated Khizr Khan (see Chapter Two), relied upon their uncle, now known by his title of Ranmast Bahadur Khan and well advanced on a successful Mughal career, to negotiate their transition from Bijapuri to Mughal service. Leveraging their control over the strategic fortress of Naldurg in the central Deccan, the Pannis negotiated favorable terms for themselves. Daud was granted the rank of Khan and a *mansab* of four thousand, while “his many brothers and relations” [*bisyār barādarān wa āqribā’-yi o*] were similarly granted appropriate rank. He was furthermore granted a *jāgīr* in Zafarnagar (also known as Temburni) northeast of Aurangabad for the residence of their *qabā’il*, a term that could equally refer to family, tribe or household.<sup>329</sup> The three brothers initially entered the service of Ruhullah Khan (probably an Irani), under whose patronage Ranmast Khan had flourished for some time. In the coming years, their uncle continued to expand upon the family’s territorial holdings, moving into the areas surrounding Daulatabad some distance south of the family residence at Zafarnagar. In 1682 Ranmast Khan took control of the *jāgīr* of Bir, probably also taking possession of the neighboring *jāgīrs* of Amba Jogai and Jalnapur.<sup>330</sup> In the Deccan capital of Aurangabad itself, the neighborhood in which he maintained a residence was graced with his name: Ranmastpura.<sup>331</sup>

Despite the Mughal system’s formal commitment to the regular transfer of *jāgīrs*,<sup>332</sup> these territories remained in Ranmast Khan’s control until his death in the Battle of Wakinkera in 1691. Thereafter Bir, Ambad, Amba Jogai and Bhalavani were transferred into the hands of Daud Khan Panni and his family.<sup>333</sup> The five-page document describing this transfer refers to the collective property as the ‘*daulat*’ of Daud Khan. The term, meaning wealth, dominion, and sovereignty in Persian, has a special connotation in Deccan administrative parlance, where it refers to the very largest of military assignments. This administrative category would live on in eighteenth-century Maratha administration, where the highest-ranking commanders controlled large and wealthy districts like Kolhapur, Satara, Aundh, Phaltan, Akalkot and others in this form.<sup>334</sup> The document records not only the inheritance of their uncle’s landed wealth, but also several increases in rank on this occasion. Daud Khan, Sulayman Khan, and their paternal cousin Mubariz Khan all saw their *sawāri* and *mansabdārī* ranks increase, while Ranmast Khan’s younger sons Ismail and Umar were

<sup>329</sup> “Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy),” fol. 68b; *Tārīkh-i dīlkashā [English]*, 113–14.

<sup>330</sup> A.R. # 965, Yusuf Husain Khan, ed., *Selected Documents of Aurangzeb’s Reign 1659-1706 A.D.* (Hyderabad: Central Records Office, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1958), 135–36.

<sup>331</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I: 459.

<sup>332</sup> For discussion on which see Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, 257–60, fn. 11.

<sup>333</sup> I.J. Coll. I/35/6-1 – 6-5, 22 Dec. 1691, Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. 1, 459. Although Zafarnagar is not named in these documents the area’s continued association with the Panni family well into the 1720s indicates it had a similar story.

<sup>334</sup> Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, 320.

newly inducted into imperial service in the same paperwork.<sup>335</sup> In all, the document identifies fifteen Panni affiliates with *mansabs*, each of whom held *sawārī* ranks of anywhere from four thousand men to a mere hundred, whose salaries were expected to be drawn from the revenues of these and surrounding territories.<sup>336</sup> The assessed value of these *jāgīrs* was some 1,983,522 rupees *jama'*, or 532,414 rupees *hāsīl*, a substantial sum, made sweeter by its central location, relative security, and vibrant economy.<sup>337</sup>

The land was thus not only an important source of reliable revenue, but also an important resource for military, particularly cavalry recruitment. The *pargana* of Bir was conspicuous for its fertility and its trade – located in the vicinity of several rivers, with a shallow water table, pleasant climate and gently rolling topography. Most importantly, it sat atop a major north-south route connecting Aurangabad to the Bijapur territory.<sup>338</sup> Contemporary accounts relate that the district headquarters was well-populated, a home to wealthy merchants, and a center for the manufacture of high quality silks.<sup>339</sup> The English traveler William Norris visited the town in 1701 on his way to Aurangzeb's court. He describes the Bendsura River, running past the edge of the town, as being fine, clear, and the largest he had seen in the region. His caravan entered the town via a pleasant mile-long stretch of mango groves, and although he was (as elsewhere) dismissive of the 'nasty thatcht houses' in the town's suburbs, he was impressed by the large stone dwellings at the town's walled center. Norris also appreciated the high, strongly built gates of the town, the better to keep out some Maratha horsemen who had been tailing his caravan. A Mughal nobleman in residence at the time, very possibly a Panni affiliate, kept a number of his elephants nearby. Norris observed a great deal of textile production, mainly coarse varieties, noting that it was a main source for the Mughal armies' tent cloth.<sup>340</sup> Other texts indicate that the region was strategically important throughout the period as a resting place for armies, likely on account of its fertile surrounding countryside.<sup>341</sup> While many neighborhoods in the subcontinent would have hoped never to experience the misfortune of playing host to a Mughal army, it appears that Bir and its surrounds had long since acclimated themselves to such a role.

This area was not only in close proximity to the Mughal capital of Aurangabad, but was the same geography over which Khan Jahan Lodi, Bahlul Khan Miyanā, Darya Khan Daudzai and others had sought to secure themselves against Mughal threat at the beginning of Shah Jahan's reign (see Chapter One). These lands had, in the final years of the Nizam Shahi Sultanate in the 1630s been an arena of overlapping sovereignty between the Sultanate and Mughal administrations. It also supported varied forces of Marathas, Siddis and Afghans who were then, as they were again in the 1670s and '80s, amongst the most trenchant holdouts against Mughal expansion. The territory's

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<sup>335</sup> The documents specifically invoke the Khan's death as the impetus behind their promotion [*ba'd-i ba kār āmadan-i Khān-i marhūm*].

<sup>336</sup> I.J. Coll. I/35/6-1 – 6-5.

<sup>337</sup> I.J. Coll. I/35/6-5. The document states the sums in *dams* is 42,249,017. The conversion is in accordance with Irfan Habib's estimate of 21.3 dam to the rupee along the western coast in 1691-2. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, 392.

<sup>338</sup> P. Setu Madhava Rao, ed., *Bhir District Gazetteer*, Rev. [i.e. 2d] ed (Bombay: Director of Govt. Printing, Stationery and Publications, Maharashtra State, 1969).

<sup>339</sup> *Tarikh-i dīlkasha [English]*, 9; Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II, 971.

<sup>340</sup> Harihar Das, *The Norris Embassy to Aurangzib, 1699-1702*, ed. S.C. Sarkar, 1st ed. (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1959), 251.

<sup>341</sup> Farīd Bhakkārī, *Dhakhīrat al-khawānīn*, Vol 2: 103; *Tarikh-i dīlkasha [English]*, 91, 178; Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. 1, 529; Vol. 2; 971.

great value for these groups was its importance as a recruitment site, both for North Indian soldiering communities and Marathas, where small and mid-scale recruiter-captains known as *jama'dārs* built up serviceable troupes whose labor was in demand along the military frontier southwards.

The areas around Aurangabad would have been an important gathering point for prospective soldiers (mainly Baksariya, Afghan and Rajput), who, by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, were in great demand amongst Deccan-based armies. Their migration is vividly illustrated by many thousands of muster rolls, known in Mughal terminology as *'arz wa chihra*, which are preserved in the Mughal Records collection at the Telangana State Archives (presently jointly housed with the Andhra Pradesh State Archives in Hyderabad). Although limited to the catalogued portion of the collection dating mainly from the 1660s, my preliminary investigation of this collection indicates that soldiering communities flocked south from military marketplaces like Uncha (in the Chittor district of Rajasthan), Baksar (in eastern U.P.), Bhadawar (near Patna), Shahjahanpur (western U.P.), Agra, as well as further afield, from Balkh, Badakhshan and elsewhere in Central Asia. Others claimed closer origins – places like Daulatabad, Ahmadabad, Malwa, and Aurangabad itself. Although the documents themselves do not record the place of enlistment, these caravans of hopefuls would have necessarily been funneled to this region.

Daud Khan Panni is best known for his long career spanning almost two decades in the Karnatak. However he and his kin retained firm control of their Deccan holdings throughout, deputizing trusted servants and junior family members to supervise the region. The Pannis' Karnatak service helped justify continued control over the territories, a point that was underscored in July of 1706, when Daud Khan wrote to the court complaining that others were attempting to transfer the *jāgīr* of Bir into their hands. The document relates that Daud Khan was energetically engaged in the service of the emperor (in the Karnatak) and that the loss of the *jāgīr* would be disheartening [*bā'is-i bīdili*] for him, therefore the transfer must not be considered.<sup>342</sup>

Although few records can be found from Aurangzeb's reign,<sup>343</sup> in the immediate aftermath of the emperor's death, records begin to multiply. In October of 1707, Daud Khan's younger brother, Sulayman Khan was granted the governorship of Burhanpur, in Khandesh. Shamshir Khan and Bayazid Khan, Daud's paternal cousin and his sister's son, held the core territories of Bir and Amba Jogai.<sup>344</sup> Sulayman Khan immediately set about expanding the family's claims both in the vicinity of Bir in Aurangabad province and along a more expansive territory, clustered along main trading routes. A handful of documents dating between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1708 and the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1709 record Sulayman Khan's petitions to take over the *jāgīrs* of Handia, Jamod, Sheradhon, Shahgadh and Paithan, the last of which had previously been held by Prince Kam Bakhsh.<sup>345</sup> He was

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<sup>342</sup> I.J. Coll. I/50/6-5. Such petitions would become increasingly common in the years following Aurangzeb's death, suggesting the continued and even growing importance of Mughal administrative mechanisms in South India even following the removal of the Mughal court northwards to Delhi, as well as the long reach of Panni's ambitions.

<sup>343</sup> Mughal administrative records from the Deccan survive in two collections – the Inayatjung Collection in Delhi and the Mughal Records collection in Hyderabad. The bulk of the collection in Delhi seems to date from the years after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, while the bulk of the Hyderabad-based collection dates from the period of Aurangzeb's reign. Unfortunately however only a fraction of the Hyderabad collection is catalogued, while the remainder is unavailable for study. It is almost certain that earlier records recording the Pannis' Deccan holdings survive, inaccessible, in the uncatalogued portions of the Hyderabad collection.

<sup>344</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/9-97, III/1/0-20.

<sup>345</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/12-47, III/1/12-48, III/2/2-84, III/2/2-86, III/2/3-17, III/2/3-31, III/2/12-17.

removed from the governorship before the year was out, however, likely as a result of over-reach.<sup>346</sup> Little else is known after about his life. He died in March of 1712 defending the ill-fated Prince Azim al-Shan during the Mughal succession struggle following Bahadur Shah's death.<sup>347</sup>

Daud Khan Panni's unnamed wife, his cousin the daughter of the deceased Ranmast Khan, controlled the main household estate in the Deccan at Zafarnagar. Record of her life, which survives in an account by Khush Hal Chand describing the circumstances of Daud Khan Panni's death in 1715, deserves close attention here. Described as chaste, brave and honorable, she purportedly maintained a studied distance from her husband throughout her life.

At the time of his wedding when every sort of courtesan came to offer congratulations he went to bed with one of them. The next day when the bridal procession was to take place he went before that chaste lady [his bride], who refused him. She said, "last night you shared a bed with a whore, and today you come near me?" It is said that she never gave him permission, and never came near him. She adopted a life of religiosity and discipline...<sup>348</sup>

This redoubtable woman held the lands around Zafarnagar as an *al-tamghā* grant.<sup>349</sup> After her estranged husband's death in battle against the renowned Mughal courtier Hussain Ali Khan (discussed later), she dared his nemesis to come and face her, taunting him from the security of her domain. Having defeated Daud Khan, the Amir al-Umara had, to use Khush Hal's evocative language, considered the Deccan to be a sweet dish of *halwā* he was eager to savor. He therefore sent an army to confront her. Panni's widow transformed his *halwā* (a favorite dessert) into a *fālūda* (another sort of desert) mixed with stones between his teeth.<sup>350</sup> She greeted his forces with nearly twenty thousand men, 'Afghans and otherwise,' and rebuffed his attacks thrice before the Amir finally abandoned his efforts and departed the region.<sup>351</sup> Panni's wife's ability to call to arms a large body of troops in his name, in spite of their possible domestic estrangement, seems to ably represent

<sup>346</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, 460–61.

<sup>347</sup> Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I: 164–174. The *Mā'asir al-Umarā'*'s assertion that he died in 1711 is wrong. Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I: 461.

<sup>348</sup> Khush Hāl Chand, "Tawārikh-i Bahādūr Shāhī" (n.d.), 134, *Tārikh*, 168, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad. *Dar hamān aiyām shādī-i khwud ke har gūna-i tawā'if barāye mubārakbād āmada būdand bā yak parirū ham-bistar shuda. Rūz-i digar ke shab-i zifāf mu'ayan būd nazdik-i ān 'ismat qubāb rafta mumkin-i ān sa'ida ikhtiyār nakarda, Guft ke dī-shab bā qahba ham-bistar shuda būdī imrūz dar kinār-i man āmada? Gūyand ke har gaz qabūl nakarda gāhī nazdik-i ān amr nayāmada zāhidāna wa murtāzāna zīst ba-sar mī burd.*

<sup>349</sup> Chand, 134. An *al-tamghā* is a tax-free grant made in perpetuity. Although correct that Panni's wife controlled these territories in perpetuity, evidence from the Inayatjung records show that they were initially held as *madad-i mā'āsh*. After her husband's death, she successfully petitioned to transfer these into *in'ām* grants. I.J. Coll. V/4/12–45, V/5/11–318, V/5/11–319. The distinction between these latter categories of grant is not well understood. (See Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556–1707*, 260–61.). In pursuing a legal conversion of her holdings, she might have sought to protect her interests from other family members, amongst them two nephews, Muhammad Bahlul and Ahmad, who separately sought assignment of Daud Khan Panni's former *mahal* in Zafarnagar for themselves. I.J. Coll. V/5/7–17, V/5/9–197.

<sup>350</sup> Chand, "Tawārikh-i Bahādūr Shāhī," 134. *Amīr al-Umarā ke ba'd az fath-i Dāwud Khān mulk-i Dakan rā halwā-i bī-dūd pindāshta būdand dar fālūda sang-rīzī ba-zīr-i dandān āmada.*

I am grateful to Abhishek Kaicker for pointing out this episode to me. For more on the Amir al-Umara's time in the Deccan see Kaicker, "Unquiet City," 253.

<sup>351</sup> Chand, "Tawārikh-i Bahādūr Shāhī," 134. *Ān 'aurat-i rustam-nizhad qarīb-i bīst hazār sawār wa piyāda az Afghān wagheira farāhim āwarda banābar-i mahmāndārī firistāda hā-yi Amīr al-Umarā bar-āmada [...] wa ham bar īn namat sih dafā fauj bar ān zan ke firistādand har sih martaba shikast yāfta bar gardāda wa ba'dahu az ān taraf bardāshta Amīr al-Umarā matawajjih- muhimmāt-i digar shuda...*

the region's significance to Daud Khan's larger project as well as his wife's probable close family relationship to the soldering communities of the immediate region. Throughout the long years of his absence from the Deccan, this woman must have overseen a constant stream of new recruits as they moved southwards from the Deccan to support her husband's Karnatak-based camp.

## The Coromandel front

Following the conquest of the Bijapuri and Golkonda capitals in 1686 and 1687, the main front of Mughal expansionary energy shifted to the Karnatak, concentrating particularly upon the fortresses guarding the hinterlands of the wealthy port cities of the Coromandel Coast. As Bhimsen's *Tārīkh-i Dilkashā* illustrates, for many in the newly arrived Mughal forces, this was a strange and exotic place. As Bhimsen, lifelong resident of the northern Deccan, traveled along the inland route south through Rayalaseema in the company of Prince Kam Bakhsh's army, he offered a wide-eyed account of the landscape and people they saw, echoing some of the same kinds of 'wonder-tale' [*ajā'ib*] narratives encountered in Sultanate depictions of the Karnatak more than fifty years previously.

Along the road between Karnul and Nandiyal which path runs along the edge of the mountain we saw wild men. They do not speak the tongue of the village dwellers who live at the base of the mountain [...]. They eat honey and the seeds of trees, and wild game. They are of extremely dark complexion and they have hair all over their bodies. They tie the leaves of trees upon their heads. They keep in their hands featherless arrows and [barbs and bows?] for hunting. They fight with no one. [...] They have no word for gold or silver; the receipt of ashrafis and rupees made no favorable impression upon them.<sup>352</sup>

Bhimsen's perception of the Karnatak offers an odd pre-echo of later Orientalist tropes: South Indians were a spiritually rich people untainted by greed but they were dark-skinned and suspiciously uninclined to the manly pursuits of war. Participant member of an invading army that he was, Bhimsen found opportunity to comment upon the land's massive tax potential. "The cause of the building of these [many] temples is the country is very wealth producing [...] [E]very year it yields four crops, and a large revenue is raised..." The "naked" [*barahma*] people of this country, he decided, were unable to imagine alternate uses for their wealth. He commented disdainfully on the regional cuisine.

Coarse rice boiled in water, cooled and enjoyed with the addition of more water [...] Men of taste and acquainted with delicacies get tamarind which is plentiful in the jungles, extract its juice and mixing it with a little salt eat it [...] With such food what strength of stature could they possibly have?<sup>353</sup>

He found similarly little to praise in local fashions. He was shocked by the extent of bared skin, not to mention perceived failings in self-care and grooming. "Their hair [is] unkempt. They

<sup>352</sup> "Tārīkh-i dilkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 103b; *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 179. *Mā bain-i rāh-i Karnūl wa Nandayāl ke shāri' ba dāman-i kūh wāqa' ast bin-i mānush, ya'nī insān-i jangālī mulāhaza gasht. Ba harf wa zabān-i mardum-i dih ke pā'n-i kūh ābād and wāqif nashud wa zabān-i ānhā rā bāshindagān-i dihāt namīfahmand ghizā'i-i ānhā 'asl wa bij-hā-yi darakht wa gūsh-t-i shikār ast bisiyār siyāh fām wa pur-i badan mū hā dārānd bar sar barg-i darakhtān mī bandānd. Tīri bī parr wa parragān wa kumanha [sic] ba dast-i ān-hama barāye shikār ast ānhā rā bā kasī jang nīst [...] lughat ba zar wa sim nadārānd khwush-waqtī yāftan-i ashrafi wa rūpiya bar ānhā zāhir nashud.*

<sup>353</sup> Most of the quotations in this section are Jadunath Sarkar's translations but I've offered my own variation in this case. *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 193; "Tārīkh-i dilkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 113a. *Khwurāk ghizā'i-i ānhā in ast baranj-i gunda rā bā āb josh dāda sard namūda āb-i dīgar mulhaq sākhata nūsh-i jān mī farmāyand [...] kasī ke sāhib-i tab' wa bazā'iqā shināst tambar-i hindī dar jangal bisiyār ast āwarda turshī mī bar ārand wa andakī namak [...] amīkhata mī khwurdand [...] bar in ghizā'i chi qadar qawīyat-i haikal mī bāshand?*

have never seen the appearance of oil even in a dream.” Moreover “...they are dark of complexion, ill-shaped and ugly of form. [...] Not to speak of white skin [amongst the Tilang people], even the wheat complexion is not found.” Bhimsen ended his uncomplimentary rumination with a brazenly posed question: “In a year the expense per man does not amount to five or six rupees. Therefore all the wealth that is produced and collected, what do they do with it and how do they spend it?” By contrast, the port at Pondicherry seemed a place of wonder, not least because of the availability of the comfortingly familiar grains and lentils that formed the staple diet of Deccanis and North Indians, imported by ship from Bengal and “sold in abundance to the imperial army.”<sup>354</sup>

From 1690 onwards, Aurangzeb entrusted military leadership in this unfamiliar southern landscape to the influential Indo-Iranian nobleman, Zulfiqar Khan.<sup>355</sup> His main task was the prosecution of the eight-year long siege of Jinji where Shivaji’s younger son Rajaram was holed up. But he found time to undertake campaigns against other antagonists as well: various Maratha groupings, local *palaiyakkarār* and *nāyaka* polities, and un-conciliated Sultanate actors. Apart from milking the region for tribute, particularly the wealthy territories of Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli, Zulfiqar Khan also involved himself, much as his Sultanate forebears had done, in port-based and inland trading opportunities, notably textiles but also the vastly profitable diamond-trade.<sup>356</sup>

Zulfiqar Khan’s success reflects his readiness to adapt to the local environment, but he relied heavily upon former Sultanate actors. During the very earliest period of his campaign, he found his footing with the aid of members of Sher Khan Lodi’s former household, left behind in the disorder following Shivaji’s invasion in 1677. As early as 1690, Sher Khan’s sons Ibrahim and Abdul Rasul Khan were occasionally to be found in Zulfiqar Khan’s camp. Abdullah Khan, the son of the Siddi leader Nasir Muhammad who had formerly controlled Jinji and who was similarly still based in the region, seems also to have tried to build connections with the Mughal camp.<sup>357</sup> Others, too, emerged from the woodwork, amongst them low-ranking *jama’dārs* and Brahmin administrators who had formerly served Sher Khan. By 1692, the Lodi brothers were comfortable enough to leverage their association with the Mughal camp to begin pursuing their own priorities, aligning themselves with a certain Afghan named Salim Khan<sup>358</sup> and attempting to seize control of Pondicherry’s hinterland, a former Lodi stronghold, in the name of the Emperor.<sup>359</sup>

Although by its sheer bulk, the Mughal army had a transformative effect upon the regions in which they marched, its impact was tenuous. “Formerly, there was no path through [the jungle between Sedum and Kanchi], but the coming and going of the imperial army formed a track, through which a horseman could pass with difficulty, elephants and loaded camels passed with great hardship,” wrote Bhimsen.<sup>360</sup> If the Mughal armies painstakingly carved their way through the

<sup>354</sup> *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 194; “Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy),” fols. 113a-113b. The Persian is *qaum-i Tilang*, thus Sarkar’s translation of ‘race and country’ seems off the mark.

<sup>355</sup> The most complete accounts of Zulfiqar Khan’s affairs in the region are to be found in Richards, “The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707”; Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 297–302.

<sup>356</sup> Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 297–302; *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751* (Madras: Government Press, 1916), Vol. 1: 15.

<sup>357</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. II, Pt. 2: 1314-1315.

<sup>358</sup> Conceivably the same Salim Khan who we encountered in Bankapur in 1678, when Jamshid Khan returned there after the collapse of Miyana fortunes at Bijapur.

<sup>359</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. II, Pt. 2: 1357, 1382, 1386-1387, 1394, 1410, 1413, 1420-21, 1447-1448.

<sup>360</sup> “Tārīkh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy),” fol. 104a; *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 180. *Bishtar rāh nabūd az āmad wa shud-i ‘asākar-i mansūr pāra rāh shuda asp ba tasdī‘ mī rawad filān wa shuturān-i pur bār ba su‘ūbat-i tamām mī guzarīd.*

Karnatak landscape, vast forests still pressed in on all sides, still home to the powerful forest-dwelling polities with whom earlier arrivals had been forced to come to terms. Through the connections afforded by Sultanate nobility in their service, the Mughals met early success. As early as 1692, the French were reporting that Mughal forces were establishing military bases in the woods and building alliances with local *palaiyakkarārs* in order to expand their territorial reach.<sup>361</sup>

Local methods, however, would also need to be married with the Mughals' own entrenched military culture. Here Daud Khan Panni had an important role to play. In an early study of the region, John Richards argued that Daud Khan was part of a hard-fought attempt by a succession of Mughal commanders to wrestle the Karnatak territories into regular, centralized administration. Unlike his predecessors, according to Richards, Panni achieved remarkable success. Richards marked up these achievements to a combination of things – partially the recovering agricultural production after the end of the long siege at Jinji in 1698 and Panni's more effective management of the imperial army's financial arrangements. Panni relied particularly upon the flexible mechanism of the *sihbandī*, or irregular recruits, and by the use of those forces to aggressively pacify dissent. A closer examination of the evidence, however, indicates that Panni's goals and his legacy were far more complex.<sup>362</sup> At the very frontier of Mughal influence, Panni well understood the limits of imperial power and negotiated those limits to the profit of himself and his household.

Panni probably traveled south in 1691, initially in the company of Ruhullah Khan and his uncle Ranmast Bahadur Khan, both deputized to lead the siege at Wakinkheda. After his uncle and patron both died (of separate causes), Panni must have joined the army led by Prince Kam Bakhsh as they moved southeast from the Raichur territories through Rayalaseema to Jinji. From there, he entered the service of Zulfiqar Khan, eventually becoming his most valued deputy. By 1699, when Zulfiqar Khan returned northwards, Panni would be granted the position of *nā'ib faujdār* or deputy commander of the Hyderabad Karnatak (and of the Bijapur Karnatak soon after). But his initial value was almost certainly in his comfort in moving between Sultanate and Mughal spheres. It is not surprising, in that light, to find the earliest regional reference to Daud Khan at the very center of Sher Khan Lodi's old stomping grounds, where in June of 1694 he assisted Zulfiqar Khan, besieging the fortress of Polaiyamkottai near Bhuvanigiri, held by allies of the Marathas at Thanjavur.<sup>363</sup>

Panni gathered around him a number of Miyana and Panni actors, amongst them Abdul Quddus Khan Miyana, Dilir Khan's younger brother, and Shamshir Khan Panni, possibly Daud Khan's cousin (a son of Ranmast Bahadur Khan),<sup>364</sup> who by 1708 controlled the *faujdarī* and *qil'adārī* of Ganjikota, an important strategic fortress on the Penner River in Rayalaseema.<sup>365</sup> Senior amongst them was Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana, younger brother of the deceased Abdul Karim Khan and uncle of Dilir Khan. This Miyana, of whom little is known prior to the late 1690s, emerged rather suddenly as a high-ranking commander in the region. His high status, in combination with the complete absence of earlier information about him, supports the likelihood that, like the sons of Sher Khan Lodi, he was part of a generation of 'orphaned' Sultanate nobility who had remained behind in the Karnatak after the fall of the old regime. Abdul Nabi Khan adhered tightly to Daud Khan Panni – their association was so well-known that the *Tazkirat al-Salātīn-i Chaghataī* (c. 1724)

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<sup>361</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. II, Pt. 2: 1386-7, 1394.

<sup>362</sup> Richards, "The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707."

<sup>363</sup> *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 195-96.

<sup>364</sup> I.J. Coll. I/35/6-1 – 6-5.

<sup>365</sup> Ni'mat Khān-i-Ālī, "Bahādūr Shāh Nāma [Photocopy]," fol. 161a.



mis-identifies him on at least one occasion as a member of the Panni family.<sup>366</sup> He was, from the beginning, closely tied to the territory of Kadapa and Siddhavat, a former stronghold of the Qutb Shahi Sultanate in southern Rayalaseema. Early nineteenth-century memory connected him to the former Qutb Shahi nobleman Neknam Khan, former commander of the Kadapa territories, identifying him as Neknam Khan's *hamshirāzāda*, or sister's son. If Abdul Rahim Khan (d. 1665) married one of Neknam Khan's sisters during his campaigns in the region in the early 1660s, this would be quite possible.<sup>367</sup> Thanks to Abdul Nabi Khan's connections, the Mughal camp was based as often in the safe enclave of Kadapa in the 1690s and early 1700s as it was in its emerging regional capital at Arcot.<sup>368</sup>

Historians have often commented, with reference to the extenuated conflict over Jinji, on an emerging concordance of interests between Mughal and Maratha commanders based in the Karnatak. It is widely agreed that Zulfiqar Khan merely went through the motions as the siege of Jinji wore on. He bided his time, profited immensely from the surrounding countryside, and awaited the death of the aging Emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>369</sup> A certain congenial antagonism set in between Zulfiqar and his opponent Rajaram, which Bhimsen saw fit to compare with another famously friendly enmity dating back to the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605-1627).

If he [Zulfiqar] had so desired, on the first day that they arrived at Jinji he could have taken the fort. But it is the customary practice of commanders to draw things out. When Khan-i Khanan [during Jahangir's reign] was appointed to conquer the Deccan country, despite great battles, he took the conciliatory path with the eunuch Suhail, commander of the Deccan army. And they conceived a firm friendship. In daylight they made war and spent the evenings in one another's company.<sup>370</sup>

We know nothing of Zulfiqar Khan and Rajaram's evening entertainments, but it is no surprise that when Jinji was finally taken in 1698, Rajaram mysteriously escaped capture and returned safely to the Deccan. Not long afterwards, Zulfiqar Khan too departed the Karnatak.

Left behind as Zulfiqar's deputy, Daud Khan Panni continued to cultivate a political methodology similarly based on calculated intimacies. This strategy's razor edge is illustrated by a victory in 1699 over the *zamīndārs* of Awk and Mataliwar, not far from Karnul. Panni and Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat (who will play an important role in Chapters Four & Five) lured the two rulers, Kumar Raghu Raja and Anand Raja, from their strongholds by means of false friendship, inviting them via flowery epistles to a meeting. Although the pair at first arrived, according to the probably exaggerated claims of the *Sa'īdnāma*, supported by some 15-16,000 Deccani cavalymen and nearly one hundred thousand musketeers and encircled Daud Khan's camp, Panni won the pair over in successive meetings in which he bestowed upon them robes, elephants and other lavish gifts. The appearance of this new friendship was carefully cultivated until one evening when Daud Khan set upon them unexpectedly, bound them with tent rope and killed them. Their terrified armies

<sup>366</sup> Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salātīn-i Chaghatā*, 40.

<sup>367</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 53b.

<sup>368</sup> Jaswant Rāi Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma" (1720s), fols. 42a, 53b, 59b, 62a, 63b, 71a, 189b, 193b, Or. 1409, British Library, OIOC.

<sup>369</sup> See for example John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 230–31; Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 299–301.

<sup>370</sup> "Tārikh-i dīlkashā (microfilm copy)," fol. 123a; *Tarikh-i dīlkasha [English]*, 207. *Agar mī khwāst rūz-i auwal ke ba Jinjī rasīdand qila' rā mī girift lekin muhim mī rā kuhna lang sākhtan shud āmad tariqa-i sardārānast har gāh ke Khān-i Khānān ba taskhīr-i mulk-i Dakan dastūrī yāft bā wujūdi ke jang hā-yi 'azīm bā Suheil khwāja-sarā sardār-i fauj-i Dakan rāh-i āshī andākht wa yak dīgar ikhlās-i istihkām girift. Rūzāna ba-jang wa shabāna hamrang namūd.*

were scattered.<sup>371</sup> This ‘victory’ helped Daud Khan secure a valuable inland route running southwards from Karnul to Kadapa. In a subsequent conquest of Vellore in 1699, Panni joined forces with his brother Ibrahim Khan, as well as Abdul Nabi Khan, Zia al-Din Khan (the latter figure was often associated with Daud Khan, although little information can be gleaned about him), Kanauji (a relative of the deceased Shivaji), and Bhankar Nayar, son of the deceased rebel Yacham Nayar who had fought against the Mughals at the battle of Jinji. The latter lineage of Nayars or Nayaks was closely associated with the territory of Venkatadri near Kadapa, and their alliance marks a growing accommodation between the Pannis and Miyanas, on one hand, and such local groups.<sup>372</sup>

Such ‘intimacies’ also took the form of negotiated cash settlements, sometimes legitimized by terminology like *peshkash* (tribute) or otherwise described as a tax farming arrangement. An example can be found between the Mughal camp and the southern kingdoms of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur who, long familiar with the habits of a succession of grabby northern neighbors, had learned to hand over cash when it was demanded of them in exchange for their autonomy. Revenue-collection campaigns in their direction thus took on an almost picnic-outing quality as was the case when Daud Khan Panni, sometime in 1708 or 1709, deputized two captains Lala Dakhani Rai and Abdul Nabi Khan to come up with five hundred thousand rupees that were missing from the treasury. The two promptly set off southwards to round up the funds, which were justified as tardy *peshkash* dues. The rulers of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur promptly coughed up the sum and were left to their own devices.<sup>373</sup> Confrontations with the Marathas were often resolved in similar fashion. In 1704, when Daud Khan Panni was appointed to extend his Governorship into the territory of Adoni in northern Rayalaseema, he was surrounded along the way by a large Maratha army at the fortress of Dharmavaram in the mountains west of Kadapa. He bought his freedom by means, according to Manucci, of seven hundred thousand rupees.<sup>374</sup> Such negotiations were no doubt smoothed by the common presence of friendly faces in opposing camps. In 1704 when Sulayman Khan Panni was taken captive in Bijapur *sūba* by a force of Marathas, he was led before one of their own captains, none other than Jamshid Khan, former servant of the Miyana household (see Chapter Two).<sup>375</sup> Jamshid Khan died the following year fighting on the Mughal side at the siege of Wakinkhera.<sup>376</sup> Such shifting allegiances were commonplace amongst mid-ranking nobility, and evidently closely tracked by contemporary actors, even if they become difficult to trace in the patchy surviving archive of the twenty-first century.

On occasions when Daud Khan ordered more aggressive interventions into autonomous territories, they often came to nothing. Such was the case when Jamshid Khan deputized a lieutenant, Abdul Islam Khan, to undertake a mission against Bhima Raja, son of Tirumala Raja of Tirupati. Although he led two thousand “ferocious Afghan cavalry” and five or six thousand foot soldiers, the troops floundered in the heavily forested landscape, returning eventually to Arcot in

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<sup>371</sup> Munshī, “Sa’īdnāma,” fols. 35a-36a. This account is probably the supporting evidence John Richards sought for a similar event described in Manucci. However Manucci names the leaders as ‘Mattalava’ and ‘Sevagy.’ Richards, “The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707,” 252, fn. 34; Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:481.

<sup>372</sup> Munshī, “Sa’īdnāma,” fols. 36b-37b.

<sup>373</sup> Munshī, fol. 62a-b. See also Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 47.

<sup>374</sup> Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:59.

<sup>375</sup> Manucci, 4:500.

<sup>376</sup> Khān, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 298.

defeat.<sup>377</sup> This latter campaign was suspiciously underpowered – a smallish body of troops led by an undistinguished junior captain, against a well-known ruler of an important regional polity. While Jaswant Rai, the author of the *Sa'īdnāma*, used it as a means to flog Daud Khan's shortcomings, it is likely that these types of enterprises are better understood as window-dressing, a busywork that allowed Panni to continue making a case for the Mughal court to pour resources into the Karnatak, and to allow for his continued security of title over his households' interests in the Deccan.

Daud Khan's military strategy might best be summarized in terms of a negotiated truce with regional powers rather than absolute conquest. There were obvious limitations to the Mughals' reach. Like Sultanate armies before them, they relied on alliances with local powers who controlled the extensive forested hinterlands beyond the 'high roads' overseen by imperial cavalry. The mediated terms of such 'conquest,' however, granted Panni and his affiliates secure access to the region's marketplaces. This argument contrasts with the two main earlier assessments of Daud Khan Panni's career. As we have seen, John Richards had perceived Daud Khan Panni as playing an imperialist, centralizing role in the region. In contrast, Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam argued that Panni, in fact, laid the foundations for a regional kingdom organized around the commercial opportunities of the coastal ports and their hinterlands. I argue here that elements of both arguments hold true. Daud Khan Panni used his place within the imperial system to consolidate autonomous power in the south, but his position within both locality and imperial superstructure relied upon the other.

Alam and Subrahmanyam's assessment that Daud Khan invited Indo-Afghan merchants formerly resident in Bijapur to begin trading through San Thomé, is correct in its broad outlines. As the previous chapter of this dissertation demonstrates, however, the merchant networks in question pre-dated Panni's arrival by some decades and would probably have only needed resurrection.<sup>378</sup> More significantly, Alam and Subrahmanyam's study underlines the extent to which Panni prioritized commercial policy during his stint in the region. In doing so, they build upon Sinnappah Arasaratnam's important study of the Coromandel economy, highlighting efforts by Panni to encourage trade at San Thomé by undercutting their competitors' import duties in neighboring Madras.<sup>379</sup> In this manner, personal enrichment went hand in hand with imperial expansion, to a point.

Throughout this period, Panni proved an intimidating and unpredictable neighbor to the English in Madras. He had a residence built for himself near the water's edge in San Thomé in order to oversee his interests at port.<sup>380</sup> Between 1699-1701 he turned up on the outskirts of Madras on several occasions, once at the head of as many as 10,000 troops. In February of 1702 he blockaded the Madras port, along with several other more minor English-held ports in the region, on the excuse that the English had failed to uphold their treaty obligations. The blockade was lifted in May after a lump payment of 25,000 rupees was negotiated. He visited the English again in 1706 and in 1708, this time in a friendlier mood, giving occasion on both visits for the English to comment on

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<sup>377</sup> The date of this event is unclear, but most have occurred sometime prior to 1705, when Jamshid Khan died in battle at Wakinkheda. Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fol. 164a-b; *Tarikh-i dilkasha [English]*, 248.

<sup>378</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizāmat."

<sup>379</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 169.

<sup>380</sup> Persian Records Bundle #1, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1764, p. 138, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai; Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 271.

his drinking habits.<sup>381</sup> Panni also entangled himself in local politics by his support of regional commercial interests. Thus, he invited a “Narrain [Narayan] of the left-hand caste” to set up a mint at San Thomé in direct competition with the English mint at Fort St. George.<sup>382</sup> In the same period, he allowed disgruntled members of right-hand caste artisan groups from Fort St. George/Madras to shelter in San Thomé after the English government failed to satisfactorily resolve a city-wide conflict.<sup>383</sup>

‘Pathan traders’ described in the English East India Company records, who operated in Madras, San Thomé and other regional ports and who traded under Panni’s protection were ‘large-scale shippers’ who did business in ‘Bengal, Surat, Mokha and Persia.’ As well as exporting Coromandel textiles they also imported elephants, ivory and tin.<sup>384</sup> In the tradition of Sher Khan Lodi’s earlier interests, Panni and those who traded under his protection almost certainly also took part in the domestic and Sri Lanka-based rice trade. The presence of the Mughal army itself, wrote the English at Madras, stimulated local trade. Panni’s cavalry were the main regional buyers of European broadcloth, otherwise not much in demand in the tropical heat.<sup>385</sup> Less visible to European observers, trade in staple grains and lentils imported from the Bengali ports would have preserved North Indian and Deccani soldiers from the despised rice-heavy local diet described earlier by Bhimsen.

Our most detailed insight into Panni’s own trading interests comes from Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1721 (six years after his death), in a letter from the British Company’s factory in Karwar on the western Karnatak coast. A Company official there observed that one of Daud Khan’s ships, a fifty tonne vessel bearing rice, turmeric, tin and iron, was to set sail for Muscat (in modern-day Oman). It might well have returned with horses as the Raja of Sunda’s ship had done a couple of months previously.<sup>386</sup> The ship’s presence on the western coast, even years after Panni’s death, helps shed light on the larger geography of the Panni enterprise. In the early eighteenth century, Karwar’s hinterland district of Bankapur was newly returned to the control of Dilir Khan Miyana, while Sunda and Bidnur, two nearby mountain kingdoms with strong coastal trading interests, continued as they had under Sultanate rule, to operate in tributary relationship to Bankapur.<sup>387</sup> Many of the products on Panni’s ship might have been sourced in, or travelled through, those territories, while others possibly originated in Southeast Asian ports.

As Alam and Subrahmanyam have indicated, Daud Khan energetically sought to influence local trading conditions along the Coromandel Coast in his favor. Yet their conclusion that Panni’s goals were merely of a regional order, part of a South India-wide project in which local actors sought to “transform *faujdārīs* into compact regional kingdoms,” seems insufficient.<sup>388</sup> Towards this end,

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<sup>381</sup> Henry Davison Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800; Traced from the East India Company’s Records Preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office, and from Other Sources* (London: J. Murray, 1913), Vol. II: 13-18.

<sup>382</sup> Despatches to England (p. 80, 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1707).

<sup>383</sup> Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800; Traced from the East India Company’s Records Preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office, and from Other Sources*, Vol. II: 19.

<sup>384</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 169.

<sup>385</sup> Letter from Fort St. George to the Company, Oct. 14, 1712, *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. III: 46.

<sup>386</sup> Letters dating September 19<sup>th</sup> & November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1721, pp. M-20 & M-26, Outward Letter Book (Karwar Factory), Diary No. 29, 1720-1722, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.

<sup>387</sup> I.J. Coll. V/6/0-38, V/6/10-24, V/6/11-49.

<sup>388</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, “Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizāmat,” 347.

one might usefully consider a map of Panni and Miyana-held territories in the early years of the eighteenth century. [Map 4] The map itself, built out of surviving documentation held in the Inayatjung Collection, doubtless betrays certain biases inherent to the uneven reach of Mughal bureaucratic machinery during this period - territories directly adjacent to the regional capital at Aurangabad are certainly more heavily represented than the more distant Karnatak regions which were, at best, superficially etched by imperial administration. Yet even such 'biases' possibly tell us something about these households' strategies. Panni and Miyana actors deployed paperwork where it was useful, but seemingly had little use for it in tightly controlled territories such as Kadapa and Karnul. Documentation is particularly thick where it relates to Panni-held estates like Bir, Amba Jogai and Zafarnagar which as neighbors of the Mughal capital at Aurangabad were subject to comparatively close surveillance. Similarly, the Miyana-held territories around Bankapur, which had been even under the Bijapur Sultanate a relatively integrated territory, generated a fair amount of paper (albeit less than the Deccan holdings). Considering the map as a whole, it is striking to see that by the 1710s, the two households controlled territories along major routes running in the shape of an up-side-down 'Y,' tied together at its axis in the central Deccan. On both the western and eastern flanks of the Karnatak, they presided over strategic territories that allowed them to command inland routes crucial for the movement of troops and of trade, as well as control over seaport hinterlands.

### Tying together regions: an 'empire of influence'

Jos Gommans, in an aside in a study otherwise focused on the politics and economy of northern India and Central Asia, suggested the Panni and Miyana strongholds at Karnul and Kadapa were essentially 'supervisory' way-stations meant to facilitate the Afghan-controlled horse trade, which connected Central Asian breeding grounds to the distant southern market at Tirupati.<sup>389</sup> Such a portrait is superficially supported by a later history of the region, which records that an early-18<sup>th</sup> century Kadapa-based Miyana leader, although blind,<sup>390</sup> was later remembered for his ability "merely upon feeling the folds of various types of cloth [to tell] their value [...] and on hearing the sound of a horse's hooves [to] detail its color and price."<sup>391</sup> Yet although it is entirely likely that the Pannis and Miyanas also participated in the horse trade, but as discussion of the contemporary evidence here so far has indicated, horses can only have been, at best, a secondary interest for these families.

How then should we understand the relationship between the Pannis' Deccan and Karnatak holdings? Frank Perlin argues that up to the middle of the seventeenth century the economy of the western and central Deccan hinterlands was comparatively isolated.<sup>392</sup> From the mid-seventeenth century forward, however, the value of copper, the locally preferred material for low-value currency, began to increase sharply indicating growing involvement of non-elite urban and rural actors in long-distance financial interactions. The two major currency zones of the subcontinent – silver in

<sup>389</sup> Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 84, 101.

<sup>390</sup> The leader is identified in the manuscript as Abdul Muhammad *nā binā*, but is probably the same as a somewhat better-known Abdul Nabi Khan 'Kor' ('the blind'), son of the elder Abdul Nabi Khan whom we have already encountered.

<sup>391</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 55a-55b. *Khān-i mazkūr agarche ba-sādiq-i zāhiri gum karda būd amā firsat 'aql bā karāmat wa razānat rāy' chunān dāsht ke bar thān-hā-yi iqsām parche y'anī kamkhwāb wa atlas [?] wa sanjarkhānī wa āghābānī wa doriya wagheira dast mālida ba-kashf-i batūn qīmat ba-alqat' mī guft wa sadā-yi tak wa tāz-i asp istimā' karda rang wa qīmatash bayān mī namūd.*

<sup>392</sup> Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900*, chap. Money use in late pre-colonial South Asia.

North India and gold in the south – overlap in the Deccan territories, demanding, as Perlin has put it, the region’s “Janus-like attention” to both.<sup>393</sup> This process went hand in hand with expansionary wars wherein Sultanate, Maratha and Mughal parties pushed southwards into new territories, drawing gold and silver currency markets into tighter embrace. Although war and political instability engulfed the Deccan economy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, this crisis does not seem to have interrupted the continuous process of monetization into all corners of the regional economy. In the early eighteenth century, Maratha tax documents record the coexistence of multiple metallic and currency types. At the same time, elite Maratha households, in ways quite similar to the Panni and Miyana examples, expanded their reach between multiple territorial centers, collecting bundles of hereditary rights across these discrete arenas. For large military households in southern India at this time success lay not in ‘full control’ over a region but rather in possessing a ‘share’ in the territory’s resources.<sup>394</sup> In order to make the most of these diverse investments, these houses typically sought a firm footing in the central Deccan, where the many threads of the subcontinental economy intersected.

It is in this light that we must consider the final years of Daud Khan Panni’s biography. In the first half of 1710, a little more than a year after Kam Bakhsh’s death outside Hyderabad, Daud Khan Panni left his base in the Karnatak to return to the Deccan, where he took up the post of *nā’ib sūbadār* of the entire Deccan, barring Khandesh and Berar-Payanghat. He would later also take up the governorship of these territories, doling out deputyships to his sisters’ sons, Bayazid Khan and Alawal Khan, respectively, and installing his trusted companion Hiramman Baksariya in Burhanpur to act as a manager.<sup>395</sup> These moves were facilitated by Daud Khan’s long-time superior and patron, Zulfiqar Khan, who, alongside his father Asad Khan, enjoyed in Bahadur Shah’s reign unprecedented power through their positions as *mīr bakhshī* (paymaster general) and *wazīr* (prime minister). In October of 1713, Daud Khan was transferred again, as part of a larger imperial shakeup following a coup that brought Emperor Farrukh Siyar (r. 1713-1719) to power, to the governorship of Gujarat, based in Ahmadabad. Two years later, in September of 1715, he would die fighting one of the most influential figures of Delhi, the younger Sayyid brother Amir al-Umara Hussain Ali Khan.

Although most scholars, focused on the politics at court, have read Panni’s transfer as a consequence of the ‘preoccupations’ of his patron Zulfiqar Khan and as a ‘distraction’ from Panni’s local interests in the Karnatak, such a portrait is only to be sustained if one ignores the expansive network that Panni fostered and which he in turn was part of, all of which operated in tandem.<sup>396</sup> When Daud Khan Panni departed the Karnatak, he left in his place his younger brother Ibrahim, titled Bahadur Khan, who was increasingly closely associated with the territories around Karnul, and who also, for a brief period, would hold the governorship of Hyderabad for a year in 1712-1713.<sup>397</sup> He also left in place his long-time Miyana companion, Abdul Nabi Khan, who continued to base himself at Kadapa while remaining closely entwined with Arcot, and Shamshir Khan, *faujdār* and *qil’adār* at Ganjikota. And, while Alam and Subrahmanyam have reasonably cast doubt on

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<sup>393</sup> Perlin, 176.

<sup>394</sup> Perlin, 200–201, 204–5.

<sup>395</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I: 460.

<sup>396</sup> Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*; Alam and Subrahmanyam, “Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizāmat,” 352; Richards, “The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707,” 259.

<sup>397</sup> Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 261–62.

Saadatullah Khan's faithfulness to his patron Daud Khan, one must nevertheless see him as participant in the larger Panni 'empire.'<sup>398</sup> To the west, at a remove of around 200 miles from Karnul, Dilir Khan and his brothers remained in Bankapur.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing figures in this map of personal connections is Subha Chand, who seems to have served as one of Daud Khan's primary financial advisors for some years in the Deccan, but who in later years operated in a similar role for Zulfiqar Khan, the Mughal general who had formerly been based in the Karnatak and who later returned north to dominate courtly politics in Delhi until his assassination in 1713, as payback for his support of Jahandar Shah's ill-fated reign (c. 1712). Although Subha Chand avoided Zulfiqar Khan's fate, he was severely punished (his tongue being cut out) and sent away from court to Deccan-based exile for some years before being forgiven. The reason Subha Chand is of interest to us here is that his prominent role in both Deccan affairs and in the capital of Delhi points to the strong probability that these three closely entangled men – Subha Chand, Zulfiqar Khan, and Daud Khan Panni – had collectively overseen economic and political networks that, semi-autonomously of the Mughal court, operated without boundary all the way from Delhi to the Coromandel Coast.<sup>399</sup> It is likely that Daud Khan Panni's move north around 1710 reflected his sense that southern investments along the Coromandel Coast were relatively secure. After his move, he and Subha Chand served together in the northern Deccan, each fulfilling their particular specialization as Zulfiqar Khan's nominal 'deputies.' After Zulfiqar Khan's death and Subha Chand's disgrace in early 1713, Panni would have been all the more inclined to remain in the north and attempt to preserve the stability of the networks the three had established.

Panni, like other Mughal *mansabdārs*, was required to field a several-thousand strong cavalry force of regular recruits, whose pay was, in accordance with protocol, drawn from the revenue collected in Panni's *jāgīrs*. Towards this end, he relied in part upon a constant stream of recruits who came southwards, expedited by the military markets around Aurangabad (discussed above), where he leaned on the organizing services of mid-level *jama'dārs*. To the south, he drew heavily upon an irregular local militia known as the *sihbandī*. Soldiers serving in the *sihbandī* units, unlike regular cavalry ranks, were hired on temporary contracts and are generally understood to have been local recruits, in this case mainly Karnatak musketeers whose talent at fighting in the local terrain was absolutely necessary to Mughal efforts. Although the *sihbandī* system was used across the empire, their role was typically limited to tax collection and other seasonally delimited duties. In the Karnatak, however, they played a central role in the maintenance and expansion of Mughal authority.<sup>400</sup> Unlike regular units, the *sihbandī* were not subject to the usual paperwork, including muster rolls that registered a soldier, his horse's physical description and other details [*arz wa chihra*]. Their salary arrangements were similarly irregular. In the early 1690s, Mughal leaders hashed out an arrangement that was supposed to have ensured the Karnatak-based *sihbandī* were paid by redirecting revenues within the Karnatak itself. The *sihbandī*, although crucial to the Karnatak enterprise, was massively expensive. In 1706, it was purportedly responsible for more than 34 per cent of Karnatak expenses, almost five and a quarter million rupees.<sup>401</sup> John Richards has

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<sup>398</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizāmat."

<sup>399</sup> Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 691, 733, 748, 773; Kāmwar Khān, *Tazkirat al-salātīn-i Chaghatā*, 181, 199.

<sup>400</sup> The most extensive discussion of Panni's use of *sihbandī* is in Richards, "The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707."

<sup>401</sup> Richards, 255–58.

argued that one of Daud Khan Panni's greatest successes in the region was his ability to somehow wrangle the Karnatak balance sheet into the black, likely a combination of increased pressure on the local tax base and an improving agricultural environment following the end of the siege of Jinji in 1698.<sup>402</sup>

The Karnatak's finances were not, however, walled off from other regional economies as Mughal economics formally understood them to be, and Panni certainly drew upon his Deccan holdings in order to finance his Karnatak interests, and vice versa. A document from 1707 records, for example, that revenues collected from the Deccan districts of Bhokarda, Debhadi, and Ambad, all regions under Panni control in the vicinity of Aurangabad, were to be set aside for Daud Khan's *sihbandi* salaries in the Karnatak.<sup>403</sup> Their total value, although not given, was doubtless slight compared with the immense expense the *sihbandi* represented. However the goal here is not to attempt an alternative budget of Panni's armies. Rather it is to point to the operational realities of Panni's 'empire of influence.' He could and did redirect resources from one region to the other as the need arose. Where the Karnatak offered wealth and opportunity, the *ad hoc* nature of revenue collection would have resulted in highly unstable collections. The regularity of tax collections in the surveyed territories close to Aurangabad would have served a welcome stabilizing function.

### Daud Khan's empty nest

Daud Khan Panni did not, it seems, produce an heir. His childlessness was a point of great curiosity and concern for contemporary observers, who happily gossiped on the topic in a number of sources. We have already seen one such example in the case of Daud Khan's estranged wife, resident at Zafarnagar. Another comes to us via the ever-catty Mughal historian Khafi Khan, who adopted the feigned innocence of hearsay in the following account:

...They say that although Daud Khan was known for his lack of virility, that during the period of his governorship in Ahmadabad the daughter of one of the landholders of that region was, in accordance with local practice, offered in lieu of tribute. She became Muslim and he took her in marriage. At the time of the battle she was eight months pregnant. When he rode into battle, that honorable woman took a dagger from his belt [as a sign of her intention to preserve her 'honor']. After hearing of Daud Khan's death she cut open her own belly and having brought out the living child became a companion in her husband's final journey. But this story cannot be relied upon.<sup>404</sup>

No alternative sources hint either at her pregnancy nor dramatic suicide, but she was almost certainly the Gujarati daughter of the Raja of Halvad. The woman married Panni only a year or so before his death. Her family's territories were located along a major trade route between Ahmadabad and the Gulf of Kutch, and point to Panni's intention to expand the household's interests into the Gujarati coastal economy.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Richards, "The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707."

<sup>403</sup> I.J. Coll. III/1/0-28.

<sup>404</sup> Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 754. *Gūyand agarche Dāwud Khān ba'adam-i rajūliyat shahrat dāsht amā naql mī namāyand ke dar aiyām-i sūbadārī-i Ahmadābād dukhtar-i yakī az zamīndārān-i ān hadūd ke muwāfiq-i rawiyā-yi ān sarzamīn ba-hukkām peshkash mī namāyand Musulmān namūda ba 'aqd-i khwud dar āwarda būd. Az o haml-i haft māhe dāsht wa waqt-i sawār shudan ba qasd-i jang ān zan-i bā ghairat jumdhār-i kamar-i o rā girifta ba tariq-i izn wa itlā' nigāh dāshta būd ba'd-i shunīdan-i kushṭa shudan-i Dāwud Khān shikam-i khwud rā pāra sākhta tift-i zinda bar āwarda rafiq-i safar-i ākhirat-i shauhar gardīdānd. Lekin īn qaul ba-sabūt na pīwasta.*

<sup>405</sup> 'Alī Muhammad Khān, *Mirāt-i Ahmadi* (Bombay: Fath al-Karīm, 1307AH), Vol. I: 424-442.



Stories of Panni’s attachments to women, their characters, and his reproductive (in)ability were more than just idle speculation. Rather they get at the heart of Panni’s political ambitions. Consider rumor of Daud Khan’s violent response to news of his paternity, as retold by Manucci in his memoirs. Panni’s senior wife had reportedly previously given birth on two separate occasions to daughters. Panni had killed both offspring with his bare hands, declaring that “those men should not be praised who were proud of having offspring.” She subsequently left him and returned to her parents. On another occasion in 1702, one of his concubines reportedly became pregnant and, having hidden her condition, secretly gave birth to a son. Knowing that Daud Khan was unlikely to take kindly to her child, she convinced Daud Khan’s brother Ibrahim Khan to intercede on her behalf. Still, Daud Khan refused their pleas for mercy:

Entering [the harem], he sought on all sides for the infant, which had been hidden. At length he found it held to her bosom by one of his female relations. Showing neither compassion nor remorse, he wrenched it from her, threw it on the ground, took its life, and spurned it with his feet. No one had the hardihood to interfere. At once he came forth somewhat pacified, and began to give audience to his captains who had hurried there in the hope of stopping this outrage. They had arrived too late, but there they stood in dejection, their heads sunk on their chests. He asked what their silence betokened and their sadness. They answered that it was from seeing the tyranny he had displayed to his own flesh and blood, and how little they had expected such a manner of acting. He retorted that the mother was low born and not of his race, that such offspring could never be courageous, and would only have lived on to disgrace him.<sup>406</sup>

Manucci’s account is strange, and has been treated, understandably, with skepticism in recent scholarship where it is bracketed as rumor.<sup>407</sup> Yet even if purely gossip, such a story reflects a popular audience trying to make sense of an unusual attitude towards dynastic reproduction. Panni’s marriages, as illustrated by the chaste cousin and the *zamīndār*’s daughter, allowed for him to cement control over strategic territories and to more deeply root himself within regional political environments. Although we can only guess at the causes of Panni’s childlessness, his empty nest in fact offered surprising political leverage, and may even have been an intentional strategy. Faced with an expansive terrain of interests, Panni surrounded himself with younger, trusted agents whose careers he fostered as he might have a son’s, but who, crucially, were not, and were therefore less of a threat. These men included kin – nephews, cousins and younger brothers – but also unrelated men like Hiranman Baksariya, “whom [he] raised up in place of a son.”<sup>408</sup> Hiranman was not only “of Daud’s house,” but the principal “commander and orderer of the household and goods.”<sup>409</sup> Yet unlike a formal adoption, Hiranman Baksariya never converted to Islam. In adulthood, Baksariya maintained a body of his own followers, many of who were likely drawn from his own community and were renowned soldiers.<sup>410</sup> Other intimates of Daud Khan included Shamsir Khan, and Bayazid Khan, respectively Daud Khan’s paternal cousin and his sister’s son. Without an obvious heir, Panni drew upon a diverse group of junior companions who, less secure in their rights than sons by blood, he deployed across his territorial holdings, commanding their loyalty through an implied promise of future inheritance.

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<sup>406</sup> Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:480–82.

<sup>407</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, “Trade and Politics in the Arcot Nizāmat,” 351.

<sup>408</sup> Chand, “Tawārikh-i Bahādur Shāhī,” 125. *Hīrāman hazārī ke Dāwud Khān Bahādur ānrā ba-jā-yi farzand pawārda būd.*

<sup>409</sup> Yūsuf Muhammad Khān, “Tārīkh-i Fathiya” (18th c.), 108, Tārīkh, 131, Salar Jung Museum. *Hīrāman nāmī ke dar qaum-i Baksariya wa dar khāna-i Dāwud Khān rātiq wa fātiq-i muhimmāt-i mulkī wa māli būd.*

<sup>410</sup> Khān, 108; Chand, “Tawārikh-i Bahādur Shāhī,” 124–25.

## Daud Khan, *mard-i sipāhī*: identity and leadership in an uncertain era

In 1834/35, Muhammad Khan Yusufzai, an Indo-Afghan born and raised in the southern port city of Madras (now Chennai), recalled in an all-too-brief passage his family's arrival in southern India more than a century previously:

...The country of my forebears was Qandahar. Drawn by the promise of subsistence and the protection of the Nawab Daud Khan they entered the Karnatak, and remained here for employment. When they became weak, the Nawab gave them food and five rupees daily [for service in] the Payinghat, and so they stayed.<sup>411</sup>

After the remembered security of their period of service to Daud Khan, they found themselves tossed on the increasingly unpredictable sea of eighteenth-century politics, seeking employment in the armies of South Indian polities. The powerful memory of Daud Khan's patronage, passed down through generations by this humble family, raises important questions about Panni's reputation beyond the court. Yusufzai's account, indeed, serves as an important reminder of the world of the common soldier. Such subaltern figures remain largely unknown to us except in the generic plural, as recruitment pools from which commanders strove to fill their ranks. Kinship and ethnic community were certainly structuring elements of the long-distance networks that fed early modern armies.<sup>412</sup> And indeed, Panni was known for his ability to bring large numbers of formidable Afghan cavalry to the battlefield. However his armies were also famously diverse. The final section of this chapter, then, reflects upon the ways in which Daud Khan Panni sought to establish and sustain his reputation as a military leader in an unusual time and place.

Dirk Kolff and Jos Gommans, offering a mainly North Indian perspective, have described the challenge faced by early modern polities of incorporating the subcontinent's vast and well-armed peasant population.<sup>413</sup> Since no single state could hope to achieve universal employment of the armed population, the best that could be hoped for was an uneasily maintained dominance in a given regional marketplace. Under such conditions, where soldiers were relatively free to abandon service and even join opposing forces, it follows that military commanders would necessarily have been concerned with establishing and maintaining their 'public' reputations.

The often-referenced but conceptually oblique 'recruitment networks' that scholarship has relied upon to explain military service relationships must have been lively sites of gossip and debate about the respective merits of prospective employers. While traditions of family service to a particular dynasty, shared ethnicity and religion, and other factors certainly shaped opportunities, none compelled absolutely. Accordingly, the language of the military camp was an inclusive and negotiable one of *namak* or salt – a leader nourished his followers with food, shelter, and the promise of regular pay, and whoever partook of it was expected to fulfill his end of the bargain on the battlefield – *namak halālī* or as the familiar English saying has it, being true to one's salt.

Namak [salt] was a negotiated relationship, a point underscored by the Hyderabad-based chronicler Yusuf Muhammad Khan in his *Tārīkh-i Fathiya*. Although dating from the middle of the

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<sup>411</sup> Muhammad Khān Yūsufzāi, "Asrār-i Ahmadi" 1250 A.H./1834-35 C.E, Siyar (1), 141, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Telangana, p. 6. *Is bande kī paidā'ish Chinnāpaṭan aur watan-i buzurgoñ kā Qandahār. Āb wa khwūrāgi kashish aur Nawāb Dāwud Khān kī parwarish se sūba-i Karnāṭak mein wārid ho. Sabab-i rūzgār ke yahīn rahe jab za'if hue tab Nawāb-i mausūf ne nān parwarish pānche rūpiye rūz pāyāghaṭ ke ta'luqe par kar diye to ta'luqa-i mazkūr mein jā rahe.*

<sup>412</sup> Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*.

<sup>413</sup> Kolff, *Naugar, Rajput, and Sepoy*; Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*.

eighteenth century, this text reflects the author's long personal experience in the administration of the first Nizam of Hyderabad's army from the 1710s onwards. He compared India unfavorably with his Central Asian homeland, since, he claimed, in India soldiering was valued above all other professions, not least his own chosen trade of pen-pushing. In India, he grumpily acknowledged, even a very humble soldier could rise to high rank, in large measure because they enjoyed significant advantages in negotiating service. Not only could and did men serve leaders who did not share their own faith, but they were far too comfortable, at least in the eyes of the author, with abandoning service when terms were not met.<sup>414</sup> In practice, leaders and soldiers alike regularly fell short of their contractual commitments. We see evidence of this not only in soldiers' rebellions but also through Mughal government orders that sought to prohibit the wandering of unaffiliated soldiers across political frontiers and by paperwork inducting new recruits, which sometimes indicated that its holder replaced a deserter (*farāri*).<sup>415</sup>

Such issues were of particular concern in the Deccan and the Karnatak where the Mughal 'brand' was subject to serious limitations. Southern territories in this period experienced unprecedented instability in their military labor markets as troops formerly associated with the Sultanates or other regional southern polities wandered the landscape in search of employment. Mughal nobility, squeezed by the economics of decades-long war, struggled to fund their households and to pay soldiers.<sup>416</sup> Some reduced their standing armies, while others adopted more creative tactics, tying themselves more closely to regional economies and leaning for support on commercial enterprises. There were chronic delays in soldiers' pay, sometimes on the order of years.<sup>417</sup> Meanwhile, rival Maratha houses jockeyed for control over their Deccan holdings, making and breaking alliances with one another and the Mughal regime.<sup>418</sup> The rising and falling fortunes of these households contributed to the market's ebb and flow.

As Daud Khan sought to build a loyal following, ready to support his interests across diverse terrains and landscapes, he necessarily sought to mold his image in a manner that spoke to a wide audience that reached well beyond an ethnically confined Afghan recruitment base. I believe that it is for this reason his memory, particularly in Mughal Persian sources, is somewhat vexed. While universally remembered as a *mard-i sipāhī*, a military man fearlessly reckless and supported by deeply loyal followers, near-contemporary accounts do not agree upon the broader implications of Panni's public reputation.

These debates are hashed out in a number of detailed accounts of his death, which took place in battle against the powerful Mughal courtier Hussain Ali Khan in 1715. Their authors sought to make sense of the causes for what, by the 1720s and 1730s when most of these accounts were written, was an obvious crisis of imperial power. More broadly, they also debated the qualities of ideal military leadership. Some of the most detailed Persian sources include Khafi Khan's *Muntakhab al-Labāb* (1720s), Khush Hal Chand's *Tawārīkh-i Bahādūr Shāh* (1720s), Muhammad Qasim's *Ahwāl-i Khawāqīn* (1738/9), and Muhammad Yusuf Khan's *Tārīkh-i Fathiya* (c. ~1760). Another

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<sup>414</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," fols. 15a-15b.

<sup>415</sup> For example: Mughal Archives, 29 August 1661, 04/0463, Telangana State Archives, Hyderabad.

<sup>416</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, chap. 7: 'The Prince Schackled, 1680s-1707'.

<sup>417</sup> Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 253; Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 280.

<sup>418</sup> Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*, Reprint 2005 (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 4: 'Family responses to invasion (1680-1719)'.

version of the story, told in Marathi and known as the *Dāwudkhānpannicchī Bakhar* (c. 18<sup>th</sup> century), offers a telling contrast.<sup>419</sup>

Daud Khan's opponent in 1715 was Hussain Ali Khan. He was the younger of two Barha Sayyid noblemen, brothers who, by the mid-1710s, were considered the real power behind the throne in Delhi. Fresh from a power struggle at court, Hussain Ali Khan (who was the imperial Amir al-Umara) arrived in the northern Deccan in 1715 where he was ordered to take over the governorship of the province. The Emperor Farrukh Siyar (r. 1713-1719), having temporarily dislodged this troublesome nobleman from his perch in Delhi, secretly sent word to Daud Khan Panni ordering him to deny the Amir entrance to the Deccan at any cost. The duplicitous emperor promised Panni the governorship if he killed his opponent. Panni, who initially had expected to meet the Amir al-Umara in friendship and had therefore left the main body of his army behind in Ahmadabad, was accompanied by only a small body of his companions. He nevertheless hurried to carry out his master's orders. The two camps, facing one another just outside the city of Burhanpur, negotiated fruitlessly with one another for a few days. The Amir al-Umara was at the head of some fifteen to eighteen thousand cavalry. In comparison Panni commanded only two to four thousand.<sup>420</sup> Panni, acknowledging the hopelessness of his circumstances, gathered his companions around him on the night before battle and granted permission for those who chose to depart for their families. Although some did, a number of his most faithful followers committed to die by his side.

All versions gleefully record the Amir al-Umara's anxiety in the face of Panni's fearlessness. To avoid a direct confrontation, he had several elephants decorated as if they were his own and seated some of his leading captains upon them with their faces covered, as decoys. At some point during the day, one of Panni's leading captains, a man named Hiranman Baksariya who Panni had raised from boyhood, was killed. Infuriated, Panni set out on his elephant to confront his opponent. Instead, he encountered in turn each of these 'false' Sayyids. In return to his shouted question, some variation on "where is the Sayyid?" his opponents would reply, "I am the Sayyid." As they were each unveiled and proven *not* to be Hussain Ali Khan, Panni killed them in turn and pressed onwards. In the end, Panni very nearly won the battle, but fate was not on his side. He was shot by one of Hussain Ali Khan's relatives, his corpse was tied to the tail of his elephant and the beast was made to parade around the city walls of Burhanpur. His surviving supporters scattered.

In the *Tawārikh-i Bahādur Shāhī* (c.1720s) Khush Hal Chand openly celebrates Panni's last stand, portraying him as a heroic relic of Aurangzeb's golden age of imperial power. Accordingly, when the secret imperial order unexpectedly arrived, Panni is lauded for unquestioningly committing himself to its fulfillment.<sup>421</sup> He called together those few companions who had accompanied him and, acknowledging that it would likely be a suicidal mission, invited those amongst them who "love life and are fond of their families and tribes" to take their leave. None left, but instead offered their support in emphatic unison. "Oh Master, at a time like this such words upon the revered tongue might be appropriate to the customs of leadership, yet it is at great remove

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<sup>419</sup> At least two versions of the *Dāwudkhānpannicchī Bakhar* are available. The Marathi language "Dāwud-Khān Pannīchī Bakhar," *Sanshōdhan* 18, nos. 3-4, Sept.-Dec. 1949, pp. 113-127 is an edited version based on a manuscript copy held by the Rajwade Shanshodhan Mandal at Dhulia, while the "Memoir of the War of Daood Khan and Hassan Ali Khan on the Borders of the Deckan [...]," (British Library, OIOC Eur. Mss., Mackenzie General, #41, nos. 15-16) was preserved and translated into English by Narayana Rao and Subha Rao, research assistants of Colin Mackenzie, in 1807.

<sup>420</sup> Khāfī Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 751-752; Khān, "Tārikh-i Fathiya," 105-6.

<sup>421</sup> Chand, "Tawārikh-i Bahādur Shāhī," 123. *Chūn ān amīr-i kabīr tartīb kardā-yi Hazrat 'Ālamgīr wa sadāqat pazīr būd shuqqa-i mubārak rā kāh bar sar wa gāh bar chashm nihāda itā'at-i hukm-i bādshāhī rā irādat-i ilāhī shumurda...*

from these faithful ones' tradition of service. Whatever is God's intent shall come to pass."<sup>422</sup> His followers then went to put their affairs in order, donned white, unhemmed clothes, and joyously prepared themselves for martyrdom. While Khush Hal acknowledged Panni's ethnicity indirectly, noting in passing that his small force was bolstered by some five hundred 'iron-chewing' Afghans, his men's commitment to sacrifice their lives for him seems more directly related to the refracted glory of the deceased Aurangzeb than to their shared ethnicity.

By contrast, Muhammad Qasim brings Panni's ethnic identity to the core of the narrative. As in Khush Hal's account, in Qasim's version Daud Khan addressed his men on the eve of battle. In Qasim's version, however, Daud Khan lingered on the unknown will of God and on his own certainty that one's best hope of fulfilling divine will was in unquestioning sacrifice in the service of one's sovereign.<sup>423</sup> The complex ethics of his position are clearly expressed in the following passage.

Anyone who is prepared to sacrifice himself is my companion, but if not, they are forgiven. It is the clear duty of Muslims to serve Sayyids and to be ready for war against unbelievers; in all sects this is so. However, for the assembled ranks the duties of *namak khwarāgī* [faithful service] are preminent. If one does not come forward at the order of one's sovereign, the [reward] is dishonor. If having gazed upon the assembled forces of the Sayyid, I were to [...] become resolved upon peace, I would be at a great remove from the youthful soldiers, indeed I would become the accursed of men and women. No one would say that this Afghan went resolutely to meet the Amir al-Umara. [Instead] it would be known that [I] went fearfully, hands clasped, to attend [upon the Amir]. In the moment of [our] meeting, the mark of *namak harāmī* [disloyalty] would be drawn across my forehead. Indeed, it would enter the history books that Daud Khan Afghan acted in treachery to his own master and overturned the tradition of loyalty. Not only that, but this community of Afghans would [be forced to] abandon its eternal attachment to the imperial dynasty.<sup>424</sup>

For Muhammad Qasim, Daud Khan was, first and foremost, a leader of the Indo-Afghan community. As such, he was concerned not only about his fidelity to the emperor but also his responsibilities to his community, who relied upon him for their reputations and their own careers as soldiers and servants of the dynasty. It is true that Qasim considered Afghans to be brutish, ignorant and stubborn. Daud Khan had little time for negotiations, responding impatiently to the Amir:

<sup>422</sup> Chand, 124. *Āy 'azīzān har ke az shumayān zindagī-dost talabgār-i qabā'il wa 'ishā'ir bāshad ba-khudā ke az dīl wa jān az o rāzī wa khwushnūd shuda rukhsat mī daham hama muttafiq al-lafz wa al-ma'nī zabān bar kushādand ke āy khudāwand ni'mat agar che in gūna alfāz dar in waqt bar zabān-i girāmī az āyīn-i sardārī 'anqarīb ast lekin az rasm-i bandagī-i in fiduyān bisiyār ba'id ba-khudā ānche ke irāda-i ilāhi ast ba-zahūr āyad.*

<sup>423</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, "Ahwāl al-Khawāqīn" (1738), fol. 97a, Tārīkh, 2, Salar Jung Museum. *Ān jamā'at ke khudā'i karīm rā hāzīr mī dānand warūd-i mawāhib-i īzīdī wa haqūq-i mukramat-i walī ni'mat rā khūb mī shināsand wa dar tariqa jān nisārī sar mū-i inhirāf na mī warzand az ānjā ke in ahqar az zumra-yi khānzādān-i mu'tabar wa mashhūr-i 'āmm al-nās bāshad az che tariq rū gardānī namāyīd.*

<sup>424</sup> Transcription follows the Salarjung manuscript copy, Muhammad Qāsim, fol. 98a. Variations in the British Library copy are offered below in brackets. Muhammad Qāsim, "Ahwāl al-Khawāqīn" (1738), fol. 110a, ADD 26244, British Library. *Har ke irāda-yi jān nisārī dar sar dāshua bāshad o rifāqat-i man ba-kunad wālā az samīm al-qalb [mu'āf] karda am wa in harf-i pazīr [nīz bar] zabān āward ke musalmān rā kamar bar sādāt bastan wa āmada-yi jang-i kushtan-i kufr mahz ast wa dar hīch mazhab rawā nabāshad amā haqūq-i namak khwarāgī bar jamī'-i marātib tafauwuq dārad wa hizb al-arshād walī ni'mat rā agar ba-jā na-āyad āward khwud rū-siyāhī dārīn hāsīl mī shawad wa agar bar marātib-i sādātī īshān nazar mī uftād khwud sakht dar warta tahyīr farū mī rawam wa agar bar afwāj-i girān Amīr al-Umarā nazar karda musta'idd-i sulh bāyad shud khwud rā nishā'i sipāhgīrī basā ba'id balke mat'un-i mard wa zan khwāham shud wa in kas nakhwāhad gufti ke Afghān ba-istiqlal-i tamām az Amīr al-Umarā mulāqī gasht hamīn [sukhan] intishār mī yābad ke az ghāyat-i khauf dast basta mulāzimat kard pas dar hālat-i mulāqat ham qashqa-i namak harāmī bar lauha simā'i in kas nigāshā mī shawad balke dākhil-i tawārīkh khwāhad shud ke Dāwud Khān Afghān ba-walī ni'mat-i khwud taraddud [wa] daghā bākht wa namak khwarāgī-i bīshīn rā tadārūk ma'kūs kard wa siwā'i in qaum-i Afghān rā az khāndān-i in daulat abd qarīn rūzī khwāhad rafti.*

“Hey brother, all of this blather of yours is useless. Quit beating cold iron.”<sup>425</sup> For the Amir al-Umara, Panni was no more nor less than a “chief of fools.”<sup>426</sup> Yet such traits were valuable, in their place. In both Khush Hal and Qasim’s accounts, Daud Khan Panni was, in his bullheaded resolve, an essentially honorable and even tragic figure, dedicated to imperial service even though the emperor seemed demonstrably unworthy. In both versions, Panni’s physical distance from the affairs of Delhi seems to have preserved him from the rot that had taken root at the imperial court. The encounter between the Amir and Panni, then, became in part an allegory of confrontation between a grander, bygone era of empire and its newer, lesser form.

By contrast, Khafi Khan’s account illustrates Mughal anxieties about the Deccan’s place within the imperial ecosystem. For him, the Deccan was a wellspring of disorder and rebelliousness, and Panni’s deep entanglement with its communities was unacceptable. Panni was apparently notorious for his cozy ties to Hindus, deploying his trusted deputies Subha Chand and Hiranman Baksariya to negotiate mutually profitable arrangements with Maratha households that sought, in defiance of imperial dictate, to collect taxes [*chauth*] across the province.<sup>427</sup> Panni’s own forces and the Maratha armies, indeed, mixed together “like sugar and milk” as they roamed the Deccan in pursuit of revenue.<sup>428</sup> Panni’s friendliness with Hindus (and especially with Marathas) was excessive to the point of *shirk* (idolatry). “That Afghan beacon of ignorance [...] was always engaged in the support of infidels and even worshiped an idol.”<sup>429</sup>

Although we might take Khafi Khan’s accusations about Panni’s religious practices with a grain of salt, his accusations about Panni’s intimacy with the Hindus and Marathas are supported not only by the preponderance of evidence already considered in this chapter but also by sympathetically rendered and anonymously authored Marathi-language account of Panni’s final stand, titled the *Dāūd-khānpannicchī Bakhar* (date unknown, 18<sup>th</sup> c.).<sup>430</sup> The text begins with a list of Panni’s companions. These included ‘Bhaiyya’ Hiranman (the aforementioned Baksariya), Lala Nathuram, Madha Gambhir, Azmat Khan, Sayyid Abdu, Shaikh Ali, Alawal Khan, Kashi Pant, [Sh?]am Rai, Batar Rai, Iphu[?] Khan, Inayat Khan, Juchmar[?] Khan, and Muhammad Yaqub. Others included: Mandhata Hazari, Parsaram Hazari, Godya[?] Dharan, Ramdas, Hussain Khan, Jugjivan Hazari, Ayub Singh Hazari, Varma, Bihari Das, Khanbahadur Gobji, Jayal Bardar, and Mikari Das.

The *Bakhar* locates Panni centrally within a Deccan context. His captains’ names reflect a diverse mixture of communities, suggesting a mix of North Indian Hindus, Marathas, Deccani

<sup>425</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, “Ahwāl al-Khawāqin,” fol. 97b. *Āy barādar mārā īn afsāne-khwānī tawātur namī bakhshad. Āhan-i sard makūb.*

<sup>426</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, fol. 97b. *Sar āmad-i juhhālān.*

<sup>427</sup> Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 691, 733, 748, 873.

<sup>428</sup> Khāfi Khān, Vol. II: 748. ...*Ba-i-ānat wa itifāq-i fauj-i ghanīm ke bāham chūn shīr wa shakkar āmīkhta būdand.*

<sup>429</sup> Khāfi Khān, Vol. II: 884. *Ān Afghān-i juhhālat nishān ke dar tarafdārī-i kuffār hamīsha mī koshīd balke yakī az buthā-yi kuffār rā mī parastīd...*

<sup>430</sup> The following discussion relies on two versions of this text. I have drawn mainly from an English ‘translation’ available in the Mackenzie Collection in London, and have read it sections of it alongside an edited version of a Marathi-language manuscript held by the Rajwade Mandal in Dhulia, Maharashtra. The two versions are similar but not identical. Anonymous, “Dāwud-Khān Pannīchī Bakhar,” *Rajwade Mandal Shanshodhan Journal* 18, no. 3–4 (December 1949): 113–27; “Memoir of the War of Daood Khan and Hassan Ali Khan on the Borders of the Deckan in the Year .... Transmitted by Narrain Row from Poona and Translated from the Maratta by Sooba Row Jan 1807” (n.d.), Mackenzie Collection, Mack Gen. 41/15-16, British Library. I am indebted to the assistance of Dominic Vendell who helped me to make sense of key Marathi passages.

Muslims, Afghans, and those of more ambiguous origin. On the day he marched into battle he carried on his body five types of weapons – a potent symbol amongst both Rajputs and Marathas of one’s warrior status.<sup>431</sup> The gravitational center of Panni’s military strength was acknowledged to have resided in the far south of the country where his massive ‘Karnatak army’ was said to be lumbering slowly northwards in a futile attempt to support Panni against his opponent. Most importantly, the Marathi account concentrates on the direct bond Panni fostered between himself and those who served him. This is most tangibly expressed in its depiction of his generous and just nature, and for an era in which cash supply was a common problem, for his seemingly unflinching access to money. By contrast with the Mughal Persian sources, it was explicitly Panni’s attachment to his men, rather than his attachment to the imperial court, that carried the Marathi narrative.

On at least two occasions, the *Bakhar* reminds its audience that those soldiers who accepted Panni’s invitation to leave before the battle were meticulously paid in full before their departure. This contrasts with the Persian sources, which while mostly remembering that Panni did grant leave to those who wished, unanimously fail to mention any salary settlements. A slight variation played out in the harem where Panni told a distraught woman to whom he bid farewell that whether he lived or died he had arranged for her care. Other servants and dependents were similarly lavished with gifts. During Hussain Ali Khan’s inventory of Panni’s camp after his death, the Sayyid explored the contents of the treasury, which was discovered to hold dozens of different denominations of coins minted across the subcontinent. These included:

Kāverī	Akbarī	Ārkāt
Sanagarī (possibly Sangamner [central Deccan district headquarter]?)	Shāhjahānī	Sikkā Aurangābādī
Ghāramodī (?)	Aurangshahī (Aurangzeb)	Farrūkh Shāhī (Farrukh Siyar)
Shrīgapatanī (possibly Srirangapatnam – Mysore)	Nizāmshāhī	Burhānpūr
Chennapatani (Madras – Fort St. George)	Panchamel (possibly Panchalgaun, a district headquarter near Bir?)	Sholāpu (Sholapur)
Patharmod (possibly Pathri – a central Deccan district headquarter near Bir)	Dhāradur Shāhī (misprint for Bahādur Shāhī?)	Paradī (possibly Parenda, a central Deccan district headquarter)
Nāyandī (?)	Kokā Shāhī (?)	Bidar
Vekatarāī (probably Venkatadri – a fort based near Kadapa along the Coromandel Coast)	Sikka Dillī (Delhi)	Bankāpūr
	Ajmīr (Ajmer)	Haidarābād
	Chadī (?)	Vidnūr (Bidnur) (an important Karnatak trading center)
	Agre (Agra?)	
	Ilahābād (Allahabad)	
	Āmanī (?)	
	Sūrat	

Panni’s treasury is discussed in no other account, but it is significant for the insight it offers into the imagination of Panni’s wealth and its origins, as well as its role in the circulation and transmission of wealth through the subcontinent. It was not merely the case that Panni was a powerful man with commercial interests across the subcontinent but he was also *known* to have been so. While in the Persian sources such ventures are referenced at best only obliquely, the Marathi account places his wealth and his trans-regional commercial ties at the center of his public identity. Panni’s famed generosity to his companions and followers was backed up by his capacity to draw upon a treasury that tied him to virtually every corner of South Asia.

<sup>431</sup> Harry Arbuthnot Acworth, *Ballads of Marathas* (Longmans, Green, and Company, 1894), 123.

Another unusual feature of the *Bakhar* is its close attention to Daud Khan's *shikārkhāna*, a difficult to translate term meaning a 'hunting establishment' or a kind of mobile zoo, which held hundreds or even thousands of individual animals and dozens of distinct species. The *shikārkhāna* is mentioned on three separate occasions in the text – once when it was inventoried as part of a larger account of Panni's camp, again when Panni went to accept its caretakers' well-wishes before saddling for battle, and finally after his death, when Hussain Ali Khan stood astonished before his defeated opponent's expansive collection. The text's attention to the *shikārkhāna* might strike the modern reader as bizarre, even surreal. Yet it turns out, when read alongside other sources, to reflect an element of his popular reputation to which Daud Khan dedicated considerable energy.

South Asian nobility have long been interested in hunting, and some early modern elites were known to have cultivated a scientific interest in animal husbandry and physiology – the Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) famously narrated his study of these matters in his biography. Likewise, Mughal and Deccan Sultanate art habitually incorporated animal imagery into depictions of sovereign power.<sup>432</sup> Rajput leaders and others put elaborate hunting expeditions at the center of their royal presentation.<sup>433</sup> However even by these standards, Panni's interest in animals was widely deemed worthy of special comment. His personal acquaintance Nicolao Manucci, resident in Madras, offers detailed documentation, including secondary confirmation of the *shikārkhāna*. He notes that:

Daud Khan is very much interested in the chase, and has great delight in different kinds of animals. In his train he always keeps tigers, leopards, hawks, falcons, etc. Of ducks [...] he has one thousand, besides many other birds. [...] Whenever he hears of any parrots, cockatoos, or similar rare animals, he sends at once to purchase them without any regard to price.<sup>434</sup>

Panni's craze for collection was not just about hunting, but about situating himself in a position of command over the animal world. Where his control over this realm slipped, or came into question, his response was violent and immediate. Daud Khan once procured a rare kind of monkey from a Dutch Jew. A portrait of this very monkey, by some miracle, survives in the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>435</sup> When the monkey suffered an untimely death, its unlucky caretakers were brutally punished for their presumed negligence. One was spitted on a wooden stake. Another had his ears cut off. The monkey's former residence was burnt to the ground. Yet Panni's interest in exotica was undampened. Soon afterwards he forwarded a letter and gifts to the governor of Manila in the hope that he might send more rare animals.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> For discussion on this see Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, chap. 4: 'Saying one thing, doing another? Shivaji and Deccan Patriotism 1674-80'; A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>433</sup> Julie Elaine Hughes, "Animal Kingdoms: Princely Power, the Environment, and the Hunt in Colonial India" (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2009), <http://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/305017546/abstract/C61FA932D3DE4825PQ/1>.

<sup>434</sup> Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:256–57.

<sup>435</sup> 'A monumental portrait of a monkey, c. 1705-1710.' Rajasthan, attributed to the 'Stipple Master' (active c. 1692-c. 1715), Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/210511>, Viewed March 30, 2016.

<sup>436</sup> Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:256–57. The Europeans were very much in on the exotic animal trade as well. In 1684, for example, an unfortunate rhinoceros was shipped from the territories of Golkonda to Britain, where it lived out the remainder of its short life providing rides to the drunk and the curious at a London tavern. "A London Rhinoceros," accessed June 22, 2018, <http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item104068.html>. Thanks to Penny Edwards for this link.



Although Manucci considered Panni’s response as evidence of his violent temperament, the story fits into a larger pattern of Panni’s interaction with the animal world, in which animals became central features of his public enactments of justice. After a victory over the southern fortress of Vellore in 1699, he had thieves from his army camp brought to the lip of its famous moat, which was filled with crocodiles, and watched as they were thrown into the water. On another occasion in 1706, Panni heard that an Armenian ship captain had recently brought back three dogs to Madras from Manila. Two were fierce and the third tame. Panni contrived to bring these dogs into his own possession. The tame one was purportedly given its own palanquin and a silver chain, was allowed to sleep in Panni’s bedroom and fed scraps from his table. Meanwhile he tested the mettle of the ferocious pair by setting them loose on criminals. His attachment to these hunting dogs is commented upon in several Persian histories, including the *Mirāt-i Ahmadī* (c. 1761),<sup>437</sup> and, most notably, the late-eighteenth century *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī* (c. 1786). According to the author (who could not have known Manucci’s account),

Daud Khan [...] undertook the deputy governorship of Arcot with equity and justice. [...] He filled the era with gentleness and compassion for high and low [*khās wa ‘āmm*]. He kept two dogs of strange appearance [*‘ajīb al-khalqat*] and would not part from them. The male he named Khizr Khan after his father and the female he called Basu after his mother. When they brought a criminal before him he would set the dogs upon him.<sup>438</sup>

After one such public punishment, “terror and awe [of Panni] reached such extremes that even enemies dared not fight one another. Indeed, a dog would not bother another. There are many stories of this type.” Local memory of Panni’s dogs and his ‘justice’ were evidently still strong more than a half century later.

Animal behavior offered familiar shorthand for power relations in South Asian society and was legible across regions and languages. An example comes from an episode in Delhi in early 1719, immediately after the dethronement of the emperor Farrukh Siyar. As several chroniclers record, popular fury against the Sayyid brothers, who had engineered the coup, provoked an outbreak of violence across the city. Maratha troops in Hussain Ali Khan’s army, recently arrived from the Deccan, were singled out for particular abuse. These hapless victims signaled their submission to the angry crowds by falling upon all fours like cattle and filling their mouths with hay, crying out “*nakko, nakko*” (don’t, don’t). They were nevertheless slaughtered.<sup>439</sup> Animal imagery offered a widely understood vocabulary, coherent across regions and languages. Daud Khan Panni put this vocabulary to spectacular use, staging dramatic episodes of justice, but also hauling along with him across vast swathes of southern India his immense *shikārkhāna*, a masterfully vivid illustration of his care for, and absolute command over, an array of God’s creatures painstakingly collected from the far corners of the earth.

<sup>437</sup> ‘Ali Muhammad Khān, *Mirāt-i Ahmadī*, Vol. I: 424.

<sup>438</sup> Munshī Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, ed. Chandrasekharan, T. (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1957), 71–72. *Nawāb Dāwud Khān [...] ba niyābat-i Nawāb Zū’lfaqār Khān Bahādur Nusrat Jang sūbadārī-i Ārkāt ba-‘adl wa insāf namūda wa zulm wa ta‘addī az hāl bardāshta wa zamāna rā ba lutf wa marhamat-i khās wa ‘āmm ampāshta do qulāda sag ‘ajīb al-khalqat mī parwarīd wa az khwud judā namī gardānīd nar rā ba-Khizr Khān nām-i pidar wa māda-i ānr [sic] ba Basu ism-i mādar-i khwud mī khwānd wa mujrimī rā ke pīshash mī āwardand az ān do sag mī darānīd.*

<sup>439</sup> Kaicker, “Unquiet City,” 284.

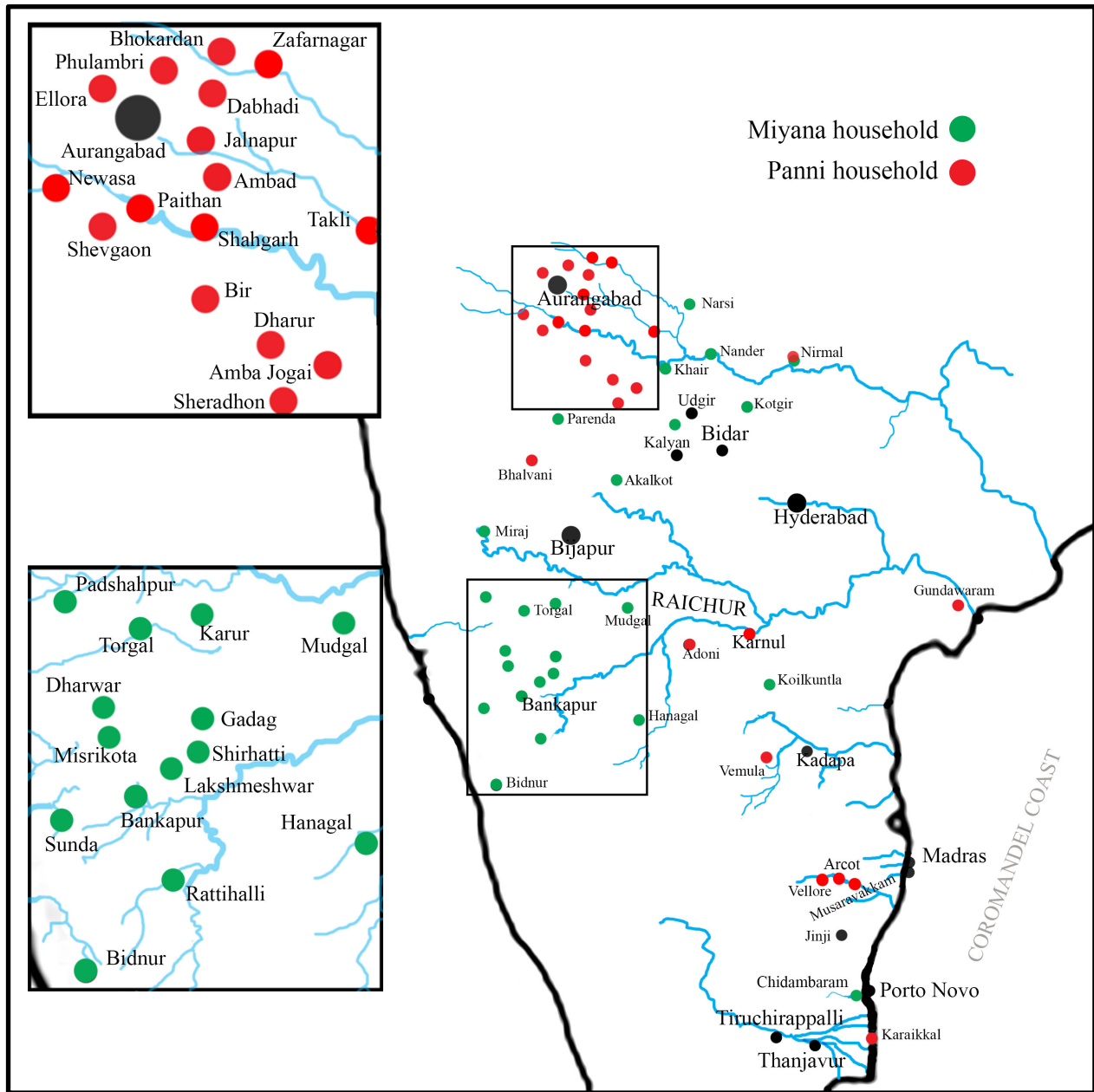
## Conclusion

Daud Khan Panni's life spanned a tumultuous period that saw the fall of the Sultanates in the south, the rise of Mughal power in its vacuum, and the beginning of imperial decline. Across this period, Panni worked tirelessly to draw into profitable relationship an expansive range of territories, resources and economies. Towards this end, he deployed his sprawling household, which included both members of his family and a diversity of others whose regional connections helped to hold the entire enterprise together. Panni's ambitions built upon an earlier foundation of household interests across both the Deccan and the Karnatak. He strengthened and innovated upon these earlier structures by the adaption of Mughal infrastructure and administrative mechanisms that allowed for these developments. While operating under the shade of the Mughal umbrella, however, the Panni/Miyana enterprise had much in common with Maratha households who similarly constructed multi-regional networks based upon a model of possessing 'shares' rather than in achieving full sovereignty.

This kind of political arrangement demanded that leaders like Daud Khan construct support bases that transcended specific regional cultures and ties. Towards this end, he cultivated an unusually vivid and creatively enacted persona that not only emphasized his fearsome commitment to a sternly policed 'justice,' but also to his own obligations to his followers. Discussions of Panni and his reputation would have circulated through the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual recruitment networks that drew soldiers from across the subcontinent to join his armies in territories ranging from Gujarat to the Coromandel Coast. In order to uphold his obligations to his followers, he paid careful attention to the finances of his household. Traces of these arrangements, which brought together the diverse resource bases of numerous regions, are clearly visible across surviving materials from the Mughal archive. As bureaucratic processes burrowed ever deeper into South Asia's economy in this period, granting states increasingly unfettered access to local financial systems,<sup>440</sup> these tools were also made accessible to prominent actors and interest groups who, even as they pursued their own ambitions, forged and deepened transactional pathways across formerly discrete territories. Thus, the 'Mughal Karnatak,' which survived only for only a couple of short decades as a directly-administered province, was built largely out of the pre-existing structures that had largely emerged in the final half-century or so of Deccan Sultanate rule. These remained, in large measure, under the control of men who were closely familiar with, if not themselves born out of, the old Sultanate households. Yet not all Sultanate-affiliated houses survived, while others, as shall be seen in the following chapter, appeared out of relative obscurity to seize political influence in coming decades. The success and failure of such groups emerged out of as-yet-incompletely understood factors that may, as in the case of the Siddis or Berads, included Mughal prejudices, but in all probability also responded to other shifting dynamics of the regional political economy. Thus as the Siddis lost their hold on western coastal trading ports, their foothold further inland also slipped. By contrast, the loosely entangled network of Panni and Miyana houses was spectacularly successful, both during and after Aurangzeb's reign, in capturing and consolidating their coastal and inland holdings.

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<sup>440</sup> For an examination of evolving traditions of bureaucratic culture and practice in the Deccan, see Sumit Guha, "Serving the Barbarian to Preserve the Dharma: The Ideology and Training of a Clerical Elite in Peninsular India c. 1300–1800," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 497–525.



Map 4: Miyana & Panni jāgīr holdings, 1691-1719 I.J. Coll: I/44/2-20, I/45/1-145, I/45/1-206, I/45/2-114, I/45/2-115, I/45/3-12, I/51/11-183, I/51/12-144, III/1/8-17, III/1/9-97, III/1/10-159, III/1/11-129, III/1/0-289, III/2/2-84, III/2/2-86, III/1/12-47, III/1/12-48, III/2/2-203, III/2/3-17, III/2/3-178, III/2/3-186, III/4/8-5, III/4/8-8, III/5/6-5 (locations not found: Daulatgarh, Shamshirgarh, Narsigarh[?], Mardangarh, Raj Hanasgarh[?], Rai Haveli), III/5/9-6, III/0/0-149, III/0/0-156, IV/1/7-46, IV/1/9-1, IV/1/9-2, IV/1/9-3, IV/1/9-4, IV/1/9-8, IV/1/9-43, IV/1/9-43, IV/1/11-15, IV/1/11-35, V/1/3-24, V/1/12-16, V/1/12-17, V/1/12-18, V/12/1-19, V/3/2-2, V/3/2-17, V/3/5-9 – V/3/5-12, V/3/10-135, V/3/11-12, V/4/2-457, V/4/2-16, V/4/5-121, V/4/6-9, V/4/7-10, V/4/7-343, V/4/10-49 – V/4/10-51, V/4/11-22, V/5/7-27, V/5/9-136- V/5/9-139, V/5/9-197, V/5/10-87, V/5/11-247, V/5/11-318, V/5/11-319, V/5/12-167, V/5/12-183, V/6/2-41, V/6/2-41, V/6/8-26, V/6/8/142, V/6/10-24, V/6-0-38, V/6/11-49, V/6/11-54, V/6/12-51, V/0/0-355. Many of these territories are mentioned repeatedly in documentation throughout the period. Important territories like Amba Jogai and Bir are ubiquitous. A few locations, however, are mentioned only once. Examples such as Vemula or Koilkuntla were sufficiently proximate to the households' major power centers to be unremarkable. A notable outlier is Gondawaram on the eastern coast. It seems to have been briefly assigned to Ibrahim Khan Panni during a failed bid by Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan to name the former as sūbadār of Hyderabad in August of 1716, and was probably otherwise beyond the reach of these houses (I.J. Coll V/5/9-136).

## **Chapter Four: The resurgent Karnatak frontier**

Over the past three chapters I have argued that in the Karnatak territories, the primary unit of politics was not the state but rather households, whose flexibility and capacity to forge connections across long distances and territories in which formal sovereignty was often patchwork and contested, gave them greater stability than the polities they purported to serve. One key point of continuity across the preceding chapters had been the theme of an expanding Deccan-based power, be it that of the Deccan Sultanates or their Mughal successor, which sought to claim sovereignty within the Karnatak. The Miyana and Panni households and others like them made their fortunes by situating themselves as middlemen within this process.

As Mughal power began to retreat northwards, however, for the first time since at least the early seventeenth century the Karnatak found itself temporarily free of expansionary pressure from the north. This period can be divided into two main phases. In the first, between 1713 (after the death of Daud Khan Panni's patron Zulfiqar Khan and Panni's re-assignment to Gujarat), and 1724 (when Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah defeated his rival Mubariz Khan at the Battle of Shakar Khera and seized the Governorship of the Deccan), the sustained dynamic tension between Deccan and Karnatak-based interest groups slackened as Mughal affiliates battled one another over the Deccan Governorship [*sūbadārī*], which seemed to promise control over lucrative trans-subcontinental north-south networks connecting the Mughal heartlands with the southeastern Coromandel Coast. Taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by these conflicts, Karnatak actors began to carve out autonomous spaces and consolidate control over locally held resources. They centered themselves in inland centers whose names have already become familiar to us. The Miyanas remained based in the west in Bankapur (and their nearby emerging capital of Savanur), as well as to the southeast in Kadapa. The Pannis were centered in the northeastern Karnatak in Karnul, close to the riverine border with the eastern Hyderabad Deccan. Further south in Arcot, another household with long roots in the Deccan Sultanates would also emerge: the Nawaiyats. In the second phase, roughly between 1724-1740, the old Deccan-Karnatak frontier reasserted its relevance in dramatic fashion. While trade continued to flow uninhibited across the divide, other forms of movement slowed, including the flow of military operations, northern soldier-recruits, and administrative cooperation between the two regions. For nearly this entire period, Karnatak-based households and the emerging Deccan capitals at Maratha-held Satara and Pune, and Asaf Jah-held Aurangabad and Hyderabad, maintained an uneasy standoff, punctuated only rarely by Deccan-organized campaigns into the Karnatak, mostly with disappointing result.

The standoff would come to an end in the 1740s, when both Maratha and Asaf Jahi powers began abruptly to renew their pressure on the Karnatak, fielding major campaigns southwards on a near-yearly basis. In this same period, a number of simmering conflicts in the Coromandel region, including the long-held enmity between the French and British East India Companies, rose to a boil. The resulting war, which entangled nearly every interest group within South India's political elite, would radically alter not only the political geography of the Karnatak, but also the preferred vehicle of political ambition from the middle of the century onwards. Beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, we finally begin to see the comparatively centralized regional state formations that others have variously described as 'military-fiscalist' and as 'Mughal successor states.'

These processes are examined here over the course of the following three chapters. In this fourth chapter, I concentrate on the re-assertion of the Krishna-Tungabhadra *doāb* dividing the central Deccan from the Karnatak territories from the perspective of northern and Deccan-based

figures that sought to assert their claims in the south between 1713 and the late 1720s. In particular, this chapter examines the competition between the influential Mughal noblemen Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan Barha, Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, and Mubariz Khan of Hyderabad, all of who sought to seize control over the north-south network whose establishment under Daud Khan and Zulfiqar Khan I described in the previous chapter. Although Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah would eventually win control of the Governorship of the Deccan, his success came at the expense of the much-desired Karnatak. Chapter Five describes some of the key features of Karnatak political culture in this period, including the establishment of a multi-layered sovereign memory, within which actors' claims to Vijayanagara, Deccan Sultanate or Mughal entitlements were all considered simultaneously legitimate. Chapter Six explores the dramatic events of the late 1740s and early 1750s as the increasingly vulnerable Karnatak household institution reached a crisis point.

### The Nawaiyats of Arcot

Before continuing with our discussion, it is first necessary to introduce an increasingly important regional household: the Nawaiyats. Their name becomes indispensable to the narrative of South Indian history from the turn of the eighteenth century onwards. Between 1710-32, the region of Arcot, which had been the de facto Mughal capital of the Karnatak under Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni, came under the authority of Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat. Like the Pannis and Miyanas, the Nawaiyats had first made their fortune under Bijapur Sultanate patronage. Their earlier strongholds, however, had not been in the Karnatak but rather along the western Konkan coastal region, an arena that fell early to the Marathas. Accordingly, the Nawaiyat leader Mulla Ahmad turned to Mughal service in 1665, hoping that he and his family might regain access to the Konkan (discussed briefly in Chapter Two). From the turn of the eighteenth century onwards, a new Nawaiyat leader, Muhammad Said (best known by his title, Saadatullah Khan), having followed the Mughal army southwards to the Karnatak, rose to power first under the patronage of Zulfiqar Khan and later Daud Khan Panni. The *Sa'idnāma*, which narrates in triumphal fashion the high points of Saadatullah Khan's career, also doubles as one of the most useful accounts of the Karnatak's early eighteenth century history through the early 1720s, and will be a major source in this chapter and the next.<sup>441</sup>

Under Daud Khan Panni's command at Arcot, Saadatullah Khan rose to power as a trusted if ambitious deputy. When Panni left the Karnatak in 1710 for the Deccan, Saadatullah Khan was given the reins. Considered through the lens of the Mughal hierarchy, Saadatullah Khan's title as *diwān* established him as the Karnatak's highest-ranking official, responsible for the collection of revenue. British authorities at Madras certainly perceived him as the primary representative of Mughal power in the region. It is clear, however, that other household leaders, including his neighbor Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana, based in Kadapa, saw Saadatullah Khan not as a superior but as an equal.

By all accounts, the relationship between the Nawaiyats and the Miyana and Panni households was, if not always peaceful, certainly quite close. The groups cooperated in local and more distant conflicts, as in the case of a Maratha raid in the Kadapa region, where Saadatullah Khan celebrated 'Id al-Fitr as Abdul Nabi's guest before working in tandem to chase the Maratha

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<sup>441</sup> The *Sa'idnāma*'s closest examination can be found in a joint study by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam republished in several locations, including *Penumbra Visions*, chaps. 4: "Commerce, Politics and the Early Arcot State".

forces from the area.<sup>442</sup> They celebrated weddings and mourned at funerals together. Their families also probably intermarried.<sup>443</sup> Saadatullah Khan and Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana were, as surviving references in contemporary correspondence indicates, social intimates.<sup>444</sup> Despite their close ties, however, the Miyanas and Pannis at times came into conflict, fighting at least two wars in the early 1720s over competing claims in the strategically important Baramahal or South Arcot region, inland from the port cities of Pondicherry and Porto Novo.

Like Daud Khan Panni, Saadatullah Khan had no children, but extended his largesse amongst friends and family. According to a later source, the *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī* (c. 1786), he “had in his heart the interests of his relatives and the members of his family. He invited them from Konkan and bestowed on them *jāgīrs* and forts.”<sup>445</sup> Most important among these strongholds was the old fortress of Vellore, which served as a second capital for the Nawaiyats, and was placed under the command of Saadatullah Khan’s younger brother Ghulam Ali. When Saadatullah Khan died in 1732, the scene was set for a major conflict between high-ranking members of the Nawaiyat house for leadership of the household. This intra-household competition was still playing out a decade later, in the 1740s.

## Mughal nobility compete for the Deccan Governorship

In the decade between 1713-1724, the *sūbadārī* or Governorship of the Deccan became an axial site for competition over the Karnatak. This was in large measure a consequence of how the Karnatak was incorporated into the Mughal administrative system. What began during Aurangzeb’s period as a hurried, temporary arrangement implemented by powerful individuals like Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni, developed a veneer of permanence in the early eighteenth century at the same moment as the coercive power of Mughal institutions were fading away. Three Mughal noblemen were at the center of this conflict: Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan Barha, also known as the Amir al-Umara (d. 1720), Mubariz Khan Imad al-Mulk (d. 1724), and Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah (d. 1748). The last of these men would transform the eastern Deccan into the post-imperial Mughal ‘successor state’ of Hyderabad after 1724.

Nizam al-Mulk, the best known of the three, came from a family that had served for three generations as military commanders in Aurangzeb’s Deccan wars and at the highest levels of imperial administration. Nizam al-Mulk, in particular, had enjoyed the favor of Aurangzeb in his early years.<sup>446</sup> The Nizam’s grandfather and father had served as *sūbadārs* in Bidar and Berar in the central Deccan, and Nizam al-Mulk himself was the *sūbadār* of Bijapur from 1702-1706, while also acting

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<sup>442</sup> Munshī, “Sa’idnāma,” fols. 193a-195a.

<sup>443</sup> Consider the example of Abdul Ghani Khan, son of Abdul Nabi Khan, died at his post in Jagdev, a fortress in the Baramahal territory west of Arcot in February of 1718. Saadatullah Khan joined the mourning Miyana householders who had gathered from Kadapa and other locations. Munshī, fols. 189b-190a. Elsewhere, there is some evidence of intermarriage. Abdul Majid Khan, one of Abdul Nabi Khan’s other sons, described Saadatullah Khan as his ‘uncle’ in correspondence with Ananda Ranga Pillai, translator for the French East India Company, in 1749. This term might have been a literal description of their familial relationship, or a respectful acknowledgement of his seniority. Ananda Ranga Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, Dubash to Joseph François Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry: A Record of Matters, Political, Historical, Social, and Personal, from 1736-1761* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1985), Vol. VI: 272.

<sup>444</sup> Muhammad Amīn, “Gulshan-i Sa’adat” (Early 18th C.), fol. 14a, Adab-i Nasar, 258, Salar Jung Museum.

<sup>445</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1934, 68.

<sup>446</sup> Faruqi, “At Empire’s End.”

as *faujdār* or *thānadār* [fort commander] of the Bijapuri fortresses of Tal Konkan, Azamnagar (Belgaum), Sanpgaon, Nusratabad (Sagar), and Mudgal.<sup>447</sup> He knew the region well. He further distinguished himself by his willingness to ally with regional actors – including Deccani Muslims, Afghans (especially those with ties to the northern and eastern Deccan) and Maratha households – when necessary.

In contrast with the Nizam, the Amir al-Umara (whom we first met in Chapter Three) had no meaningful ties to the Deccan. He and his elder brother Sayyid Abdullah Khan Barha (d. 1722), the famed Sayyid brothers, dominated North Indian courtly politics during this period, arguably enjoying even greater power than the Emperor himself. During the Amir al-Umara's four-year governorship of the Deccan, he sought to overcome the handicap of his inexperience in the region by attaining from the then Emperor, Farrukh Siyar (d. 1719), unprecedented powers to appoint, transfer and dismiss even the highest-ranking imperial officers commanding the region's major fortresses.<sup>448</sup> As we shall see, his imperiousness quickly provoked a crisis over the legitimacy of central authority. A third major competitor was Mubariz Khan. Where Nizam al-Mulk wielded the legacy of his own family's important role in the Aurangzeb-era Mughal Deccan, and the Amir al-Umara trumpeted his powerful ties to the northern court, Mubariz Khan built his career by cautiously navigating the slippery landscape of regional politics. He had only held mid-level responsibilities under Aurangzeb – maintaining at various points *faujdārīs* in Sangamner and Baidapur near Aurangabad, as well as (his most influential early posting) the *faujdārī* of Surat, still one of western India's most important ports. He came to real power at the beginning of Farrukh Siyar's reign in 1713, when he was granted the *sūbadārī* of Hyderabad, a title he maintained up through his death in 1724. The position made him a direct subordinate to the Governor of the Deccan, and as the Governorship passed between Nizam al-Mulk and the Amir al-Umara's hands in 1713, 1715 and again in 1720, Mubariz Khan offered conspicuous demonstrations of loyalty to whomever held the reins, while covertly coming to a mutual understanding with local powers. He was finally granted the Governorship of the Deccan in 1724 by the emperor Muhammad Shah (d. 1748), while he was *en route* to defeat by Nizam al-Mulk at the Battle of Shakar Khera.

Despite these men's contrasting political biographies, each would find himself forced to come to terms not only with the expanding Maratha polities based in Satara and Kolhapur but also with the Karnatak-based Miyana, Panni, and Nawaiyat households that guarded the marchlands south to the wealthy polities of Mysore, Bidnur, Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli, the most prominent targets of northern tribute-collection campaigns. The households' continued capacity through the 1730s to negotiate arrangements on their own terms with their northern neighbors served as a stinging reminder of the limits of the Deccan governorship's authority.

## Karnatak equations

During Aurangzeb's long war in the Deccan, the Karnatak territories had become latched, in an *ad hoc* administrative arrangement, to the Deccan capitals at Aurangabad, Bijapur and Hyderabad. These systems at times traced the earlier arrangements of the Deccan Sultanates during their expansion into the Karnatak, but also diverged in some measure. Between the last decade of the seventeenth century, when the Mughals began their conquest of the Karnatak, and the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the Karnatak became an anomalous, subsidiary province-within-a-

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<sup>447</sup> Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.*, 1–4.

<sup>448</sup> Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 276.

province within the Mughal system, a governmental structure without parallel elsewhere in the empire.<sup>449</sup> The arrangement was further complicated by the Karnatak's division between the Bijapuri and Hyderabad 'sub-*sūbas*' within the larger Deccan *sūba*, representing a kind of ghostly holdover from the old Deccan Sultanate treaty of 1655 that had divided the territories south of the Krishna River between Golkonda and Bijapuri spheres of influence.

The often haphazard manner in which Mughal institutions were mapped out across South India's territories can be exemplified by a major *jāgīr* near Madras on the Coromandel Coast, which was set aside sometime in the early 1690s to facilitate the payment of some portion of Zulfiqar Khan's salary when he was *faujdār* of the distant Karnatak.<sup>450</sup> After he returned north, he retained his claim over this income source, relying, no doubt, on Daud Khan Panni's oversight to ensure that the funds arrived northwards. Even after he was granted the *sūbadārī* of the Deccan following Bahadur Shah's coronation in 1707, the arrangement remained in place. Perhaps it was his desire to preserve access to this lucrative resource that led him to carefully maintain his old title as *faujdār* of the Karnatak in absentia, hitching together in his person the two powerful roles of Governor of the Deccan and military commander of the Karnatak despite his apparent intention to remain permanently in the north and leave his deputy, Daud Khan Panni, in charge of details on the ground. When Nizam al-Mulk was given the *sūbadārī* of the Deccan after Zulfiqar Khan's execution in 1713, he inherited Zulfiqar Khan's arrangements, including the proceeds from the Karnatak *jāgīr* linked to the *faujdārī* of the Karnatak.

When Hussain Ali Khan Barha, the Amir al-Umara, took over the Governorship from Nizam al-Mulk in 1715, he too automatically received the title of the Karnatak *faujdārī*, and considered the southern *jāgīr* as his personal prerogative. In a hint that revenues from the *jāgīr* were no longer finding their way northwards, however, the Amir almost immediately deputized a servant, Mutha Dayaram Gujarati, to travel south to oversee the region. According to English Company observers, Dayaram was charged with extracting a princely 300,000 *hūn*, or approximately 1,125,000 rupees,<sup>451</sup> from the property and delivering them to his master.<sup>452</sup> Dayaram also proposed to collect a further Rs. 1,700,000 from Saadatullah Khan in Arcot as unpaid dues owed to the imperial treasury. According to British records, these sudden demands were sufficient to send refugees pouring into Madras as cultivators abandoned their fields and merchants sought shelter

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<sup>449</sup> Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.*, 39.

<sup>450</sup> This *jāgīr* finds regular mention across both Persian and English-language sources from the period. I am confident, however, that this was not a '*jāgīr*' in the classic sense, and may not have been subject to land survey at all (since we have no record of such an endeavor). Rather, the term was probably pressed in to service as a reflection of an acknowledged 'bundle' of local revenue sources, amongst them markets, taxable agricultural land, as well as perhaps textile-producing villages specialized in weaving or dyeing. Unlike northern *jāgīrs*, it was not subject to regular reassignment.

<sup>451</sup> The gold *hūn*, known in European sources as the 'pagoda' remained relatively stable against the silver rupee between the mid-seventeenth and early decades of the eighteenth century – ranging between 3.75 rupees to the *hūn* during its high point to a low of 3.05 rupees to the *hūn* when, in the late 1730s, mints reduced their gold content. Kanakalatha Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant: Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel* (Chennai: Orient Longman, 1999), 88. It is interesting to note that the *hūn* largely retained its value and remained a preferred southern currency even after the fall of the Sultanates. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 22.

<sup>452</sup> Even taken as a ballpark figure, this is a considerable sum of money, roughly equivalent to the annual assessed value of major North Indian *sarkār* or district headquarters such as Awadh, Gorakhpur or Khairabad, and much more than the annual tribute demand of 200,000 *hūn* made by the Mughals of the entire Qutb Shahi Sultanate beginning in 1636. For comparison see Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, 103, fn. 46; Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, 388–93.



from collectors, who typically arrived with an armed force in tow.<sup>453</sup> The episode, addressed in further detail in the pages that follow, illustrates the manner in which *ad hoc* arrangements dating from the Mughal conquest took on formal trappings, but also points to the ambitions of Mughal affiliates to maintain their hold over Karnatak properties even as they retreated to the more established estates of the Deccan and northern India.

As we have seen, the Karnatak had long been a byword in the northern imagination for limitless wealth. At the turn of the eighteenth century, northern fantasies found new form in the precision of Mughal tax revenue figures, first collated in the 1707-1708 *Deh ba-Dehī* or ‘village by village’ account book by Aurangzeb’s orders. These figures, at best, reflected returns on one-off tribute collections and guesstimates reached in the midst of a major war. Compared with northern revenue figures, which at least claimed a basis in the Mughal state’s ambitious land survey efforts,<sup>454</sup> Karnatak revenues were a far less precise science. They were almost entirely based on tribute, and thus tell us little about the source of that money – whether it represented cash collected from land revenues or from taxes on trade, or whether the collection represented a sustainable annual tax rate for any given region or an expensive one-time gambit to buy off Aurangzeb’s armies.

Deccan subas	Annual estimated revenue in rupees, fractions omitted ( <i>jama’-i kāmīl</i> )	Portion of Deccan revenues (%)	Karnatak portion in numeric terms	Portion of <i>sūba</i>
Aurangabad	12,778,498	7%		
Khandesh	5,880,222	3%		
Berar	12,268,767	7%		
Bidar	6,942,102	4%		
Hyderabad	66,019,220	36%	48,633,879	74% of Hyderabad <i>sūba</i> , 27% of Mughal Deccan
Bijapur	78,440,143	43%	52,262,239	67% of Bijapur <i>sūba</i> , 29% of Mughal Deccan
Total	Rs. 182,328,952		Rs. 100,896,118	55% of Mughal Deccan

Table 1: Mughal Deccan *sūbas*.<sup>455</sup>

Whatever questions modern historians might have about their reliability, the sums nevertheless had great staying power in the imaginations of eighteenth-century Deccan-based claimants to Mughal authority. Figures from the *Deh ba-Dehī* were repeated nearly unchanged in later compendiums like the *Sawānih-i Dakhan*, compiled in 1782/83. Accordingly, these figures

<sup>453</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 114.

<sup>454</sup> The reliability of these northern figures have nevertheless rightly been subject to substantial debate by Mughal scholars over the decades, Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam offer an engaging overview of the subject in the introduction to their jointly edited *The Mughal State, 1526-1750* (Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>455</sup> Table compiled using data from Aurangabādī, “Sawānih- Dakkan.”

serve here as an illustration of the central role that the Karnatak was imagined to have held in a larger eighteenth century Mughal Deccan economy. According to figures provided in the *Sawānih-i Dakhan*, the Karnatak should have constituted more than half of the Deccan's total revenue.

How these figures were calculated is, and likely must remain, an open question. What is clear is that much of the promised wealth of the Karnatak, perhaps even the majority of it, came not from regularly collected land revenues, but rather from other sources – various taxes on the movement and sale of goods, as well as individual investment in commercial enterprises. As we have already seen, the Panni and Miyana households had long since thrown themselves eagerly into such ventures before the arrival of the Mughal armies.

The Mughal conquest of the Karnatak, however partial and short-lived it had been, did however transform certain features of South India's commercial landscape, particularly by drawing northern and southern marketplaces into closer embrace. One of the key changes was growing numbers of northern entrepreneurial communities who sought opportunity in the south. There seems little reason to doubt that the Miyana and Panni households profited by these changes. Some of these groups followed in the footsteps of the Miyana and Pannis' earlier example, but others branched out into related markets. Following inland routes that ran along the eastern and western margins of the highland spine of the Karnatak and carved straight through the middle of Miyana and Panni territories in Bankapur, Karnul and Kadapa, trading communities made their living by connecting together new markets. Remnants of this world were still visible to the British East India Company surveyor Francis Buchanan at the turn of the nineteenth century. He described well-established Gujarati and Afghan mercantile networks that traded high-end textiles like chintz, gold lace, silks, as well as more practical 'daily wear' cloth like red, white, and black-dyed cotton between Deccan production centers and Karnatak-based capitals.<sup>456</sup> These products were snapped up by wealthy inland urban communities in the Karnatak, while merchants returned northwards with cash, precious stones, ivory and pearls.<sup>457</sup>

Despite the Miyanas' early prominence in their old stronghold around Bankapur, the disintegration of the old Bijapur Sultanate capital seems to have pushed the region off the beaten path, at least so far as major subcontinental transport networks were concerned. Nevertheless, Bankapur (and their new capital in nearby Savanur, discussed in Chapter Five) remained important centers in the western Karnatak. Goods from the Malabar coast and headed to the Deccan's several major cities were transported through their territories – including pepper, coconut kernels, betelnut, cardamom, jaggery, tobacco, turmeric, chilies, as well as certain varieties of hardwood and tree barks. Other products from the highland Karnatak also came through, including cattle, steel, and both raw

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<sup>456</sup> Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar: Performed under the Orders of the Most Noble the Marquis Wellesley, Governor General of India, for the Express Purpose of Investigating the State of Agriculture, Arts, and Commerce; the Religion, Manners, and Customs; the History Natural and Civil, and Antiquities, in the Dominions of the Rajah of Mysore, and the Countries Acquired by the Honourable East India Company* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1807), Vol. I: 198-199, 203. Deccan production centers included Burhanpur, Narayanpet (a muslin-production region just north of the Krishna River and southwest of Hyderabad), and 'Guldometcullu' (possibly Kodavatkallu, a calico-production region inland from Masulipatnam on the northern Coromandel Coast).

<sup>457</sup> Buchanan, Vol. I: 302-303. More humble players in the burgeoning consumables market also found record in the archive. Buchanan encountered a community of self-described Rajputs in Kollar, near Bangalore, who claimed to have followed Aurangzeb's armies southwards. They were shoemakers, whose close work with leather marked their degraded social status. The claims to northern origin, however, perhaps allowed them to target regional market demand for North Indian fashions. Buchanan, Vol. III: 268, 332.

and woven wool fabric. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Francis Buchanan estimated that perhaps one half of all Malabari and Karnataki goods were destined for sale in the Deccan or further north.<sup>458</sup> The Miyana households also continued to oversee hinterland routes feeding western port cities like Hanovar and Karwar, which did a continuous if diminutive trade compared with their earlier Sultanate-era prominence.

Karnul, where the Pannis were based, was like other major Karnatak trading centers, closely involved in the cloth industry. Apart from being a transit zone for Deccan-sourced high quality raw cotton destined for the looms of Coromandel-based weavers, the region was itself a producer of cotton.<sup>459</sup> The territories around both Karnul and Kadapa were perhaps best known, however, for their centrality in the diamond trade, which was dominated by Gujarati merchants. Although not as productive as they had been in the seventeenth century, diamonds continued to play a major role in South India's economy, both for elite investors and consumers, as well as for regional laboring communities. A British observer, Benjamin Heynes, described in 1809 how distant 'owners' of the mine dispatched 'renters' to oversee the work, who in turn were granted a surprising degree of autonomy. The miners themselves were typically from low caste communities, described by Heynes' informants as 'hill people' who moved seasonally between low-lying mines near the Krishna and Penner Rivers during the dry season to more mountainous locales for the remainder of the year.<sup>460</sup> The primary investors in these mines during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were Gujaratis, Marathas, and Afghans, amongst which were included members of the Miyana and Panni households.<sup>461</sup> These figures made major investments in the often rugged and forested regions where productive mines were to be found. Later observers noticed that these figures had played a major role in developing regional settlements, funding the construction of temples, mosques and tanks in new population centers.<sup>462</sup> The merchants' primary markets were both northwards and southwards of Rayalaseema – both in the Deccan's urban centers but also in the Coromandel sea ports, where they were snatched up by traders who negotiated their sale to other Asian ports, notably Calcutta.<sup>463</sup>

The Miyanas of Kadapa, whose location closer to the southeastern port cities ensured their closer entanglement with oceanic trade (further details of which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6), were themselves personally invested in sea-trade, owning ships that carried freight along various routes both to Southeast Asia and points westward, but also, as we saw in the previous chapter, closely associated with clusters of sea-going merchants described in the British archives as 'Pathan traders,' who conducted business in a handful of the coast's major port cities. These Pathans did some of their business in British-held Madras, but they generally refused to accommodate themselves to British regulatory demands. Instead, they flaunted their close ties to inland authorities. In 1712,

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<sup>459</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. X: 20 (1 Oct., 1733).

<sup>460</sup> Benjamin Heyne, "Dr. Benjamin Heyne's Account of the Diamond Mines near Cuddapah and at Banganapalle in the Deccan" (1809), 26, 45, 67–69, F/4/275/6149, British Library, IOR Private Papers.

<sup>461</sup> Colin Mackenzie, "Remarks on a Journey into the Countries of Cummum, Dupood, Purumuttum, Canoul Being the Continuation of the Survey of the Frontier and Pafses between the Rivers Pennar and Kistna" (1794), 14, 94–96, Mack Misc 82 / IOR 34416, British Library; Chetty, *A Manual of the Kurnool District in the Presidency of Madras*, 94–96.

<sup>462</sup> Mackenzie, "Remarks on a Journey into the Countries of Cumum, Dupood, Purmuttum, Canoul," 11, 12, 37; Naurain Row, "Kyfeat of Cadapah Town and Chanoor Talook" (1812), 128, 130, 134, Mack Trans. XIII.42 (Telugu), British Library.

<sup>463</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. IV: 428–430.

the British complained about the Pathan merchants that “they [are] insolent and keep Correspondence with the Government and mutter at the Customs.”<sup>464</sup>

These merchants did a substantial business, although we are only able to capture a fragmentary portrait of it from our sources. In 1716, the English calculated that Afghan merchants residing in Madras whose main trade was with Bengal typically did at least 10,000 hun (or around 35,000 rupees) in business annually through their port.<sup>465</sup> This was clearly only a small fraction of the overall annual export through the city, but its significance for the British governors of Madras was less about the overall quantity of their trade than its form – namely the Afghans’ ties (perhaps via middlemen) with purchasers in Bengal and in Southeast Asia who eagerly consumed Coromandel goods (mainly cloth).<sup>466</sup> British officials jealously sought ways to turn some of this trade to their own profit. At least initially, however, they were thwarted by the Afghans’ capacity to simply shift their trade to other Coromandel ports, as well as by competition from Indian authorities who, like the British, sought to profit by association with this merchant network. In 1716, Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat (who held the port at San Thomé only four miles south down the coast from Madras) moved to lure the Afghan merchants to his port and away from Madras, promising them a favorable two percent duty if they imported their goods at his port.<sup>467</sup> The Afghans accordingly decamped to San Thomé *en masse*. In July of 1718, the British reported to London that they:

Ha[d] endeavour’d to get back the Patans from St. Thoma and hope to effect it by preventing the black Merchants at Madras trading privately with them, allow them to bring in goods from thence by sea and pay duties, but would prevent buying Goods there and sending them into the Country...<sup>468</sup>

British attempts to persuade the Afghans to return to Madras would carry on over the course of the following decades, with mixed results. One of the main reasons why the British found it so difficult to woo these traders was that they had other viable options. British observers made careful note of their strategic withdrawal to the neighboring port of San Thomé, but less visible to the British would have been these groups continued engagement in more southerly ports, notably Porto Novo and Karaikkal. The Miyana household, which as we know already had a long presence in the region, poured resources into preserving their overland connections with these cities by maintaining powerful representatives in the hinterland centers of Bhuvanigiri and Chidambaram, as well as along inland routes through the rugged Baramahal districts (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6), through which trade could be directed to points northwards and westwards.

Although scholars of the latter decades of the eighteenth century have identified a mutual affinity that grew up between indigenous merchant and banking groups with European traders, this does not appear to have been the case along the Coromandel Coast in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>469</sup> Instead, these groups cultivated ties with inland powers. This is a point to which we shall return in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>464</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. III: 36 (10 Jan., 1712).

<sup>465</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 99 (27 Feb. 1717).

<sup>466</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. XII: 51 (undated, sometime in 1736). “The Pattan & Moors Merchants settled here and at St. Thomé have their [Correspondents] at Hughly who send Gomastas over the Country for the Consumption of this Coast which will be fully supplied by others whether we do or not [...] At present we have the Mortification to see this Trade entirely in the Hands of Armenians Moors and Pattans for the most part carried by our Door to St. Thomé to the great Prejudice of your Customs here and in Bengall besides.”

<sup>467</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 99 (9 Oct., 1716).

<sup>468</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 137 (19 Sept., 1718).

<sup>469</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 252.

For the present, however, it is sufficient to note that both the Miyana and Nawaiyat households were in important respects oriented towards supporting and participating in the southeastern Coromandel coastal trading economy. The households' command over major trading thoroughfares made them key beneficiaries of the expanding trading connections between Karnatak and more northerly markets. Their position granted them considerable power in South India, one that was poorly reflected by their formal locations in the Mughal hierarchy of the sprawling Deccan *sūba* administration. It comes as little surprise to find that Nizam al-Mulk, during his first stint as Governor between 1713-1715, made a concerted effort to break up the Panni and Miyana-dominated political ecosystem that had flourished under Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni.<sup>470</sup>

### **Nizam al-Mulk and the Amir al-Umara spar for the Karnatak**

As late as the opening weeks of 1713, Daud Khan Panni drew on his close ties with Zulfiqar Khan, the most powerful nobleman in the Empire during Jahandar Shah's short-lived reign, to expand his control into the Deccan territory of Berar, where he sought *jāgīrs* earmarked for his soldiers' salaries.<sup>471</sup> With Farrukh Siyar's accession to the Mughal throne and the execution of Panni's Delhi-based patron Zulfiqar Khan, however, the Pannis fell on hard times. Daud Khan was transferred to Ahmadabad in Gujarat while Nizam al-Mulk moved to consolidate control around Aurangabad. Many of the Pannis' Deccan holdings were temporarily transferred out of their hands. Even the territory of Bir, a centerpiece of the Pannis' Deccan establishment for four decades, was transferred into Nizam al-Mulk's hands.<sup>472</sup> An incomplete list of Panni holdings transferred to Nizam al-Mulk's control provides the names of no less than sixty-one *parganas*, almost all located in the central Deccan.<sup>473</sup>

The Pannis fought back through bureaucratic channels, initially making little headway. A petition from Daud Khan's younger brother Ibrahim Khan from the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1715 pleads (rather suspiciously) that because the *pargana* of Amba Jogai – in Panni hands since the days of Ranmast Khan in the 1680s – was 'unworthy of the *khāliśa*' [territories set aside for imperial expenses] because of its desolate [*vīrāna*] condition, the authorizing document [*sanad*] should be returned to him.<sup>474</sup> Tellingly, however, Nizam could not afford to shut out the Pannis entirely. Amba Jogai and Bir, in accordance with Daud Khan Panni's younger brother Ibrahim Khan's pleas, were returned to his possession along with *sanads* for the Karnatak-based territories of Vellore and Musaravakkam, both far to the south along the Palar River, in June of 1714. The salaries of several junior kin are remembered in the associated paperwork, indicating that these administrative vehicles continued to be perceived as avenues for furthering household careers.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Consider Yusuf Husain Khan's comparable argument. *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*, 74–75.

<sup>471</sup> I.J. Coll. IV/1/7-46, IV/1/8-18, IV/1/9-1 – IV/1/9-4, IV/1/9-8, IV/1/9-43, IV/1/9-46, IV/1/11-15, IV/1/11-35, V/1/12-17 – 12-19.

<sup>472</sup> I.J. Coll. V/4/2-46. Although the referencing document dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 1716, it must have taken place prior to the Amir al-Umara's assuming the *sūbadārī* almost a half year previously.

<sup>473</sup> I.J. Coll. V/4/2-3 – 2-4. 15<sup>th</sup> January 1716. There is a folio missing from this document, indicating that the list of Panni-held properties would have been substantially higher. The missing folio probably exists but I was unable to find it while conducting fieldwork.

<sup>474</sup> I.J. Coll. V/3/2-2.

<sup>475</sup> I.J. Coll. V/3/5-9 – 5-12.

Not long afterwards, Nizam al-Mulk deputized Ibrahim Khan Panni to lead a small force against a Maratha group near Medak (Gulshanabad in the text), fifty or sixty miles distant from Aurangabad. The Marathas had seized control of the region during Daud Khan's era.<sup>476</sup> In what might be construed as a form of public shaming for his brother's misdeeds, Nizam al-Mulk dispatched Ibrahim Khan with an obviously inadequate force to clear up the mess. He quickly became hopelessly bogged down in monsoon rains and in unfamiliar territory, while the Marathas taunted him just beyond reach. Nizam al-Mulk thereafter sent a rescue party nominally commanded by his own eight-year-old son Ghazi al-Din (he was flanked by two experienced guardians and followed by a large army).<sup>477</sup> They successfully dispersed the Maratha forces, chasing them into the local hills. Despite its humiliating overtones, the moment nevertheless points to Nizam al-Mulk's willingness to incorporate members of the Panni house, albeit on his own terms and at a safe distance from Ibrahim Khan's powerful older brother, Daud Khan Panni, who in this period endeavored to make lemonade from lemons by consolidating a foothold in Gujarat.

Nizam al-Mulk could not afford to dismiss the Panni household entirely. The Marathas were consolidating their hold over the western Deccan, in the process effectively blocking Mughal access to the western Karnatak via Bijapur. The Pannis' command over the eastern marchlands south from Hyderabad below the Krishna River took on new importance. Probably for this very reason, only a few months after Ibrahim Khan's disastrous expedition in the Deccan Nizam al-Mulk entrusted Ibrahim Khan with a different task. This time the young Panni commander was well-equipped and given a clear set of instructions to accompany revenue collected in the Karnatak [*khizāna-i Karnātak*] north to Aurangabad.<sup>478</sup> With Ibrahim Khan's help, the Nizam successfully arranged for the collection and transportation, probably for the first time since Aurangzeb's death, of the Karnatak revenues. Despite later efforts by Hyderabad-based historians to paint the affair in triumphalist terms,<sup>479</sup> however, the collections were whittled away by negotiations and recalcitrant refusals to pay. Dilir Khan Miyana of Bankapur, in particular, doubtless seizing the advantage of his close ally's supervisory role in the collection, negotiated forgiveness for his part of the revenue for four years in exchange for a paltry one-off settlement of Rs. 115,000.<sup>480</sup>

Whatever hard-won concessions the Nizam achieved during this short first tenure were lost the following year when he was recalled to Delhi and the Amir al-Umara (Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan Barha) set out for the Deccan to take over. The Amir al-Umara had not initially wanted to relocate to the Deccan. When granted the Governorship, he let it known that he intended to remain in the capital and, in the manner of the deposed Zulfiqar Khan, rely on Daud Khan Panni to organize Deccan affairs. Only under pressure from the Emperor Farrukh Siyar, who badly wanted him as far from the court as possible, and only after reassurance that he would be awarded unprecedented freedom to 'hire and fire' regional officers without oversight, did he reluctantly journey southwards.

Following his lethal confrontation with Daud Khan Panni – manufactured by Farrukh Siyar and described in the previous chapter – the Amir al-Umara moved to make sweeping changes across the Deccan. He aggressively pursued Maratha forces in the northern Deccan around Aurangabad

<sup>476</sup> Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 745-747; Abū al-Qāsim ibn Razī al-Dīn Mīr 'Ālam, *Hadīqat al-'ālam* (Hyderabad, 1850), Vol. II: 63-67.

<sup>477</sup> Khan, *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*, 73.

<sup>478</sup> I.J. Coll. V/3/10-23, V/3/10-36 – 10-39. I encountered no record of the *khizāna*'s total value that year, which might have helped contextualize Dilir Khan's payment.

<sup>479</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 103–4.

<sup>480</sup> I.J. Coll. V/3/10-140.

and Burhanpur, and attempted to displace and relocate major actors such as Mubariz Khan, the Governor of Hyderabad, as well as members of the Panni and Miyana houses and others. When it became clear, however, that he lacked the capacity to fully enforce such moves, he soon adopted a more conciliatory stance. The Amir al-Umara had first turned his attention to Daud Khan Panni's widow, based in or near the Panni household estate in Zafarnagar. Finding himself unable to dislodge her, he pursued the emerging Maratha ruler Shahuji Bhonsle's forces. The Amir sent his deputy Zulfiqar Beg in pursuit of Khande Rao Dabhade, one of Shahuji's leading commanders.<sup>481</sup> Dabhade deployed one of the oldest tricks in Deccan military strategy, making a pretense at defeat and flight, then circling back when his opponent had dropped his guard. Dabhade's forces surrounded the Mughal camp; Zulfiqar Beg was killed and his forces scattered. This major defeat would come to mark a shift in the Amir's policy towards the Marathas, serving as the basis for a change of strategy that would lead to the Amir al-Umara's well-known pact with the leader of the Satara-based Marathas, Shahuji Bhonsle. Their treaty granted Shahuji a broad swathe of rights: to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhī* taxes across the Deccan provinces and to claim the inheritance of this grandfather Shivaji's title as king [*chhatrapatī*]. In exchange, Shahuji agreed to pay the Amir al-Umara a large annual tribute and to maintain an army that could be called upon to serve the latter. Although Emperor Farrukh Siyar opposed this arrangement, the pair's new coziness would eventually allow the Amir al-Umara to march to Delhi in late 1718 with an army of ten thousand Maratha soldiers at his back to support his increasingly beleaguered brother in Delhi.<sup>482</sup>

### Karnatak households push back

Such were conditions in the Deccan. Further south, in the Karnatak territories, the Amir al-Umara at first tried to insert his own men into strategic positions and force others out. In Bankapur, a man named Muhammad Shafi was granted the *faujdārī* and *qil'adārī* formerly held by Dilir Khan, as well as a number of associated tracts of land.<sup>483</sup> In Karnul, a certain Firdaus Khan was appointed to the *diwānī* and granted a lucrative position supervising the region's diamond mines. In both regions, these figures found little welcome. In Bankapur, a resounding silence about the new appointee's arrival followed by the resumption of Dilir Khan's name in subsequent archival records speaks for itself.<sup>484</sup> In Karnul, Firdaus Khan's arrival sparked a bureaucratic spat with two of Ibrahim Khan Panni's servants, Sundar Pandit and Basant Ram.<sup>485</sup> The latter were at first compelled to sign a promise [*rāzīnāma*] not to interfere in the affairs of the mines. But Firdaus Khan did not last long; he abandoned his post by 1718, doubtless driven from the region by the closed ranks of unwelcoming Panni-affiliated local actors.<sup>486</sup>

Jaswant Rai's *Sa'īdnāma*, penned from a resolutely Arcot-based Nawaiyat-friendly perspective, affords a telling angle on the Amir al-Umara's efforts in the Karnatak, centered around the unsympathetic portraits of the Amir's servants, Mutha Dayaram Gujarati and Sayyid Usman. In late 1716 or early 1717, these two men arrived at Saadatullah Khan's court. Mutha Dayaram had

<sup>481</sup> Dhārāpa or Dabhārāpa in the manuscript. Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 112.

<sup>482</sup> Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, 129–39.

<sup>483</sup> IJ. Coll. V/4/7-10, V/4/10-49, V/4/10-51, V/4/11-22

<sup>484</sup> This new appointee seems to have been unable to find foothold or local support. Meanwhile, Dilir Khan, whether by official channels or by default, retrieved his old position.

<sup>485</sup> I.J. Coll. V/4/2-462, V/6/3-18, V/7/5-23, V/(Misc)-2/282.

<sup>486</sup> I.J. Coll. V/(misc)2/282.

been given orders to take over the administration of the *jāgīr* first held by Zulfiqar Khan and now set aside for the Deccan Governor's salary. Mutha Dayaram was plainly unpopular. Rai describes how Dayaram spent his days oppressing regional officers and clerks [*gumāshtagān wa qanūngūyān*] whose good intentions, the author assures us, had never been in any doubt. Worse, he behaved tyrannically with renunciant Brahmins and secluded philosophers [*Brahmanān-i zawiyat-guzīn wa mūbidān-i gūsha-nishīn*] who had since the first settlement of this country been assigned estates and villages for their expenses, so that they might dedicate themselves to prayers for the wellbeing of the king and the empire. Victims of Mutha Dayaram's new order soon began to clamor for justice from Saadatullah Khan's deputy, Rai Dakkani Ram. Before long violence had broken out, pitting local aggrieved parties, *zamīndārī* and *palaiyakkārār*-led armed bands, as well as English-led groups against one another.<sup>487</sup> According to the *Sa'īdnāma*, it eventually became clear that the Amir's servants, despite having taken to violence, would not achieve their revenue-collection goals. They returned authority of the *jāgīr* to the hands of local authorities and "clutched needily at the long skirts of the government's dignified servants [Saadatullah Khan's men]."<sup>488</sup> They petitioned for their paperwork to be put in order by the *sarkār* at Arcot (perhaps an oblique reference to the reality that Mughal paper records that continued to pile up in the Deccan capital of Aurangabad were becoming increasingly untethered from practical governance), after which they left.

Mutha Dayaram's traveling companion Sayyid Usman had a longer history in the Karnatak, and perhaps an even less respectable reputation than Dayaram's. The always-dramatic Jaswant Rai painted Usman as a classic vagabond and opportunist who furthered the growing insecurity of the Empire even as he travelled along its high roads between cosmopolitan cities. The reader of the *Sa'īdnāma* first encounters him *en route* to Bijapur from Bidnur around 1713. Claiming, falsely, to be the descendent of the founder of the famed Qadiri order [*nām-i waladiyat-i Hazrat Ghaus al-Āzam bar khwud basta*], he organized around himself a troupe of some two hundred Siddi soldier-followers. In this guise as a commander-saint, he served at first as a companion of Sayyid Rustam Khan, son of Sharza Khan Mahdawi (the Mahdawi family were discussed in Chapters One & Two), who held the title of *faujdar* in the Bijapur Karnatak in the early 1710s. When his pretended identity was uncovered, Sayyid Usman began a peripatetic search for refuge, moving from Arcot to Hyderabad and finally Delhi itself. Depending on his audience in each location, he alternately deployed his claim to *pīrzādagī* (descent from a Sufi master), collecting around his banner a fresh band of armed followers as he had in Bijapur, or adopted a vocabulary of helplessness, calling himself a child [*farzand*] of the potentate and seeking the court's protection. In both Arcot and Hyderabad, his deceit was soon uncovered.

In a jab by Jaswant Rai at the gullibility of the imperial sovereign, Sayyid Usman had better luck when he circled north to Delhi. There he received from the Emperor Farrukh Siyar the title of Qadir Ali Khan Kamrani and a *mansab* of 1,500. Having achieved this seal of imperial approval, he joined the Amir al-Umara as the latter traveled south to the Deccan. Sayyid Usman then re-entered the Karnatak with Mutha Dayaram to help enforce the Amir al-Umara's policies in the south. Before long, he was up to his old tricks, this time in and around the city of Arcot, where, according to

<sup>487</sup> For a short summary of events from the British perspective, see *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 124-125.

<sup>488</sup> Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fols. 186b-187a. *Kārpardāzān-i Amīr al-Umarā bāz mahāl jāgīr ba-tamalluq wa chāplosī-i tamām ba peshkārān-i sāmī sarkār muta'allaq kardand. Bā jāgar darīda wa labān tafsīda ba baldā-i Ārkāt rasīda dast-i niyāz ba-damān-i dirāz 'ālī bandagān mutamassik namūd. Ba-'amāl-i mansūb barāye taiyārī-i kāghaz-i 'amal-i ū tākīd raft.*



Jaswant Rai at least, he occupied his days heaping injustices upon destitute street-dwellers [*luqma gadayān-i kūcha*]. One day, having provoked an altercation with the respected Rai Dakkani Ram (Saadatullah Khan's servitor), he was nearly killed by an irate mob [*izdihām-i 'ām*], and only escaped thanks to the timely intervention of Saadatullah Khan himself. Soon afterwards during the month of Muharram, he led his followers in an effort to spark a riot,<sup>489</sup> but was barred from entering the city gates by two Tilang [Telugu-speaking] retainers in Saadatullah Khan's employ, Burda and Ali Nayak. Alarmed locals sought an explanation for Sayyid Usman's behavior, raising their concerns with, amongst others, the Amir al-Umara's newswriter, still based in his Karnatak *jāgīr*. Finally, despairing of other methods, an order was sent to the artillery that cannons be gathered in front of Sayyid Usman's tent with the message that he should depart the environs of Arcot and return to his master's *jāgīr* immediately. Taking the hint, Usman decamped for the coast, where not long after he received word of the revocation of the *jāgīr* and the termination of his post. He departed for Aurangabad where he found service with Sayyid Alam Ali Khan, the Amir al-Umara's nephew.<sup>490</sup> His apparently sturdy ties to the Barha Sayyids suggests that despite our introduction to Sayyid Usman in the Bijapuri Karnatak, he likely hailed from northern India. It is possible that he may have been himself a member of the Barha Sayyid clan.

The stories of Mutha Dayaram and Sayyid Usman point to the complex footwork during this period between imperial and local authority. It is entirely probable that the portrait offered in the *Sa'īdnāma* was more character assassination than accurate reflection. But even if Sayyid Usman and Mutha Dayaram had been upstanding citizens, the *Sa'īdnāma* offers a none-too-subtle reading of unwelcome meddling by Mughal northerners. The Emperor was (at best) naïve, his northern servant the Amir al-Umara was incompetent, and the henchmen the Amir dispatched to the south were nothing more than crude rabble-rousers. It offers a vivid Karnatak-based perspective on the fraying imperial superstructure. By contrast, local actors are portrayed as competent and just, if hamstrung by expectations of hierarchy and imperial loyalty. Importantly, the northern interlopers were unable to win meaningful local support. Even Sayyid Usman, who is described as having used trickery to gather villainous and stupid men [*mardum-i qabāhat nā-fahm*] to support him, proved repeatedly unable to retain his southern following.<sup>491</sup> That the Karnatak-based nobility were depicted in the *Sa'īdnāma* as hesitant to counter the Amir al-Umara's men outright, however, suggests a continued, if qualified, respect for the imperial superstructure. At the same time, it also points to an increasingly impermeable regional fabric of elite interests that saw little reason to cooperate with northern representatives.

Meanwhile, as northern hopefuls rotated in, and back out, of the Karnatak in this period, members of the Miyana and Panni houses continued to climb the ranks of regional imperial authority. Thus, Dilir Khan Miyana of Bankapur had become, by early 1715, the deputy or *nā'ib sūbadār* of Bijapur province. By the middle of 1717, he had achieved the *sūbadārī* of Bijapur itself.<sup>492</sup> This placed him, from the perspective of regional authority, in a position in some respects comparable to his former royal employer Sikandar Adil Shah, the last Sultan of Bijapur. Interestingly, in August of 1716, Ibrahim Khan Panni of Karnul had likewise been awarded the

<sup>489</sup> The word used is *khāna jang*, which is typically translated as a 'civil war' but in this instance suggests something more localized.

<sup>490</sup> Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fols. 187b-189a.

<sup>491</sup> Munshī, fol. 187b.

<sup>492</sup> I.J. Coll. V/4/2-219, V/6/4-140, V/6/8-25.

*sūbadārī* of Hyderabad, likely at the behest of the Amir al-Umara, who perhaps had hoped to domesticate the Panni leader while luring him away from his stronghold at Karnul.<sup>493</sup> Ibrahim Khan's promotion was exceedingly short-lived, however. Indeed, it receives no mention in contemporary chronicles, which instead describe Mubariz Khan's uninterrupted possession of the title between 1713-1724. Whereas Dilir Khan Miyana met with success in Bijapur, where he enjoyed long-held family connections, the Panni household enjoyed few, if any, ties to the city of Hyderabad. It is nevertheless tempting to speculate here on what might have been. If Ibrahim Khan had managed to retain this position, the Miyana and Panni households would have achieved quite a spectacular victory – seizing control of the two major Deccan Sultanate capitals some thirty years after the Mughals had conquered the city. Instead, Ibrahim Khan Panni's ousting from the position, so swift as to go almost unmentioned in the archive, serves as testimony of the quickness with which the door was closing for Karnatak elites who hoped to expand their influence northwards into the Deccan. The door, however, remained ajar, if diligently guarded, for ambitious northerners with an interest in the Karnatak.

A slow-burning conflict between Nizam al-Mulk and the Sayyid brothers, which had for some years been playing out across an expansive territory ranging from the imperial court southwards to the Deccan finally came to a head in 1719-1720. In 1719, Nizam al-Mulk had been assigned to the governorship of Malwa. Although not apparently a plum posting, it nevertheless afforded a silver lining in that the Nizam used it to keep an eye on affairs to the south in the Deccan and to build a powerful network of regionally influential supporters. He borrowed money and used it to forward loans and negotiate relationships with figures who would continue to play an important role in the Nizam's Deccan-based forces for years to come. Among the most significant: Abdul Khair Khan, Muhammad Ghiyas Khan, Qizilbash Khan, Ismail Khan Khweshgi, and Muthawwar Khan Khweshgi.<sup>494</sup>

Only a few months after he had first arrived in Malwa, the Nizam abandoned his post and marched into the Deccan where, in June of 1720, he confronted and killed Dilawar Ali Khan, the Amir al-Umara's *bakhshī*, and shortly thereafter likewise dispatched Alam Ali Khan Barha, the Amir's nephew, both of whom had been deputed to oversee the Amir al-Umara's interests in the Deccan after the latter's departure for Delhi. The Nizam's unsanctioned return to the Deccan was very nearly cut short when the Sayyid brothers' fortunes in Delhi collapsed with the killing of the Amir al-Umara and the imprisonment of his brother. The Nizam initially proposed to return to the imperial court and claim the long-sought-after role of *wazīr*, or chief minister, to the new Emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1720-1748). He was dissuaded when he learned that his uncle and rival Muhammad Amin Khan had taken the position himself. Seeking to avoid an open confrontation with his family member, the Nizam instead turned southwards to the affairs of the southern Deccan and Karnatak, on a mission that would end in an unusual embarrassment for the normally successful commander.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> I.J. Coll. V/5/9-136, V/5/9-137, V/5/9-138.

<sup>494</sup> Khan, *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*, 108; Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.*, 10; Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 848.

<sup>495</sup> Several authors offer a basic outline of events, including Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*; Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.* The most detailed version, however, remains Khan, *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*.

The Nizam crossed first into the territories of Bijapur, travelling to the old Aurangzeb-era encampment at Islampuri (also referred to as Islamabad and Brahmapuri) before turning eastwards to Adoni, widely considered a fortified ‘gateway’ into the Karnatak territories. There, he sent letters inviting a meeting with the leaders of the various Karnatak houses. Once they had gathered, the Nizam provoked a confrontation, demanding the payment of overdue tribute and resurrecting a five year old dispute over the *faujdārī* of the Karnatak Balaghat, long held by Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana of Kadapa. The dispute had its roots in either Nizam al-Mulk’s first stint as Governor in the Deccan, or during the Governorship of Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan. A certain Arab Beg Khan<sup>496</sup> had been chosen to serve as the *faujdār* of the Karnatak Balaghat. In a familiar pattern, he was blocked from taking up the duties of his title by the former office-holder, Abdul Nabi Khan. Now, the Nizam hoped to use the dispute as an opportunity to re-assert his authority in the south. A testy confrontation quickly arose between the Nizam and Abdul Nabi Khan and his allies, who were neither interested in ceding the disputed position nor paying tribute to Nizam al-Mulk who was, after all, in no position to cast judgment about abiding by the strict rules of Mughal administration.

The Nizam turned for support to Mubariz Khan, the Governor of Hyderabad, who had earlier, supposedly, pledged his loyalty to the Nizam. As it turned out, Mubariz Khan’s loyalties were not to be trusted. According to the *Sa’idnāma*, he arrived with a deliberately small contingent of followers and, rather than helping to enforce the Nizam’s orders, instead blandly adopted the role of negotiator between two broadly equal contestants. He placed his tent between the two factions, and sent out diplomatic feelers to both camps. Under Mubariz Khan’s watchful eye, a settlement was eventually reached that, in the eyes of the historian Shah Nawaz Khan, clearly favored the Afghans. The Nizam was disgraced, and forced to return to northern India having received not more than “a hundredth part of his expectations.”<sup>497</sup>

For obvious reasons this episode is passed over or only obliquely referenced in the most sympathetic narratives of the Nizam’s history. In the *Ahwāl-i Khawāqīn*, a widely referenced account of the Nizam’s career, for example, the author goes out of his way to portray the Nizam’s meeting with Karnatak leaders as a dazzling success, wherein everyone acknowledged the Nizam’s authority and handed over uncountable sums of tribute, after which the Nizam and Mubariz Khan lingered in friendly dalliance for several days.<sup>498</sup> The *Sa’idnāma*’s far less complementary, but more believable narrative, by contrast, points to the growing confidence of the Karnatak households in their autonomy. Mubariz Khan adopted a calculatedly neutral stance between these parties because, as Shah Nawaz Khan so artfully phrased it, he “drank water from the same cistern” as the Karnatak households.<sup>499</sup> Both groups benefited from a weak government in Aurangabad, which afforded them the freedom to carry on their affairs as they saw fit. The Nizam’s efforts to reassert northern power were no more welcomed than the Amir al-Umara’s servants had been in previous years.

The Nizam was saved from further embarrassment, and Mubariz Khan and the Karnatak households from more unwanted meddling, by the arrival of news from the imperial court that the Nizam’s uncle, Muhammad Amin Khan, had died. The coveted position of the *wizārat* was now

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<sup>496</sup> The man’s name, thanks to some ambiguously placed *nuktas* in one of the two manuscripts, is uncertain. He may also have been Izzat Beg. See Munshī, “Sa’idnāma,” fols. 215b-217b; Lachman Narāyan Shafiq Aurangabādī, “Ma’āsir-i Āsifi” 1208AH/ -1794CE 1793, 74, Tārīkh, 354, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

<sup>497</sup> Munshī, “Sa’idnāma,” fols. 215b-217b; Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnawaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 94.; Aurangabādī, “Ma’āsir-i Āsifi,” 74.

<sup>498</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, “Ahwāl Al-Khawāqīn,” fols. 180a-181a.

<sup>499</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnawaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 94. Translation by Beveridge.

available and the Nizam rode quickly northwards to claim it. He spent the following two years in northern India working hard to carve out an influential position at court that would accompany his formal title. The interlude would not last. Despite the Nizam's best efforts, he found a formidable cadre of court-based actors who maneuvered to keep Nizam al-Mulk at a distance from the levers of power. Finally in 1724, the Nizam abandoned the Mughal court in disgust, resolving to return to the Deccan and seize the Governorship of the province by force.

Some debate exists around how the Nizam's Deccan ambitions should be characterized. Many Hyderabad historians have indicated that the Nizam had always maintained an interest in the south, and that his decision to seize autonomous power in 1724 was merely a capstone to a long-held ambition to establish his own southern state. Against this, Munis Faruqui has more recently argued that the Nizam's return to the Deccan in 1724 reflected his weakness and isolation at the imperial court.<sup>500</sup> Faruqui argues that the Nizam turned to the Deccan only after a long and frustrated career as a satellite of post-Aurangzeb Mughal politics, where he repeatedly tried and failed to secure an influential role at court, and that the bulk of his energies had long been oriented towards the imperial center, rather than in the Deccan.

It is true, as Faruqui points out, that the Nizam only spent five or so years in the Deccan between Aurangzeb's death and 1724.<sup>501</sup> It is likewise true that the Nizam was demonstrably fixated by court politics. Still, he repeatedly and energetically threw himself into Deccan affairs whenever he had the opportunity to do so. Certainly by 1719, when he was posted to the Governorship of Malwa, he proved himself far more interested in affairs to the south than the region over which he had been assigned to govern. Hyderabad historians' foregrounding of the Nizam's long-standing ties to the Deccan are not misguided, but neither is Faruqui incorrect in characterizing the Nizam's decision to found the Hyderabad successor state as a symptom of his isolation from Mughal courtly politics. I would argue that the Nizam's turn southwards in 1724 marked a concession that his long-held goal – of controlling the long distance links, first forged under Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan Panni, that had connected the imperial court with the wealthy Karnatak via the Deccan capital – had to be abandoned for more limited ambitions.<sup>502</sup> This concession had larger implications. It was an acknowledgement that the fragile institutional frameworks that had connected northern India to the southernmost districts of the Karnatak had broken down.

As it transpired, the Nizam's ambitions would be even further curtailed. On paper, Nizam al-Mulk's usurpation of the Governorship of the Deccan entitled him to nearly the whole of southern India, including the overarching skeleton of Mughal administration that linked the Deccan and Karnatak territories. The Nizam had already made enemies in the Karnatak, and his actions in 1724 and in the years that followed would only exacerbate those tensions. His foundation of a new Mughal 'successor state' in Hyderabad ushered in an era whose geopolitical dynamics had clear precedent in a centuries-old pattern pre-dating the seventeenth-century Sultanate expansion southwards – namely the political division between Deccan and Karnatak spheres along the old Raichur *doāb* fracture zone.

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<sup>500</sup> Faruqui, "At Empire's End."

<sup>501</sup> Faruqui, 18.

<sup>502</sup> As is widely acknowledged, the Nizam never abandoned his formal ties to the Mughal court. He maintained a life-long correspondence with the Emperor in which he described his various Deccan-based enterprises in terms of 'duties' selflessly performed for his imperial master. His rhetoric did not match his financial policy, however. The Nizam failed after 1724 to deliver revenues to the imperial court.

## The Battle of Shakar Khera

To claim the Governorship, Nizam al-Mulk faced off against a powerful alliance between Mubariz Khan and the Karnatak-based Afghans and Nawaiyats. The emperor, Muhammad Shah, had hoped to block the Nizam's ambitions by appointing Mubariz Khan in early 1724 to the *sūbadārī* of the Deccan. The Emperor had sent word of this not only to Mubariz Khan himself but also to "all of the other *faujdar*s of the Deccan, namely the Karnatak Afghans and Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat, of Arcot," and in the process had confirmed these actors in their imperial titles.<sup>503</sup> Accordingly, these groups threw their support behind Mubariz Khan. Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana of Kadapa sent his son Abul Fath Khan, and Ibrahim Khan Panni of Karnul headed his own forces. Ghalib Khan (who represented Saadatullah Khan of Arcot), Ali Khan of Bankapur (described as a 'slave and chief administrator' of the [Miyana] house' [*ghulām wa sāhib-i ikhtiyār-i khāna-i o*]), and Abdul Majid Khan Miyana of Bankapur also marched north to join the fray.<sup>504</sup>

Two powerful groups were on the Nizam's side at the battlefield of Shakar Khera. The first was a major Maratha contingent led by Baji Rao Vishwanath, who served the Maratha ruler Shahuji Bhonsle of Satara. The second were the powerful Muslim *jama'dārs* of the northern Deccan. The Maratha leader's calculated decision to back Nizam al-Mulk seems to have emerged in consequence of some poorly documented negotiations between the Peshwa Baji Rao and the Nizam, wherein the latter possibly promised to respect Shahuji's *chauth* and *sardeshmukhī* rights, and Shahuji may have also spied an opportunity to further expand his own territorial claims by further destabilizing Mughal-affiliated authority in the region.<sup>505</sup> The Nizam and Shahuji's alliance proved short-lived. Within a few years, the two would face off warily from their respective perches in the western and eastern parts of the Deccan. Indeed, the Nizam would soon seek to undermine Shahuji by supporting rival Maratha lineages, particularly the Kolhapur-based Bhonsles.<sup>506</sup> In the coming decades, the rivalry between these two Deccan powers would prove one of the key organizing features of regional politics.

By contrast, the Nizam's wooing of Deccan-based *jama'dārs* proved more durable. The category of the *jama'dār* itself demands our attention here, for these were key figures in the military household and of rising importance in early modern South Asian armies at large particularly from the seventeenth century onwards.<sup>507</sup> *Jama'dārs* fulfilled a key function in the military landscape. They served as recruiters and as small-scale captains within the military hierarchy, typically cultivating followings anywhere from a dozen or so men to, at the large end, several hundred. They often also were provisioners of horses, leasing out mounts to the many soldiers who were unable to afford the expense of outright ownership. As suggested in previous chapters, the *jama'dār* was a key middleman, able to leverage his local knowledge and networks to improve his and his men's status. But the *jama'dār* was also vulnerable both to desertion and/or rebellion from his followers and to

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<sup>503</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 189.

<sup>504</sup> Khān, 189; 'Azim al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Dilīr Jangī*, 23–24; Aurangābādī and 'Abd al-Hayy ibn Shāhnavāz Khān, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, Vol. III: 737. Yusuf Muhammad Khan, author of the *Tārīkh-i Fathīyya* eyewitness to the battle and close student of South Indian politics, wrongly names Randaula Khan, who was not a Miyana but was rather the son of Ibrahim Khan Panni of Karnul. The *Ma'āthir al-Umara*'s author, also an eyewitness, recalls instead that it was Abdul Majid Khan, grandson of Dilir Khan, and his 'adopted son' [*mutabannā*], Ali Khan.

<sup>505</sup> Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, 172–73.

<sup>506</sup> Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761*, chaps. 8: Tarabai (1675-1761); Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*, 119–21.

<sup>507</sup> Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy*, 174. Kolff quaintly translates *jama'dār* as 'jobber-officer.'

uncertain conditions of pay from above. Given these risks, *jama'dārs* prized a reliable employer. To this end, as we saw in the previous chapter, Daud Khan Panni had proven particularly successful in constructing a geographically dispersed *jama'dārī* network, tying together the northern Deccan and eastern and southern Karnatak territories, using these forces to further both the Mughal state and his own household's commercial interests, and to secure reliable funds for his soldiers' salaries.

After Daud Khan Panni's death, the Panni household's hold over northern Deccan-based recruitment networks slipped away, to be fought over in the coming years by the Amir al-Umara, Nizam al-Mulk, and various northern Maratha commanders. As we have already seen, the Nizam used his stint as the Governor of Malwa to win the support of prominent commanders like Abdul Khair Khan, Muhammad Ghiyas Khan, Qizilbash Khan, Ismail Khan Khweshgi, and Muthawwar Khan Khweshgi. Many of these men had longstanding roots in the northern Deccan. During his time in Malwa, the Nizam had lent them money and other resources to expand their recruitment networks.<sup>508</sup> Many of these men would subsequently lend him their support in 1724. Scattered through the sources of the period are the names of mid-ranking military captains with ties to mid-sized *qasbas* in the northern Deccan and in nearby Malwa where they could readily recruit soldiers. These were men like Muhammadi Beg and Jauhar Khan, who had served as deputy *faujdārs* in the area of Gulshanabad, a region formerly included within Daud Khan Panni's ambit. During Nizam al-Mulk's first stint as Governor in 1713-1715, they were imprisoned for habitually pillaging the countryside and for their purported connections with Maratha groups. Pointing to the importance of their services, however, the pair were released after only a few months and inducted into the Nizam's service. Later, they joined the Amir al-Umara, who lavished them with titles and rank. Other figures included Umar Khan Panni, the nephew of Daud Khan. Another interesting figure was Turktaz Khan.

Turktaz Khan was actually a Turani. His father had come from the country of Turan to serve Alamgir Padshah, and had received the title of Yakkataz Khan and was commanded to punish the miserable Marathas. Turktaz Khan was born in the Deccan and presented himself in the manner of the Marathas. In [his] clothing and food and conversation they had such a degree of similarity that there was no perceivable difference [not a hair from their heads could be distinguished]. In style of warfare also he was like the Marathas.<sup>509</sup>

This is a remarkable portrait. Turktaz Khan, of foreign [*wilāyatī*] extraction, could have enjoyed access to the highest circles of Mughal society, but he preferred the company of Marathas, dismissed in Mughal circles as uncultured 'wretches' and 'robbers.' Yet Turktaz Khan, alongside

<sup>508</sup> Nayeem, *Mughal Administration of Deccan under Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, 1720-48 A.D.*, 10. Qizilbash Khan is a particularly interesting character – his early career was in the Karnatak, where he enjoyed close ties to both Abdul Nabi Khan and Saadatullah Khan. He seemingly lived for some years in Kadapa before turning, in the early 1720s, to the northern Deccan. Yusuf Muhammad Khan indicates he fought on the side of Mubariz Khan, while Khafi Khan suggests that he was at least sometimes in the pay of Nizam al-Mulk. Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 198, 199, 210; Khāfi Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 848. For evidence of Qizilbash Khan's close ties to the Karnatak houses, see generally Muhammad Amīn, "Gulshan-i Sa'adat"; Munshī, "Sa'idnāma," fols. 190b-191a.

<sup>509</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 190. *Turktāz Khān ke dar asl Tūrānī wa pidarash az wilāyat-i Tūrān ba huzūr-i 'Ālamgīr Pādshāh rasīda ba khitāb-i Yakkatāz Khānī wa tambīh-i ashqiyā'-yi Maratha ma'mūr mī shud. Wa in Turktāz Khān dar Dakkan mutawallid shuda. Khwud rā ba waz'-i Maratha hā sākhta dar libās wa khūrāk [sic] wa mukhālatat bā Maratha hā qismī muwāqafat dāsht ke sar-i mū az waz'-i ānhā bā in tafāwāt mahsūs namīkardand wa dar rawīya-i jang nīz mīsl-i Maratha hā būd.* Here Yusuf Muhammad Khan's phrasing is very close to that of Shah Nawaz Khan's in the *Ma'āsir al-Umarā*. Whether Yusuf Muhammad Khan borrowed from Shah Nawaz Khan or vice versa is difficult to gauge given the proximity of each author's work in time. Aurangābādī and 'Abd al-Hayy ibn Shāhnawāz Khān, *Ma'āsir al-Umarā*, Vol. I: 503-504.

other northern Deccan-based *jama'dārs* including Umar Khan Panni, enjoyed the close confidence of the Nizam for decades. Other Muslims with intimate Maratha ties included Abdul Aziz Khan and the Afghan Ismail Khan Panni of Berar.<sup>510</sup> An Afghan recruiter named Salim Khan was known for his habit of 'speaking like a Mughal,' despite his ethnic background.<sup>511</sup> In the post-imperial Deccan, such culturally transgressive figures were embraced insofar as they made alternative methods of warfare more accessible by widening access to diverse recruitment networks.

The consequences of the Nizam's considerable success in winning the support of the northern Deccan-based *jama'dārs*, and the Panni and Miyana households' loss of connection with these important groups (amongst them extended clan members) were made evident as the southern coalition led by Mubariz Khan marched northwards. Shah Nawaz Khan reports that they had hoped to travel via the territories of Aundih (near Nander in Berar, a territory formerly associated with the Miyanas) and Zafarnagar, which was still widely understood to be under the control of the Pannis, now led by Ibrahim Khan.<sup>512</sup> It was clear, however, that the recruitment networks that had formerly fed the Panni and Miyana households from the north had slipped from their grasp in the years since Daud Khan Panni's death. As Yusuf Muhammad Khan put it, "[Mubariz Khan and his Karnatak allies] proceeded stage by stage through the rainy season, buoyed by the vain hope of gathering more soldiers."<sup>513</sup> They did not, seemingly, have much success. Accounts of the battle only list amongst Mubariz Khan's supporters the major Karnatak houses, a small scattering of Deccani names, and Mubariz Khan's own sons. By contrast, Nizam al-Mulk boasted an expansive regional coalition in addition to major contingents led by his often-commented-upon Turani kinsmen.<sup>514</sup> Notably, he was even able to win over some northern Panni actors, including the Ellichpur-based Sarmast Khan Panni of Berar, one of Daud Khan's cousins, in addition to the aforementioned Umar Khan Panni and Ismail Khan Panni.<sup>515</sup> This split within the Panni lineage likely reflects the fact that the northern group, seeing that their own connections with the south were withering after the death of Daud Khan Panni who had so successfully coordinated the household's northern and southern interests, elected to cast their lot with the Nizam. As we saw previously in Chapter Two with the divided loyalties of the Panni brothers Khizr Khan and Ranmast Khan in the 1660s, such an arrangement might have afforded later avenues for negotiation on both sides, should opportunity have arisen. As it happened, none did.

## The Deccan-Karnatak frontier re-emerges

Mubariz Khan and the Karnatak households suffered a massive defeat at Shakar Khera. Mubariz Khan was killed, as were two of his sons. Another two were wounded and captured along with other members of Mubariz Khan's inner circle. Ghalib Khan, who had represented the Arcot-based Nawaiyats, also was killed, as was Ibrahim Khan Panni of Karnul. Others, including Abul Fath

<sup>510</sup> Mīr Faiz Allah Munshī, "Waqā'ī-i Dakkan" (13th c. (AH)), fol. 58a, Salar Jung Museum; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 251–52.

<sup>511</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, "Ahwāl al-Khawāqīn," fol. 232b. *Salīm Khān agarche Afghān būd amā guftagū-yi Mughal kard.*

<sup>512</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 96-97.

<sup>513</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 190. *Ba-farāham āmadan-i jamī'yat-i ziyāda wa sipāhgīrī khwud maghrūr būda dar 'ain-i mausam-i barshakāl koch ba-koch mī āmad.*

<sup>514</sup> Khāfī Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 952-959.

<sup>515</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, "Ahwāl Al-Khawāqīn," fol. 173b.

Khan Miyana of Kadapa and Abdul Majid Khan and Ali Khan of Bankapur escaped.<sup>516</sup> Randaula Khan Panni, the son of Ibrahim Khan Panni, was captured and imprisoned.<sup>517</sup> The Hyderabad-Karnatak coalition was in ruins, and most of the leadership of the Karnatak houses were either dead, imprisoned, or in headlong flight. With his opponents out of the way, the Nizam turned to consolidating power across both the Deccan and the Karnatak. In the years that followed, however, the Karnatak household would fight their way back, taking advantage of mutual distrust between the Nizam and Maratha leadership in order to secure their own regional autonomy.

Amongst the Nizam's first moves after the battle was to reward his followers. Those who had supported him were richly rewarded – high-ranking Marathas like Peshwa Baji Rao received high *mansab*, elephants, robes, and several other gifts.<sup>518</sup> He conciliated Mubariz Khan's surviving family members, mostly based in and around Hyderabad, by granting his surviving sons and servants respectable positions throughout the *sūba*.<sup>519</sup> The Nizam's own family members received some of the most important positions, however. His uncle 'Azd al-Daula Aiwaz Khan was granted the *sūbadārī* of Berar, his cousin Muhammad Mutawassil Khan 'Rustam Jang' was given the *sūbadārī* of Bijapur, and Rustam Jang's brother Talib Muhi al-Din Khan was granted the *faujdārī* of Bijapur and Raichur.<sup>520</sup> Yusuf Muhammad Khan, author of the *Tārīkh-i Fathiya*, no relation but a loyal servant, was given the *faujdārī* and *qila'dārī* of the important fortress of Parendā, halfway between Aurangabad and Bijapur.<sup>521</sup>

The Nizam's other immediate action, apart from a symbolically important pilgrimage to the Sufi shrine of Gisu Diraz at Gulbarga, was to make permanent the Karnatak households' loss of access in the Deccan. While the Pannis and Miyanas had already been losing ground in the Deccan proper for years, Nizam al-Mulk put the final stamp on the process. The long-held Panni stronghold at Bir, for example, was granted to the Maratha commander Sultanji Nimbalkar, along with Pathri, in Berar.<sup>522</sup> This gesture of gratitude for the Nimbalkars' support was an acknowledgement of the Marathas' growing power in the region. In 1723-24, elites in Bir had complained of major disruption in the district due to Maratha raids.<sup>523</sup> It also proved to be an important investment in a powerful ally. In subsequent years the Nimbalkar household often proved themselves solid allies of the Nizam, serving as a bulwark against Shahuji's forces after the Nizam's alliance with the latter broke down.

Southwards, along the Karnatak frontier, the Nizam withdrew the *faujdārī* of Adoni from Randaula Khan Panni (who was, in any case, still a prisoner of the Nizam). The city, which was perhaps the most important 'gateway' fortification between the two regions, was instead granted to

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<sup>516</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnavaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 99; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 194, 221. The *Ma'āsir al-Umarā* incorrectly counts Abul Fath Khan amongst the dead. That he survived is attested by Yusuf Muhammad Khan, who notes that he was merely brought down from his horse. Another account of this battle is offered in the *Ahwāl-i Khawāqīn*. I have not relied on this text because the author seems unfamiliar with the major Afghan players in the battle, for example listing Abdul Nabi Khan as one of the combatants, and Ibrahim Khan Panni as one of Abdul Nabi Khan's sons. Muhammad Qāsīm, "Ahwāl Al-Khawāqīn," fol. 193a.

<sup>517</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 218.

<sup>518</sup> Khān, 200.

<sup>519</sup> Khān, 208.

<sup>520</sup> Abdul Gani Imaratwale, *History of Bijapur Subah, 1686-1885* (New Delhi: Islamic Wonders Bureau, 2007), 181–82.

<sup>521</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 223.

<sup>522</sup> Khān, 219; Aurangabādī, "Sawānih- Dakkan," fol. 12b.

<sup>523</sup> Khāfī Khān, *Muntakhab al-lubab*, Vol. II: 971.



one of Mubariz Khan's sons-in-law.<sup>524</sup> Clearly, the Nizam hoped to drive a wedge between surviving affiliates of Mubariz Khan's household and the Karnatak houses. Mubariz Khan's family may also have been useful to the Nizam as a means of preserving a sense of continuity and to reassure economic interests. When the Nizam arrived at Hyderabad he found that "most of the residents of the city [Hyderabad] who were wealthy or merchants had withdrawn in fear and sheltered in the fortress [of Golkonda, where some members of Mubariz Khan's family remained]. Those people who remained in [Hyderabad] were utterly terrified."<sup>525</sup> An olive branch to Mubariz Khan's people would have gone some distance in restoring normalcy. For similar reasons, the Nizam likewise raised Jan Sipar Khan, the son of Rustam Dil Khan, who had been the *sūbadār* in Hyderabad during Aurangzeb's period, to the deputy governorship of Hyderabad.

Hoping to recoup some of his expenses, the Nizam's next move was to turn to the Karnatak to collect tribute. In the next two years, the Nizam himself organized two campaigns below the Krishna River.<sup>526</sup> First, however, he deputized his uncle 'Azd al-Daula Aiwaz Khan to accompany the Maratha leader Fateh Singh Bhonsle on a tense joint expedition to the Karnatak sometime in 1725. This collective enterprise would prove one of the last efforts at mutual cooperation between the two powers. Aiwaz Khan insisted on maintaining his own independent force, marching at a distance from Fateh Singh Bhonsle's forces as the two Deccan leaders leapfrogged south via Bijapur, Gulbarga and Kopbal to Chitradurg [also known as Chittaldurg], and then onwards to Sondha and Bidnur. Even as the two commanders claimed cooperative goals, both watched the other's every move with suspicion and sought to undermine the other at every turn.<sup>527</sup>

Following closely on the heels of Aiwaz Khan and Fateh Singh Bhonsle's campaign (probably in late 1725 or early 1726), the Nizam himself decided to visit the region. The trip was a debacle, although one would never know it from the official chronicles, which glide over the tour almost without comment. The *Tārīkh-i Fathiya* merely comments that the Nizam, having elected to 'secure' the Karnatak district [*bandobast-i zila'-i Karnātak tawajjuh farmūdand*], received the various fort commanders and regional elites, nearly all of them surviving representatives of the Miyana, Panni and Nawaiyat houses, who all did service [*mulāzamat*] and were rewarded for it, before being given permission to return to their strongholds.<sup>528</sup>

<sup>524</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 219.

<sup>525</sup> Khān, 206. *Aksar-i sakana-yi ānjā ke māldār wa tijār būdand ba īn dahshat az shahr-i mazkūr barkhāsta darūn-i ān qila' rafta būdand wa digar mardumī ke dar ān shahr mānda harās-i biqiyās dāshtand.*

<sup>526</sup> The *Tārīkh-i Fathiya* seems to offer the clearest guidance on the order of events, but dates are not forthcoming, and surviving letters from the campaigns can only be partially matched to the two campaigns. Cavalier assertions by Hyderabad historians that the Nizam undertook 'administrative tours' of the Karnatak, thus inviting images of well-organized supervisory missions into subsidiary districts, do not merit our faith. Likewise, the editors of *Studies in Maratha History* provide provisional dates for the Nizam's letters, many if not most of which appear to be inaccurate. The translations at times inaccurate or vague, thus I have relied on the British Library copy of the *Gulshan-i 'Ajā'ib* here, comparing it where necessary against the Telangana State Archives copy. I have patched the letters together with the different Karnatak campaigns as best as possible by matching references to figures like Abdul Nabi Khan and Tahir Muhammad Khan, who both, if we trust the author of the *Tārīkh-i Fathiya*, died between the first and second campaigns. Khan, *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*, 176; A. G Pawar and Setumadhava Rao Pagdi, *Studies in Maratha History*. (Kolhapur: Shivaji University Publication, 1971), Vol. II; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 218, 221.

<sup>527</sup> Govind Sakharam Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*. (Bombay: Phoenix Publications, 1946), Vol. II: 88-91.

<sup>528</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 218-19.

By contrast, surviving letters from the campaign collated in the *Gulshan-i 'Ajā'ib* reflect a far more chaotic reality. The Nizam, hoping to benefit from his uncle's recent experience in the region, invited Aiwaz Khan to join him. Aiwaz Khan flat-out refused to return so soon after his last visit. He was doubtless eager to tend to his own territories in Berar and concerned about their vulnerability to Maratha attack in his absence. Although unwilling to offer material support, Aiwaz Khan did offer his nephew some advice. In the absence of a large Deccan-sourced army, the Nizam should make every effort to befriend the Karnatak-based Afghans. Seeing the wisdom in his uncle's advice, the Nizam tried hard to follow it. He marched first to Adoni, where he sent letters to the Karnatak households and to friendly factions amongst the Maratha clans, seeking their support. None came. In a letter to an unknown recipient, the Nizam complained:

...In spite of my counsel the Afghans would not be persuaded. I went to great lengths to give generous guidance and advice. I deputized reasonable and intelligent men of that group [Afghans] in order to conciliate and win them over. I made a halt of three weeks in Adoni, expecting that they would join me, and we could then march together to Srirangapatnam and other places to gather tribute [...]. The Afghans [delayed]. And Saadatullah Khan [Nawaiyat] who due to his loyalty and fidelity had kept himself apart from them, and sent numerous messages attesting to his intention to join in companionship and aid [of the Nizam], and who had already departed Arcot, also began to delay. I saw that I was wasting my time waiting for this cunning group [the Afghans], and for the Marathas, with whom they had entered into an unholy alliance...<sup>529</sup>

Over the course of the negotiations, the Nizam even went so far as to make a direct appeal for mutual alliance on the basis of their shared piety. This was emphatically a strategy of last resort, rather than a natural first impulse. He wrote to Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana that he led an army into the Karnatak on a religiously inspired mission. He and his army sought to claim “the reward of *jihād*. In obedience to commands for the purification of the Earth, [we] turned [our] attention to the punishment, eradication and subduing of wicked and deviant unbelievers.”<sup>530</sup> He hoped the Afghans would join in this sacred task. The Afghans did not take him up on the offer. To the contrary, they deepened their alliance with the ‘infidel’ Marathas. As is so often the case, the Nizam's recourse to shared religion merely underscored the absence of more meaningful avenues by which to build rapport. Not long after, when the Miyana ruler of Kadapa found it politic to pursue a temporarily arrangement with the Nizam, he submitted obsequiously that “I am of the Afghan tribe [*qaum*] and of the Muslim community [*zumra*], and each morning I wake and perform my ablutions and repeat that there is no God but God, [and then I speak the name of] Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah.”<sup>531</sup> Far from

<sup>529</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, “Gulshan-i ‘Ajā’ib,” fols. 134b-135b. ...*Muqadamāt-i marqūma hama ‘aql būd wa qarīn-i salāh wa sawāb ba haul wa qawwat-i ilāhī mar’i shud. Ma’hazā Afāghana mustamāl nashudand rafq wa muwāsā wa pand wa nasīhat az hadd guzasht mardum salīm al-tab’-i dānā rā bawāsita-i tālīf wa taskīn-i qalūb-i īn farīq sākhta shud wa dar Adonī sih hafta tawaqquf namūda ke ānhā biyāyand wa hi’at-i majmū’i ‘azīmat-i Srīrangapatan waghaira amākan-i mashūra mu’tabar namūda ba akhz-i bāj wa khirāj ke mutazzamin-i munāfi’-i danyawī wa ukhrawī ast pardākhta shawad. Afāghana bamuqtazā-yi harf-i mashhūr ke al-khā’in- khā’if madatī balīyat wa la’l guzarānīdand wa Sa’adat al-Allah Khān ham bar chand az Arkāt rawāna shuda būd wa hisb-i ikhlās wa rāstī az ānhā imtiyāz dāsht wa marāsālāt-i o mushtamil [?] bar khūlūs irādat wa muwāfiqat wa irāda-yi mulāqāt wa murāfaqat mī rasīd nazar ba akhbār wa atwār-i ihtimāl-i āmadan-i o ham za’if būd chūn dīdam intizār-i īn farqa-i rūbāh bāz wa Maratha ke ba ānhā sākhta wa ‘ahd-i shaitānat wa khabāsāt bā ham istiwar namūda and maujib-i taziyē-i awqāt ast wa fursat-i kār az dast mīrawad.*

<sup>530</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fols. 141a-141b. *Dar īn ayām-i zafar anjām ‘asākīr-i mansūra-i Islām ba ‘aun-i Allah malik al-‘allām ba niyat-i hasūl-i sawāb-i jihād wa itā’at-i ikhām-i jahān munaqqī wa matuwajjih-i tanabbuh wa qal’ wa gam’-i kufra-i fajra zilālat farjām ast.*

<sup>531</sup> Khān, “Tārīkh-i Fathiya,” 222. *Man dar qaum-i Afghān wa dar zumra-i Musalmānān hastam wa har subāh ke az khwāb barkhāsta wazu mikunam kalima-i ‘lā ilāha ilā Allāh’ Nawāb Āsaf Jāh bar zabān mīrānam.*

a celebration of religious brotherhood, this sort of rhetoric usually signaled that the two parties found themselves with little shared ground apart from the thin thread of religious community.

But let us return to the conflict between the Nizam and the Karnatak houses as it continued to play out during the Nizam's first tour of the region in 1725-1726. The Nizam embarked on a risky course, recognizing that his overtures to the Afghans would receive no positive response. He decided to continue southwards, with his modest army of seven thousand cavalymen and ten thousand infantry, towards the highland fort of Sira, in the very center of the Karnatak. There, he presumably hoped he might find better luck with the leader of the Nawaiyat household, Saadatullah Khan, as well as Tahir Khan Nawaiyat, the *faujdār* of Sira.

As he marched, his spies delivered a constant stream of distressing reports. The Miyanas of Bankapur/Savanur, led by Abdul Ghafar Khan, had allied with a handful of powerful Maratha commanders, including Sripat Rao, Baji Rao, and Sultanji Nimbalkar (the Nizam's courtship of the Nimbalkar household had not, by this early period, it seems, produced reliable result). Abdul Ghafar Khan Miyana led a diverse army into this coalition. It included fifteen hundred freshly pledged cavalry [*sawār-i mulāzim jadīd*], four thousand footsoldiers raised by regional authorities [*zamīndārs*] as well as groups of soldiers that had been "entrusted" [*nigāhdāsh t jārī būd*] to Abdul Ghafar Khan by the *zamīndārs* of Gadwal (some miles north of Karnul on the banks of the Krishna River), Mallareddi (a small settlement about eighty miles north of Hyderabad), Rayachoti (an important center on the road south from Kadapa to Arcot), and Mudkarā (maybe Mudgal?) [see Figure 5] All told, Abdul Ghafar Khan led some fourteen thousand cavalry and an equal number of foot soldiers.<sup>532</sup> The combined Afghan-led and Maratha-led forces totaled at least twenty-five thousand cavalry and an uncounted number of foot soldiers.

The inventory of the Miyana-led troops is both rare and instructive for understanding how the Karnatak-based houses raised armies. As this episode shows, they drew upon soldiering communities from a wide swath of southern India, ranging from territories north of Hyderabad to those based deep in the southwestern and southeastern Karnatak. The willingness of local leaders across these regions to lend men to the Afghan and Maratha-led defiance of the Nizam suggests both a continued widespread disquiet amongst regional elites around the changing of the guard in the Deccan as well as of long-standing bonds of trust between these groups and the Afghan and Nawaiyat households. At the same time, their payment arrangements indicate the typically ad hoc quality of military enterprise in the Karnatak. The troops had been "entrusted" to Abdul Ghafar Khan – suggesting that he had undertaken responsibility for their pay, but only for a limited tenure. Indeed, the Nizam wrote that the nearly all of the Maratha-Afghan coalition's forces were irregular recruits rather than recipients of regular government salary. "The entire sum [of their salaries] was promised on the basis of [expected] tribute collections."<sup>533</sup> These were part-time soldiers, who probably supplemented their agricultural livelihoods during slack seasons between planting and harvest. They were not salaried professionals, unlike the directly pledged men, mainly members of the cavalry, who enjoyed more formal pay arrangements. The promise that these part-time soldiers would share in the spoils represented a certain degree of risk to the soldiers themselves – but it was a risk that presumably could be better shouldered with harvests to return to.

The question of soldiers' pay would prove a recurring feature of this military expedition. Around the same time that the Nizam got word of Abdul Ghafar Khan's activities to the west, the

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<sup>532</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, "Gulshan-i 'Ajā'ib," fol. 137b.

<sup>533</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fol. 137b. *Mabliḡ-i kulī banāye kharj darkhwāst dāsh t and*.

Nizam heard from sources eastward that Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat of Arcot had met up with Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana at Kadapa, a bad sign indeed. Meanwhile, Tahir Khan Nawaiyat sent evasive messages to the effect that he hadn't the necessary cash to pay his soldiers.

On account of the quantity of demands over unpaid salaries, the reins of control slipped from his hands and the soldiers have united. At Abdul Nabi Khan's invitation, they have removed themselves from [Tahir Khan's] service and shifted their allegiances.<sup>534</sup>

In his own correspondence, the Nizam lingered regretfully on his uncle's absence, begging for his assistance. If his Uncle had joined him, the Nizam wrote, they could have punished the enemy inhabitants [*mukhālīfān-i qātina*] of this place, and "brought to heel the rich territories of the Karnatak, which is the kernel of the provinces of the Empire."<sup>535</sup> Despairing of his uncle's arrival in person, he later suggested that he perhaps might send Turktaz Khan, or Shaikh Ali Khan, or Khan-i Alam, or Muqarrab Khan. In the end, none came to his aid. Clearly, the Nizam's Deccan-based allies were unable, or unwilling, to shoulder the risk of sending their forces to the Karnatak. This is a point I will return to in the coming pages. The Deccan and Karnatak remained discreet spaces, most vividly illustrated in this period by their divergent service arrangements. The Raichur *doāb* represented a dividing point between recruitment zones, and a clear feature of eighteenth-century South India's topography of service.

When the Nizam arrived at Sira, close to the border of the kingdom of Mysore, his luck began, suddenly and unexpectedly, to turn. His shifting fortunes serve to further underscore the nature of Karnatak warfare and economy. First, Tahir Khan Nawaiyat wrangled his unpaid and untrustworthy following, some three thousand strong, into marching condition and joined the Nizam. Next, Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat arrived, leading a meager force of two thousand cavalry and fifteen hundred foot soldiers. With this small but appreciable augmentation of his forces, the Nizam weighed the risks and decided to forge ahead into Mysore, where there was the promise of wealth to settle unpaid salaries. The risk paid off and the economic logic of the tribute collection campaign quickly began to play itself out. As the Nizam expanded his forces, his prospects for collecting tribute increased, in turn drawing more soldiers in search of income. At the same time, the Afghan-Maratha coalition crumbled. Word that the Nizam had already begun collecting tribute in the region of Mysore disrupted the Afghan and Maratha leaders' plans as they had relied on collecting those funds themselves. The Nizam wrote "...the Marathas, on hearing this news [that I had reached the territory of Bidnur] became depressed and frightened, and they rejected Abdul Ghafar Khan, and begged to join us."<sup>536</sup> Whereas they had previously opposed the Nizam, Afghan and Maratha leaders now came forward and belatedly offered him their support, hoping they might still find a way to profit by the expedition. And indeed, as the Nizam's forces moved through Mysore, Bidnur, and other points in the western Karnatak, the Nizam complained of the heavy salary obligations he now began to incur.

In this period [our] expenses, on account of the cost of maintaining troops, became much heavier. Tahir Muhammad Khan hadn't a penny to his name [not even a sigh in his heart], and the demands of his servants

<sup>534</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fols. 141a-141b. *Tāhir Muḥammad Khān ke ba sabab-i afzūnī-i talab 'anān-i ikhtiyār az dastash rafta sipāh muqāiyad dārad ba ishāra-i 'Abd al-Nabī Khān o rā bardāshṭa nazd-i o burdand.*

<sup>535</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fols. 136a-136b. *Mukhālīfān-i qātina ba sazā-yi kardār-i khwud mī rasīdand wa amākan-i zarkhīz-i Karnātak ke lubb-i lubāb-i mamālik-i mahrūsa ast ba zabt mī āmad.*

<sup>536</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fol. 137a. *Maratha ba istīmā'-i akhbār maghlūb-i ru'b wa dahshat shuda 'Abd al-Ghafār Khān rā jawāb-i sāf dādand wa ba istishfā' wa iltijā hamrah-i ānha mī āyad.*

ran into the lakhs. He received two thousand rupees daily from the government for their pay. Similarly, most of the *zamīndārs* had brought companies of cavalry and footsoldiers. Their men also received daily pay from the government. After arriving in the Karnatak, the expenses had grown very heavy. The Marathas of Raja Shahuji received three thousand five hundred rupees [daily], Sidhu and the others [received] one thousand five hundred. To the army of Tāhir Muhammad Khan went two thousand rupees, and the *zamīndārs* and *pāligars* received one thousand five hundred. Apart from this, [there was the matter of] the fresh recruits both cavalry (fifteen hundred) and footsoldier (five thousand). Collectively under government command were nine thousand cavalry and eleven thousand footsoldiers. Considering all of these aforementioned and related expenses, and weighing income as well, it is shocking to find the expenses run to nine lakh [900,000] rupees monthly.<sup>537</sup>

The Miyana and Panni households would also eventually join the Nizam's camp. In a letter to Raja Shahu, the Nizam observed that, after the various Maratha commanders had already elected to join the Nizam's forces, the "Afghans [too], considering it beneficial to profess obedience, brought forward an appeal of their abject circumstances."<sup>538</sup> The Nizam went on to complain about the challenges of maintaining order in these distant regions when even the Deccan countryside had only recently come under his control.<sup>539</sup> The Nizam was, of course, quick to point out that Shahuji's servants were of little help in the matter.

The terms of the Karnatak households' tactical acquiescence became clear during the Nizam's second Karnatak campaign, sometime in 1727. Unfortunately, letters from this latter "tour" do not survive to offer us the same granular detail afforded for the first. Nevertheless, even the *Tārīkh-i Fathiyā's* resolutely upbeat take on the Nizam's Karnatak enterprises cannot help but acknowledge how limited the Nizam's authority was across the region. During the Nizam's second tour, the various Afghan leaders, according to Yusuf Muhammad Khan, came before the Nizam to pledge their support. Abul Fath Khan Miyana of Kadapa (the son of the recently deceased Abdul Nabi Khan), Abdul Majid Khan Miyana of Bankapur/Savanur, and Randaula Khan Panni of Karnul all purportedly delivered sizeable tribute collections to the Nizam. On having reviewed the leaders' contributions, the Nizam offered an interesting reflection on the nature of their relationship.

"These sums are only collected in order to [pay for] the salaries of the warlike soldiers whom you have recruited to secure the country. So that whenever you, who are all commanders of armies, come and bind your hearts sincerely to me, and whatever place or whichever *sūba* of the Deccan which I might appoint you, you will dedicate yourselves wholly to service." They [the Afghans] replied "what is all this about Deccan *sūbas*? [Even] if [the Nizam] were to turn his attention to Hind and Kabul, we slaves and faithful ones would be present in the stirrup and be exalted by the obligations of service." Afterwards, [the Nizam] ordered the Afghans' men to retrieve [the offered tribute]. He noted that "I have forgiven you this wealth. Each of you should select from amongst your armies a leader who can serve as deputy to the Governor of Hyderabad, who will undertake such work as is directed. And if I am called before the Emperor, someone will be deputized to govern in Aurangabad

<sup>537</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fols. 137b-138a. *Dar in 'azīmat nusrat iqtarān ikhrājāt ba sabab-i nigāhdāsh-t-i sawār wa piyāda-yi bisiyār afzūda Tāhir Muhammad Khān āh dar jigār nadāsh-t wa talab-i naukarānash lakhāst az sarkār do hazār rūpiya yūmiya ba ānhā mī rasīd wa hamchūnīn aksar-i zamīndārān jamī'at-i sawār wa piyāda bā khwud āwarda būdand mardum-i ānhā ham yūmiya az sarkār mī jāftand. Ba 'd-i rasīdan-i Karnātak tarafa ikhrājāt darmiyān-i āmad-i rūz marra mā bain-i tafsil-i kharj mī shud. Maratha hā-yi Rāja Shāhū sih hazār wa pānsad rūpiya Sidhū waghaira yak hazār wa pānsad rūpiya wa fauj-i Tāhir Muhammad do hazār rūpiya wa zamīndārān wa pāligarān hazār wa pānsad rūpiya siwā-yi in jamī'at-i tāza ke az sawār wa piyāda nigāhdāsh-t shuda būd siwāye yak hazār wa pānsad piyāda panj hazār majmū' nah hazār sawār wa yāzdah hazār piyāda mulāzām-i sarkār nazar bar jamī'-i ikhrājāt-i sābiq wa lāhiq ke namūda mī shawad wan azar bar mudākhlil karda mī shawad tabaiyur rū midahad hama nah lakh rūpiya dar māh kharj mī shud.*

<sup>538</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fol. 106b. ...*Afghānān khairat wa bahbud dar itā'at dida ba 'ajz wa ilhāh-i tamām rujū' āwardand.*

<sup>539</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, fol. 106b.

[in my stead], and you all will in your own places persevere in your obligations as sincerely in [my] absence as in [my] presence.<sup>540</sup>

Despite all the protestations of devotion and service, the Nizam forgave the Afghan households all or most of the offered tribute. Although arguably readable as an acknowledgment of the Nizam's high status (since superiors customarily returned a gift in similar or greater amount first offered by his inferior), in this case it may also be read as an indication of the Nizam's acknowledged need to build ties with these still-powerful households who held the keys to regional recruitment networks. Most importantly, Yusuf Muhammad Khan's narrative highlights the actors' shared awareness of the region's multiple arenas of service. While the Nizam commanded that the Afghans be ready to serve him anywhere in the Deccan, the Afghans' sarcastic-sounding reply gestured to the Empire's most distant corners, even to 'Hind and Kabul.' One is struck, given the Miyana and Panni Afghans' ethnically Afghan identity, by these places' apparently distant role in their imaginations. While Daud Khan Panni had relied upon steady recruitment networks that drew in part from communities based in places like 'Hind' and 'Kabul' only a decade or two before, for these men, the boundaries of the Karnatak and Deccan formed the outer threshold of their lived landscape. Hind and Kabul had become shorthand for territories they hoped never to have to visit. In the end, the Afghans were reassured that they needn't leave the Karnatak at all. Their final arrangement bowed to a reality that both the Afghans and the Nizam understood well: the Afghans' power, and their usefulness, lay in their location along the high roads into the Karnatak, commanding a network of part-time military labor.

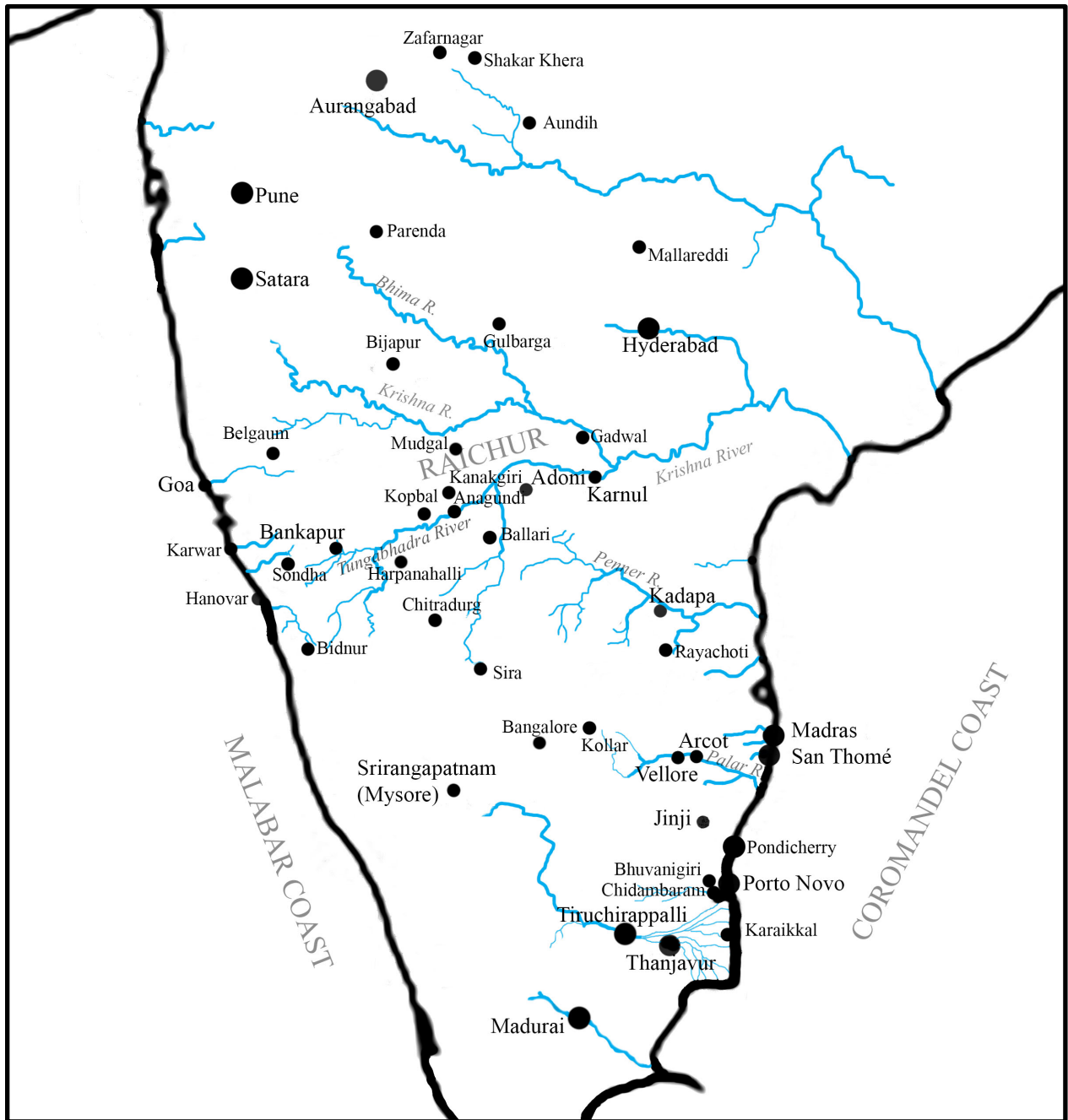
## Conclusion

In a little over a decade between 1713, when a dramatic shakeup in the Mughal court at Delhi provoked an important change in leadership in the Deccan, and 1727, when Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah articulated a testy acknowledgement of the Karnatak households' autonomous power south of the Krishna River, a number of important changes took place. The rapid-fire changeover of control of the Governorship of the Deccan between 1713-1724 between the Amir al-Umara, Nizam al-Mulk, and Mubariz Khan afforded the southern Panni, Miyana and Nawaiyat households the space they needed to carve out strongholds for themselves. Efforts by both the Amir al-Umara and Nizam al-Mulk to enforce their claims in the Karnatak were repeatedly deflected by a cooperative coalition of southern groups. The catastrophic result for the Karnatak households of the Battle of Shakar Khera was hugely important for our story here not only because it resulted in the death of several leading members of the Panni and Miyana households, but because it marked the end of an era of southern politics in which households rooted in the Karnatak could aspire to expand their sphere of interest northwards into the Deccan.

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<sup>540</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 222–23. *Giriftan-i in mablagh mahz barāye in ast ke ba sipāh-i razmkhwāh ke barāye bandobast-i mulk naukar karda id tankhwāh gardad. Chūn shumā hā ke sarān-i fauj āyad wa bā mā az dil ikhlās baham rasānada id dar har jā wa har sūba az sūbajāt-i Dakan ke mā'mūr farmāyam kārband-i khidmat mī kardid. Anhā mā'rūz dāsht ke az sūbajāt- Dakan che mā'nī dārad? Agar Hazrat badaulat ba Hind wa Kābul matuwajjih shawand mā ghulāmān wa fiduyān dar rikāb hāzīr būda ba marāsīm-i jānfishānī mī bardārīm. Afrād-i har yak rā ba o bāz hawāla farmūda irshād kardand ke in zar hā rā ba shumā mu'āf farmūdīm har sih kas ba yak yak az fauj hā-yi khwud rā shakhsī sardār muqarrar karda hamrāh-i nā'ib-i nāzīm-i Haidarābād tā in kunīd ke bā nā'ib dar Haidarābād kār hā-yi mā'mūra rā ba taqdīm rasānand. Mā rā ke bādshāh ba mabālagh dar huzūr talab farmūda and tawajjuh ba simat-i Dār al-Khilāfat zarūr shuda shakhsī rā ke niyābat-i Khujasta Buniyād muqarrar mī shawad shumāyān ba jā-yi khwud būda dar murāsīm-i inqiyād ziyāda az zaman huzūr wa ghaibat ba koshid.*

Despite the Nizam's clear thirst for control over the wealth of the Karnatak after 1724, however, several concerted attempts proved that the new triangular balance of powers would not allow him to achieve his wishes. The fact that the Marathas and the Nizam now shared a testy neighbor-relationship meant that southern households could use the northerners' mutual anxiety to their own advantage, even in spite of their recent losses. This three-way standoff, barring a few hesitant experiments, would hold through the end of the 1730s. In the interim, the Karnatak households would continue to elaborate upon an emerging post-Mughal regional culture of politics, characterized by highly dispersed and diversely articulated claims of sovereignty were collectively upheld by an expansive class of Karnatak elites.



Map 5: Early 18th C. South India



## Chapter Five: Household rule and the remembrance of plural sovereignties

In this chapter, I seek to chart out sovereignty's practical formations and its imaginations in the early-eighteenth century Karnatak. Rather than organizing my investigation around state formation as it took shape in the context of one or another particular examples, this chapter lays a groundwork for understanding the larger ecology of politics and expressions of legitimating authority in the south. I argue that the Karnatak households about which we have already spoken, in addition to a number of other elite groups, collectively forged something akin to what David Sneath has described, for the Central Asian steppe context, as a 'headless state.'<sup>541</sup> This was a highly decentralized aristocratic order across which governmental functions and responsibilities were shared amongst dispersed networks of leading families. In the Karnatak, this arrangement was further complicated by the continued coexisting memory of multiple sovereign regimes from which these families derived their claims to power: the Mughal, Sultanate, and Vijayanagara courts, as well as, to some degree, the Maratha court at Pune. In the absence of any one group enjoying the capacity to impose its own interests, groups with ties to each of these remembered states negotiated connections with others, collectively producing a Karnatak political culture in which multiple sources of legitimation were acknowledged.

The arrangement bears resemblance to conditions in India's early modern northeast, where Indrani Chatterjee notes that competing monastic lineages pursued allegiances with any number of local and outsider specialist communities – merchants, soldiers, craftsmen, scribal groups and others – in order to strengthen their command over regional government. In doing so, they forged coalitions that became increasingly indistinct from one another, bearing little relationship to the religious or ethnic fault-lines that modern historians might expect to encounter. "[T]hese conflicts," writes Chatterjee, "were not between 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', but between one group of allied and intermarried Tantric Buddhist, Saiva, Vaisnava, Jewish-Zoroastrian, and Muslim lineages against an[other] identically heterogeneous alliance and network."<sup>542</sup> A similar set of arrangements facilitated the flow of commerce in South India's sophisticated economy. This reality, however, is not easily visible in much of the existing literature.

### **Decentralization and the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Karnatak**

As we saw in Chapter Five, the early decades of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of an increasingly autonomous Karnatak political sphere, marking an important shift away from the trends observed in the seventeenth century. Much of the scholarship throughout the twentieth century, building on earlier colonial-era framings, tends to perceive these trends in decidedly gloomy terms. Perhaps the most vivid example comes in the form of M.S. Ramaswami's *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs* (1984), which doggedly attempts to document the 'wars and murders' that punctuated South India's early eighteenth century political stage drama.<sup>543</sup> Ramaswami's study remains one of the few concerted efforts to narrativize the Karnatak's eighteenth century from start

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<sup>541</sup> David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, & Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>542</sup> Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, 70.

<sup>543</sup> N. S Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic Under the Nawabs* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1984), chap. 1: 'Wars and Murders'.

to finish. For this reason alone, it deserves mention. Still, the account barely coheres, in large measure because of Ramaswami's assumption, widely shared if less forthrightly presented elsewhere, that the Karnatak was radically reshaped by Mughal conquest, and its political relations, therefore, must be understood through the lens of normatively imagined Mughal institutions. Ramaswami's account thus begins with the siege and capture of Jinji, and the city of Arcot, which became the *de facto* Mughal capital in the Karnatak during Zulfiqar Khan and Daud Khan's period, and is presumed to retain that privileged position subsequently. Political relationships are assumed to be hierarchical – Arcot's governors served at the pleasure of the Deccan-based Mughal Governor (Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, after 1724) based in Hyderabad, while the various *faujdārs*, *qila'dārs* and other Mughal title-holders scattered across the territories were in turn subservient to Arcot. Others with a more Deccan-centered approach likewise treat these Karnatak titleholders as relics of the Mughal regime, and seek to tuck them into dutifully subsidiary roles under the Nizam of Hyderabad.<sup>544</sup>

This idea of southern India as intrinsically prone to chaotic fragmentation is echoed in Ashin Das Gupta's work on eighteenth-century trade and economy. Das Gupta was in turn responding to Tapan Raychaudhuri, who argued that South India's indigenous mercantile interests were simply too weak to compete with the British East India Company on the Coromandel Coast. Against Raychaudhuri's already bleak portrait of South Indian commerce, Das Gupta argued for an even bleaker vision. He argued that the Coromandel Coast had precociously embraced trends like revenue farming and decentralized administration as early as the opening decades of the seventeenth century, nearly a century before they became familiar elsewhere in India. This marked the region as a dubious trendsetter and harbinger of the economic decline he believed would befall the rest of the subcontinent in later decades. He concluded, rather miserably, that "it is [...] possible to argue that the political weakness which had always been present in Coromandel broke down into total anarchy in the eighteenth century, and what should cause surprise is that some trade survived at the end [at all]."<sup>545</sup>

Despite the pessimism of Ashin Das Gupta and others, it is clear that the early decades of the eighteenth century were perceived by at least some Karnatak elites as an era of opportunity. While a fuller conversation will necessarily await the next chapter, it is useful here to point a common strategy amongst regional households in this period, namely the simultaneous development of their territorial strongholds as market centers (where they hoped to woo trading communities to do business) and as military hubs (where they could coordinate flows of recruits and other material resources). Their optimism is exemplified by building and expansionary trends in the Miyana, Panni and Nawaiyat centers. A common theme was the pairing of mercantile centers with more security-minded fortified strongholds, a theme which meshed with longer-term development patterns in South India, where settlements have often been classified as 'open' or 'fortified' towns.<sup>546</sup>

Subrahmanyam has indicated (often in chorus with one or several of his regular co-authors Muzaffar Alam, Velcheru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman) that southern politics, rather than being shaped, as Ramaswami has argued, by a centrifugal impulse, or, as Burton Stein has argued, by a centripetal one (see discussion in Introduction), was rather buoyed by a free-wheeling

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<sup>544</sup> Khan, *Nizam Ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I, Founder of the Haiderabad State*.

<sup>545</sup> Das Gupta, "Trade and Politics in Eighteenth-Century India," 394.

<sup>546</sup> S. Jeyaseela Stephen, *The Coromandel Coast and Its Hinterland: Economy, Society, and Political System, A.D. 1500-1600* (Delhi: Manohar, 1997), 103.

commercialism. Like Das Gupta, Subrahmanyam sees South India as a precocious trendsetter. But whereas Das Gupta saw early signs of decay in the south, for Subrahmanyam they were symptoms of the region's economic strength. As early as the sixteenth century, *nāyaka* kings flaunted their command over streams of liquid wealth, shifting away from the old royal prerogative of donating land to Brahmin and other ritual communities, and towards more ephemeral and costly displays of sovereign power like the feeding of elaborately prepared meals [*annadāna*] to large assemblies of Brahmins each day.<sup>547</sup> Territory and its possession, according to this argument, was increasingly only one indication of wealth amongst many, although it continued to play some role. Sanjay Subrahmanyam has used various iterations of the idea of the 'state' to describe territory's significance in different contexts. In a joint article with Christopher Bayly, Subrahmanyam argued that so-called 'portfolio capitalists' like Mir Jumla sought to carve out what they portrayed as 'sub-states' in the region, with commercialist priorities at the front of their mind.<sup>548</sup> The relationship between the 'portfolio capitalist,' who nominally served a sovereign, and the sovereign himself, who Bayly and Subrahmanyam note may also have been "operating as [a] portfolio capitalist[...]" of sorts, meant master and servant became functionally indistinct competitors in the same game.<sup>549</sup>

By the eighteenth century, Subrahmanyam, in concert with Muzaffar Alam, suggests that political ambitions had begun to take even more firmly state-like form as ambitious agents sought to build upon the administrative detritus of the Mughal regime. Figures like Daud Khan Panni, and others who succeeded him, all sought to "transform *faujdaris* into compact regional 'kingdoms'" in places like Karnul, Kadapa, Savanur, and Sira, where the foundation of small courtly centers demanded a "partial displacement" of local Kannada or Telugu-speaking lineages, at the same time as they themselves adopted some form of a "regional idiom" in their mode of governance.<sup>550</sup> Quite clearly, there are unresolved questions about the role of territory in the articulation of political authority in early modern southern India. What Subrahmanyam seems to suggest, however, is that the early eighteenth century coincided with an increased importance of territory to politics, rather than a more footloose model of political entrepreneurship associated with earlier periods.

In some respects, the Miyana and Panni examples seem to support this assessment. As is outlined below, these and other early eighteenth century households all found ways to root themselves firmly in defensible strongholds. In some cases, traces of evidence survive that serve as illustration of the formation of cultural trappings at these courts – patronage of architecture and of poets, as well as locally powerful religious institutions.

Market centers naturally cropped up in close proximity to any source of authority, temporary or permanent. With the disappearance of large-scale armed encampments following the death of Aurangzeb and the subsequent departure northward of Daud Khan Panni, whose large armed encampments had attracted major markets,<sup>551</sup> a new crop of mid-sized market centers began to take root across the region. This marked in one sense a return to Sultanate-era patterns or even pre-Sultanate arrangements that saw the scattering of *pettai* (the southern equivalent to the northern

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<sup>547</sup> Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 56–72.

<sup>548</sup> Subrahmanyam and Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India"; Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, chaps. 4: 'Commerce, Politics, and the Early Arcot State'.

<sup>549</sup> Subrahmanyam and Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India," 419.

<sup>550</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 100–101.

<sup>551</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. III: 456 (14 Oct. 1712). Madras-based Company officials mourned the departure of Daud Khan Panni in particular for he had "always kept a good Body of Horse in pay," thereby ensuring a ready audience for merchants that plied English broadcloth.

*ganj*) centers across the south.<sup>552</sup> Karnatak households' deliberate and largescale attempts to command both military/strategic and commercial centers, however, represented something more like an expansion of the 'portfolio capitalist' model to that of an oligarchic power-sharing arrangement that extended across the entire Karnatak.<sup>553</sup>

This cultivation of unfortified market centers in some respects resembles the establishment, described by Christopher Bayly in the late eighteenth-century North Indian context, of *ganj* settlements.<sup>554</sup> Yet whereas Bayly describes the North Indian *ganj* as a "small regulated market" center, a second-tier expansion of the monetized economy into the countryside that mainly traded in products and services for local consumption, these new southern market centers appear rather to have been developed with an eye to profiting by and perhaps influencing the flow of major overland trade routes.

The city of Arcot was founded initially as the semi-permanent army encampment of Zulfiqar Khan and his successors, Daud Khan and Saadatullah Khan. By the 1710s it had developed into a permanent urban hub and commercial center.<sup>555</sup> Despite its militarized beginnings, however, the city itself, being located on a flat plain alongside the Palar River, was poorly suited for defense. Quite quickly, the Nawaiyat household established a symbiotic relationship to the nearby fortress of Vellore, which offered a strongly defensible retreat in moments of danger. Under more peaceful conditions, Arcot served as a major gathering point for traders, bankers and others who made their living off the movement of inland goods outwards to the sea-ports at Madras, San Thomé, and the Nawaiyats' nearby experimental port of Saadatpattan. This intentional division between commercial and military centers is repeated elsewhere across the region. Consider the branch of the Miyana family who remained based in Bankapur. They elected to construct a new and initially unfortified market town, Savanur, just a few miles distant from the old fortress of Bankapur. An early nineteenth-century history remembers that the site selected, a village called either Channur or Janmaranhalli<sup>556</sup> was closely associated with a nearby hill known as Jubangadh, a holy site surrounded by orchards and streams, inhabited by Sufi ascetics, and likely already a pilgrimage site of at least regional importance. A palace was constructed below the hill and a bazaar was laid out. Skilled craftsmen [*ahl-i hunar*], Sayyids [*sādat*], and trained scholars of religion [*maulviyān*] were invited to settle in the place, and it seems clear that the new market center quickly became the de facto capital. Although the Tamil observer Ananda Ranga Pillai habitually referred to the western Miyanas as the rulers of 'Bankapurum and Savanur,' indicating the coexistence of both capitals up to this period,<sup>557</sup> a later source reports that eventually little remained of Bankapur except the name's administrative significance in Mughal recordkeeping.<sup>558</sup> Perhaps the household found it difficult, as their fortunes declined after the mid-century, to sustain the upkeep of both.

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<sup>552</sup> Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 27, 73–75.

<sup>553</sup> Although understood to have been a widespread phenomenon in early modern South Asia, the portfolio capitalist is most commonly considered in the literature in the singular, rather than as a ruling institution. Subrahmanyam and Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India."

<sup>554</sup> Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*, 98–101.

<sup>555</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1934, 58–64.

<sup>556</sup> John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India, Including Malwa, and Adjoining Provinces, with the History and Copious Illustrations of the Past and Present Condition of That Country* (London: Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen, 1832), 209.

<sup>557</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 182, 290, 303, 343, 395, 398, 420.

<sup>558</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," 45. *Bankāpūr faqat qil'a mānd thāna guzāshht amā dar daftar-i bādshāhi hamīn nām-i Bankāpūr mazkūr ast. Rafta rafta kharābtar gardīda juz-i nāmī namānd...*

The Miyanas based in Kadapa, by contrast, kept not one but two alternate centers. In addition to the poorly fortified capital at Kadapa, the Miyanas maintained control over fortifications in Ganjikota and Siddhavat. The latter was sheltered only a few miles downstream in the narrow Penner river valley, while the former, also located on the Penner River, was located upstream in the mountains to the west. Siddhavat was an important pilgrimage center with several important temples in and around the fortress itself. It is sometimes described as a ‘Kashi of the south’ for its riverbank location, a diminutive stand-in for the distant Ganges River.<sup>559</sup> Ganjikota was located in the mountainous region west of Kadapa. It was widely considered one of the strongest forts in the Karnatak, and was where the Miyana household sent vulnerable members during moments of danger.<sup>560</sup>

Beyond this dualistic inclination towards both security and commercial goals in the Karnatak households’ infrastructural investments, we find that they also continued to pursue footholds in regions that were not territorially contiguous with their strongholds. In practice, this meant that representatives from multiple households moved shoulder-to-shoulder, much as they had during the earlier Deccan Sultanate period, in a handful of strategically or commercially important centers. Such figures recognized one another’s mutual right to conduct their affairs, and yet sought by means both subtle and otherwise, to expand their own claims at the others’ expense. The clearest example, and in some respects the most important, can be found in the southern port cities of Porto Novo and Karaikkal, as well as the transit regions through which they accessed these ports, namely the Baramahal territories.

The name Baramahal, which translates to ‘twelve districts,’ points to the region’s patchwork nature. In the early eighteenth century, many of the Karnatak’s leading households jostled to maintain footholds in an area freckled with fortifications, amongst which Satgarh, Krishnagiri, Rayakottai, Jagdevpur, Venkatagiri, Tiruvannamalai, and Kaveripatan were some of the more prominent. Not coincidentally, this region was roughly the same area in which Sher Khan Lodi, Nasir Muhammad and Ekkoji had competed against one another in the 1670s. It also neighbored Jinji, where Zulfiqar Khan and the Maratha leader Rajaram had faced off in the 1690s.

The region’s continued centrality across the decades and through a series of different dynastic orientations reflects its place along an axis between the wealthy Mysore kingdom, the rich agricultural zone to the south around the Kaveri River delta and the Thanjavur kingdom, and eastwards, the city of Arcot and the coastal hinterlands that granted access to the marketplaces of Madras, Pondicherry, and Porto Novo. For the Miyana and Panni households, the Pondicherry and Porto Novo hinterlands, which melted inland into the Baramahal districts, were particularly important. These regions allowed them to circumvent Arcot, which was firmly under Nawaiyat control. It also was a fertile military recruitment zone conveniently located on the path south to Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli and other sites.

We know that Miyana associates like Sher Khan Lodi had been present in the region since the latter decades of the Sultanate era. We also find a hazy reference to Daud Khan Panni’s brother Sulayman Khan, who in 1698 had gathered the support of the Worriyar *palaiyakkarār* of Udaiyarpallaiyam and other groups neighboring Porto Novo, and who had enjoyed connections as

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<sup>559</sup> C.F. Brackenbury, *Madras District Gazetteers*, vol. 1 (Madras: Government Press, 1915), 235–36. When the fortress was expanded in 1755 by Abdul Alam Khan Miyana, the idols formerly maintained within the fortress walls were ordered to be removed and reinstalled in temple structures nearby.

<sup>560</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 118.

well with the Tamil Muslim Chulia trading community. The latter were a powerful community based in Porto Novo itself.<sup>561</sup> The first evidence of the Panni and Miyana households' association with the region in the eighteenth century comes a few months after Daud Khan Panni's death. In December of 1715, Panni's brother Ibrahim Khan petitioned the Mughal emperor Farrukh Siyar for *sanads* for his nephews (possibly Sulayman Khan's offspring?) Muhammad Yusuf, Izmat and Mustafa Ahmad. They hoped to confirm claims in the neighboring port of Karaikkal, south of Porto Novo.<sup>562</sup> In May of 1716, a certain Wilayat and his brothers, all sons of Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana, sought permission to draw their 'Mughal' salaries in the form of revenue collected in the districts of Tirnamul (Tiruvannamalai).<sup>563</sup> Dozens of documents recording collection of tribute survive in the Inayatjung Collection from the same period (1123 *fasli*/1713 CE) in the territories of Tiruvannamalai, Jagdev and Krishnagiri.<sup>564</sup> Most of these collections were likely supervised by Miyana, Panni, or Nawayiat householders. The existence of Mughal paperwork recording territorial claims in these regions is striking in and of itself, not least because these regions, even at the height of Mughal power under Aurangzeb, can scarcely have been described as imperial holdings. Certainly by the second decade of the eighteenth century with centralized Mughal authority in full retreat from the south, imperial *sanads* would only have gotten these households so far. According to most authorities, the port cities of Karaikkal and Porto Novo were formally, albeit very loosely, possessions of Thanjavur during the early eighteenth century, even as Saadatullah Khan's government also asserted some influence.<sup>565</sup>

Accordingly, these households sought more pragmatic means by which to cement their association with these territories. Members of the Miyana family, including its esteemed patriarch Abdul Nabi Khan, were buried in the port city of Chidambaram, only a few miles inland from Porto Novo and a couple of miles further to Karaikkal. The Miyana family's choice to bury their dead in this distant city, more than two hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies from the household's capital at Kadapa and separated from the household's central territories by regions controlled by the Nawayiats, can perhaps be attributed to the region's religious significance for influential mercantile and soldiering communities. Apart from being an important trading center, it was also the site of the famous Shaivite temple of Sri Murukan, which became known to southern Muslims sometime prior to the eighteenth century as a throne of the prophet Sulayman/Solomon.<sup>566</sup> Muslim and Hindu adherents alike paid visits to the temple at Chidambaram. The port of Karaikkal, where Panni householders had sought to confirm claims in 1715, was likewise a major center for the Tamil-speaking Muslim Maraikkayar mercantile community, whose close trading relationships with Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and the Arabian ports were centuries old. As Susan Bayly's work highlights, Maraikkayar Sufi *dargāhs* in Karaikkal and elsewhere were major centers of pilgrimage for both Muslim and Hindu devotees across the region. Explicit connections were drawn between the Muslim saints buried there, whose memories were often associated with horses (the ultimate icon of northern warriors), and the Tamil horseback-riding deity Aiyanar.<sup>567</sup> Inland leaders went to great

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<sup>561</sup> Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, 4:370–81.

<sup>562</sup> I.J. Coll. V/3/11-12, V/3/11-13.

<sup>563</sup> I.J. Coll. V/4/5-246, V/4/5-250.

<sup>564</sup> I.J. Coll. Box 72.

<sup>565</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 122–23.

<sup>566</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 41.

<sup>567</sup> Bayly, 76–77, 148–49.

lengths to build connections with the Maraikkayar community, whose ties to distant ports in Southeast and West Asia opened doors to business opportunities.<sup>568</sup> The graves of Miyana householders in this region operated as anchors, but the household also retained local representatives in the region, who were titled *faujdārs* [military commanders], although their routine duties appear to have been more commercial than martial. In the 1740s, the brother of the Kadapa Miyana ruler held this position (see Chapter Six). The household's claims were sufficiently widely acknowledged that, as late as 1753, Miyana agents continued to spar with Pondicherry-affiliated actors for rights over the collection of rents in Chidambaram.<sup>569</sup>

A number of less prominent Miyana householders, both men and women, also established themselves in the Baramahal territories directly inland from the southern Coromandel Coast.<sup>570</sup> While evidence is somewhat sketchy, it seems probable that in the Baramahal districts, male family members married in to local *palaiyakkarār* communities in much the same way as Daud Khan Panni had intermarried with regional elites such as the Raja of Halvad in Gujarat. A suggestive legend of the Kadapa-based Miyanas' association with Baramahal and the southeastern coast survives in an early nineteenth-century chronicle titled the *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* (c. 1800).<sup>571</sup> While few of the details mentioned by the *Tazkira* can be independently verified, the text offers strong indication that the region, having come under the sway of Qutb Shahi nobility in the early seventeenth century, was subsequently divided and passed down amongst sons and sisters' sons, with Bijapur-affiliated Miyana family members gradually entering regional prominence. The central place of women in the inheritance of territory in Baramahal is repeatedly highlighted, not only with respect to sisters and sisters' sons, but also noblemen's wives and widows. Several such women are recorded as having been granted *jāgīr* rights in the region. These women are often portrayed as having divided their time between Kadapa and the Baramahal territories, and the proceeds from their *jāgīrs* as having been divided between payment for soldiers' salaries and the women's own expenses. By Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana's era, in the early eighteenth century, parts of Baramahal were purportedly maintained as a *jāgīr* for the upkeep of the widow of a certain Azam Khan Miyana, who had formerly supervised the districts. When she died, Abdul Nabi Khan sought and received Zulfiqar Khan's permission to place the Baramahal in the hands of his own mother.

Why does the *Tazkira* establish this overt relationship between female power in Baramahal and the region's ties to Kadapa? It is very likely that these women were born of prominent regional *palaiyakkarār* households and married to Miyana affiliates. Supportive of this conjecture is the *Tazkira's* complaint that the Baramahal served as residence for the many Miyana *khānazāds* (houseborn), an ill-defined category of dependents who purportedly spent their time in the Baramahal in continuous mutual conflict because of their natural 'rebellious-mindedness.'<sup>572</sup> This comment echoes common complaints in both Persian-language and European sources about *palaiyakkarār* political behavior, and points to the *khānazāds'* complex web of local affinities. Other materials similarly point to the probability of intermarriage, including the *Ahwālnāma-i Karnūl*

<sup>568</sup> Bayly, 173.

<sup>569</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VIII: 345; X: 41.

<sup>570</sup> "Family Trees of the Sultans of Mysore, Nawabs of Arcot, Nawabs of Cuddapah, Rajas of Coorg, and Other Rulers" (n.d.), Mss Eur F301, British Library, IOR Private Papers.

<sup>571</sup> Although the *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* is an at times untrustworthy record of Karnatak history prior to the mid-eighteenth century, the author goes out of his way to trace his own maternal ancestry to the Baramahal region, suggesting why we should attend carefully to his account of its history. Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 54a.

<sup>572</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 59b. *Ba-andīsha-yi baghāvāt wa khwudsarī ke aksar-i awqāt ānhā bā yakdīgar shorish afzā būdand.*

(1808), which offers a casual reference to a proposed marriage between the Pannis and so-called ‘*zamīndārī*’ families (almost certainly Telugu-speaking local *palaiyakkarār* households).<sup>573</sup>

While the Miyanas had strong claims within the region, they were far from the only important local actors. The Nawaiyat household, whose capital at Arcot was geographically the closest, also seeded the southern Coromandel hinterlands with representatives, and on at least one occasion the normally cooperative Nawaiyat and Miyana households even went to war over the region.<sup>574</sup> In 1719, Abdul Nabi Khan led a major army against Saadatullah Khan. The latter’s forces were routed, and he was forced, in spite of his formal title as *dīwān* of the Karnatak and his claim to be the highest-ranked Mughal official south of the Krishna River, to beg for shelter behind the walls of the *nāyaka*-ruled city of Tiruchirappalli, from whom he had in recent years frequently demanded tribute.<sup>575</sup> The ruler of Tiruchirappalli, for reasons of his own, seems to have obliged.

Apart from these policies specifically organized towards the Baramahal districts, it seems that all of the southern noble houses examined in this study – both branches of the Miyanas, the Pannis, and the Nawaiyats, cultivated close ties with one another when they were not locked in contest over regional claims. Household associates intermarried, attended funerals, celebrated holidays, and of course organized campaigns with one another (see Chapter Four). These informal connections no doubt smoothed negotiations as factions vied for access to key economic hubs like the southern Coromandel Coast or its strategically crucial Baramahal hinterlands. This, in combinations with the above evidence, points to a Karnatak politics in which decentralization and the establishment of multiple political centers did not produce the fragmentary chaos envisioned by earlier scholars, but rather an increasingly cohesive shared landscape within which competition and cooperation were carried out in accordance with widely shared expectations and norms, smoothed by carefully cultivated social bonds. Karnatak-based actors cultivated a regional political culture within which participants routinely claimed rights over resources in territories that were at times hundreds of miles from their courtly strongholds. How, then, were these shared norms established and sustained?

### Imagining post-Mughal sovereignty in the Karnatak

A few surviving contemporary sources and a larger body of materials dating from the turn of the nineteenth century help to illustrate a multi-layered understanding of sovereignty in the early eighteenth century Karnatak, where local elites staked simultaneous claims to authority on the basis of remembered associations with Vijayanagara, Deccan Sultanate, and Mughal-era courts, sometimes all at once. The continued co-existence of these authoritative regimes, in memory if not in actuality, afforded the possibility for multiple avenues by which arrangements could be settled. Even by the most generous measurement, direct Mughal rule in the Karnatak extended for no more than twenty-

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<sup>573</sup> ‘Abd Allah, “*Ahwālnāma-i Karnūl*,” 31b-32a. Arguably even more so than the aforementioned *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām*, the *Ahwālnāma* is demonstrably untrustworthy (see Introduction). It opens with a richly imagined (but almost certainly concocted) early history of the Pannis in Karnul. The casualness with which the author references the prospect of a marital alliance between Panni and *zamīndār*, however, strongly suggests that such alliances were not atypical, even if the *Ahwālnāma* had hoped to disparage the Pannis by referencing the practice.

<sup>574</sup> A later colonial-era source suggests that a second battle may also have taken place in 1724. This later date can neither be proven nor disproven, however, it is important to remember that 1724 was also the year in which the Miyana and Nawaiyat households joined cooperatively against their shared enemy in the Deccan, Nizam al-Mulk, making it more difficult to imagine a simultaneous war against erstwhile allies on the southern front. John Henry Garstin, *Manual of the South Arcot District* (Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1878), 60.

<sup>575</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. V: 14-17 (10 Oct., 1719).



five years (more conservative estimates raise questions as to whether, even under Zulfiqar Khan's governance, the region could ever claim to have been centrally governed).<sup>576</sup> These decades had certain highly visible effects, however. These included new vocabularies: *faujdārīs*, *sūbas*, *mansabdārī* ranks, and other terms tied to the empire. They also, as explored in previous chapters, opened new avenues of opportunity for some, and brought the distant Mughal heartlands of Hindustan and the Karnatak into a closer embrace. Yet these changes have been over-emphasized by scholars who, intentionally or not, have assumed that the prominent households traced in this dissertation were merely agents of the Mughal court. The challenge is worsened by sources patronized by the Asaf Jahi court after 1724, and the Wala Jahi court in Arcot in the latter half of the eighteenth century that insistently represent the Karnatak, and their own actions within the region, as part and parcel of a still imaginable Mughal universe.<sup>577</sup>

It is significant that a major strand of Persian historiography in southern India persisted in depicting the Mughal encounter in critical terms. This contrasts strikingly with standard histories, for example the one illustrated in *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*, that portray the south as subject to the same processes as Mughal-successor politics elsewhere. Apart from the *Sa'īdnāma* itself, which we have already encountered in the past chapter and which raised serious questions about normative claims to Mughal authority in the Karnatak, we also have other examples. These include the author of the influential early nineteenth-century *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, who painted a vividly emotional portrait of the return of the former Bijapur sovereign Sikandar Adil Shah's corpse to the former capital after his fourteen-year-long imprisonment in a Mughal prison in the northern Deccan, where he was widely rumored to have been poisoned. As the body of the last Adil Shahi sultan (r. 1672-1686) was carried through the streets of the former Sultanate capital,

[...] the entire city raised an outcry and rushed to the head of every street and into every bazaar. All the men and women formed a great crowd. The cries and mourning of the citizens of Bijapur was so great that it resembled Armageddon. Thousands of women set up wailing and lamenting as if it were the day of their own widowhood, breaking their bangles.<sup>578</sup>

The *Basātīn's* author was not merely reflecting a popular rejection of Mughal sovereignty or a romantic yearning for pre-Mughal institutions but rather a powerful continued memory of Bijapur's authority in the eighteenth-century Karnatak. This is exemplified by epigraphical evidence from city of Kadapa, where the city's oldest *īdgāh* [an enclosed festival ground where the major *īd* celebrations are held] was either repaired or completed in 1718-1719 at the behest of Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana. The structure's foundations had been laid many decades previously by one of his forebears. An engraved poem, although formally connecting the completion of the work to the distant sitting Emperor Farrukh Siyar, spends most of its energy underlining Abdul Nabi Khan's family's Sultanate-era roots in the region.<sup>579</sup>

<sup>576</sup> Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, 300–302.

<sup>577</sup> For example Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934; Mansā Rām Lāla, *Ma'āsir-i Nizāmī*, ed. Parveen Zareena (New Delhi: National Mission for Manuscripts, 2015); Aurangabādī, “Sawānih- Dakkan.”

<sup>578</sup> Zubayrī, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 545. *Gūyand ke tābūt-i Sikandar 'Ādil Shāh dar shahr-i Bijāpūr mī āwardand dar tamāmī-yi shahr ghūghā uftād. Khalq-i ambūh bar sar-i rāsta wa bāzār hajūm āwardand. Az zan wa mard izdihām-i 'azīm shuda wa nāla wa gham-i mā'tam bar sakina-i Bijāpūriyān chunān uftāda ke ān rūz namūna-i qiyāmat shuda būd. Hazār-hā 'aurat ba-nauha wa faghān dar āmada hangāmī ke bewagī wa bī-shauharī nā sāz dādand wa chūrī shikastand.*

<sup>579</sup> The inscription is only partially recorded in Rahi Fida'i's study of Urdu in Kadapa, but can be read in its entirety in a Youtube video (accessed Oct. 29, 2016). Munsif TV Live, *360 Year Old Eidgah in Kadapa*, 2016,

In the reign of the Emperor, Asylum of the World,  
 King of Kings, Farrukh Siyar Padshah.  
 The foundations of the grand *'idgāh* had been laid  
 [by] Sikandar's commander, of rare virtues.  
 The moonlike seal [?] of the Nawab Bahlul Khān,  
 who is like a splendid moon upon the earth  
 The generous one, son of Karim the munificent  
 of the line of Nawab Abdul Rahim  
 the capstone of this illustrious lineage,  
 is titled: Abdul Nabi Khan.  
 When the construction of the mosque reached completion  
 the speaker was inspired to give this date  
 He said: the *'idgāh* was by the grace of the Prophet, and  
 its arrangement by Nabi.<sup>580</sup>  
 On the year of 1130  
 after the emigration of Muhammad, peace be upon him!

*Ba-daur-i jahāndār 'ālam panāh  
 binā sākhṭa 'idgāh-i buland  
 mah-i muhr-i Nawāb Bahlūl Khān  
 Karīm ast ibn Karīm al-Karīm  
 sar-i nāmdārān 'ālī janāb  
 chū ta'mīr-i masjid sar-anjām dād  
 ba-guftā ba-faiz-i Nabī Allah, wa  
 sinn-i yak hazār wa sad wa sī tamām*

*shahanshāh Farrukh Siyar pādshāh  
 amīr-i Sikandar siyar arjmand  
 chū badr-i munīr ast andar jahān  
 dar bahr-i Nawāb 'Abd al-Rahīm  
 ke 'Abd al-Nabī Khān ast o rā khitāb  
 ba-tārīkh-i ān hātīf ilhām dād  
 murattab shuda az Nabī 'idgāh  
 zi hijr-i Muhammad 'alai-bi 's salām*

A similar inclination can be found in the *Sa'īdnāma*, where the author went to great lengths to underline the Nawaiyat leader Saadatullah Khan's having been a 'co-brother-in-law' [*hamzulf*] of the famous Bijapuri nobleman Mulla Ahmad Nawaiyat even as he also traced Saadatullah Khan's rise to power through the good graces of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>581</sup> Likewise, Kadapa and Arcot established themselves as havens for scholars and poets boasting family ties to the defunct Bijapur court. This pattern had begun as early as Zulfiqar Khan's era in the 1690s, when the relatively well-known Dakhani poet Hashmi Bijapuri found patronage at Arcot. Others made their way more circuitously, as for example the family of Sayyid Shah Abul Hasan Qurbi (d. 1768), whose family first fled to Miyana-held Bankapur after Bijapur was sacked in 1686. They then moved to Sira sometime around 1710, before finally settling in Arcot around 1726, when Qurbi was in his teens. Qurbi eventually based himself in Vellore, becoming one of South India's most prominent scholars of Islamic philosophy.<sup>582</sup> Bijapur-associated Sufi lineages, some of which had already established

<https://youtu.be/UWTocOPihTc>; Rahi Fida'i, *Kadpah Men Urdu: Az 1120 H. Ta 1375 H., (1710-1957)* (Dihli: Maktabah-yi Jami'ah, 1992), 24–25.

<sup>580</sup> This appears to be a rather unusually complicated chronogram. The entire line equals 2157. Subtract from this *wa murattab shuda az Nabī* (1027) for a total of 1130 and the more modest remaining message *ba-faiz-i Nabī Allah 'eidgāh* (the *'eidgāh* was by the grace of the Prophet). The entire chronogram is excised in Rahi Fida'i's copy of the inscription in *Kadpah men Urdu* (pp. 24–25). Thanks to Abhishek Kaicker for reading through this with me.

<sup>581</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 117. The *Sa'īdnāma*'s author similarly underscored Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana and Jamshid Khan's Sultanate roots, tying both to the long-deceased Abdul Karim Khan Miyana (identified as Bahlul Khan in the text). Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fols. 20b, 63b.

<sup>582</sup> Muhammad Yousuf Kokan Umari, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960* (Madras: Hafiza House, 1974), 115–30.

branches in places like Karnul or Vellore in the seventeenth century under Sultanate rule, retained prominence during the eighteenth century under the patronage of formerly Sultanate-affiliated houses.<sup>583</sup> Although the Nawaiyat, Miyana and Panni households used Mughal titles and associated administrative vehicles, they clearly also sought to situate themselves regionally as the rightful inheritors of the old Sultanate system.

### *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām*

The coexistence of these multiple avenues to legitimation is perhaps best illustrated by the *Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām* (c. 1800), written by Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani, a former scribe at Hyder Ali Khan's court in Mysore. The author (whose background receives closer attention in the Introduction) appears almost to revel in chronological recklessness.<sup>584</sup> Despite its possible failings as a 'sober' historical source, however, the *Tazkira* nevertheless offers important insights on the political culture of the region in the eighteenth century. In particular, the stories told reflect widely shared conventions that governed negotiations and alliances, underscoring key themes like friendship, service, loyalty and deceit. I concentrate here on four main points. First, it offers a genealogy of sorts, justifying the household's history of service and the basis for their claim to the land. Second, the ambiguous place of Mughal authority in the text points to the value, for eighteenth century actors, of maintaining other avenues for legitimation. Third, the centrality of originary hero-narratives to the account points to the likelihood of an audience for whom royal power was important than exemplary service. Finally, Kirmani's text underlines the continued importance of horizontal networks, including remembered friendships and affiliations, to the organization of regional politics. While 'who one knows' is a universally important feature of politics, the *Tazkira* underscores its axial significance in the Karnatak by repeatedly locating these connections at the center of the narratives described.

It is useful to begin with Kirmani's history of the Miyana household in Bankapur/Savanur. It differs remarkably from the story that I already laid out in the early chapters of this dissertation. Instead of Bahlul Khan's broken alliance with Khan Jahan Lodi and the Miyanas' subsequent move south in the 1630s, Kirmani traces the Miyana family's time in Bijapur all the way back to the sixteenth century, to a shadowy figure named Jan Nisar Khan, who purportedly fought on behalf of the Bijapuri Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah I (r. 1534-1558) at the Battle of Burhanpur. His various offspring thereafter boasted biographies that traced the high points of Sultanate military history. One son, Ankas Khan, was said to have died bravely in the Battle of Talikota in 1565. Ankas Khan's son Jabbar Khan Miyana was an uncouth figure who habitually wore "dirty, soiled clothes" and was of "black-complexioned and towering stature." He "was known by the language of the men of this province, i.e. Kannada, as 'Ragati' Bahlul Khan the Black Mountain," Jabbar Khan was rewarded for his father's bravery at Talikota with a gift of land in formerly Vijayanagara-held Bankapur, and thereafter himself performed brave service in the Karnatak campaigns.<sup>585</sup> This oddly detailed

<sup>583</sup> Umari, 77, 79. A Qadiri lineage based in Karnul and founded by Shah Laubali offers a particularly interesting example. Ghulām 'Alī Qādri, "Mishkat al-Nubuwwat" (n.d.), fols. 477a-526b, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Telangana.

<sup>584</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 1a-1b.

<sup>585</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 44b. *Aksar-i auqāt libās-i nā-sāf wa chirik-ālūd mī pūshid wa siyah-fām wa qawī haikal būd ba-zabān-i mardumān-i in nuwāh ya'nī Kanharā az nām-i Ragatī Bahlul Khān Kālā Pahāṭ mashhūr shud.* 'Ragati' may be an approximation of the Urdu 'ragrī,' in turn borrowed from Sanskrit, meaning quarrelsome, pugnacious, turbulent. Another version, almost certainly a loose translation or related version of Kirmani's account, turns up in the voluminous

depiction does two important things. First, it anchors the household into a deep, nearly Vijayanagara-era substrata of regional history, connecting the family's claim to Bankapur to the renowned Battle of Talikota. It also builds an interesting heroic archetype in the guise of Jabbar Khan. This towering, unwashed man with the colorful nickname seems to bear comparison with two heroic models. First, it suggests a connection with certain models deployed in Tamil-language narratives around the heroic feats of formerly forest-dwelling or nomadic soldiering groups, depicted as cultural bumpkins who were, nevertheless, fierce warriors and loyal soldiers.<sup>586</sup> At the same time, it bears resemblance to the sorts of descriptions deployed in Indo-Persian sources depicting Afghans as brave, but uncultured rustics (see Chapter Three).<sup>587</sup> This convergence need not be read as intentional, but perhaps lends some support for extending Jos Gommans' dichotomy of subcontinental soldiering typologies, between "ghazis and sadhus" (often unlettered, nomadic or formerly nomadic mercenary groups) and "mirzas and rajputs" (military elites who cultivated identities as educated consumers, producers and patrons of the arts) into the Karnatak context.<sup>588</sup>

In the *Tazkira*, the Mughal invasion was recalled in terms ranging from ambivalent to hostile. Kirmani offers no obvious moral distinction between elite households, Hindu or Muslim, that rose to prominence under Vijayanagara rule or those that came later. Consider the description of the Mughal conquest of Adoni fortress, typically recalled (albeit briefly) in Mughal counts as evidence of the famed commander Firuz Jang's military talent and his Sultanate opponent Siddi Masud's cowardice (see Chapter Two and Three for more on Siddi Masud).<sup>589</sup> Mir Hussain Ali Kirmani, by contrast, makes the account of Siddi Masud's valorous sacrifice in order to save a Vijayanagara-era mosque. Masud, described as a pious individual as well as a generous and able administrator, was said to have been exceedingly fond of the mosque, having ordered its restoration during his period of authority in the region. When Firuz Jang besieged the city in 1687, he sought an easy avenue by which to seize the fort. When a few duplicitous residents informed him that Siddi was a great believer in the mosque [*mu'taqid ba-masjid ast*], Firuz Jang accordingly ordered that his cannons be aimed at the mosque and some shots fired. Siddi Masud immediately announced on hearing the news that "if in pursuit of fortress and country he seeks to destroy this mosque, I will grant him the fort." He then marched to Firuz Jang's tent with only two or three servants and said to the Mughal commander: "life, property, treasure and country along with my wife and children are all a sacrifice for this mosque. Take the fort and send your guards in."<sup>590</sup> In this version of Mughal conquest, Aurangzeb's commander Firuz Jang, none other than the father of the future Governor of the Deccan, Nizam al-Mulk, was described as "ignoble and cowardly, covetous and of poor judgment."<sup>591</sup>

Now consider Kirmani's depiction of the Savanur/Bankapur-based Miyana household's entrance into Mughal service around the same period. In Kirmani's account, Dilir Jang (identified

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Mackenzie Collection. It offers an alternative epithet, the 'Black Tiger' or *kālā sher*. "History of the Patan Hakeems of Sanoor, translated from the Persian by Captain Edmonds" (1804), 247, Mac Gen 41/17, British Library.

<sup>586</sup> Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 70–75.

<sup>587</sup> Kumar, "After Timur Left," 99–104.

<sup>588</sup> Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, Ch. 2 'War-band and court'.

<sup>589</sup> Khān, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 191.

<sup>590</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 39a-39b. *Agar barāye qil'a wa mulk masjid rā kharāb kardan mī khwāhad man qil'a rā ba-o mī sipāram. [...] Jān wa māl wa khizāna wa mulk bā 'iyāl wa atfāl-i in banda hama nisār-i masjid ast. Qil'a ba-gīrīd wa ṭhāna andarūn rawāna sāzīd.*

<sup>591</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 39b. *Sardār-i lashkar khasīs himmat wa bad-niyat wa bī-tamīz būd.*

here as Dalil Khan) won the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb’s respect by his keen intellect and bravery in an episode that bears little resemblance to other sources or, almost certainly, to reality. It appears nothing like the more familiar account (offered in Chapter Two) of Dalil Khan a.k.a. Dilir Jang *né* Abdul Rauf Khan Miyana’s humbled audience before Aurangzeb alongside his master, Sikandar Adil Shah, at the moment of Bijapur’s final defeat. Kirmani’s account proceeds as follows: Aurangzeb’s son, titled here Muazzam Khan, was led astray into rebellion by a group, variously identified as Afghans or as Deccanis. Aurangzeb was distraught, and his counselors were helpless. To the rescue came Dalil Khan, who successfully captured Muazzam unharmed and led him back to his father by first pledging his service to the rebellious prince and then persuading him to enjoy a ride on a particularly sure-footed elephant from the Khan’s stables. Dalil Khan ingeniously signaled for the elephant’s driver to have the elephant walk ever more slowly until they were separated from the rest of the prince’s party, whereupon the elephant driver was ordered to make an about-face and the shame-faced prince was delivered safely to his father, camped at Bijapur. The overjoyed father and emperor bestowed the title of Dilir Jang upon Dalil Khan, as well all of Prince Muazzam’s luggage in addition to his (symbolically laden) royal tent. Dilir Jang’s reputation afterwards spread to every corner of the Deccan and Hind.<sup>592</sup>

In this story, the Mughals were not antagonists. Rather, they were hapless, dependent on the capable intervention of the quick-thinking Miyana leader who, unlike the foreign Mughals, understood the “duplicity of the Deccan people,”<sup>593</sup> and the capacity to move with fluency in South India’s peculiar political world. The message was clear: Mughal power in the south was at the sufferance of households like the Miyanas, for whom the move from Sultanate service to Mughal service was nothing more than a calculated investment:

During the last period of the Sultanate [...] most of the nobility of the capital [of Bijapur] raised the flag of rebellion. [Bahlul Khan] was amongst them. They entered the Sultanate of Aurangzeb. [...] By means of a *nazr* of three *lakh* [300,000] rupees and many valuable gifts [Bahlul Khan] retained his *jāgīr* [probably Bankapur] and entered the lineage of *mansabdārs* under Alamgir.<sup>594</sup>

Kirmani’s handling of the Karnatak households’ affiliations to both Sultanate and Mughal courts beg credulity. Yet at the same time, these and other stories offer intuitively satisfying justification for why their protagonists enjoyed regional prominence. In many respects, the *Tazkira* bares a close correspondence with narratives penned between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in Telugu, Tamil, Marathi and other southern languages, many of which have been brought together in the Mackenzie Collection, a massive body of ‘historical’ texts (broadly construed), collected across southern India. In fact, portions of the *Tazkira* itself made their way into the Collection. Collected in the form of separate documents and titled as *kaifīyats* (stories, accounts), they were swept up along with other texts by Mackenzie’s research assistants as they worked their way across the courts of the southern subcontinent. Their presence in the Mackenzie collection, in fact, points to the texts’ probable wide circulation. In other cases, *Tazkira* narratives bear strong resemblance to Mackenzie

<sup>592</sup> Kirmānī, fols. 45b-47a.

<sup>593</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 46a. *Farīb-i ahl-i Dakkan wāqif na-būd.*

<sup>594</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 45a. *Dar ākhir-i Sultanat-i ‘Ādil Shāh Sānī ke dar daulatash ba-sabab-i khwud pasandī futūrī rāh yāfta aksar-i umarā-yi pāy-takht ‘alam-i baghāwat bar-afraštand az ān jumla Khān-i mazkūr ham ba-Sultān Aurangzīb ke hisb al-hukm-i Shāh Jahān wālī-i Dihlī bandobast-i Dakkan rukhsat yāfta qil’a-i Junnair wa Ahmadnagar wagheira ba-zabt-i khwud dar awūrd wa aksar-i umarā-yi Dakkan bā o malhaq mī-shudand ba-dil ruju’ awarda ba- nazr-i sih lakh rūpiya wa tah’if-i bisyar sannad-i ba-hālī-i jāgīr yāfta dākhil-i silsila-i mansabdārān-i ‘umda-i ‘Ālamgīrī gardīd.*

Collection texts (or vice versa), but the two are plainly distinct.<sup>595</sup> In still other cases, Kirmani evidently drew on widely accessible themes. For example, South Indian origin narratives commonly offer stories of men who went out hunting and, while in the middle of the wilderness, observed unusual forms of animal behavior – often a hare or a fox which, confronted by the man’s hunting dogs, turned and boldly made the predator its prey, thus inspiring the man to found a new city or polity at the site. A version of this story is often associated with the founding of the city of Vijayanagara<sup>596</sup> and is repeated in Mackenzie Collection texts. In each case, the underlying message is that the soil of the region itself possessed some magic that gave its inhabitants, whether animal or human, a supernaturally courageous and battle-hungry temperament. Each of these regions is closely bound up with the memory of soldiering communities whose later service to neighboring powers is subsequently recounted. The *Tazkira* drew from roughly the same palette of literary and political culture as the (often unknown) authors of the Mackenzie Collection texts. What makes them appear odd is that Mir Hussain Ali Kirmani gave them form in the Persian language, where a strong tradition of ‘historicity’ was at least expected to be maintained, even if efforts were not always successful.

Two distinct perspectives have emerged in reading Mackenzie Collection materials. One, articulated by Narayana Rao, Subrahmanyam and Shulman in *Textures of Time*, argues that in this period, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and other southern language traditions began to experiment with an emergent historical consciousness. Whereas Indic literatures have often been accused of ahistoricity, the conditions of this period, including the growth of an upwardly mobile, autonomous service gentry community known as *karanām*, encouraged new ways of explaining the political circumstances in which they found themselves.<sup>597</sup> They argue that these authors playfully mixed historically oriented narratives with more conventional genre expectations for an audience who were fully attuned to these shifting forms. Arguably, the *Tazkira* seems to present some of the same patterns, intermingling threads of seemingly ‘historical’ material with what we might describe as more ‘mythical’ content. Yet in other ways, Kirmani seems to be doing something like the opposite of what the authors describe. While seeming to identify itself as a historical text (the term *tazkira* indicates ‘memory’ or ‘remembrance’ and is a familiar Perso-Arabic genre), Kirmani’s account often pushes its characters towards archetypal expectations, while ignoring what was likely to have been comparatively accessible evidence undermining the *Tazkira*’s chronology. A second perspective on Mackenzie Collection records can be found in Nicholas Dirks’ portrait of the *palaiyakkarār* family histories collected from the Pudukkottai region, in which rough-hewn forest-dwelling figures often proved their worth by heroic acts of devotion and loyalty to a king or deity, after which he was granted a number of honors, titles and privileges.<sup>598</sup> Dirks’ reading of these materials appears more oriented towards questions of legitimation rather than of historicity, and in some respects, his reading appears to mesh more closely with Kirmani’s aims as well. At the very least, Kirmani appears ready to incorporate easily disprovable elements in his narrative (for example, improbably long-lived

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<sup>595</sup> See for example ‘History of the Patan Hakeems of Sanoor,’ Mack. Gen. 41/17; ‘Kyfyat of Sanoor,’ Mack. Gen. 11/20; ‘Kiefeyat of Sobah of Audoney,’ Mack. Trans. I.13; ‘The Principal Account of the Chiefs of Kunnole,’ Mack Trans. I: 24; ‘Historicall Account of Sirah,’ Mack. Trans. I.12; Mackenzie Collections, European Manuscripts, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library.

<sup>596</sup> Phillip B Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rāyavācakamu*, trans. Wagoner, Phillip B. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 84.

<sup>597</sup> Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*.

<sup>598</sup> Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 78–107.

hero figures) in order to fulfill other priorities (demonstrating a household's connection to some other group or location).

In another respect, however, the *Tazkira* bears an important resemblance to both approaches offered above. In Narayana Rao *et al* and in Dirks' readings alike, the relationship between the sovereign and the servant is far from straightforward. Rather, the kingly grantor of privileges is often portrayed as a rather helpless figure, while the 'servant' is the real agent of change. In this respect Kirmani's narrative fits neatly, as he traces the heroes at the center of his account between and across service relationships, continually renewing their reputations against a shifting backdrop of royal patrons. In effect, kings take up orbit around these heroic 'servants,' rather than the expected reverse.

One of the more complicated but also revealing examples comes in Kirmani's description of the relationship forged between the Miyana household and a lineage of village headmen from the Lingayat community in Lakshmeshwar and Shirhatti, known as the Khan Gauras. According to Kirmani, the relationship was forged in the sixteenth century when administration of the region came under the control of the Sultanate nobleman Ankas Khan, mentioned above as a mythical forebear of the Miyana household. In this portion of the *Tazkira*, Ankas Khan seems to have become conflated with a renowned Sufi holy man named Sayyid Shah Lal Shahbaz Bukhari, popularly known as Bare Nana, whose prayers turned local stones into a substance soft like soap, allowing them to be carved into ornate forms. The saint's prayers were thought to have enabled the regional craftsmen construct a mosque of otherworldly beauty. One evening, Ankas Khan was up late playing chess when his lamps ran out of fuel. No oil was anywhere to be found, but when the nearby headman from the settlement of Lakshmeshwar, a Lingayat known as Somanna, heard of the Khan's trouble he volunteered several casks of his own household's oil. On hearing of Somanna's generosity, the Khan made him come to sit in court at his side, placing his hand on the man's head and making a public announcement that henceforth, he would consider him his son and would guard his welfare for all time. Somanna was granted the *deshpandiya*, or revenue collectorship, of Lakshmeshwar, rights to a percentage of the collection, a *jāgīr*, the title of Khan Gaura Bahadur, as well as several other privileges. Subsequent leaders of the Miyana household continued to honor Khan Gaura's descendants' claims in Lakshmeshwar and Shirhatti. When Dilir Jang's son Ghafar Khan sought to revoke Khan Gaura's descendent Chik Khan Gaura's privileges in the 1720s, on the excuse that the latter were nothing but 'lowly slaves of idols' [*adnā ra'iyat 'abd-i asnām*], the latter sent a polite rejoinder.

Although I am of the *qaum* [community] of Hindus I am nevertheless obedient to Islam. Notwithstanding that we are tribute-paying subjects of your forefathers, to murder and plunder us is unbecoming of a descendant of the holy lineage.<sup>599</sup>

Despite Chik Khan's peacemaking efforts, Ghafar Khan attacked Khan Gaura, who bravely took to the field with a small contingent of supporters and the emblem of the Sufi *pīr* Ankas Khan, confident in his hereditary rights. Divine favor was with this Hindu rather than his Muslim former patron. Ghafar Khan's men were defeated, and Khan Gaura raised the holy standard of Ghafar Khan's forebear Ankas Khan, or Bare Nana, on the battlefield.<sup>600</sup> As with other examples in the *Tazkira*, Khan Gauras' subordination to the Miyana household turned out to be entirely contingent on the Miyana household's good intention. Hierarchies were never absolute and terms were always

<sup>599</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fol. 111a. *Agarche az qaum-i Hunūd zā'i-am amā mutī' al-Islam. Qat'i nazar az in ra'iyat-i bājguzār-i jadd wa ābā-yi shumā hastīm. Qat'l wa ghārat-i mā munāsib-i hall-i sāhib ni'matān nīst.*

<sup>600</sup> Kirmānī, fol. 111a.

subject to renegotiation. The memory of how these relationships first came to be, not to mention competition over how these relationships were remembered, continued to play an important role in these processes well into the eighteenth century. The Karnatak was densely mapped with such remembered affinities and obligations. These mutually acknowledged networks formed the stage on which politics operated in the absence of a centralized state.

## Local recruitment

Mir Hussain Ali Kirmani's audience would have been limited to a small number of Persian-literate South Indian gentry. It is possible that his *Tazkira* was aimed at British East India Company officials who enjoyed growing dominance in the region. The text itself merely asserts that he had hoped to recount the histories of those regional elites that had been left out of other accounts.<sup>601</sup> Either way, his narrative is valuable to us because, untethered by the demands of patronage, Kirmani's main ambition appears to have been a demonstration of his virtuosic familiarity with regional geographies of power. Kirmani's lingering attention to the sorts of relationships detailed above help us to gain insight on the sorts of communities upon which the Karnatak households relied as northern recruitment streams dried up in the early eighteenth century.

One of the most important communities were the Bedars, whom we have already encountered in Chapter Three in the form of intransigently anti-Mughal armies led by Pam Nayak and his son Pidiyah Nayak, who defended the Bijapuri capital in the final years of the Sultanate's existence. The Bedars are often associated with the territory in and around the confluence of the Krishna and Bhima rivers, about halfway between Bijapur and Hyderabad. Most likely, it was Bedars who ruled the territory of Gurmatkal, evocatively described in Yusuf Muhammad Khan's mid-eighteenth century *Tārīkh-i Fathiya*.

The *zamīndār* of that place [Gurmatkal] [...] had become proud and independent-minded and because Gurmatkal lay between the *sūbas* of Bijapur and Hyderabad he would say that "one pole of my palanquin rests upon the shoulder of the king of Bijapur and the other rests upon the shoulder of the ruler of Hyderabad."<sup>602</sup>

Their communities, however, were scattered across the northern Karnatak. In particular, they also formed a dominant group in population centers like Chitradurg [Chittaldurg], Harpanahalli, Anagundi, Rayadurg, Kanakgiri, and Ballari, all situated along the high, dry marchlands of northern and central Karnatak [see Figure 6]. A legendary account of the community's history, compiled in 1800-1801 on behalf of Colin Mackenzie by Venkata Borriah Kavali<sup>603</sup> on the basis of testimony by local residents survives in the Mackenzie Collection in London.<sup>604</sup>

Kavali's informants relate that the Boya (or Bedar, also sometimes called Berad) community were descended from a Brahmin and a beautiful low-caste woman. In punishment for this pair's sinful union, the Brahmin was forced to spend several years inhabiting a snake cave. Their offspring

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<sup>601</sup> Kirmānī, fols. 1b-2a. He specifically identifies the *Tārīkh- Firishṭa* and the *Tārīkh-i Afāghana* (probably Nimatullah's *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*).

<sup>602</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 169. *Zamīndār-i ānjā [...] dam-i istikbār wa istiqāl mī zad wa chūn Gūrmatkāl mā bīn-i sūba Bījāpūr wa Haidarābād wāqī' shuda zamīndar mī guft ke yak bāns-i pālakī-yi man bar dosh-i dūniyādār-i Bījāpūr wa sar-i dūyum bans bar dosh-i dūniyādār-i Haidarābād ast.*

<sup>603</sup> For more on the background and history of Mackenzie's research assistants, see Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," 791.

<sup>604</sup> Venkata Borriah Brahmin Kavali, "Account of the Boyawar or Bedar Tribe 1800-1801" (1801), 219-27, Mack Gen, 21/44, British Library, OIOC.



lived in the jungle, hunting wild animals. Later, they divided into two sub-groups, the Vora Boyas [Voora Boyaloo] and the Macha Boyas [Macha Boyaloo]. They respectively lived in the towns and in the forests. In time, both communities, signaling their climb up the ladder-rungs of respectability, abandoned the eating of pigs and birds, as well as the drinking of alcohol. The Macha Boyas in particular began to practice circumcision. Both communities were renowned soldiers, known for their mastery of what Kavali describes as four weapons that considered central to Karnatak martial culture: the bow, dagger, axe, and the ‘Catiga,’ a sort of curved handheld stick.<sup>605</sup> Kavali notes that members of the Boya community divided their energies between agricultural pursuits and military labor. They farmed sheep and cattle, sometimes worked as loadbearers and peons, and were also hunters, for which they bred hunting dogs. But they were best known for their military talents. Muslims reportedly dubbed the community ‘Bedar,’ from the Persian *bī-dar*, meaning fearless. Even at the turn of the nineteenth century, the community remained, according to Kavali, “too often ready to turn out to follow any adventurer that holds out fallacious prospects of plunder and a substance more suited to their warlike character [than agriculture or employment as a peon].”<sup>606</sup> While perhaps ready at times to lend their talents to any adventurer that came past their settlement, the ties the Bedars sustained with established military households like the Pannis and Miyanas, whose connections in turn offered entrée to a wider political sphere, were key to their secure employment.

As the above references to Bedar practices like circumcision and the avoidance of pig meat and alcohol suggest, boundaries between ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ amongst these groups were exceedingly porous. Thus we find stories like that of a childless village headman and Hindu from the region of Chitradurg (a major Bedar settlement), who, with the aid of a Sufi master descended from a well-known Bijapuri lineage known as Hazrat Hussain Sahib, became a father after years of childlessness. In his gratitude, he offered the child to the saint, who named the child Muhammad Kamal and brought him up, presumably as a Muslim. The village headman thereafter fathered many more children; none apparently subject to conversion. Many Hindus in the region recognized Hazrat Hussain Sahib’s miracles, including the Nayaka of Chitradurg, who awarded the saint with tax-free land for his and his family’s maintenance. Hindu devotees of the Hazrat wore clothes dyed by red earth, burnt incense and carried peacock feathers in his name.<sup>607</sup> Communities of belief organized around saintly personages like these would have offered, as we saw in the case of the Lingayat Khan Gaura lineage, a shared ethical orientation and identifiable roles within a unified framework that helped to cement service relationships to the Muslim military households they served.

A similar porousness likely existed when it came to ethnic categories.<sup>608</sup> As we have already seen in Chapter Four, during the Nizam’s campaigns in the Karnatak between 1725-1727 the Miyana and Panni households fielded large numbers of footsoldiers that they first offered up to Maratha leadership, before turning to the Nizam. Yet they also fielded large cavalry forces – some fourteen thousand in total under Abdul Ghafar Khan in 1725.<sup>609</sup> Karnatak cavalry forces are

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<sup>605</sup> Kavali, 223, 226. The list had been recently updated and expanded to five items: a sword, shield, dagger, long pike, and matchlock, pointing perhaps to the community’s awareness of other soldiering communities like the Marathas and Rajputs, who famously honed their mastery of five weapons. Acworth, *Ballads of Marathas*, 123.

<sup>606</sup> Kavali, “Account of the Boyawars,” 227.

<sup>607</sup> Kirmānī, “Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām,” fols. 88b-89b.

<sup>608</sup> This observation has already been made in the North Indian context by Dirk Kolff with respect to Rajput and Afghan communities. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy*, 57–58.

<sup>609</sup> Munshī Rām Singh, “Gulshan-i ‘Ajā’ib,” fol. 137b.

traditionally assumed to have been of northern stock, be they Maratha, Afghan, Deccani or Rajput. And certainly, some of the horsemen in Abdul Ghafar Khan's armies were likely to have been themselves migrants or descendants of migrants. Yet to make up for slowing recruitment channels from points northwards, it is likely that a growing number of the households' cavalry recruits were drawn from local communities like the Bedars, who embraced new military technologies as they sought to preserve their reputations at the forefront of the regional military service economy, and whose active cultivation of upwardly mobile cultural practices remained, at the turn of the nineteenth century, a part of the community's living memory.<sup>610</sup>

One of the most important components of this transition was the growing availability of cavalry horses beyond the traditional Central Asia and Persian Gulf trading networks. In the early eighteenth century, we begin to find references to so-called 'Kollari horses,' raised and pastured in southern India itself. At the same time, horses from Aceh (Sumatra) and Pegu (Myanmar) found a ready market in the Coromandel port cities.<sup>611</sup> Alongside these sources, Maratha horses (despite Indo-Muslim sources' dismissiveness towards these small but sturdy animals) would also have been extremely popular. Whereas by the turn of the nineteenth century southern elites were paying upwards of five thousand rupees for colts imported from the North Indian Lakhi Jungle and the Gujarat/Cutch regions,<sup>612</sup> locally available and more affordable horses suited to Karnatak climates would have opened doors for upwardly mobile groups hoping to establish themselves as cavalry men rather than foot soldiers.

As the large Aurangzeb-era armies scattered skilled soldiers cast about for alternative employment. Figures like Sahib Rai Daudkhani, whose father Kewal Ram had served as a captain in Daud Khan's army and whose names point to their northern origins, were key figures in the spread of specialist knowledge about cavalry warfare in this period. By 1719, Sahib Rai had settled into the service of a local ruler not far from Tiruchirappalli, where he retained a company of troops.<sup>613</sup> The epithet 'Daudkhani' would have served its holder as an early modern brand of sorts and as an indication of one's marketable talents.<sup>614</sup> Other examples of agents who led the spread of cavalry technology and skill during this period included two Afghan Daudzai brothers, Abdullah Khan and Waris Khan, "both born of the faithful servants of the eternally blooming garden of Shahnur (where it is always spring) [Savanur]," who found employment leading cavalry forces in the service of the

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<sup>610</sup> See comment above, fn. 69.

<sup>611</sup> The early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Persian-language treatise on South India's geography, plant and animal varieties, and political history, the *Sirāj al-tawārīkh*, offers a multi-page discussion of South India's horse trade. The authors claim that whereas the Karnatak was once known for the poorness of its horses, the Kollari horse (Kollar is a region neighboring Bangalore) had in more recent times become renowned for its quality. Kollari mares were reportedly held in particular esteem. While the text's authors assert that Kollari horses were only improved under the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century rule of Tipu Sultan, a stray earlier reference to Kollari horses as an article of tribute points to the region's importance in the regional equine trade in earlier decades. Horses from Aceh and Pegu (Myanmar) were also commonly imported by the early decades of the century, and considered to have been solid stock, if smaller than Arabian and Central Asian varieties. Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fol. 191b; Maulānā Muhammad Sibghatullah, Sayyid Murtazā, and Hakīm Bākīr Hussain Khān Bahādūr, "Sirāj al-tawārīkh" (1825), fols. 217a-218a, OMS/IO Islamic 3216, British Library; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 145.

<sup>612</sup> Sibghatullah, Murtazā, and Bahādūr, "Sirāj al-tawārīkh," fols. 316a-316b.

<sup>613</sup> Munshī, "Sa'īdnāma," fol. 214a.

<sup>614</sup> Martin, *India in the 17th Century*, Vol. I, Pt. 2: 651. This pattern was a strue in the early eighteenth century as it had been in the later decades of the seventeenth.

Raja of Chitradurg.<sup>615</sup> Given the proliferation of these wandering biographies, it is not surprising to discover that in the early eighteenth century, the Nayaka of Tiruchirappalli maintained an army of some “five or six thousand arrogant Afghans [*Afāghana-i ru‘ūnat kīsh*]” under the leadership of his advisor Kasturi Ranga.<sup>616</sup> Although it is impossible to test such an assertion, I would suggest some of the ‘Afghan armies’ of the Karnatak in this period were composed of local recruits of Bedar, Lingayat and other Telugu and Kannada-speaking communities that had trained in the arts of Afghan-style cavalry warfare.

The communities that I have described in the preceding pages are not readily defined merely as the subjects of one regional ruler or another. They were part of a large, diverse, and skilled population of farmer-soldiers whose services were available at least some part of the year, and whose history of association with different political and religious elites in the Karnatak tied them variously to Mughal, Sultanate, Maratha and Vijayanagara regimes and their memories, even while their own local identities and affiliations remained intact.

### Official documents, currency regimes and other formalities of regional order

In practical terms, the coexistence of multiple orders of sovereignty meant that administration itself was often a complex and overlapping set of claims and processes, a point that is somewhat hard to illustrate given the decidedly skimpy nature of the early-eighteenth century administrative archive in South India. Nevertheless, a handful of surviving materials, many of them swept up by figures like Thomas Monroe and Colin Mackenzie as they sought to make sense of the societies the East India Company now purported to govern, point to some important characteristics of the political order in this period. Most important was a commitment to establishing claims through a multiplicity of channels.

This is neatly illustrated by a *sanad* dating from 1748, which confirms the rights of a certain Som Bhatt, son of Narayan Bhatt (Saum Bhut s/o Narrain Bhut) of the Patwardhana family, residents of Bangalore. The document was stamped with the seal of Balaji Baji Rao, the Maratha Peshwa in Pune. It seems that when a Maratha army swung through the region sometime in 1747-1748, this Bangalore-based family sought to preserve their control over revenue collection in the village of Motaganahalli (Mateganahully) by verifying the family’s claims through the Maratha court.<sup>617</sup> Although the territory in and around Bangalore was never actually controlled by the Satara and Pune-based Marathas, and although the region continued to change hands in the following decades, the document survived, probably in the family’s records, until the turn of the nineteenth century when it was collected and translated by Venkata Lakshmiah Kavali, Colin Mackenzie’s research assistant. According to the paper trail described in the *sanad*, dated 1748, a small *in‘ām* valued at eighteen *hūn* (or approximately 63 rupees) had originally been granted to Som Bhatt’s ancestor by Ekkoji Bhonsle (r. ~1675-1686?) described as having been “wealthy as the greatest king.” Ekkoji, the half-brother of Shivaji (see Chapter Two) was the son of Shahuji Bhonsle, the Adil Shahi nobleman, and controlled a string of territories between Thanjavur and Bangalore. During the Mughal occupation of the Karnatak, the *in‘ām* was reportedly rescinded, but it was resurrected,

<sup>615</sup> ‘Azim al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Dilīr Jangī*, 40–41. *Īn har do barādarān-i haqīqī az jumla-i fidawizādagān wa aulad-i nashū namā yāftagān-i bāgh wa bastān gulzār-i hamīsha bahār-i riyāsāt-i Shāhnūr...*

<sup>616</sup> Munshī, “Sa‘īdnāma,” fol. 68b.

<sup>617</sup> “Maratha Sanad Granted in Bangalore Dist. by Balaji Baji Rao” (1748), Mack Gen 18, 17 (Part A, p. 253), British Library.

probably sometime in the 1720s, by two regional authorities: the (unfortunately unidentified) Miyana ruler of Kadapa, and Dilawar Khan (a relative of the deceased Mubariz Khan, assigned by Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah to the *faujdārī* in Sira). Both, the document proclaimed, had been shown the original grant and had separately recognized its authority. Finally, the *in'ām* identifies a portion of the total assessed value of the village (eleven 'Cantaroy' *hūns* out of eighteen) as being held in *jāgīr* by a certain Ismail Khan, about whom we have no further information. Most probably the *in'ām* ensured that Som Bhatt's family enjoyed tax-free revenue drawn from the remaining portion, formally classified as the "*sarkār's* share."

The *in'ām* held by Som Bhatt's family thus preserves a complex universe of legitimating orientations. If we are to believe Som Bhatt's claims, his family's privileges in Motaganahalli had been separately underwritten by a wide array of figures with associations to one or several courts, including Ekkoji Bhonsle's purview (ever so loosely tied to the fading Adil Shahi Sultanate court), the Mughals, the emerging Asaf Jahi state in Hyderabad, and the Marathas in Pune. At the same time, his family's claim also sat cheek-by-jowl with that of Ismail Khan's *jāgīr*, whose affiliations are unknown. Strikingly, despite Motaganahalli's primary proximity with Bangalore, the document makes no effort to weave the family's relationship with the Wodeyar dynasty. This is perhaps a reflection of the Wodeyars' apparent disinterest in documentation<sup>618</sup> or may just reflect the specific goals of this document.

The *sanad* in some respects serves as a mirror to a related pattern observed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam in his study of the Wodeyar court at Mysore, namely the state's willingness to offer tribute to several regional powers at once.<sup>619</sup> By the 1720s, the Wodeyars were intermittently paying *peshkash* to Sira and to Arcot, both of which claimed to represent Mughal interests. At the same time they paid *chauth* and *sardeshmukhī* to the Pune-based Marathas. Subrahmanyam characterizes Mysore in this period as having at once a "strong and a weak state," one that bought autonomy from more distant powers by offering their formal submission, while seizing opportunities for expansion locally. In order to sustain a degree of regional stability, actors like Som Bhatt, much in the same model as his more powerful Wodeyar neighbors, would necessarily have patched together claims that appeared legitimate to the widest range of audiences possible. At the same time, regional authorities like the *faujdār* of Sira or the Miyanas of Kadapa by necessity recognized a wide range of claims in order to build and preserve support.

The *in'ām* grants collected in and around the region of Kadapa as part of Thomas Monroe's survey of regional landholding patterns in 1805 highlight a related pattern. Three hundred and thirty-seven such records survive from the immediate environs of Kadapa: in the districts of Siddhavat, Jammalamadugu, Badvel, Kamalapuram, Yerraguntla, Pulivendula, Rayachoti, Cumbum, Gurrampakonda, Dupadu, Chennur, Duvvur, Chitavel, and Koilkuntla.<sup>620</sup> These areas were at the heart of what became known in the colonial era as the 'Ceded Districts.' The title nods at the region's late-eighteenth century role as a pawn of Mysore, Hyderabad and British East India Company negotiations, and its eventual cession to the British by Hyderabad in 1800. When the British began to take stock of landholding patterns in the region, they found that the Ceded Districts hosted some of the highest percentage of alienated lands (i.e. lands held in *in'ām* or similar)

<sup>618</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 62–64.

<sup>619</sup> Subrahmanyam, 70–73.

<sup>620</sup> "Cuddapah Inams," January 2, 1815, 18018/2 Register of Villages Alienated in the District, Tamil Nadu State Archives.

in the entire subcontinent. As much as half of the territory was considered *in'ām* in Kadapa.<sup>621</sup> Although earlier scholars like Eric Stokes saw this as evidence of the political chaos of the eighteenth century, others have since argued that rulers who invoked the power to gift parcels of land to worthy or needy recipients not only demonstrated their own power but incorporated the recipients of these gifts into the body politic.<sup>622</sup> Most importantly for the present discussion, the proliferation of *in'āms* reflects a calculation on the part of the grantor or guarantor that the land revenue's value is less than the value of a sturdy relationship with the gift's recipient.

Like the *in'ām* granted to Som Bhatt's family, many of the *in'ām* records collected by Thomas Monroe in the Kadapa region were originally granted by earlier regimes. Out of the total, only 136 of the *in'āms* collected originated under Miyana rule, the remainder were traced to the Vijayanagara kings, the Qutb Shahi sultans or their Brahmin agents Akanna and Madanna, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Saadatullah Khan Nawaiyat of Arcot, or one of several regionally powerful *palaiyakkarār* households.<sup>623</sup> The Miyana household consolidated their own authority by situating themselves as preservers and inheritors of these remembered and in some cases neighboring orders. In the process they cemented their own status as regional hubs in the circulation of people and resources.

The Karnatak households' willingness to uphold and acknowledge the legitimacy of these bygone regimes similarly extended to the matter of currency, a tradition that had also characterized the earlier Deccan Sultanate regimes.<sup>624</sup> Even after the Mughal invasion, the Mughal silver rupee remained only one of several circulating coins in the south. Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, one of the most common currencies remained the Vijayanagara-era gold *hūn*, stamped with an image of Vishnu. Saadatullah Khan continued minting these coins, modeling them after currency formerly produced by the Chandragiri-based Vijayanagara Rajas, in Arcot.<sup>625</sup> Meanwhile, similar coins were minted by an array of autonomous actors based in port cities all along the Coromandel region. Patterns of currency exchange and valuation were complex, based both on their metal content and on the 'prestige' value of certain coins. This is exemplified by the fact that even at the end of the eighteenth century, British East India Company officials struggled to make terms with Karnatak-based weavers who insisted on receiving payment in old Portuguese *hūn* from Porto Novo, despite the port's mint having long since ceased operation.<sup>626</sup> The insistence of groups like this on defining the terms of their payment in this manner remains poorly understood, but the sheer complexity of South India's currency regime nevertheless highlights a crucial fact: the regional economy was characterized by a powerfully decentralized, incorporative political universe within which actors were habitually plural in their economic and political orientation and practice. Even as late as the opening decades of the nineteenth century, British East India Company officials based in

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<sup>621</sup> Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 49.

<sup>622</sup> Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 116–17, 136.

<sup>623</sup> "Cuddapah Inams."

<sup>624</sup> Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900*, 171.

<sup>625</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1934, 98–99; Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900*, 171.

<sup>626</sup> Washbrook, "Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India," 270. Parthasarathi has recently sought to develop a more nuanced understanding of coins' extra-monetary value in South India. See Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Money and Ritual in Eighteenth-Century South India," *The Medieval History Journal* 19, no. 1 (2016): 1–20.

Dharwar, near Savanur, grumbled that “there are so many coins in circulation here, that it would be idle to expect that any restrictions could prevent a constant variation in their relative value...” He lamented further the powerful role of the moneychangers [‘surrāfs’ or more properly *sarrāf*] in local exchange markets, whose knowledge over the seemingly mysterious workings of the market the British plainly feared. Any meddling in their affairs “almost invariably produces an effect directly the reverse of what is intended.”<sup>627</sup>

In sum, Karnatak households built deep roots within and themselves contributed to a complex system of pre-existing sovereignties and, from what survives of the administrative documentation of the period, it is clear that the households’ survival was incumbent on their acknowledging and working within as many of these systems as possible. Rather than situating themselves, as much of the historiography might contend, as ‘little kings’ or, adopting Robert Orme’s view, as upstart Nawabs who sought to plant their flag on their little patch of soil, the Karnatak householders aimed to establish themselves again, as they had in previous decades, as interlocutors. Their ties, historical, imaginary, or contemporary, to Vijayanagara, Deccan Sultanate and Mughal regimes, as well as the emerging eighteenth-century Maratha and Asaf Jahi powers in the Deccan, granted them capacity not only to expand their influence well beyond the limited territorial bounds of their inland strongholds, but to move across the Karnatak territories in cooperation and in competition with other households.

## Conclusion

In contrast with questions of state formation in northern India, where much of the literature seeks to explain the emergence, and subsequent disintegration, of a centralized imperial order, literature on the precolonial state in South India has been forced to contend with a much messier state of affairs ‘on the ground.’ The tendency, as we have already seen, is to paint a portrait of South India’s natural political order as that of the ‘segmentary state,’ where local rulers exercising practical authority opted to bow, for pragmatic or legitimating reasons, to a ritually important but virtually powerless king based in the Chola, Vijayanagara, or other southern court.<sup>628</sup> Some have sought to revise this portrait, emphasizing the role of the king as a balancing agent between material and ritual axes of power,<sup>629</sup> while others have underscored the degree to which South Indian polities are forged within, and beholden to, the fickle but powerful currents of regional and Indian Ocean-wide commerce.<sup>630</sup>

This chapter has offered a portrait of the political culture of the Karnatak and its operation in the absence of any centralized state authority. Whereas the first three chapters of this dissertation described a political universe in which either Sultanate or Mughal power was expanding southwards into the Karnatak, this and the preceding chapter have sought to understand consequences as these powerful political systems withdrew. In recent years, a handful of studies examining contexts as diverse as the American Southwest, Central Asian steppe societies, and monastic governments of Buddhist, Shaivite and Islamic orders across Northeastern South Asia, have all sought to make sense

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<sup>627</sup> “Dharwar Collector’s Diary” 1819 1818, 48–49, Maharashtra State Archives.

<sup>628</sup> Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*.

<sup>629</sup> Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*.

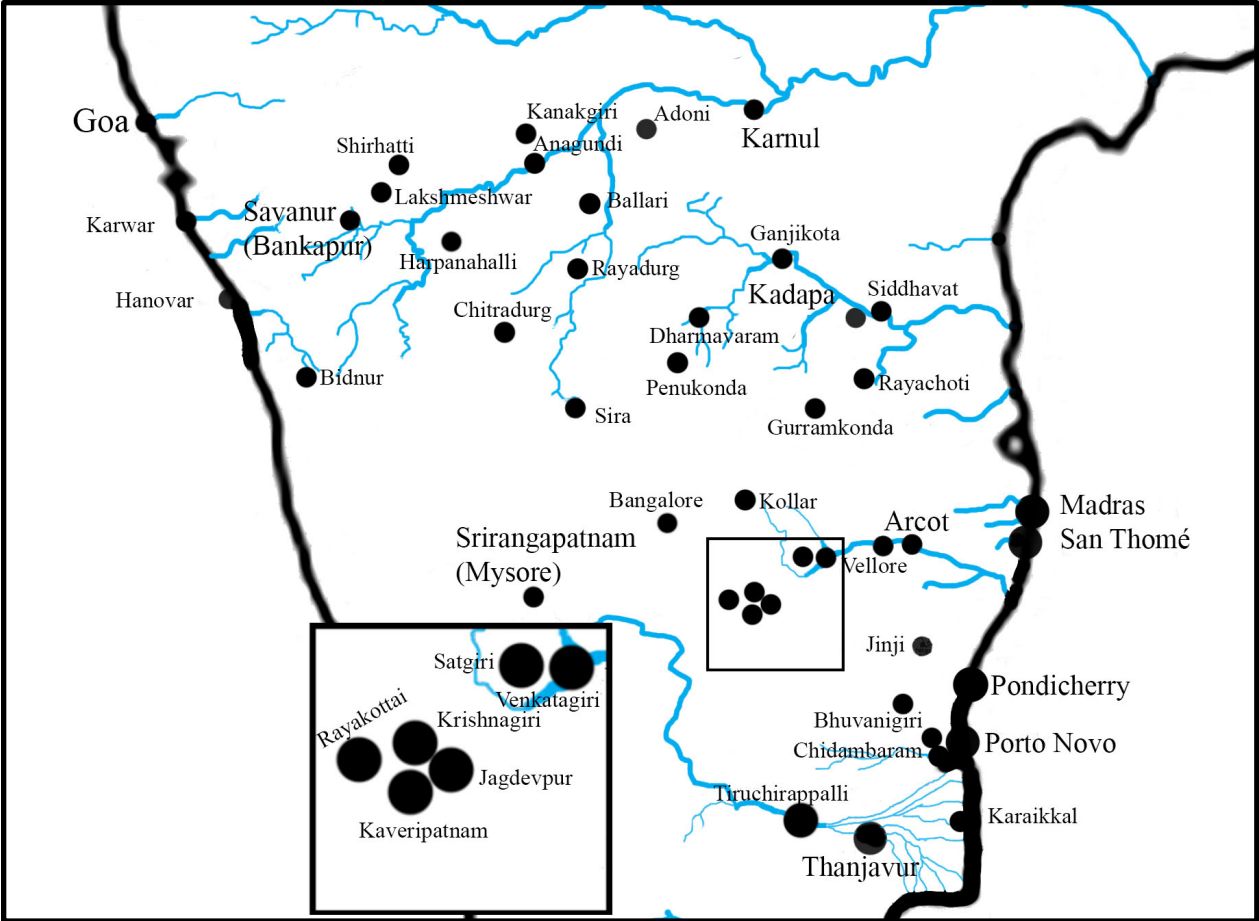
<sup>630</sup> Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*; Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

of political orders in the absence of central authority.<sup>631</sup> Each of these studies seeks, in the face of prevailing arguments that presume an absence of centralized authority must have equated to chaos, to illuminate the dispersed, practical systems of order upon which such societies relied. Elite or aristocratic households, spread out across large swathes of territory, shared out administrative responsibilities, delegating much of the practical decision-making to local representatives and their allies, and relying upon relations of blood and marriage to facilitate the movement of populations and resources across regions. Disagreements were at times worked out by recourse to violence, and at other times through negotiation and exchange. In all cases, however, such 'headless' governments relied upon widely shared agreement over the rules of conduct. Understanding that no one group could hope to predominate, governing elites acted, whether explicitly or implicitly, on the basis that neighboring powerholders also enjoyed legitimacy. Over time, participants wove a tapestry of dispersed power arrangements across the landscape, continuously incorporating new groups as they sought to latch themselves ever more securely to strategically and economically important regions. Much like Indrani Chatterjee's depiction of the many-stranded system of monastic authority that prevailed in India's early modern northeast, in the Karnatak region households like the Pannis, Nawayats and Miyanas sought to build around them coalitions of specialist communities that looked increasingly like one another. These densely interwoven systems of alliance bolstered their command over secure strongholds and facilitated their ability to do business in the region.

A distinct feature of the Karnatak's political culture, however, was its experience of rapid transition over the course of the seventeenth century from dominance by Vijayanagara-affiliated successor lineages to Deccan Sultanate actors to Mughal representatives. The ability to operate fluently within and across these layered sovereignties was crucial to one's political success in the region, since this was the 'language' by which one forged alliances with the region's soldiering communities. Returning for a moment to the events of Chapter Four, we find that throughout the 1710s-1730s, Deccan-based Maratha, Mughal, and Hyderabad actors found themselves obliged to strike expensive and at times even humiliating bargains with Karnatak households in order to achieve short-range military aims. Accordingly, outside military powers were often tellingly unwilling to cross over the Krishna River boundary, a crossing that demanded the ceding of certain normative sovereign claims, as well as hierarchical pretensions.

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<sup>631</sup> Sneath, *The Headless State*; Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*.



Map 6: South India 18th c. with Baramahal detail



## **Chapter Six: Last dance**

The final chapter of this dissertation documents the disintegration of the Karnatak household institution and the roots of European territorial expansion in southern India. In the previous two chapters, the Krishna-Tungabhadra frontier reasserted its importance in the wake of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah's rise to power in the eastern Deccan. Karnatak households, which had under Deccan Sultanate and Mughal rule made their careers by bridging this boundary, remade themselves as gatekeepers within the Karnatak itself and as key players within a radically decentralized political ecology. As they had in previous decades, households counterbalanced their military specialization with investment in commerce. What at first seemed to suggest the households' growing strength, however, soon revealed an increasing vulnerability.

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that South India's economy remained vibrant, wealthy, and dynamic. Its magnetic pull, as I have shown, was a key element shaping subcontinental politics across the centuries in question. Far from an earlier historiography that described South India's seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in terms of 'chaos' and 'decline,' this study supports revisionist scholarship offering a far more prosperous portrait. In particular, I have shown how South India's political institutions were closely integrated with and responsive to the demands of the region's sophisticated economy. This is not to say that South India had been peaceful. Far from it, the military household was peculiarly well-adapted for early modern market competition: seeking to expand their spheres of influence by combining war and commerce. Through the 1730s and 1740s, however, a series of shocks led to circumstances that allowed European Company actors who had long hovered at the subcontinent's margins to begin their march towards its center.

Each of these shocks, if taken alone, might readily have been overcome within a few years. Indeed, it was the households' very capacity to adapt and recover from such setbacks that has been the central story of this dissertation. In this case, however, they found themselves by the 1740s trapped between changes taking place simultaneously southward along the Coromandel Coast and to the north in the Deccan. As we have already seen, the Karnatak households' defeat at the Battle of Shakar Khera in 1724 had forced their leadership to regroup and focus their attention on affairs south of the Krishna, largely ceding their former claims in the Deccan to the Nizam and the Marathas. Despite this setback, through the late 1720s and the 1730s, the Karnatak households held their ground, continuing to cultivate a shared political culture within the region. Yet this was also a period marked by a major famine along the southern Coromandel Coast, first between 1727-1730 and again between 1733-1738. Years of shortage, which had a marked impact on the coastal trade in which the households were deeply invested, were directly followed by an abrupt shift in strategy by the Maratha and Asaf Jahi Deccan powers, which both pushed aggressively southwards during the 1740s. Finally between 1748 and 1751, two major political contests – one between dueling contenders for power in throne, and the other between French and British East India Companies hoping to dislodge one another from the Coromandel trading region – converged in the southern Coromandel hinterlands near Pondicherry.

After Nizam al-Mulk's death in 1748, two competing claimants to the Hyderabadi throne, Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang, opted to go to battle not in territories of the Deccan where they hoped to claim power, but rather in the southeastern Coromandel coastal hinterlands. Before reaching its conclusion, the succession war would draw into its orbit nearly every major interest group and political player in the Karnatak territories, including both the French and British East

India Companies, major regional mercantile and banking interests, and finally, the Panni, Miyana, and Nawaiyat households.

These events are often described within the context of a larger complex of conflicts glossed in the historiography as the ‘Carnatic Wars.’ These military entanglements, divided arbitrarily into three separate periods (1744-1748, 1749-1754, 1756-1763), are usually seen as a mere side-note to the global conflict between English and French forces, which played out across multiple continents during the eighteenth century.<sup>632</sup> Such a portrait depicts South Indian politics primarily in terms of weak proxies in the service of Europe’s global ambitions. Seen from an inland perspective, however, the conflicts of the 1740s take on a quite different character, one in which indigenous actors appear as optimistic investors in what they hoped might be a profitable future.

One of the key points in this chapter is the extent to which regional actors continued to perceive the Karnatak as an arena ripe for investment and exploration even as the political system formerly dominated by the households unraveled. During this same period, growing European influence and expansion along the Coromandel Coast introduced new fissures within the hinterland economy that had serious repercussions both locally and in distant inland marketplaces. The main focus of my analysis in this chapter is a three-year period between late 1748 and the opening months of 1751, when almost every political arrangement and alliance seemed up for potential revision, and every possible future lay on the table. As the two Asaf Jahi contestants and their various allies fought a slow contest for dominancy across the Coromandel hinterlands, the Karnatak’s old and emerging powers alike all brought forward ambitious visions, buoyant with the expectation that their claims would prevail. Participants, like investors in a booming stock market, gambled recklessly. Most would leave emptyhanded; some would lose their lives. By 1751, the political geography of southern India had been radically transformed, and a major vacuum of power had emerged in the Karnatak hinterland.

Reflecting the declining fortunes of the Karnatak houses, the Miyana and Panni households retreat from the main stage here (the Nawaiyats play a slightly different role, as we will see). Yet they do not entirely disappear from the field of action. At key junctures, they roared back into the spotlight as the Hyderabad succession war lurched towards its conclusion, even becoming, for a brief moment, kingmakers. The households hedged their bets by lending public support to the Nizam’s presumed successor and son Nasir Jang, even as they maintained back-channel communications with supporters of Muzaffar Jang, the Nizam’s grandson by his eldest daughter. When they found themselves unable to achieve a negotiated outcome that they had hoped would allow them to recover some semblance of their earlier arrangements, Panni and Miyana household leadership embraced desperate measures. They assassinated Nasir Jang and raised Muzaffar Jang to the throne of Hyderabad, before in turn murdering Muzaffar Jang as well, triggering a violent reprisal. This final and desperate series of events, in which it is clear that the Miyana and Panni households had at once everything and nothing to lose, marks the functional end of the household system as interregional hinge institutions, and the opening of a new set of possibilities in South India’s political sphere.

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, a new kind of South Indian polity would emerge – the regional state, increasingly centralized and territorially confined. While the Mysore Sultanate rose to prominence from the 1760s onwards, becoming the poster-state for indigenous

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<sup>632</sup> G.J. Bryant, “The War in the Carnatic,” in *The Seven Years’ War: Global Views*, ed. Mark H. Danley and Patrick J. Speelman (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013), 73–106.

military fiscalism, remnants of the Miyana and Panni households in Kadapa, Karnul and Savanur, unable to sustain themselves on the limited resources of their home territories, became satellites to their powerful neighbors – the Asaf Jahis of Hyderabad, Hyder Ali of Mysore, and the Marathas in Pune. Importantly, however, unlike in the northern Mughal heartlands, where scholars like Muzaffar Alam have argued that regional state systems emerged as a response to rising economic prosperity, the regional state in southern India only came into its own *after* growing European control over the major port cities of the Coromandel Coast had effectively undermined inland institutions like the Karnatak household, which had formerly been fostered by South India’s central place in the Indian Ocean economy.

## European traders and Asian trade

While the European trading companies have operated at the margins of this story almost throughout, in this final chapter they emerge to take center stage. The orthodoxy in earlier generations of historiography on eighteenth-century trade was that Indian merchants flocked to European port cities and market centers to do business during this period because they found these European-governed centers to be havens of good governance and security of property. This argument has retained a degree of currency even in some recent work. Radhika Seshan’s 2012 study, for example, asserts that Europeans supplied the sole source for “security of both trade and person” as far back as the seventeenth century.<sup>633</sup> While acknowledging the coast to have been an economically vibrant region, she nevertheless argues that European Company officials successfully manipulated weak inland polities to their own benefit beginning as early as the late seventeenth century.<sup>634</sup> Alongside this strand of scholarship, revisionists beginning in the 1980s sought to propose alternative ways of thinking about the eighteenth-century relationship between indigenous merchants and polities, and European Companies. C.A. Bayly, for example, argued in the North Indian context that Indian bankers and merchants often found reasons to “recruit themselves into the Europeans’ world,” even if “they did so on their own terms,” largely because it made good economic sense to do so.<sup>635</sup> For Bayly, indigenous merchants were powerful autonomous forces on whose support early Company traders relied. These merchants’ abandonment of indigenous sovereigns spelled their downfall. Sinnappah Arasaratnam makes a similar, if more conservatively argued, assertion in the context of the Coromandel Coast. Like Seshan, he traced an indigenous exodus of capital to European ports as far back as the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>636</sup> Yet Arasaratnam’s account is in several places tantalizingly ambiguous as to the reasons behind and even the timing of such a migration, particularly in his discussions of the city of Porto Novo, which he shows to have remained an indigenous economic powerhouse well into the middle decades of the eighteenth century precisely because, as a free port outside the bounds of coercive European ambitions, it offered refuge for merchants and affiliates seeking to make their own trade arrangements.<sup>637</sup> In this vein, Kanakalatha Mukund argued that where indigenous merchants *did* enter into trade negotiations with Europeans along the Coromandel Coast in the early part of the

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<sup>633</sup> Radhika Seshan, *Trade and Politics on the Coromandel Coast: Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2012), 42.

<sup>634</sup> Seshan, 42–47.

<sup>635</sup> Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*, 239.

<sup>636</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 233–35.

<sup>637</sup> Arasaratnam, 161–62, 174–75.

eighteenth century, they often did so not because these arrangements were more profitable or trading conditions more equitable, but often for other reasons, much in the same way, she argues, as modern capitalists might “purchase [...] loss-making industrial units [...] for tax relief.”<sup>638</sup> Although some traders managed to make the arrangement marginally profitable, others absorbed a loss in order to accrue intangibles like name and status in a key connecting port city or to attain side benefits that came with being a ‘Company merchant.’ For Mukund, these indigenous traders’ decision to pursue business in European-held ports was frequently not the preferred option.

Still, Mukund argues that in the “post-1725 scenario”<sup>639</sup> European enclaves had begun to operate as “inviolable strongholds” that served as points of physical refuge for persons and property during moments of instability inland. My work supports that assessment that sometime in the years around 1740, European-held ports began to serve as ‘safe zones’ of a sort (albeit never uniformly or completely). Such a transformation appears here to have been both later than is sometimes suggested and relatively rapid. In sympathy with Mukund’s larger assessment, this was not a consequence of Europeans’ good governance or security of property; far from it, many merchant groups clearly worked hard to avoid European and especially British ports. Instead, this chapter points to a number of short-term factors that converged to amplify the European Companies’ influence at a delicate moment. I also point to longer-term processes that destabilized the balance the households had long ago struck between investment along the Coromandel Coast, command over the high roads to the north, and their place near the apex of the regional military labor market.

Given the British East India Company’s well-known later history in the subcontinent, it is worth pointing out that the early decades of the eighteenth century marked a nadir for British interests on the Coromandel Coast. By contrast, in Madras, trade seemed to be stagnating, some merchants were going bankrupt, and others were beginning to drift away from the port. For their part, the French appeared to be improving their own standing by imitating the indigenously-controlled port of Porto Novo to the south and reducing all import and export duties to two and a half per-cent, roughly half of what was current in Madras. Pondicherry’s rapid growth in this period effectively eclipsed the small British-held port of Fort St. David, a few miles up the coast.<sup>640</sup> Surviving sources from this period seem to defy any straightforward reading. For example, Arasaratnam’s study attributes a bump in Dutch trade during the 1730s to the stable administration established inland at Arcot by Saadatullah Khan, but a few pages later blames sagging fortunes in Madras on administrative upheaval in the Arcot hinterlands during the same period.<sup>641</sup> Although these shifting stories make for frustrating reading, Arasaratnam perhaps ought be forgiven such contradictory arguments, given the cacophony of the multilingual archives and the sheer number of moving parts: French, British, Dutch (and to a lesser extent Portuguese and Danish) actors engaged in trade on behalf of their companies and also for private gain. Meanwhile numerous Asian trading groups, amongst them Armenian, South Indian groups like Chettiyar, Maraikkayar, and Labbai groups, Afghan, Iranian, Gujarati, Arab, Chinese and Southeast Asian communities, all plied the ports and built relationships with inland producers and political authorities. For every downturns in fortune reflected in an individual or group’s history, an uptick elsewhere muddies the narrative.

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<sup>638</sup> Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, 131–41.

<sup>639</sup> Mukund, 141–43.

<sup>640</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 174, 191, 200–202.

<sup>641</sup> Arasaratnam, 181, 201.

Contributing to the literature's lack of clarity on this period is a comparative plenty of European archival data and an almost total absence of comparable material in indigenous languages. As a result, most scholars have focused on European-centered trade. Yet this is a misleading representation. Considering the economy more broadly, both Christopher Bayly in the North Indian context and Karuna Wielenga in the southern context have drawn upon such material as they were able in order to estimate that local markets continued to make up more than half of the economic demand well into the nineteenth century (figures can only have been higher in the century preceding).<sup>642</sup> Looking outwards towards the oceans, intra-Asian, rather than Europe-bound trade, continued to make up the great majority of transactions both in value and in quantity of goods. Indeed, where European traders found success, it was incumbent on their learning how to participate in intra-Asian trade as they sought to assemble profitable return shipments.<sup>643</sup> European-held port cities necessarily courted Asian traders and European Companies piggy-backed on indigenous merchant networks in order to survive.<sup>644</sup> These trade networks remained firmly in the hands of non-European specialists. Accordingly, it behooves us to be careful when generalizing about the South Asian coastal economy outside the sphere of European ports.

European trading company officials in South Asia during the early decades of the eighteenth century were not, from a purely economic perspective, dominant players. What they were able to do along the Coromandel Coast, however, was claim an increasingly advantageous position through their militarized hold over major regional ports, thereby forcing their own punitive trade rules on Asian sea-trade networks that fell within reach of British (and to a lesser extent French and Dutch) ports. As the decades of the eighteenth century progressed, increasingly large areas of the Coromandel's coastline were excised from the region's formerly open trading environment.<sup>645</sup> Indigenous networks were forced into ever more constrained circumstances in distant free ports like Porto Novo, or else accede to European regulations in exchange for the convenience of access.

One of the primary sources on which this chapter relies is the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, whose remarkable Tamil-language diary provides a fabulously detailed portrait of life in Pondicherry (with some gaps) between 1736-1761. The text is a remarkable one, running to twelve volumes in its English translation, translated and published in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>646</sup> The original does not appear to have been intended for a wide audience – perhaps only Pillai's family. It sat unread amongst family records for more than a century after his death. Pillai was from a relatively humble caste group, the Idayans, but his ancestors had risen in status over time to become powerful merchants and account-keepers along the southern coast. During the eighteenth century members of his family had served both British and French East India Companies. Ananda Ranga Pillai served as a commercial agent and translator [*dubāsh*] for the French Governor Joseph Francois Dupleix between 1742-1754 when the French Company was at the height of their power in South India. Pillai himself retained a trading post at Porto Novo on behalf of the French Company, and also

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<sup>642</sup> Karuna Dietrich Wielenga, "The Geography of Weaving in Early Nineteenth-Century South India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 52, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 147–84; Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars*, 236.

<sup>643</sup> Jan de Vries, "The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World," *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (2010): 724–25.

<sup>644</sup> Indrani Ray, "India in Asian Trade in the 1730s: A Discussion by a French Trader," in *The French East India Company and the Trade of the Indian Ocean: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Lakshmi Subramanian (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1999), 181; Nadri, "The Maritime Merchants of Surat."

<sup>645</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 165.

<sup>646</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*.

oversaw trading posts at Arcot and in Lalapettai (an inland market near Vellore) on his own dime. In his diary, Pillai maintained records of market prices, cargo contents, news and gossip that he heard, as well as details of political negotiations, records of conversations he and others had held, and occasionally, his own opinions on events.<sup>647</sup> While he maintained a high opinion of his boss Dupleix, he also at times commented on areas where he felt Dupleix was mistaken or ignorant of something. He was a well-connected and powerful merchant who paid close attention to these details for his own business and that of his client, the French Company. He was openly biased against various groups – he was a fan neither of the British nor of Muslims, although he was perfectly content to work with, and contract business agreements with the latter group in particular. In my reading of Pillai, I take seriously his reports of news and rumors about affairs inland as well as his insights on business affairs conducted closer to home. His diary represents the best surviving source we have reflecting the perspective of a high-status indigenous merchant from this period.

### Hinterland hinges

One of the key factors that had fed the Karnatak households' success was their command over key hinterland centers, allowing them to keep an eye out to sea while closely overseeing the movement of goods and people inland. Although we have seen evidence of this strategy dating back to the Miyanas' initial settlement in Bankapur (which served a similar role on the southwestern coast), it is only in the 1740s, a period by which the Miyanas were under severe pressure, that we develop a clearer picture of what their local household infrastructure looked like. Despite the late provenance of this material, it helps shed a light on the households' arrangements. In particular, it points to the manner in which they sought to balance risk and to make different types of investments work more effectively by mutual association.

Two key centers for the Miyanas, as we have already seen, were the towns of Chidambaram and Bhuvanigiri, both about nine miles inland from the free port of Porto Novo. In the 1740s, a man known as Mudamiah<sup>648</sup> supervised household interests in the region. Contemporary sources describe him as the *faujdār* of Chidambaram, although he played no obvious role as a military commander. He did, however, maintain *jāgīrs* both in Chidambaram and Kadapa, and oversaw the household's financial interests in the Porto Novo and Pondicherry hinterlands.<sup>649</sup> Mudamiah took over the position from his elder brother Lal Khan, himself either the son or the younger brother of one of the several Abdul Nabi Khans who had ruled Kadapa.<sup>650</sup> He oversaw the overland transport of goods between Chidambaram and destinations northwards, and almost certainly also arranged sea

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<sup>647</sup> All of the biographical details offered here, as well as a broader analysis of this source, can be found in Washbrook, "Envisioning the Social Order in a Southern Port City."

<sup>648</sup> His name is an interesting mystery. Certainly the latter half is the Persian title 'Miyan,' a common form of respectful address among Indian Muslims, however 'Muda' is not readily identifiable. One possibility emerges from H.H. Wilson, who notes that *mūda* is an Arabic term for 'trustee.' *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms: And of Useful Words Occurring in Official Documents Relating to the Administration of the Government of British India, from the Arabic, Persian, Hindustani, Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Uriya, Marathi, Guzarathi, Telugu, Karnata, Tamil, Malayalam, and Other Languages* (London: W.H. Allen and Co, 1855), 348. Other possibilities include a reference to the Mudaliyar merchant community based in the region. A perhaps more far-fetched possibility comes from the region's close trading ties with Malay ports. In Malay, 'Muda' can be a title used to indicate youth, as in the case of the famed Acehnese Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636).

<sup>649</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. IV: 3; VI: 37.

<sup>650</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 334; Kirmani, *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w'al Hukkam*, 196, 199.

shipments (although we lack the evidence for this), much as his earlier predecessor Sher Khan Lodi had done in the 1670s.<sup>651</sup> By Mudamiah's time, Bhuvanigiri was considered one of the most reliable and remunerative sources of land revenue in the region, a point that will be significant to our story in the pages that follow. Our sources allow us to see in some detail the network that Mudamiah built around him. It included two Afghans, Azmat Khan and Mamriz Khan. The former was a *jama'dār* who often worked for members of the Nawaiyat household but also carried out work in association with the Miyanas.<sup>652</sup> The latter was a trader and ship owner whose vessels often plied routes between Tenasserim (in modern Myanmar), Queda (Kedah, in Malaysia), and the various Coromandel ports.<sup>653</sup> Other figures included Muhammad Khan Sulayman (more often identified as Chidambaram Muhammad Khan), whose name often comes up in the context of overland shipments and business arrangements with Pondicherry-based figures, as well as the Porto Novo-based shipowner Miran Marakkayan, who hailed from the Maraikkayar Tamil Muslim community.<sup>654</sup> Meanwhile, Mudamiah entrusted land revenue collection to a figure named Periyar Perumal Pillai.<sup>655</sup>

Mudamiah oversaw a complex regional ecosystem of capital exchange and land revenue rights, whose existence helped to alleviate cyclical currency shortages relating to the seasonal nature of oceanic trade. The shipping season along the coast was roughly April-September, while ships headed to Southeast Asia left in September or early October and returned between February-April the following year.<sup>656</sup> Merchants sought to offset seasonal shortages of hard currency by investing in shares of rights to collect land revenue in villages surrounding the city. Surviving evidence of such arrangements in the Pondicherry context offers testament to the nuanced legal and monetary universe in which these actors operated. In 1749, for example, revenue collected from nine villages outside of Pondicherry, all part of a certain Nawab Baraward Khan's *jāgīr* (neither the identity of this individual nor the authority by which the *jāgīr* had originally been granted appear in the surviving record) had been assigned to be shared out between a prominent trader known as Sunguvar and the Miyana affiliate Muhammad Sulayman Khan, who may have been business partners of some type. When their rights were abruptly rescinded for reasons not specified, they together sought the intervention of the Nawaiyats and the French government at Pondicherry for permission to repossess the villages and claim for themselves what remained outstanding. This was agreed upon and a new arrangement was negotiated between these men and two other figures, Mutturama Chetti and Lakshmana Rao (both merchants who did some business in Pondicherry and together owned a half share in the village revenues). It was agreed that the latter pair would pay the former one fourth of the net revenue. This was in turn formalized by the French, apparently with the understanding that their share in the land revenues would help offset the men's expenses while in Pondicherry.<sup>657</sup> Similar arrangements were almost certainly in place in the Porto Novo hinterland territories that Mudamiah supervised. Mercantile and political interests were tightly entwined, and their interrelationship

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<sup>651</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. V: 172.

<sup>652</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 306.

<sup>653</sup> Pillai, Vol. II: 214.

<sup>654</sup> Pillai, Vol. II: 214; Vol. VI: 231, 243, 287; Vol. VII: 190-191, 303.

<sup>655</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 228.

<sup>656</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 33-38; Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 48-49.

<sup>657</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 243-244, Vol. VII: 294.

formally acknowledged. Merchants and governments relied upon one another, fronting cash, access to markets, and other resources in times of need.<sup>658</sup>

This dense entanglement of interests was not limited to elites, but reached deep into the social fabric, playing a prominent role in the lives of more humble communities as well. The close weave of reciprocal obligation that made up the social fabric of market centers was on full display when, after a century under British control, French forces seized the city of Madras for three years between 1746-1749. Ananda Ranga Pillai's account offers some sense of how these deeply rooted networks operated during this period. Regardless of his own lifelong service to the French in Pondicherry, he commented quite frankly on the state of affairs in Madras, where he had maintained personal and business connections, as commerce slowed to a crawl. Groups that normally made their living in the port city found its business environment radically disrupted as the British withdrew. Many of the city's non-European residents – not just elite merchants but traders, craftsmen, and other specialists, as well as sweepers, load carriers, and other servants, elected to depart the city even as the French installed their own temporary administration. On the city's return to British hands, Pillai reported that these groups returned in their droves, hoping to retrieve their old places. He noted in some wonderment that:

...We do not know where the Tamils were who had left Madras and would not return in our time; but when [the British] flag was hoisted, ten lakhs of Tamils, Muhammadans, Lubbays, Pattanawars, coolies, etc., crowded into the town as joyfully as though the Fort and town belonged to each of them.<sup>659</sup>

Such an account should not be read as confirmation of the British Company's business-friendly policies, but does indicate the extent to which formal and informal relationships, connections, and patterns of commerce accumulated around whatever infrastructure was in place. Disruption or displacement of that infrastructure had demonstrable effects and often took time for the local 'ecosystem' to recover. Such a story helps us to see how deeply entangled were the various communities and pieces of the southern economy, and how very conscious its participants were of the complex ties that bound them to more and less distant markets. Considering the Karnatak households and their long distance network of investments and interests as a whole, one can imagine a complex spider web, where at each node – in places like Bhuvanigiri or San Thomé or, further inland, at one of the Baramahal forts like Jagdevpur or even Kadapa itself – close connections with local actors solidified household claims. Pressure at one point or another along these networks had power to affect interconnected markets up and down the Karnatak. Accordingly, the expansion of European trading companies' authority along the Coromandel coast, squeezing many indigenous merchants into a diminishing number of autonomous ports, had major repercussions for inland politics as the eighteenth century progressed. In particular, the conflicts which shaped the 1740s and 1750s would play out in large measure by way of the complex, long-distance network-alliances described above, wars not between states, but rather between early modern capitalist coalitions.

### **Pathan traders seeking safe harbors**

Participants in these networks had a clear understanding of how disruptions in one region caused knock-on effects at great distances. We saw evidence for this as far back as the 1670s, when Shivaji targeted Miyana household interests up and down the Karnatak's western and eastern flanks

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<sup>658</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 157-158, 396-397.

<sup>659</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 159-160.



with the goal of disrupting Miyana power in Bijapur itself (see Chapter Two). Around the turn of the century (as described in Chapter Three), Daud Khan Panni led a concerted effort to shift household shipping interests north to the port of San Thomé and to British-held Madras as he simultaneously expanded his household's claims in the western Deccan. One of the key communities associated with Panni's efforts were the 'Pathan' (or Afghan) traders who, as we have already seen, carried on a flourishing trade that remained undiminished into the 1720s.

In 1725, the year after the Karnatak households' defeat at Shakar Khera in the northern Deccan, in what may well have been a consequence of the battle's larger-scale political fallout thanks to the establishment of a hostile government in the eastern Deccan, the fortunes of Pathan merchants trading in Madras and in neighboring San Thomé took a sharp downturn. While no direct evidence survives to illuminate the precise relationship between these events, it is easy to imagine that the wounded Panni and Miyana houses based in the Karnatak highlands might have put pressure on merchants moving through their territories – forcing them to pay higher taxes or failing to pay for high-value goods. Moreover, direct relationships between these houses and elites based further north in the Deccan would have suffered as the Nizam did everything in his power to reorient regional patronage networks towards his own person. In any case, the Madras-based British complained that year that the Pathans were tardy in paying their dues, and that they had imported fewer goods than in previous years. By 1727, East India Company officials reported that “the Pathan Merchants are dwindled away to nothing there is not now a Man among them who can find the least Credit so that we have this Year lost that part of the Revenue.”<sup>660</sup> The situation can only have been worsened by the developing famine inland, itself a result of harvest failures over several successive years (between 1717-1730 and again between 1733-1738). In 1729 the report was terser: “Patan trade dwindled to nothing.”<sup>661</sup>

The Pathan merchants probably did not actually abandon their businesses but rather, feeling the pinch of political upheaval from their patrons inland, sought more profitable accommodations in more amenable ports elsewhere (a point I will return to in a moment). The British remained optimistic that they would be able to win this group back to Madras.

We promise our Selves the Pathan trade will revive again. Several Bales of Bengall piece Goods having been already imported last month by them. They or any others who will come to our Port shall find the Liberty and Freedom of trade which they can possibly desire.<sup>662</sup>

The Afghan merchants' fortunes stabilized in the early 1730s. Despite the ongoing famine in raging inland, they appear to have found avenues by which to secure their own business arrangements. Towards this end, we find them attempting limited forays back into the central Coromandel trading region. Initially, they only did business in San Thomé, which by this period enjoyed a nebulous status: formally controlled by the Arcot-based Nawaiyats, its business was shaped the port's proximity to Madras only a few miles up the coast but it remained free to establish its own, comparatively flexible customs arrangements. British overtures to Pathan representatives doing business in San Thomé returned cool replies. They received “no other answer than that their Principals are at Sea or in the Country...” and that any negotiations “...must be deferr'd till next Season.”<sup>663</sup> British efforts to reach out to this group must be understood in the context of British

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<sup>660</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. VI: 20 (22 Sept., 1727).

<sup>661</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. 6-9: 50 (12 Oct., 1729).

<sup>662</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. VIII: 75 (19 Jan., 1730).

<sup>663</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. VIII: 93 (16 Aug., 1732).

anxieties respecting the power of Armenian, ‘Moorish’ and Pathan traders who dominated the Bengal trade through the 1730s, finding success where the British could not because of their superior capacity to build trading relationships beyond the port of Calcutta.

The Pattan & Moors Merchants settled here and at St. Thomé have their [Correspondents] at Hughly [in Bengal] who send Gomastas over the Country for the Consumption of this Coast which will be fully supplied by others whether we do or not [...] At present we have the Mortification to see this Trade entirely in the Hands of Armenians Moors and Pattans for the most part carried by our Door to St. Thomé to the great Prejudice of your Customs here and in Bengall besides.<sup>664</sup>

By the 1740s, however, the British had successfully wooed the Pathans back to Madras. In January 1742, Company officials remarked that the “Patan goods [traded at Madras] [...] was very considerable and made up for the loss by several other branches of our trade.”<sup>665</sup> In other words, the Company’s failure to make a profit in their own ventures was counterbalanced by what they could glean in taxes from the Afghan traders’ sales in the British-held port. This comment alone offers considerable insight as to the East India Company’s continued reliance on the so-called ‘Asian trade,’ rather than the trade between India and Europe that has often been the focus of scholarly attention.<sup>666</sup>

The return of the Afghans to Madras, however, forces us to ask first where the Afghans had disappeared to during their decades-long absence from the English-held city, and second, what had caused their return. Through the 1720s and 1730s, it appears that Afghan merchant networks directed much of their trade southwards to the more amenable environments around Porto Novo where, as we have seen, the Miyanas retained a powerful hinterland presence, much stronger than in the Madras hinterland, dominated as it was by the Nawaiyats at Arcot. Remarkably, despite Porto Novo having been characterized by scholars like Arasaratnam as “the story of the success of traditional Asian trade against European competition” in the early decades of the eighteenth century, this port city has not been the subject of any major historical study. This despite the fact that it “far exceed[ed] in volume the trade of any other port [on the Coromandel Coast], including the European settlements.”<sup>667</sup> We do know, however, that Porto Novo authorities imposed a low two-and-a-half per-cent import duty and no export tax during the early decades of the century, making it one of the most favorable ports for merchants to do business.<sup>668</sup> The Afghan merchants’ probable choice to shift their trade to this and other ports outside of European control likely helped them to regain their footing after the twin inland shocks of political disruption following the households’ defeat at Shakar Khera and the years of famine that followed.

Porto Novo’s significance for Asian merchants (as well as private European traders) increased as French and British authorities sought to expand regulations on trade by non-Company merchants in Company ports. Authorities often demanded that traders sign agreements promising not to do business with other European powers, forced Company-affiliated merchants to sell unpopular English woolens,<sup>669</sup> or required that ship owners purchase ‘passes’ that allowed their safe passage along sea routes patrolled by European ships. Company officials regularly tried to control the types

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<sup>664</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. XII: 51 (undated, sometime in 1736).

<sup>665</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. X: 10 (1 Oct 1733); Vol. XIII: 44 (18 Jan., 1742).

<sup>666</sup> de Vries, “The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World,” 724–25.

<sup>667</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 25–26, 162, 174–75.

<sup>668</sup> Arasaratnam, 174–75.

<sup>669</sup> Arasaratnam, 246–47.

of currency accepted within their ports. The British sought in 1741, for example, to insist that business in Fort St. David (Cuddalore) be solely conducted using the Madras star pagoda, a Company innovation on the South Indian gold hun.<sup>670</sup> Given that the South Indian economy, far more so than the Mughal north, was predicated upon a promiscuous embrace of at least a half dozen major currencies (see Chapter Five), traders understandably chafed at this demand.

European interventions at times took a more aggressively disruptive face. An early example of such behavior in 1717 has the British mistaking a ship owned by Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana of Kadapa for one owned by the Sultan of Aceh. This is a rather stunning mistake, one which points both to probably substantial overlap between Acehnese and Kadapa-based business affiliates, as well as to the public visibility of Abdul Nabi Khan's wealth, such that his boat might be mistaken as the property of Acehnese royalty. A storm forced the ship, which had been traveling from Aceh to Porto Novo, to anchor further north near Madras. Its captain, intent on conducting his master's business and uninterested in submitting the ship's goods to import duty at the unfavorable rates available in Madras, came ashore and began working his way overland towards Porto Novo. He was confronted en route, relieved of a large sum of gold, and imprisoned by British officials who believed that the Sultan of Aceh owed them a debt. When the British officers eventually realized that they had imprisoned the wrong man, they released the unfortunate ship captain and (so claim the records at least) returned his gold.<sup>671</sup> Such examples of arbitrary seizure and imprisonment were not uncommon even in Company records.

In early 1749, the ruler of Kedah (in modern Malaysia) was moved to write a letter of formal complaint to the British after a similar episode. The ruler of Kedah had sent a ship to the Coromandel Coast the previous year, steering towards Porto Novo. Much to the captain's dismay, the British sent several ships to seize the vessel, forcibly hauling it to Cuddalore [Fort St. David], where its cargo of elephants, rice, and other goods were unloaded and sold under duress, subject to British port rates. The ship's captain thereafter took advantage of some unnamed 'disturbance' at the port, quietly lifting anchor and sailing south to Porto Novo, where he completed the ship's business before returning eastwards. The ruler of Kedah was upset, not only because his agents had been obliged, against their will, to conduct a part of their trade at a British-held port, but also because his much-delayed ship was the last of the season to return to its home port, and as such, subject to substantial risk of loss at sea. Interestingly, however, the ruler of Kedah concluded his formal complaint with an olive branch that seems to reflect Asian merchants' frustration at their sense of confinement in conducting their business only in Porto Novo. He wrote that in the coming year, he planned to send a ship to Cuddalore to trade, but indicated that the ship would drop anchor only if granted a promise to conduct its trade at the same rate current in Porto Novo. If not, "my people will carry her [there] to finish her affairs."<sup>672</sup>

Despite the evident inconveniences and unpleasantness of trading through European-held ports, the above example points to a slow drift of Asian trade into the orbit of British and French ports. The Pathan merchants, as we have seen, began to reappear at Madras in the early 1740s. The timeline coincides with several major events that took place in the environs of Porto Novo, each of

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<sup>670</sup> Madras (India : Presidency), ed., *Selections from Fort St. David Consultations, 1741*, Records of Fort St. George (Madras: Government Press, 1916), 6 (16 May, 1741).

<sup>671</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. IV: 120-121 (27 Sept., 1717).

<sup>672</sup> *Records of Fort St. George: Country Correspondence, Public Department, 1749* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1909), 20.

which served to disrupt trade along that stretch of coastline. From the late 1730s, French company officials began aggressively to pursue the ‘purchase’ of the southern port of Karaikkal, where Miyana and Panni households had long maintained a presence, from the ruler of Thanjavur. Although no direct evidence supports this, it would be reasonable to presume that, much like the earlier-referenced French takeover of Madras, such a change of hands had more wide-ranging consequences for port-based business communities and service providers not just in Karaikkal but along the several other local indigenously held ports, including Porto Novo. Another disruption at Porto Novo came in the form of Maratha armies in 1740. Several tens of thousands of cavalymen arrived in the region for the first time in decades, forcing inhabitants of these ports to flee, albeit temporarily, to safe havens. Those merchants who were captured suffered substantial losses.<sup>673</sup> Perhaps these disruptions help to explain why British interests based in Fort St. David, about twenty-five miles north of Porto Novo, finally met some success in their efforts to woo Porto Novo’s merchants in 1741, after the port had for decades subsisted in near-irrelevance.

We have already granted and marked out spots of ground to several of the inhabitants from Porto Novo, the major part of whom are sea-faring merchants who do promise that as they have a general correspondence to several parts of India that they will negociate [*sic*] from hence and bring their shipping and consigns to this port as they formerly did to Porto Novo; further several tradesmen, as weavers, dyers, and painters that they have been formerly concerned with, they will procure to settle here...<sup>674</sup>

These and other pressures on the free southern ports of Coromandel Coast shook trading networks across the region. Long-established connections that had tied the Miyana household’s inland strongholds to the coastal port cities were, by the early 1740s, under serious threat due to shifting dynamics of power along the coast. As we have seen, a key destabilizing factor was the expanding European presence in port cities along the coast, alongside a growing capacity to invite or coerce indigenous traders into doing business in European-held ports.

## Return of the Deccanis

The 1740s marked a suddenly renewed aggression from the north, which placed the Karnatak households’ growing vulnerability on full display. In 1740, Deccan-based armies turned suddenly back towards the Karnatak, conducting a series of major campaigns in rapid succession. Unlike earlier efforts made by Asaf Jahi and Maratha leadership in the mid-1720s, both powers now demonstrated a capacity to recruit soldiers from the Deccan in overwhelming numbers. Their armies easily steamrolled the threat formerly presented by the Karnatak’s Miyana, Panni, and Nawaiyat gatekeepers.

Both Maratha and Asaf Jahi leaders had been content, through much of the 1730s, to train their attention towards concerns in the Deccan and further north, consolidating power and regularizing revenue collection systems in their own territories as well as, in the Maratha case, expanding their reach into new regions. In the large stretches of the Deccan where the Maratha and Asaf Jahi governments overlapped, the regimes settled, across the 1730s, into what Stewart Gordon and John Richards have described as a ‘dual administration,’ where each government collected its own share while tacitly nodding at its rival’s collection agents engaged in the same processes.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 135.

<sup>674</sup> Madras (India : Presidency), *Selections from Fort St. David Consultations, 1741*, 25 (31 Dec. 1741).

<sup>675</sup> Stewart Gordon and John F. Richards, “Kinship and Pargana in Eighteenth Century Khandesh,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 12, no. 4 (1985): 371–97.

Maratha competition against Nizam al-Mulk's forces proved most fierce in the strategically important gateway territory of Malwa, with its important soldiering communities and middlemen recruiters (*jama'dārs*).<sup>676</sup> In 1738, Maratha forces achieved a convincing victory at the Battle of Bhopal and Hyderabad forces were forced to cede control of the region. The Marathas also expanded north and eastwards into Gondwana and Orissa, major parts of Rajasthan and the heartlands of northern India. In the final years of the 1730s the invasion of Mughal North India by the Persian ruler, Nadir Shah, and the sacking of Delhi by Persian forces transfixed both Maratha and Asaf Jahi leadership.

By contrast, both Maratha and Asaf Jahi forces contented themselves with the occasional foray across the Krishna River during the 1730s. Unlike the northern campaigns, however, these were limited projects not aimed at larger administration-building efforts. Nizam al-Mulk led a minor foray in the region in 1735 after several years of delayed promises to do so. The campaign was marked by a tense confrontation with the leader of the Kadapa-based Miyanas, who at one point rode his horse directly up to the Nizam's elephant, forcing his personal guards to intervene. Puzzled Hyderabad observers could only interpret this as an episode of madness.<sup>677</sup> The Miyana leader was briefly imprisoned but seems to have been released before the Nizam returned to the Deccan. His insistence on approaching Nizam al-Mulk directly points to the Afghans' continued confidence in their own autonomous claims in the region.<sup>678</sup> Another minor excursion into the Karnatak came in the form of small Maratha raiding parties, such as one recorded in 1738, which made it as far south as a trade route connecting Arcot to the Mysore highlands. The party waylaid a caravan bearing goods from the Coromandel ports meant for sale at inland markets. Some 200,000 hun or Rs. 700,000 in goods were seized, and Safdar Ali Khan, the leader of the Nawaiyat household, was forced to purchase the Marathas' withdrawal from the Karnatak with an undisclosed quantity of cash.<sup>679</sup> Neither the Marathas nor the Asaf Jahis appear to have attempted during this decade to establish formal tax-collection systems or to otherwise expand their permanent political representation in the Karnatak. This would soon change, however.

### *The Marathas*

In 1740, Raja Shahuji dispatched one of his most important generals, Raghuji Bhonsle, to organize a major Karnatak expedition. The force he gathered was nothing less than overwhelming: on the order of 50,000-100,000 mounted and footsoldiers.<sup>680</sup> They marched southeastwards, crossing into the Karnatak near Karnul with a plan to follow the eastern flank south to the wealthy southern coastline. The Nizam, only recently returned to the Deccan after his sojourn in occupied Delhi, was still occupied by putting down a short-lived rebellion led by his son Nasir Jang and an

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<sup>676</sup> Stewart Gordon, "The Slow Conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire," *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1977): 1-40; Gordon and Richards, "Kinship and Pargana in Eighteenth Century Khandesh"; Stewart Gordon, "Legitimacy and Loyalty in Some Successor States of the Eighteenth Century," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. John F Richards (Madison: South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978), 286-303.

<sup>677</sup> Muhammad Qāsim, "Ahwāl al-Khawāqin," fols. 223a, 223b, 227b, 228b, 234b.

<sup>678</sup> Pawar and Pagdi, *Studies in Maratha History*, Vol. II: 103-104.

<sup>679</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. XII: 88.

<sup>680</sup> Pillai says that some forty to fifty thousand cavalry were present in the Maratha army by the time they reached Karnul. Given typical cavalry/footsoldier ratios one hundred thousand is not improbable. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II: 252; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 41; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 118.

array of prominent Deccan commanders, and thus did not attempt, as he had in earlier years, to respond to the Marathas' moves in the Karnatak.<sup>681</sup>

The Maratha armies paused for long enough in Karnul to collect 60-70,000 rupees in tribute from the Panni household, before moving south to Kadapa. There, the Miyanas were coerced into delivering Rs. 150,000 and other gifts. Women and other vulnerable householders were sent to shelter in the strong fortress of u

up the Penner River.<sup>682</sup> After departing Kadapa, Raghuji and his followers turned next towards Arcot, where Dost Ali Khan Nawaiyat, the nephew and successor of Saadatullah Khan (d. 1733), held power. Women of the household and other vulnerable family members fled to Pondicherry where the French governor promised their safety, along with perhaps a thousand merchants normally based inland.<sup>683</sup> Raghuji's forces easily defeated the Nawaiyat army at the Damalacheruvu pass, killing Dost Ali Khan and forcing his son, Safdar Ali Khan to flee for his life to the secure fortress of Vellore. The Maratha armies then embarked on a leisurely sacking of the unprotected city of Arcot. They eventually reached an agreement with Safdar Ali Khan that he would collect and deliver *chauth* on their behalf. Above and beyond this they also extracted a promise of a further Rs. 3,800,000 in tribute. Rs. 1,200,000 were immediately delivered and a further Rs. 400,000 were somehow collected and presented after the Marathas set about plundering the countryside west of the city.<sup>684</sup>

From Arcot, Maratha armies continued southwards. They harried Porto Novo, provoking panic amongst the city's residents and seizing at least 150,000 hun (Rs. 525,000). Terrified merchant families were stripped and forced to cower naked at the point of a sword as houses were searched during a single day of plunder.<sup>685</sup> Inland, Raghuji's forces encountered several Nawaiyat household members who had been busily expanding their influence south of the Kaveri River. These included Chanda Sahib (the son-in-law of Safdar Ali Khan), who had seized power in Tiruchirappalli, as well as Chanda Sahib's two brothers, Bara Sahib and Sadiq Sahib, both recently established in Madurai and Dindigal.<sup>686</sup> The Marathas besieged Tiruchirappalli, and Chanda Sahib's

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<sup>681</sup> Mīr 'Ālam Abū al-Qāsim ibn Razī al-Dīn, *Hadiqat al-'alam* (Hyderabad, 1266), Vol. II: 149. Nasir Jang appears to have seen his father's absence and the death of the Maratha commander Baji Rao as an ideal opportunity to seize the Deccan for himself.

<sup>682</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 118, 120. Ganjikota is identified as 'Gendi' in the text.

<sup>683</sup> Pillai, Vol. I: 119-120, 135.

<sup>684</sup> *Despatches to England [from Fort St. George] 1694-1751*, Vol. XII: 111-112. This is a massive sum and would certainly have badly undercut the Nawaiyat household's resources. For reference, in 1717 when the Amir al-Umara sent his employees to the Karnatak to collect revenue from Arcot, they demanded (and failed to receive) 1.7 million rupees from Arcot (see Chapter Four). Unfortunately Pillai does not comment on the Marathas' tribute demands from the Nawaiyat household. Robert Orme suggests an even more astonishing figure: Rs. 10,000,000 (supposedly equivalent to one year's revenue in the province), with the promise of future offerings of a similar size. Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 41-42.

<sup>685</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 135.

<sup>686</sup> The story of Chanda Sahib's plot to seize Tiruchirappalli makes for fascinating reading. According to the *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, the city fell into the hands of a young queen named Minakshi after her husband died in 1732. Chanda Sahib, spying opportunity, won Minakshi's trust in part by taking an oath of goodwill on the Qur'an. After talking his way into the city by promising to be her protector, he then treacherously seized the fort. Minakshi, seeing Chanda Sahib's true character and the end of her own political career, decided to immolate herself in a belated *sati* ritual. She reportedly cast herself into the flames whilst clutching a copy of the Qur'an to her chest. While the rest of her body was incinerated, the book and her breast remained miraculously unburnt. The chronicler understood this to be a testament of the Rani's good character and of the holiness of the text, as well as a warning of the punishment that would eventually befall the "faithless liar" Chanda

brothers were killed as they rushed to his defense. Raghujī's forces then contracted with local soldiering communities, amongst them "Poligars, the Kallar of the Maravan Tondiman, and the Pindaris," whose talent in scaling fortress walls finally induced Chanda Sahib to surrender.<sup>687</sup> In Chanda Sahib's place, Raghujī Bhonsle put a Maratha commander with long-standing Karnatak connections named Murari Rao Ghorpade. The Maratha armies then turned back northwards, carrying with them their valuable prisoner Chanda Sahib. They retraced their footsteps home along the same eastern Rayalaseema route, indulging in a second round of pillage in the Miyana and Panni strongholds, as well as several other centers. Well over a century later, the Marathas' actions were still vividly remembered in local oral traditions from Karnul.

Fatte Sing [Fatah Singh Bhonsle, an officer of Raghujī] invaded Trichinopoly [Tiruchirappalli] in the year Raudri and plundered Chandavaram [Chidambaram]. On his return in Durmati he plundered Cuddapah, Chagalmari, Sirvel and Nandyal, in short the whole of the Srisaila country, and took possession of Kurnool and other strongholds. The brave Patans were alarmed and took to flight. The more important poligars succumbed to his sword, while the minor poliemis yielded. Towns and villages were burnt and reduced to ashes. Hidden treasures were looted. The sufferings of the people were unbearable. Women were ill-treated, maid girls shed tears. People were put to the sword or reduced to slavery. Poison was poured forcibly into their noses and eyes. They were forced to abandon their castes or suffer imprisonment.<sup>688</sup>

This description bears considerable parallel with Ananda Ranga Pillai's diary, which vividly narrates the months of Maratha occupation in the Karnatak as a period of unremitting terror and uncertainty, during which the Maratha armies divided into small, fast-moving strike forces that targeted propertied communities for robbery and ransom. Rumors raced up and down the coastline of impending Maratha attacks on port cities, prompting panicked flight and large refugee populations in perceived safe harbors like Pondicherry.<sup>689</sup> What seems clear is that the Marathas' venture was not oriented towards the immediate establishment of a Maratha administration (as their campaigns might have been elsewhere in the Deccan and parts of northern India). While Raghujī Bhonsle did install the Maratha commander Murari Rao as the new governor of the fortress at Tiruchirappalli, the move seems more symbolic than systematic. The Karnatak-based Ghorpades were hardly close allies of the Pune-based court. A family history dating from the end of the eighteenth century recalls that Murari Rao and his father, Hindu Rao, based in the Karnatak, had long refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Bhonsles in Satara. Thus when Raghujī marched south into the Karnatak in 1740, Hindu Rao maintained his distance, while Murari Rao made a calculated decision to join Raghujī's forces.<sup>690</sup> Perhaps Raghujī hoped to conciliate this wayward Ghorpade clan, but if that was his goal, it did not ultimately prove successful. Murari Rao would go on to enjoy a long and storied career through the 1750s and 1760s, during which he primarily allied himself with Karnatak-based groups like the Savanur-based Miyanas against his Deccan-based Maratha cousins.

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Sahib. "The cheat, in his ignorance of the right path, went against the practices of Islam, chose the objects of this transitory world, and took a false oath on the holy book simply to create more confidence in his assertions..." Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 70–71.

<sup>687</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 161.

<sup>688</sup> Chetty, *A Manual of the Kurnool District in the Presidency of Madras*, 31.

<sup>689</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 120–164.

<sup>690</sup> "Yaadhaast Bakhyr Ghorpuddeh or A Historical Memoir of the Ghorpuddeh Family Containing a Full Account of Their Origin, Genealogy from Generation, Their Increase, Great Deeds, and Reputation" (n.d.), Mackenzie Collection, British Library.

### *The Hyderabadis*

The Nizam, who had been unable to respond immediately to the Marathas' campaign due to his son's rebellion, now turned his energies to organizing a proportional response. He set out for the Karnatak at the beginning of 1743 with an army that quickly swelled to the hundreds of thousands (including both footsoldiers and cavalry). Although these figures as well as the earlier numbers cited in reference to the Maratha campaign might seem to beggar belief, they are supported by multiple sources and appear to have been at least broadly accurate.<sup>691</sup> Towards the end of February, 1743, Ananda Ranga Pillai noted that "the Nizam, with his sons, kinsmen, and nobles, advanced- as though the sea was rising and flooding the land – with an overwhelming force of 70,000 horse [...] and encamped in great state at Arcot this morning..."<sup>692</sup> His forces were commanded by perhaps forty high-ranking noblemen and six hundred elephants, of which several hundred alone were dedicated to carrying artillery, a hundred or so more for certain types of baggage, another hundred for other types of baggage, and another hundred for carrying musical instruments. There were 20,000 horse under the Nizam's direct command, and 10,000 more in the service of his own commanders. Also with the Nizam were men identified as Abdul Nabi Khan Miyana's sons, titled Fath Miyan and Bade Miyan, leading about 3,000 horse. The Afghan households' poor treatment by the Marathas, not to mention their own increasingly vulnerable position, seems to have encouraged them to seek temporary alliance with the Asaf Jahis. Marching with the Miyana commanders were an impressive assortment of allied *pāligār* forces, identified as "Anukondavaru, Munukondavaru, Pirakattayurvaru, Nadikattavaru, Mayisurivaru, Kudinadavaru, Chittirakandivaru, Siringerivaru, Kangondivaru, Anaikondivaru, Yachamanayanivaru, Maddalvaru, Ingevaru, Bommarachavaru, etc." These latter groups collectively included some 5,000 or 6,000 cavalry and 100,000 foot soldiers. Beyond them, "the number of the Pindaris in the army is beyond calculation." There were also two major Maratha commanders in the camp, identified as Raja Chandrasen and Raja Nimbalsiyudosi [Nimbalkar 'Shiv Dasi?'], who led a further 20,000 horse.<sup>693</sup>

The composition of the Nizam's army offers a marked contrast not only from the scruffy coalition he had gathered in 1726-1727 (described in Chapter Five) but also from the Maratha forces that had swept through the region only a couple of years previously. In the middle years of the eighteenth century, Maratha leadership seems to have relied primarily on recruitment *within* the Maratha community.<sup>694</sup> By contrast, the Nizam elected to build a multi-ethnic coalition, relying heavily on local leadership to flesh out his military on an as-needed basis. That both strategies enjoyed success is a point that deserves to be underlined in light of ongoing debates about military

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<sup>691</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 254; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 51; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 214.

<sup>692</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 214.

<sup>693</sup> Pillai, Vol. I: 214. Pillai's estimate of the strength of the Nizam's army does not appear to have been far off mark. Other sources quote similar or even higher figures: Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 254; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 51.

<sup>694</sup> It had not always been the case that Maratha-led armies were so heavily skewed in this manner (see Chapter Five) nor would it remain so. Certainly by the early nineteenth century (and likely much earlier) the Marathas cultivated large numbers of Afghan recruits, quite often drawing upon communities associated with the Panni household in Karnul as well as from the Savanuri Miyanas, and even sheltering disgruntled Panni family members in the city of Pune itself. Anonymous, "Waḡā'i-i Nawāb Muhammad Ālif Khān" (Early 19th c.), fols. 146b, 150b, 186b, etc, Library, 647, Telangana State Archives.



technologies and patterns of organization in the eighteenth century.<sup>695</sup> If scholars have begun to identify a shift towards centralized military command and reliance on European weaponry and training by the latter decades of the period, both Maratha and Asaf Jahi campaigns proved that subcontinental military innovation continued to follow multiple paths towards successful ends through the middle of the century.

The Nizam's forces did not stay long at Arcot, but instead pushed onward to Tiruchirappalli, settling into a six month siege. In the end, Murari Rao Ghorpade (who had only recently been granted command of the fort by Raghuji Bhonsle) abandoned Tiruchirappalli in exchange for the Karnatak hill-fortress of Penukonda, rights over sufficient territory to support 1,000 cavalymen, and an immediate cash payment of Rs. 200,000. Local observers saw this as a respectable trade. Pillai observed that "by these means Asaf Jah, who is an astute man, gained his object, but at the same time Morari Rao [*sic*] gathered renown [as a soldier, for his successful defense of the city for half a year]."<sup>696</sup> The Nizam then returned to Arcot where, summarily sidelining the surviving members of the Nawaiyat household, he installed as Governor a northern ally named Anwaruddin Khan, a man with few, if any, local connections.<sup>697</sup> The Nizam's forces then turned back to Hyderabad.

### *Establishment of the Wala Jahis*

The Nizam's intervention was highly unpopular, not least amongst the Karnatak-based allies of the well-connected Nawaiyats. Anwaruddin Khan's reputation as an ineffective and unpopular governor was seen by some as a consequence of his lack of local connections. Others more generously pointed to his advanced age.<sup>698</sup> Despite Anwaruddin Khan's unpromising introduction to the region, however, he and his household, whom I will refer to here as the Wala Jahis (a title they were later granted and by which they are commonly known) maintained their grasp on power. They slowly cut away at potential rivals and other threats. Anwaruddin Khan's targets included remnants of the Nawaiyat household as well as Afghan residents of the city who dated their arrival in the region to the days of Daud Khan Panni's governorship.

Taking advantage of a murderous dispute between an unpaid company of Afghan soldiers and surviving members of the Nawaiyat household (a conflict which led to the death of Muhammad Said, the child-heir of the Nawaiyats for whom Anwaruddin Khan ostensibly served as regent), Anwaruddin Khan ordered that all Afghan residents of the city be expelled and their houses razed. The *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*'s unsympathetic author, Burhan ibn Hasan, insists that Arcot's residents had

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<sup>695</sup> Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered," 391; Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*, 129; Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Art of War under the Nayakas," in *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia, 1000-1800*, ed. Jos J. L. Gommans and D. H. A. Kolff (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 133–52.

<sup>696</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 234-235.

<sup>697</sup> In fact, he first installed a man named Khwaja Abdullah Khan, who died within a few days of his selection. Several hundred years later, the jury remains out as to whether the Khwaja was merely a victim of poor timing, or if he was felled by a more sinister plot. Suspicion has naturally fallen on Anwaruddin Khan, the primary beneficiary of his death. Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 265.

<sup>698</sup> Orme, 52; Paupa Braminy and Robert Orme, "History of the Province of Arcot from 1709 to the Death of Anaverdekan, 23rd July 1749 or the State of the Province of Arcot Alias Pauyeenghaut Carnatica" (1752), 47, Mss/Eur/Orme OV. 14, British Library, IOR Private Papers. For another view see Yusuf Muhammad Khan's account, which portrays Khan as honorable and well-intentioned but elderly, Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 268. See also, generally, the effusive portrait offered by Burhan ibn Hasan, tasked with painting Anwaruddin Khan, the founder of the Wala Jahi dynasty, in glowing terms. Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934.

long suffered under Afghan oppression. While Afghans dominated the business quarters of the city, he argued, money-lenders were reportedly harangued, shop-keepers enjoyed no security of property, and innocent young women were molested at will.<sup>699</sup> When Anwaruddin Khan arrived and ordered that the entire Afghan population be exiled, the Afghans at first tried to disguise themselves by adopting the garb of Shaikhs. In the end, however, they were recognized by their “manner of speech,” [*tarz-i goyā’i*] and driven by force from the city.<sup>700</sup> While ibn Hasan’s account makes the case that Anwaruddin Khan’s attack helped to make Arcot more business-friendly, in reality, his purge of the Afghan community disrupted military recruitment networks that had formerly supplied Afghans soldiers to the Nawaiyats, while also breaking up merchant links that had long threaded through the city, connecting cities like Kadapa and Karnul to the coastal ports. Nor did it escape others that the murder of Safdar Ali Khan’s young son by disgruntled Afghans conveniently rid the Khan of a potentially popular future local rival.<sup>701</sup>

Meanwhile, Anwaruddin Khan’s sons rapidly pushed southwards into the regions formerly battled over by Chanda Sahib Nawaiyat and his brothers. Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, who initially made his base in Tiruchirappalli, was soon campaigning all the way south to Madurai and even Thirunelveli. His brother Abdul Wahhab Khan, meanwhile, was granted the territory of Nellore, on the banks of the Penner River north of Madras. Another brother, Muhammad Najibullah Khan, was awarded portions of the Baramahal.<sup>702</sup> The fourth brother, Muhammad Ali Khan, who would eventually succeed his father and become a close ally of the British, was entrusted with command over the region of Arcot itself, as well as the financially remunerative Tiruchirappalli and its environs.<sup>703</sup>

### *Bankers and moneylenders*

What the Wala Jahis lacked in local support, they made up for in connections with moneylending networks from the north. The brothers’ expansion south of the Kaveri appears to have been funded, in large measure, by Gujarati banking groups who saw opportunity to reap substantial profits from a new wave of political expansion southwards. As I have mentioned in Chapter Two, *hundi* bills of exchange were a routine feature of business along the Coromandel Coast as early as the

<sup>699</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 110–11; Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 117–18.

<sup>700</sup> This unusual episode mirrored in some respects a similar form of collective punishment undertaken by the French in Pondicherry after the Maratha campaign, when the city’s thirty Maratha merchants were rounded up, imprisoned, fined, and then exiled. It also foreshadows later episodes of anti-Afghan violence that would sweep through the city in Hyderabad in 1821, likewise on the basis of the Afghans’ purportedly ‘high-handed’ behavior. Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 167-168; Makhan Lāl, “Yādgar-i Makhan Lāl” (A.H./ 1822 C.E 1237), 290–99, Tārīkh 474, Salar Jung Museum; Lāla Burjnāth, “Waqā’i-i shorish-i Afghānān” (1822), 2218, Salar Jung Museum, Printed Section; “Waqā’i-i Chanchalgarh” (n.d.), 178, Telangana State Archives Library.

<sup>701</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 58–59.

<sup>702</sup> The region is designated ‘South Arcot’ (*janūbī Arkāt* in the Persian) in the text. The Baramahal districts came to be known as South Arcot after the British East India Company rose to power. Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 127; Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 131.

<sup>703</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 127–29.

later decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>704</sup> Still, in the 1740s moneylender networks began to take on an increasingly visible role.<sup>705</sup>

The Nawaiyats, too, had been closely connected with Gujarati banking houses, including one led by a certain Sambu Das Sankaraparik, who also operated as a merchant. Sambu Das had long cultivated close ties to the Nawaiyat household, funding their various ventures and enjoying the security afforded by their patronage. Sambu Das maintained a network of contacts that tied him to interests in Bengal and in Kedah (Malaysia). He moved regularly between residences at inland centers including Srirangapatnam, Arcot, and Thanjavur, as well as port cities like Madras, Pondicherry, San Thomé and Nagore. He traded in hardwoods and in cloth, but Pillai commented particularly on his trade in diamonds and other jewels, which Pillai, his business rival, contended were looted from Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli, sold at a profit in distant Bengal.<sup>706</sup>

As the Nawaiyat household's fortunes declined they pulled connected figures like Sambu Das along with them, opening opportunities for new investors. These included the so-called 'moneylenders of the army' [*sāhūkārān-i lashkar*], who travelled south with the Wala Jahis and Nizam al-Mulk's forces in 1743-44. Not long after their arrival, these men were eagerly making their first local investments as Anwaruddin Khan's sons, each in mutual competition with the other, sought to seize control over Tiruchirappalli. Pointing to the central role played by finance in the politics of the period, this fraternal competition was settled on the basis of the brothers' moneylenders' relative efficiency at gathering cash. One group, promised the rights over the forthcoming collections [*tabṣīla*] from the Thirunelveli region, gave Muhammad Mahfuz Khan a *hundi*, or bill of exchange, for Rs. 300,000. This sum was to be delivered to Anwaruddin Khan's government in exchange for Muhammad Mahfuz Khan being granted the *sūbadārī* of Tiruchirappalli. Mahfuz Khan's brother Muhammad Ali Khan, hearing of this arrangement, turned to the Gujarati firm of Bahuganj. The Bahuganj house one-upped the competition, delivering the same sum in 'ready money' to Anwaruddin Khan's camp on the backs of elephants and camels early the next morning. Faced with a choice between a *hundi* or real coins, Anwaruddin Khan awarded his resourceful son Muhammad Ali Khan and his fast-acting financial backers with the *sūbadārī* of this profitable region.<sup>707</sup>

The renewed northern push for investment in the Karnatak economy took other forms as well. In 1744, shortly after the Nizam's return from the Karnatak, the Marathas announced their intention to send another army south under the leadership of Babu Nayak for the purpose of collecting *chauth*. In a flurry of communiques between Pune and Hyderabad, the Nizam countered that the *chauth* should be collected by his own affiliates and divided and apportioned in his presence "as it had the year previously." Thereafter an agreed portion would be forwarded to the Maratha court. Under no circumstances were Maratha forces to be allowed to enter the Karnatak.<sup>708</sup> His demand was ignored and some 40,000 Maratha cavalry crossed over the border into the Bankapur-

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<sup>704</sup> This evidence contradicts Lakshmi Subramanian's argument that South India's reliance on gold currency served to isolate it from *hundi* networks all the way up through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lakshmi Subramanian, *Indigenous Capital and Imperial Expansion: Bombay, Surat, and the West Coast* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>705</sup> Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, 290-91.

<sup>706</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. I: 131, 205, 265, 268, 270-271; Vol II: 127, 174, 177, 331; Vol. IV: 186, 193, 215, 428-430, 439; Vol. V: 78, 399-400.

<sup>707</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1934, 131; Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 134-35.

<sup>708</sup> Anonymus, "Ruqā'āt-i Karnātak" (n.d.), fols. 1a-1b, Library, 75, Telangana State Archives.

Savanur territories. A combined force of Miyana, Panni, Ghorpade, and Wala Jahi armies put away their own enmities to confront the invading army. Babu Nayak was defeated and forced to return to Satara, where he was met by the clamoring demands of creditors who had invested in his campaign.<sup>709</sup>

Let us pause for a moment to consider the implications of these incursions in the early 1740s, marked both by the vast size of the armies that moved through the region, and by the stunning sums that were seized or negotiated in tribute from the southern houses. Deccan-based polities were clearly enjoying a period of expansive confidence and a new capacity to flaunt their military capacity. Meanwhile, both campaigns reflect a vast amount of wealth, both in the costs of the campaigns themselves, and in the transfer of money from the Karnatak territories to the Deccan capitals. The arrival of moneylenders in the army and the more-or-less explicit settlement of the competition between the various Wala Jahi siblings for control over Tiruchirappalli by dint of each brother's access to liquid currency demonstrates two things. First, that the Karnatak continued to serve as a transregional economic engine whose allure for northerners remained undiminished. Second, the commodification of political conflict in the region continued apace. While this uptick in the 1740s of militarized competition over resources clearly highlights the fact that the Karnatak households were losing their grip on the levers of power, it does not support the argument that South Indian politics and economy had settled into a trajectory of decline.

### **1748-1751: Hyderabad's succession war comes to the Karnatak**

The Deccan's most extended intervention into the Karnatak was yet to come, and would take the form of a succession dispute between two prospective heirs of Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1748). The first was Nizam al-Mulk's second son, Nasir Jang (his eldest son, Ghaziuddin Khan, had long been settled in Delhi and apparently preferred to remain there). The second contender was Nizam al-Mulk's grandson Muzaffar Jang, by the Nizam's eldest daughter. Key to this affair would be the ongoing competition between the English and French, whose global conflict was in these years also being played out by affiliated actors along the Coromandel Coast. In 1746, the French had seized the long-held English port of Madras, forcing the English to retreat to the much smaller port of Fort St. David (Cuddalore), further down the coast not far from Pondicherry. Between 1746-1749, French and English interests jostled with one another up and down the southern coast. The arrival of Hyderabad competitors in the Karnatak offered fresh opportunity for each party to gain leverage against the other.

Another element in this affair was the release, sometime prior to 1748, of Chanda Sahib. Chanda Sahib, a Nawaiyat householder to whom we have already been introduced in previous pages, had been imprisoned at Satara by the Marathas since his defeat and capture at Tiruchirappalli in 1741. Thanks to his close familial affiliation with numerous Karnatak networks, Chanda Sahib appears to have become a "pawn of value in the hands of several bankers" based in diverse locales ranging from Berar to Satara, Pune, Hyderabad, and Pondicherry.<sup>710</sup> The drawn-out nature of these negotiations helps to explain discrepant dates ranging between 1745-1748 for his release. During these years, apparently subject to extremely loose confinement, Chanda Sahib at first pleaded his case in Hyderabad at the Nizam's court, where he hoped to win support for his plan to win back his

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<sup>709</sup> Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II: 256.

<sup>710</sup> Sardesai, Vol. II: 256.

family's old holding at Arcot.<sup>711</sup> When he found no sympathetic ears, he returned to Satara, looking for Maratha support.<sup>712</sup>

Chanda Sahib's eventual return to the Karnatak was overseen and funded by Monsieur Dupleix, the Governor at Pondicherry, and by Chanda Sahib's wife and other members of the Nawaiyat household, all residents of Pondicherry. Dupleix had come to the conclusion that Chanda Sahib's return to the Karnatak would improve the fortunes of the French trading company. Pondicherry's investors hoped that he would be able to oust the Wala Jahis from Arcot, restoring familiar Nawaiyat dominance in the Coromandel hinterlands.<sup>713</sup> In order to raise the money that paid for Chanda Sahib's return, Dupleix's agent, Ananda Ranga Pillai, negotiated large loans from moneylenders, including the aforementioned Nawaiyat-affiliated Gujarati banker Sambu Das.<sup>714</sup> The total sum, which hovers somewhere between the wildly discrepant Rs. 100,000 and 700,000, not only procured Chanda Sahib's release, but also afforded him a small following of perhaps three thousand Maratha cavalrymen.<sup>715</sup> Chanda Sahib marched south into the western Karnatak, where he hoped to build a viable force to facilitate the triumphal recovery of the old household stronghold of Arcot.

It was at this tenuous moment that the long-lived Nizam al-Mulk died, launching a major conflict over Hyderabad's succession. The Nizam's son Nasir Jang hurried to his father's side in Burhanpur, and, as soon as his father had passed away, seated himself on the "throne of the government of the Deccan *sūba*" with the support of the major Asaf Jahi nobility.<sup>716</sup> He was present in Aurangabad to receive an imperial *farmān* from Delhi as well as various ceremonial gifts that confirmed his succession. Nasir Jang divided these gifts amongst his relatives and well-wishers, but failed to ensure that a ceremonial robe [*khilat*] intended for Nasir Jang's nephew, Muzaffar Jang, found its recipient.<sup>717</sup> Perhaps this was for good reason. Muzaffar Jang remained querulously in the Bijapur territories, refusing to congratulate his uncle or travel north to offer obeisance. Indeed, Muzaffar Jang had always posed a threat to Nasir Jang. During the years when Nizam al-Mulk imprisoned Nasir Jang following his rebellion in the early 1740s, the Nizam had cultivated Muzaffar Jang for the succession instead. Amongst other things, he granted his grandson the *sūbadārī* of Bijapur, formerly held by his father Mutawassil Khan Bahadur, as well as control over the border territories of Raichur and Adoni.<sup>718</sup>

These territorial claims meant that Muzaffar Jang was well-placed to serve as a standard-bearer for disgruntled Karnatak interest groups. Indeed, the ghost of an older geography was just visible in Muzaffar Jang's holdings, and seems to have raised hopes amongst former Sultanate households for the recovery of something resembling the old Bijapur Sultanate or even the recovery

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<sup>711</sup> Braminy and Orme, "History of the Province of Arcot," 57.

<sup>712</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 124–25; Virginia Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)* (New York: R. O. Ballou, 1933), 122.

<sup>713</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 210.

<sup>714</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. II: 340.

<sup>715</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 124–25; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. IV: 124–125.

<sup>716</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 256. *Nawāb Nizām al-Daula Nāsir Jang Bahādur bar masnad-i riyāsāt wa iyālat-i sūbajāt-i Dakan raunaq afzā wa mutamakkin gashṭand wa aksar-i sūbadārān wa faujdārān dar sūbajāt wa mutasaddiyān ke dar huzūr būdand ānhā rā ba-hāl dāshta ba-marāsim-i dil-dahī wa nawāzish pardākhtand.*

<sup>717</sup> Khān, 256, 265.

<sup>718</sup> Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnawaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 398–408; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 253.

of Hyderabad and the implementation of a politically contiguous region stretching from Aurangabad to the Coromandel Coast. Rumors swirled across the Karnatak that the Nizam had in fact intended for his grandson to succeed to the Asaf Jahi throne. Contemporary and near contemporary accounts spoke confidently of a *farmān* from the Emperor Muhammad Shah, who had granted the *sūbadārī* of the Deccan to Muzaffar Jang.<sup>719</sup> In early 1749, Muzaffar Jang moved south into the western Karnatak, where he encountered Chanda Sahib near Chitradurg, now supported by perhaps six thousand cavalymen.<sup>720</sup> Together, they hatched a plan to defeat Anwaruddin Khan in Arcot and use it as a springboard for Muzaffar Jang's larger regional ambitions.

Signaling local confidence in this prospect, by the time the pair had reached the pass of Damalacheruvu, considered the boundary of the Arcot territories, they had gathered an army that numbered as many as 40,000 soldiers.<sup>721</sup> The co-conspirators' forces were soon further supplemented by 2,000 French-led sepoys.<sup>722</sup> They easily defeated Anwaruddin Khan, supported by a sparse following of perhaps 3,000 and 5,000 cavalymen.<sup>723</sup> Anwaruddin Khan was killed, several of his sons were imprisoned, and his troops scattered. Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib marched victoriously into Arcot. There, Muzaffar Jang proclaimed himself the *sūbadār* of the Deccan, assigning to Chanda Sahib the deputy governorship of Arcot.<sup>724</sup>

Further evidence of the co-conspirators' sunny prospects came in the form of letters from the Panni and Miyana leadership, offering congratulations. This was especially notable given that these households had already publicly acknowledged Nasir Jang's claim to the succession.<sup>725</sup> Their secret message to Muzaffar Jang underscored the shallowness of Nasir Jang's support in the Karnatak and points to the Panni and Miyanas' hope that Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib's victory would grant them space to recover their old standing. Muzaffar Jang's advisers considered the chances good that Nasir Jang would quickly accept a *fait accompli* in the Karnatak, granting Muzaffar Jang the *sūbadārī* of Bijapur and control of the territories south of the Krishna River (referenced in the Persian as the 'old districts,' which would be administered according to the 'prior arrangement,' both legible if subtle references to pre-Mughal Sultanate structures of governance).<sup>726</sup>

<sup>719</sup> Braminy and Orme, "History of the Province of Arcot," 58.

<sup>720</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 125. Chanda Sahib had successfully supplemented his forces by inserting himself into a conflict between the kingdoms of Chitradurg and Bidnur. On seeing his talents on the battlefield a number of soldiers from both sides pledged their service.

<sup>721</sup> Orme, 131. The number is supported by Pillai's note, some weeks earlier, that Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib had collected perhaps 14,000 horsemen and as many as 15,000 footsoldiers. Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 123-124.

<sup>722</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 124.

<sup>723</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 137; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 268; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 130. Interestingly, Orme suggests that Anwaruddin Khan had undertaken a 'reform' of his armed forces, seeking to regularize and centralize his army on a model normally associated with the later Mysore Sultanate leader Tipu Sultan. This attempt, if indeed it transpired, bore up poorly on this occasion against Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib's more 'traditional' irregular army of temporary recruits.

<sup>724</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 270; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 133.

<sup>725</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 270. *Dar ān waqt nuwīshujāt-i sarān-i Afghānān az Bankāpūr wa Kurpā wa Karnūl mutazammin-i mubārakbād- fath wa itā'at wa inqiyād rasīd.*

<sup>726</sup> Khān, 270. *Muqāyyad-i mudda'a ast shāyid miyān-i shuma wa 'Āli Dūdman musālaha qarār yābad wa ta'aluqa-yi qadīm ba-dastūr-i sābiq ba-hāl shawad wa agar in Afghāna chunānche nowishṭa and itā'at numāyand wa dīgar mardum ham az atrāf bā shumā jam' shawad musālaha bā jang ānche shawad ba-waz'-i khūb ba-'amal mī āyad.*

### *The waiting game: phase I*

Before some new iteration of the Bijapur Sultanate could be used as a launch pad for Muzaffar Jang's larger ambitions respecting Hyderabad, however, there remained an urgent question of procuring funds for Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang's immediate military expenses. Successive Maratha and Asaf Jahi invasions had recently bled Arcot's treasuries dry. In September, Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang set out for Pondicherry, where they hoped to win over prospective investors. Whereas they had hoped to drum up interest for their own enterprise, they were instead met by a gaggle of optimistic petitioners, each hoping to secure advantage. These included revenue collectors, village caste headmen, and others. "[T]heir hopes are boundless," reported Ananda Ranga Pillai.<sup>727</sup> Pillai himself, in his individual capacity as a major businessman and merchant, sought a meeting with Muzaffar Jang to cement his claim over a *jāgīr* near Bhuvanigiri.<sup>728</sup> Also on the list of important audiences was Sambu Das, who had already played an important role in bankrolling these men, and who they now hoped would consider extending their line of credit.<sup>729</sup> Chanda Sahib and Sambu Das were often to be seen together in subsequent days as they sought to hash out an arrangement.

Despite the many disruptions which had shaken the Karnatak's politics in recent years, the mood was strikingly buoyant. Indeed, the ambitions being voiced quickly began to take on the dizzy unreality one associates with economic bubbles. Chanda Sahib proposed to Monsieur Dupleix and others that he and Muzaffar Jang would conquer the entire Deccan all the way north to the Narmada River. In exchange for the French Company's help, Chanda Sahib promised them control over the port of Masulipatnam (north of the Godavari River), long in English hands, along with other important sea-ports. They also assured the French revenue rights over key hinterland villages, in addition to an immediate cash payment of "one or two lakhs" [Rs. 100,000-200,000].<sup>730</sup> Their French allies seemed eager to believe them.

Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang also made unsubstantiated claims, widely repeated in Pondicherry, that they enjoyed the military support of the Pune-based Maratha government. Rumors circulated through the city that a massive army, perhaps as many as one hundred thousand Maratha cavalymen, were preparing to march southwards to support the pair's claims. In fact, Pune-based Maratha leaders did express some interest in the negotiations transpiring in Pondicherry, but their methods were much more circumspect. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, General Dupleix, Jayaram Pandit (who enjoyed connections both to Chanda Sahib's camp and to the Maratha government at Satara<sup>731</sup>), Ananda Ranga Pillai, and Chanda Sahib's *gumāshṭa* Raghu Pandit held a meeting where they drew up a response to a letter that they had recently received from Shahuji Bhonsle himself. The reply stated that "according to [Shahuji's] desire," Anwaruddin Khan had been killed, Chanda Sahib had been made *sūbadār* of Arcot, and that Chanda Sahib would continue to carry out the Maratha leader's wishes.<sup>732</sup>

Despite Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang's expansive ambitions, they had neither the cash nor the credit they needed to see their venture through. Nor were Maratha armies converging on the

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<sup>727</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 169.

<sup>728</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 207-208.

<sup>729</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 212.

<sup>730</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 215.

<sup>731</sup> Pillai, Vol. III: 296, Vol. IV: 124-125.

<sup>732</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 236.

horizon. Then in September, Chanda Sahib's son Raza Sahib's troops, whose salaries were two months in arrears, quit following orders.<sup>733</sup> A plan was organized to raise cash by invading Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli, hopefully with the assistance of French troops. Once these regions were in their hands, the pair reasoned, they would enjoy a plentiful and regular income to fund their larger interests. Unable to convince the French to lend their support, however, the pair repeatedly put off the moment of departure. In November, as the rainy season set in and cash flow tightened further, well-known merchant-moneylenders like Nayakkan, Muttrama Chetti, Singanna Chetti, Venkatachala Chetti, and others left Muzaffar Jang's camp in protest, complaining that they had been unable to collect their debts.<sup>734</sup> The pair's abandonment by the region's business elite was an ominous sign, indeed.

Chanda Sahib pursued other avenues as well, including pursuit of old debts owed to the Nawaiyat household when they had formerly held power. Most important amongst these was the Gujarati banker Kasi Das Bukkanji, who had handled many of the deceased leader Dost Ali Khan's financial dealings, and who reportedly had retained various Nawaiyat assets for himself after the household's fall from power. Chanda Sahib approached Bukkanji, now resident in the English-held port of Fort St. David, with a bond describing Rs. 1,100,000 formerly held by Bukkanji on behalf of Safdar Ali Khan Nawaiyat, a quantity of jewels entrusted to him by Ali Dost Khan's wife, as well as other undisclosed sums drawn from both the sale of textiles and from land revenues in Safdar Ali Khan's name.<sup>735</sup> Finding the English, under whose protection Bukkanji resided, unwilling to help him realize his claims, Chanda Sahib next sought to paint the English themselves in a disparaging light. He took up cases like that of a wealthy San Thomé-based businesswoman known to the English records only as "Bangary." Her home had been pillaged by the servants of a certain Ghulam Hussain, resident of Madras. His men took from her house bonds amounting to 60,000 rupees evidencing debts owed her by Arcot-based actors.<sup>736</sup> Chanda Sahib's energetic defense of Bangary's claims were no doubt motivated by his own interests, particularly the repayment of debts that he felt were owed to him by the Gujarati banker, but also his attempt to forge a reputation as an upholder of justice.

Chanda Sahib even went so far as to organize an armed excursion to Fort St. David, accompanied by a small contingent of French troops. He pressed his claims against Kasi Das while camped outside the city walls. The latter replied by demanding that Chanda Sahib produce valid documentation before he would consider repaying the sums purported owed to Chanda Sahib's deceased family members. Ananda Ranga Pillai, who saw Chanda Sahib's efforts as ill-founded, disapproved of his employer Dupleix's willingness to offer military support to the expedition. "I do not think [Chanda Sahib] will succeed [at Fort St. David]," wrote Pillai. "He may get a present of four or five thousand [rupees], but that is nothing [...] If the Governor knew this, I think he would recall our detachment at once. I have said nothing because he would not believe me and because he has told me that I need not report the Fort St. David news or send people there."<sup>737</sup> Pillai's prediction proved accurate.

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<sup>733</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 171.

<sup>734</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 230.

<sup>735</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 233.

<sup>736</sup> *Records of Fort St. George: Country Correspondence, Public Department, 1749*, 49-50 (Oct. 21, 1749).

<sup>737</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 231.



As Chanda Sahib's efforts came up empty, his methods became increasingly questionable. In early December, he attempted and failed to pass off an unsealed, unsigned deposit bill indicating that the well-known merchant-banker Imam Sahib owed his family 20,000 hun (~70,000 rupees) and 9,800 gold muhrs (~147,000 rupees).<sup>738</sup> Meanwhile, financial strain caused relations to fray between Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib. A rumor spread that the pair had fought, but that Chanda Sahib had smoothed things over by promising his partner Rs. 200,000 in coin, with another Rs. 1,000,000 in the form of promised title over the revenues of the territories of Nellore, Sarvepalli, and 'other countries.'<sup>739</sup> At some point around this time, Muzaffar Jang controversially elected to free a number of valuable prisoners connected with the Wala Jahi household: Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, Muhammad Najib al-Allah Khan, Abdul Maali Khan, Afzal al-Din Muhammad Khan, and Raja Sampat Rai. While receiving a much-needed ransom of Rs. 300,000 in liquid currency, Muzaffar Jang added to his list of potentially formidable rivals.<sup>740</sup>

Across the Karnatak, prospective investors of all stripes started to hedge their bets. Prominent amongst them were the Miyana and Panni households. In the last weeks of November, 1749, Abdul Majid Khan, the younger brother of the Nawab of Kadapa, wrote a letter to Chanda Sahib that at first blush appeared to suggest their continued support.

With the strong help of the French, you will easily conquer Tanjore, Trichinopoly and the killas [forts]. God has given you their help so that you may defeat the northern army; so you will succeed in all ways. But the Gingee fort is the strongest in the Carnatic and in all Hindustan ; if you strengthen it and keep friends with [Muzaffar Jang], you will gain all your desires. As I enjoy your favour and [Muzaffar Jang's], my elder brother, the subahdar of Cuddapah, leaving his family at Cuddapah, has gone to Cumbum, etc., with the subahdar of Kandanurr [Karnul] to stop robberies there ; and he will return in peace in a short time. I pray God to bless you with the same high position as the deceased [Saadatullah Khan], my uncle, who got large wealth in the Arcot subah, and ruled for many years, all bowing before him. There was formerly a correspondence between us and the Governor of Pondichery ; but it was stopped on account of the war between him and the English. As you and the Governor of Pondichery are friends, please write to him to send me two small rough-coated Europe dogs and a telescope such as were sent before.<sup>741</sup>

Yet its contents, read in the context of affairs playing out across the Karnatak, painted a worrying portrait. On the one hand, Abdul Majid Khan remembered his family's close (perhaps even marital) ties to the former Nawaiyat leader Saadatullah Khan, confidently proclaimed that Chanda Sahib and Muzaffar Jang enjoyed divine favor in the coming conflict against the northerners, and even fished for gifts from the French that would signal a resumption of their former relationship. On the other hand, Mocha Miyan, the Miyana leader of Kadapa, had proceeded north with a military force in the company of the Karnul-based Himmat Bahadur Khan Panni. Ostensibly a routine tribute-collection tour in the mountainous region east of Karnul, this was actually a thinly veiled excuse for the Miyana and Panni houses' real purposes, where key representatives of both households had gone to join Nasir Jang and to cut off Muzaffar Jang from his northern investments. It turned out that Nasir Jang had finally, belatedly, decided to do something about his upstart nephew, and

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<sup>738</sup> Conversion rate between hun and rupee based on standard 3.5 rupee/hun. Conversion for muhrs of 15 rupee/muhr based on a range of figures offered for late seventeenth century (Habib) and late eighteenth century (Perlin). Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, 386-87; Perlin, *Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500-1900*, 274-75.

<sup>739</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 236.

<sup>740</sup> Munshi Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi (Second Part) [English translation]*, trans. S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar (Madras: University of Madras, 1939), 2.

<sup>741</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 272-273.

had written to the leaders at Kadapa and Karnul, sugaring the deal with an invitation for them to seize Muzaffar Jang's territorial holdings in and around Adoni. The prospect that Muzaffar Jang might lose control over his territories in Adoni was so worrying that he momentarily considered abandoning his Karnatak ambitions entirely in order to return north and defend them.<sup>742</sup>

On further examination, the Afghan households had maintained friendly correspondence with the English throughout this period. One letter records that they had granted permission for English-made mortars to be transported through their territories on their way to Nasir Jang's camp. Another note finds the Miyanas still in pursuit of exotic canines; they asked that the English send 'handsome puppies,' knives, and other European 'curiosities' to Kadapa without delay.<sup>743</sup> The Miyanas and Pannis were playing a delicate double game, hoping to maintain the possibility of alliance with either Hyderabadi contender, depending on how events played out.

In Pondicherry, reports began to arrive of Nasir Jang's stately progress southwards, and observers grew increasingly nervous. There remained no question that Nasir Jang enjoyed the full resources of his father's treasury and the full support of Deccan-based nobility. Estimates of his armed following ranged anywhere from 50,000-300,000 men, as well as thousands of elephants and perhaps eight hundred cannon.<sup>744</sup> But they made painfully slow progress – clear evidence that Nasir Jang was not inclined to undertake an outright war against his nephew. Nasir Jang's camp finally arrived in the Pondicherry hinterlands only in late March of 1750. There, it reportedly stretched a breathtaking "five miles from north to south, and about three miles from east to west."<sup>745</sup> Perhaps Nasir Jang hoped that this strategic delay and dramatic illustration of his military capacity would increase the pressure on his cash-strapped nephew, and allow him to correct the situation without undue bloodshed. During the five months during which the entire Karnatak waited with baited breath for Nasir Jang's arrival, Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib's unpaid troops grew ever more restive, and the pair's creditors in Pondicherry and elsewhere increasingly impatient.

In late November as they waited, Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib decided at last to proceed against Thanjavur. The campaign was supposed to be quick work, but like every other aspect of the affair so far, it soon stretched into a complexly drawn out series of negotiations. The pair convinced the French to grant them the use of some French troops, which they first deployed against the *palaikkarār* of Udaiyarpalayam, in order to secure a tribute payment of 60,000-70,000 hun. This they put towards paying their soldiers' much-delayed salaries. They then established a camp outside of Thanjavur and opened negotiations with the city's ruler, Raja Pratapasimha, momentarily reviving hopes in Pondicherry of political and financial gain on the horizon. Pillai reported to General Dupleix that "Chanda Sahib hopes to get a crore [10,000,000] of rupees [from the city]; but I think it may be settled for 25 or 30 lakhs [Rs. 2,500,000-3,000,000]" to which Dupleix replied that "if the affair be settled for half a crore [Rs. 5,000,000] as Chanda Sahib hopes, we must help him with troops to conquer the country as far as Aurangabad; and then he will show his generosity."<sup>746</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 238-239.

<sup>743</sup> *Records of Fort St. George: Country Correspondence, Public Department, 1749*, 8-9 (March 3 & 7, 1749), 37 (Sept. 20, 1749).

<sup>744</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1939, 29; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 9; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 272; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 142.

<sup>745</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 431-432, Vol. VII: 9.

<sup>746</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 271. The author of the *Tārīkh-i Fathiya* reports that they hoped to collect 1.25 crore 'chakra,' which he estimated to equal approximately Rs. 20,000,000. Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 271. 'Chakra' refers to a South Indian

The pair remained encamped for nearly the next three months, through the monsoon rains, at the city's gates. Initially, things seemed to be going well; after they seized control of the fortress's front gate, Raja Pratapasimha sued for peace. A settlement was reached at Rs. 7,000,000, of which Rs. 4,000,000 were to be given directly to the French in repayment for loans, in the form of village *in'āms* around the French-held port of Karaikkal.<sup>747</sup> A further Rs. 3,000,000 in 'ready money' was to be paid to Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib. However Raja Pratapasimha was well aware that if he drew out the process for long enough, Nasir Jang's forces would arrive and offer a reprieve. While Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib's forces remained encamped near the gate of the fort, Thanjavur's treasury officials slowly doled out jewelry and other small items, haggling minutely over the value of each piece. By mid-February, they had only delivered Rs. 700,000 of the 'ready money' originally promised.<sup>748</sup> The value of these items, delivered in full ceremony and all the urgency of a slow-dripping tap, was quickly eaten up by the salaries of soldiers and other camp necessities. In the same period, a sure reflection of the camp inhabitants' poor spirits, the rugs that had outfitted the officers' tents were entirely eaten away by white ants.<sup>749</sup> Nasir Jang's armies were getting closer, and many of Muzaffar Jang's soldiers began refusing to obey orders.<sup>750</sup>

### *The waiting game: phase II*

By the time Nasir Jang finally arrived in the region at the end of March, Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib's camp, and their grand ambitions, were in ruins; their disheartened and unpaid forces had largely melted away into the landscape. Their few remaining advisors squabbled unhappily over an appropriate course of action. Finally, it was agreed to set out for Pondicherry. The co-conspirators sent out ahead of them a message urgently seeking an emergency loan that would allow them to pay their soldiers.<sup>751</sup> The initial request, for Rs. 1,000,000 rupees, was scornfully refused by Dupleix, but Ananda Ranga Pillai suggested a more modest Rs. 300,000. The sum was raised by undertaking a collection from amongst various French and indigenous businessmen inhabiting the city. A bill of exchange was written up. Understanding that this was a risky venture, the loan was secured by a promise that Muzaffar Jang's family would remain hostages at Pondicherry until it was repaid.<sup>752</sup> This was a clever arrangement, for whatever Muzaffar Jang's fate might be, Nasir Jang would also be bound by blood to honor his nephew's debts. If the French were still willing to continue loaning money to their erstwhile companions, however, they were no longer ready to commit military aid. When Chanda Sahib sent Pondicherry an urgent letter wondering about the whereabouts of promised French troops, the French returned an airy excuse, as if responding to an inconvenient party invitation, that "...the timing is not good for us today, but we will certainly fight tomorrow."<sup>753</sup>

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silver coin by this name, whose value was close but not exactly equivalent to the rupee. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, 98, 155.

<sup>747</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 324, 352-353.

<sup>748</sup> Pillai, Vol VI: 362, 398-399.

<sup>749</sup> Pillai, Vol. VI: 366, 368.

<sup>750</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 272.

<sup>751</sup> Khān, 272-73.

<sup>752</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 396-398. Interestingly, the *hundi* stipulated that it was to be repaid at Adoni, near the Deccan-Karnatak boundary, presumably on Muzaffar Jang's victorious return northwards after defeating his uncle.

<sup>753</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 274. *Imrūz barāye māyān sā'at-i khūb nīst ke jang bakunīm. Fardā jang khwāhīm kard.*

Friendless and penniless, Muzaffar Jang wilted against his uncle's massive army. For several days, messengers shuttled back and forth between their camps, trying to arrange respectable terms for the surrender for Muzaffar Jang's forces. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, Nasir Jang sent a messenger to Muzaffar Jang offering to help him pay off his soldiers' still delinquent salaries, and further, to grant him a *jāgīr* of Rs. 200,000 and the *sūbadārī* of Berar, as well as a future role at court.<sup>754</sup> This was a promising prospect indeed, but to the chagrin of Muzaffar Jang's elderly counselor Yusuf Muhammad Khan (the author of the *Tārīkh-i Fathiya*), Chanda Sahib convinced Muzaffar Jang to turn the offer down. Very early in the morning on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, Muzaffar Jang climbed onto his elephant and, after a chaotic skirmish in which both Muzaffar Jang and his forces seemed uncertain as to whether they were fighting or surrendering, Nasir Jang's men surrounded Muzaffar Jang and, coaxing him off his elephant, imprisoned him.<sup>755</sup>

With Muzaffar Jang safely under guard, parties from all sides hoped fervently that Nasir Jang would quickly return north to the Deccan. He had plenty of reason to do so. Pillai reported that Nasir Jang had left only a skeleton force of 1000 cavalry and 2000 sepoys at Aurangabad (this figure was probably exaggeratedly low, but still suggests the vulnerability of the Asaf Jahi Deccan in the absence of central leadership), and Maratha armies were on the move. Maratha forces nipped around the edges of Hyderabad and Aurangabad, and "plundered the country from Hyderabad to the [Krishna River]."<sup>756</sup> Nasir Jang's commanders, themselves worried about their home territories, urgently advised him to be magnanimous, grant Arcot to Muzaffar Jang in exchange for the promise of regular tribute payments, and return quickly to the Deccan. If Nasir Jang opted instead, as he appeared intent upon doing, to demand from the French the 'return' of Muzaffar Jang's household (which included Nasir Jang's sister, Muzaffar Jang's mother), along with Chanda Sahib as prisoner, his advisors warned him that he risked losing the six *sūbas* of the Deccan entirely. As his advisors saw it, he had to choose one side of the Krishna, or the other.<sup>757</sup> As Abdul Nabi Khan of Kadapa (also known in some of the sources as Mocha Miyan) put it,

Forgive [Muzaffar Jang], release him and give him his own country [Adoni] and Arcot. Then he will keep the French quiet, and live at peace in these parts. You must make him swear on the Quran never again to transgress [...] [But to the contrary,] if you decide to carry him away with you, you must conquer the French, capture their fort, imprison Chanda Sahib and recover Muzaffar Jang's children who are at Pondicherry. If you do not follow one of these plans, you will be condemned for leaving your sister a pawn for debt in a European town, and your dishonor will last as long as the world shall endure. You will be blamed even after death.<sup>758</sup>

Nasir Jang was stricken with indecision. Unwilling to release his nephew, his "commitment to honor" would also not allow him to leave his family in French captivity.<sup>759</sup> In the months that followed, he hesitated in the environs of Jinji even as his camp followers drained away. Maratha

<sup>754</sup> Khān, 274; Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VI: 437.

<sup>755</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 276–80.

<sup>756</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 27–29.

<sup>757</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 46–47; Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1939, 38–41.

<sup>758</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 150.

<sup>759</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 279. *‘Āli Dūdīmān rā ke nāmūs wāhid būd az rāh-i ghairat begamāt-i mazkūra rā dar ānjā na guzāshā az ān mulk bar āmadān bar mizāj guwārā na shud.*

What the women themselves might have wanted is an entirely different question. That they had ambitions quite separate from the promise of 'protection' by the Asaf Jafi patriarch is indicated by an episode in May that year when, as part of ongoing negotiations, the French briefly offered up the prospect that the women could leave Pondicherry even without payment of Muzaffar Jang's debts. The women, led by Nasir Jang's sister (Muzaffar Jang's mother), refused to join Nasir Jang's camp. Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 100.

contingents that had earlier supported him, led by Murari Rao Ghorpade and Chandrasen Nimbalkar, left as early as April, complaining of lack of pay and eager to return home before the rains arrived and swollen rivers threatened to cut them off from their home territories.<sup>760</sup> Others quickly followed suit.<sup>761</sup> Those that remained contended with the effects of the unfamiliar climate and diet. Yusuf Muhammad Khan probably spoke for many northerners in his disgusted comment that “the country has eight months of rain out of each year. For cattle there is [no food] but unhusked rice, which the people of that country call *purāl*, and there is no grain other than *gulatthī* [plain rice porridge], of which there is a plentitude...” The diet of Nasir Jang’s soldiers, meanwhile, closely resembled that which they fed their animals, and even the price of these meager foodstuffs soon skyrocketed.<sup>762</sup> By late May, animals in Nasir Jang’s camp were dying in large numbers.<sup>763</sup> Loss of human life was soon to follow; men began to fall prey to diseases that spread quickly through the camp. Still, he refused to budge.

In the meantime, other processes were underway. The British had, over the past several years, come close to losing their place on the Coromandel Coast entirely. Only in the previous year had they regained control over Madras thanks to a treaty signed with France. In a reflection of their relative vulnerability, the British had remained largely at the margins throughout the above-described negotiations, barring some friendly if conservative overtures towards Nasir Jang. Now, spying an opportunity, they began to more assertively promote the interests of their own preferred candidate for control of Arcot, Muhammad Ali Khan Wala Jah. Up to the point of Muzaffar Jang’s imprisonment, Muhammad Ali Khan had played only a minor role, having secured himself behind the walls of Tiruchirappalli after his father’s defeat. Now that the Muzaffar Jang-Nawaiyat household coalition was in tatters, he ventured back out onto the field. Through the summer months, Muhammad Ali, along with a body of English troops, carried out a series of at first indecisive exercises in the Pondicherry hinterlands against French-allied troops. Finally, in late summer, he suffered a major loss against French forces near Tiruvaddi, an important fort not far inland from the English-held Fort St. David.<sup>764</sup>

Throughout the spring and summer, Nasir Jang’s counselors maintained lines of communication with the French, seeking mutually profitable resolutions to the impasse. Initially, it was suggested that Muhammad Ali Khan be granted Arcot, while Chanda Sahib be offered Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur, an arrangement which Dupleix flatly refused.<sup>765</sup> Other proposals sought to place Chanda Sahib in control of Arcot. The French, for their part, sought to recoup debts owed them by Chanda Sahib in the form of guaranteed leases over the territories of Tindivanam, Poonamallee, Achcharapakkam, Villupuram, Tiruvaddi, Bhuvanigiri, Devanapatnam, Tirtanagiri

<sup>760</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 50.

<sup>761</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 157.

<sup>762</sup> Khān, “Tārīkh-i Fathiya,” 280. *Chūn dar ān mulk hasht māh dar sāl-i tamām barshakāl mī shawad wa barāye dawāb chāre beghair az kāh shālī ke ān rā dar ān mulk purāl mī guyānd wa dāna ghair az gulhattī ke ghalla āst wa dar ān mulk bisyār mī bāshad digar barāye dawāb muyassir na mī āyad wa barāye qawwat-i insān nīz ba-kār mī āyad wa baranj-i gunda ke mardum-i ān zila’ ān rā sāyida’i nān [?] ham mī pazīd wa az mardum-i lashkar-i ‘Āli Dūdman az insān wa dawāb ke ‘adī ba-khwordan-i ān na būdand wa ma’huzā-i ān ham binābar-i harj wa barj-i wafūr-i lashkar ba muhāfazat-i mukhālifān kam muyassir mī āmad ke ān ham kam ba ham mī rasīd wa barāye dawāb chāre nāyāb shud ke haft rūpiya wa hasht rūpiya rā yak gāv-i bār-purāl mī āmad.*

<sup>763</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 178.

<sup>764</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 173–76.

<sup>765</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 257.

and Venkatammalpettai. As conversations progressed, the scope of territories under negotiation expanded in a bewilderingly rapid fashion much as they had during Muzaffar Jang's earlier tenure.

This tendency towards the rapid inflation of the scope of negotiations points squarely at the negotiators' shared understanding that these southeastern districts tucked away at the very edge of the subcontinent needed to be understood as gateways to a far wider range of prospects. Chanda Sahib demanded that Mysore (a still-autonomous kingdom ruled by the Wodeyar dynasty) also be granted to him. General Dupleix wanted Nasir Jang to promise the future security of French holdings in Masulipatnam and in Yanam (near the mouth of the Krishna River). Dupleix promised that, if a few cannon recently commandeered by Nasir Jang's forces be returned to the French, they would lend him European troops and funds that would carry the young Nizam all the way to Delhi(!).<sup>766</sup> Yet such negotiations, for all their giddy expansiveness, never progressed towards reality. Lines of credit had dried up, and prospective investors had withdrawn from the table.

### *The battle for the Porto Novo hinterlands*

As contestants sought funding, there was one arena where all major parties poured their energies: the hinterland territories of Madras, Pondicherry and especially of Porto Novo, whose reliable land revenues traditionally constituted a financial safeguard for Indian Ocean trade. Through the summer of 1750, the French, who hoped to protect lands they had received as 'gifts' from Muzaffar Jang just a few months previously, faced off against Muhammad Ali Khan Wala Jah, who led an army that included his own supporters as well as contingents contributed by Nasir Jang and the British. A low-grade war in these regions ground its way slowly through the summer months.

Here, the Miyana household re-emerges as a central participant, thanks to their long history in the region. Whereas once they had dominated routes through the Porto Novo and Pondicherry hinterlands, they now battled for their survival in these regions. An important aspect of the conflict was rooted in the French Company's 1738 purchase of the small port of Karaikkal. It was this episode that had first prompted the Miyanas to withdraw from their formerly friendly relationship with the French and instead reach out to the British in hopes of cultivating a counterbalance.

Nasir Jang and Muhammad Ali Khan saw opportunity to benefit. They sent out agents across the hinterlands, directed to seize charge of revenues, especially in Chidambaram and Bhuvanigiri. Muhammad Ali Khan sent a letter to Chidambaram Muhammad Khan (Miyana) in early May ordering him to immediately draw up an account for Nasir Jang of expected tax revenues. The French, catching wind of the letter, countered with their own missive, warning Muhammad Khan that they knew about his contacts with the English, and indicating they expected him to immediately deliver revenue collections to Pondicherry.<sup>767</sup>

At the same time, both the French (with their local allies) and the British (with theirs) seized the opportunity both to assert their influence inland, and to expand their mutual competition against one another into new arenas. They did this through the tying of *toranams*. The practice, glossed in one source as "festoons of mango leaves usually tied up on auspicious occasions such as the first arrival of a public manager in a Country" served as a symbolic assertion of revenue collection rights within a territory.<sup>768</sup> Nasir Jang's agents tied *toranams* in Venkatammalpettai, Devanapatnam,

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<sup>766</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 147; Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 258.

<sup>767</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 129, 138.

<sup>768</sup> Anonymous, "Provincial Annals of Condaved" (n.d.), 51, Mack Gen, 45/7, British Library OIOC.

Villupuram, Poonamallee, Ponneri, Manimangalam, Conjeeveram, and Chingleput, and other places up and down the hinterlands from points north of Chennai southwards to the Porto Novo coast. By early July, the French had responded by themselves tying *toranams* as far inland as Valikondapuram, Elavanasur, and even Poonamallee, far to the north near Madras, although the limited practical implications of these claims were evident from Pillai's comment that they were mainly "for political purposes."<sup>769</sup> By the summer of 1750, Miyana householder Mudamiah had stopped paying revenues to the French entirely. Meanwhile, local revenue collection authorities hedged their bets as they waited to see which power would eventually prevail. Mudamiah and Chidambaram Muhammad Khan<sup>770</sup> made excuses to both Wala Jahi forces (supported by Nasir Jang and the British), and to the French. In July, the southern Miyana representatives made a strategic choice which put them at odds with the Miyana leadership in Kadapa, who for their part were actively pursuing a French alliance. The local Miyana agent, Periyar Perumal Pillai, plundered the Bhuvanigiri countryside and Mudamiah forwarded the collected sum to the port of Devikottai, recently captured by the English. Kadapa-based Miyana leaders responded angrily to this news, but were unable to do much more than make threats from afar.<sup>771</sup> The Bhuvanigiri-based Miyanas' autonomous endeavors were quickly forgotten, however, when French forces took the nearby fortress of Tiruvaddi. Reconsidering his priorities, another of Mudamiah's associates Chidambaram Muhammad Khan promised to immediately forward 20,000 rupees to Pondicherry and an undisclosed further payment as soon as possible.<sup>772</sup> In the meantime, the English dangled the prospect of a stronger alliance with Muhammad Ali Khan on the latter's promise to deliver paperwork securing their control over the territories of Poonamallee and Tiruvaddi. When Muhammad Ali Khan proved unable to do so (nor to pay British troops under his command), the British withdrew their support for him entirely.<sup>773</sup>

As always, the scramble over hinterland territories was as much about the revenues of the territories themselves as it was about securing trade security and access to markets. Porto Novo played a major part in all of this, although as usual the evidence is patchy. In May, agents from Nasir Jang, the English, and the French were all trying to win over Porto Novo's chief revenue officer [*amaldār*], Shaikh Hamid, who had got his start working for the Wala Jahi household and now seemed to enjoy a substantially autonomous authority in the port city.<sup>774</sup> At the same time, each group sought to disrupt their competitors' trading networks connecting the Porto Novo market with points inland. Such tactics are exemplified by an encounter between Shaikh Ibrahim, a French ally, with a merchant distantly associated with Nasir Jang's network of allies, who happened to be staying overnight in the town of Villapuram, not far inland from Pondicherry. This unfortunate man had purchased two elephants in Porto Novo and was transporting them to Lalapettai, a market center near Vellore. Lalapettai was closely connected with the trading interests of the Maratha commander and long-time Asaf Jahi ally, Raja Chandrasen Nimbalkar, and was thus an obvious target for those opposed to Nasir Jang.<sup>775</sup> Shaikh Ibrahim commandeered the elephants and took them to

<sup>769</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 3-4, 299.

<sup>770</sup> Identified in this section as Chidambaram Lal Khan, Muhammad Khan's father. This seems to have been a slip of the pen.

<sup>771</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 228.

<sup>772</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 228, 269.

<sup>773</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 266-67.

<sup>774</sup> Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, Vol. VII: 4-5, 129-131, 137.

<sup>775</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 87, 253-254.

Pondicherry, where they were sequestered by the French Company until Dupleix eventually took pity on the merchant and released them.

These types of daily uncertainties had the effect of slowing economic activity to a crawl, and helps to explain why, in early September, the city of Pondicherry fairly erupted in jubilation after receiving news that the French had won the small but strategically important inland fortress of Tiruvaddi from Muhammad Ali Khan. They celebrated not only because they believed that the victory would “finish Nasir Jang’s affair” and hand Deccan Governorship to Muzaffar Jang’s hands, but also because overland trading networks might move freely again. After a 21-gun salute, the distribution of sugar throughout the city, music, and a special thanksgiving mass, Governor Dupleix said to Ananda Ranga Pillai, “the troubles are over, so you can turn your mind to trade: tell the merchants, washermen, etc., to make haste and supply goods quickly. You must pay special attention to this matter.”<sup>776</sup> Later that day as Pillai pored over his astrological chart, wondering whether this good news was a sign that previously foretold wealth and political power were about to materialize, Dupleix again disrupted these pleasant musings with an order reiterating his earlier command:

Go to the washing place, to the stamping place, and the Company’s cloth-godown, and tell the merchants they can carry on their trade freely from to-day. Till now it has been difficult to bring in goods or take them out; but they need fear nothing now. Tell the merchants they can send money to distant places for cloth. Hasten them and collect many washers.<sup>777</sup>

### *Secret negotiations between the French and the Pathans*

Throughout all of these long, drawn out affairs, the Panni and Miyana household leadership had watched as balance-of-power arrangements that had long facilitated their access to the southeastern coast, and particularly to Porto Novo, deteriorated precipitously. Despite remaining in Nasir Jang’s camp, they were deeply unhappy with Nasir Jang’s determination to support the Wala Jahi household’s claims to Arcot rather than to make a pragmatic concession to Chanda Sahib or to his wayward nephew, Muzaffar Jang. Nasir Jang also proved himself directly unsympathetic to the Afghans’ interests. Instead of conciliating the Afghans, in late June Nasir Jang tried to insist that the Miyana and Panni leaders pay him *peshkash*. Their response was indignant. They replied (rather disingenuously) that “they had not paid any even to his father, and would pay none now, for [while they were forced to remain away] their countries were being plundered day and night...”<sup>778</sup> The following day, they refused to attend court, prompting an armed standoff in camp. Some of Nasir Jang’s men attacked and captured some Miyana and Panni followers. As the Afghans in turn began to draw up battle lines around their tents, the nobleman Shah Nawaz Khan was forced to intervene, narrowly avoiding more serious violence. Again in early August, tensions reached a breaking point when Nasir Jang demanded that Abdul Nabi Khan (Mocha Miyan) Miyana, Himmat Bahadur Khan, Sanoji Nimbalkar, Raja Ramachandra Rao, and Abdul Wazir Khan Miyana (the brother of the *sūbadār* of Savanur) order their own horsemen serve under Muhammad Ali Khan, whose forces were at that time still floundering against French forces near Pondicherry. The Afghans publicly complained about the order.

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<sup>776</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 358-370.

<sup>777</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 371.

<sup>778</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 289.



The Afghans were not entirely powerless, however. They cultivated a secret channel of communication with General Dupleix, beginning sometime in early summer.<sup>779</sup> They quietly sent word to the French that “though they would march with Muhammad Ali Khan as ordered, they would slay him and depart [as soon as opportunity presented itself].”<sup>780</sup> By July, Dupleix had sent the Afghans a bond for Rs. 700,000, payable on Nasir Jang’s being deposed and the imprisoned Muzaffar Jang raised to the Nizam.<sup>781</sup> Such an arrangement offered the Pannis and Miyanas prospect of a far more favorable negotiating position well beyond the not-insignificant incentive of Rs. 700,000. If they could put Muzaffar Jang on the throne, and with it return control of the Karnatak to their old familiar allies the Nawaiyats, there was every reason to believe that they might retrieve their old role as gatekeepers between the Karnatak and Deccan territories. Indeed, the prospect seemed to open up the possibility of claiming an even greater influence over regional politics than the households had enjoyed in decades.

Still, another half year of indecision and waiting would go by. The Afghans needed French support in the form of a diversionary attack that would allow them to make their move within the camp. The plan was held up by various complications, including, finally, the unusually early arrival of the northeastern monsoon in late September.<sup>782</sup> By October, what remained of Nasir Jang’s camp, much like his nephew’s a year earlier, had become an unhappily sodden, disorganized affair. The majority of Nasir Jang’s forces had abandoned him during the summer, marching back towards the Deccan; these men refused calls to return and support their erstwhile leader. The remainder of the army’s tents were scattered along patches of high ground in the uneven terrain surrounding the fort of Jinji, which the French had seized in early September.<sup>783</sup> Likely because they enjoyed a fair amount of support amongst disconsolate residents of Nasir Jang’s camp, the Afghan-French conspiracy continued to evade Nasir Jang’s attention. Still, the Afghans grew increasingly anxious as time ticked by. They sent urgent messages to Dupleix that they could not keep the agreement quiet forever. Indeed, some sources suggest that Nasir Jang received prior warning of the Afghans’ deceit, but that he had dismissed the idea, naively confident in their fidelity. “What ill treatment have I offered these people that they should break treaty with me, and forge alliance with another?”<sup>784</sup>

Nasir Jang, too, reopened negotiations with the French in the fall, but his position was much weakened. In early December, he reached a settlement on terms that strongly favored the French. Not only would the French retain Jinji, long considered the most venerable fortress in all of southern India, but they would also receive other advantages that they had long sought: control over Hyderabad’s most important port city of Masulipatnam, Muzaffar Jang’s freedom and properties, and Chanda Sahib’s confirmation as the governor of Arcot and the Karnatak.<sup>785</sup> For Dupleix, it now

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<sup>779</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 274, 303. The agents who carried messages between these camps were often Miyana household associates who had long done business on the southern coast. They included Muhammad Khan Sulayman’s son Misri Khan, as well as Azmat Khan. Another shadowy figure with connections to Nasir Jang’s camp, but who had subsequently switched allegiances, was known as Sayyid Abdul Rahman *alias* Pirzada.

<sup>780</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 343-344.

<sup>781</sup> Pillai, Vol. VII: 303-306.

<sup>782</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 265-71.

<sup>783</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1939, 55.

<sup>784</sup> Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Wālā Jāhī*, 197. *Bā in kasān che bad kardā im ke bā māghadar kunand wa bā dīgari bagirawand?* Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajahi [English translation]*, 1939, 55-56. “What have I done to these people for which they behave treacherously towards me and join hands with others?”

<sup>785</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 266-67; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 157-58.

mattered little whether this long stand-off be resolved by means of a treaty or by the defeat of Nasir Jang in battle, and Dupleix seems to have left chance to decide which would transpire.<sup>786</sup> At the same time as a signed treaty formalizing the terms described above was *en route* from Nasir Jang's camp to Pondicherry, the French commander La Touche, in collaboration with the Afghan leadership, launched a surprise attack [*shab-i khūn*] on Nasir Jang's camp on the night of December 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>787</sup>

French forces (doubtless mainly indigenous recruits), following a guide provided by the Afghans, fell upon Nasir Jang's bedraggled encampment. A confused struggle ensued in the muddy darkness. Nasir Jang sent an order that his nephew's head be struck off. His guards, who had been paid off in advance by the Miyanas and Pannis, ignored the order.<sup>788</sup> As the fighting continued around him, Nasir Jang mounted his elephant and turned it in the direction of the Afghan leaders who, likewise perched atop elephants, observed the general melee from a distance. He urged them to join him in battle against the enemy.<sup>789</sup>

At that point [Nasir Jang] sought to turn in the direction of Bahadur Khan and the other Afghans where they were standing with a number of men who had joined in allegiance with the enemy. It was just the break of day when Nasir Jang's elephant came up close to Bahadur Khan, that traitor. He, who, due to some secret grievances had joined hands with the enemy, proffered this delicate gesture: he raised the musket in his hands and shot it at him. The bullet put an end to [Nasir Jang's] life.<sup>790</sup>

The Afghans cut off Nasir Jang's head, and placed it on a spike. They raised this grim emblem skywards, where the surrounding forces could see it and digest its clear message: the polarity of the Karnatak's political world had suddenly reversed. The Afghans brought the former prisoner Muzaffar Jang out from the covered elephant palanquin [*ghattā top*] in which he had been held, and hurriedly ("in the same clothes he had been wearing"), placed him atop another elephant.<sup>791</sup> Close

<sup>786</sup> Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 158.

<sup>787</sup> From this point forwards, all the sources offering narrative of this event take on a certain shrillness. Their authors seemed determined to underscore their preferred moral lesson. Most chroniclers, thanks to patronage patterns in later decades, are sympathetic to Nasir Jang. An entire subgenre of martyrdom accounts linger on a portrait of the ill-fated Nizam, who purportedly adorned himself in the early dawn light in a close-fitting white gown like a shroud, without armor or arms. He is said to have spoken thrice to his reflection in a mirror, "Oh Mir Ahmad [his given name], may God preserve you!" After which he proceeded, ready for martyrdom, to his elephant. See Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 56. Other examples of the Hyderabad narrative that developed in subsequent decades includes Rahbar Farūqī, *Nāsir Jang Shahīd Hazrat Nizām al-Mulk Āsaf Jāh Auwal Bānī-i Sultanat-i Āsafiya Khalaf al-Rashīd Jānashīn Nawāb Mīr Ahmad Khān Nizām al-Daula ke khūn chikan sawānih aur Hindūstān mein mulk-gīrī ke liye Yūropī aqwām ke ibtidā'i kār-nāme martaba* (Hyderabad: 'Āzam Istīm Press aur Government Educational Printers, 1942); Mirza Nasīrullah Khān Dawlat Yār Jang Fidāi, "Tazkira-i sharh-i hāl wa hayāt-i Nawāb Nāsir Jang Shahīd" (1301AH), Library, 206, Telangana State Archives Library.

<sup>788</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1939, 56.

<sup>789</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, 57; Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 282; Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, 160. Orme's account disagrees with this portrait, indicating instead that he accused the ruler of Kadapa of being a coward for not joining the battle.

<sup>790</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 282. *Dar ān waqt īshān mayil ba simat-i Bahādur Khān waḡheira Āfghānān ke istāda būdand bā mardum-i qabil namūdand bā itifāq-i mukhālīfān rā bardārānd hanūz subh sādiq būd ke filsawāri-yi 'Āli Dūdman muttasil-i filsawāri-yi Bahādur Khān kāfir-ni'mat rasīd wa o ke binābar-i ranjish-hā-yi nihānī bā mukhālīfān hamzabān wa hamdāstān gashta būd rasīdan-i īshān rā bā īn waz' az lata'if dānista [?] bandūqī ke dar dast dāsht ba-jānib-i īshān sar dād wa az rasīdan-i ān zarb kār-i 'Āli Dūdman tamām shud.*

<sup>791</sup> Khān, 282. *Az ghattā top bar avarāda ba libās ke dāshtand bālā-yi fil-i digar nishānida.* Or, as the French sources more dubiously have it, the Afghan leadership, having cowardly waited out the battle and confirmed with their own eyes a French victory, belatedly cried out "*vive le Roi!*" Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 271.

allies of Nasir Jang, including Shah Nawaz Khan, fled towards Hyderabad. Muhammad Ali Khan Wala Jah sought refuge in the fort of Tiruchirappalli. The remainder joined Muzaffar Jang.

### *The Pondicherry negotiations*

There followed well over a week of celebration in camp and in the city of Pondicherry. The location of the negotiations itself deserves our attention. Only a few years previously the French, in this period the most successful of the European powers along the Coromandel Coast, might hardly have been considered central players in the region. Now, having helped bankroll and offered security to some of the most important inland political leaders as the direction of the Karnatak's future was fought over, the French East India Company were at the very center of affairs. Monsieur Dupleix, well-versed in the cultural nuances of South Asian political diplomacy, sent six ceremonial gowns to Muzaffar Jang in the name of the French king. He must have been aware that this signified Muzaffar Jang's ritual submission to the distant French sovereign. These were presented, and accepted, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December.<sup>792</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, Muzaffar Jang, along with the leaders of the Afghan households and Chanda Sahib, entered Pondicherry to great fanfare. There, after Muzaffar Jang was reunited with the women of his household, the various participants in the conspiracy sat down not only to divvy out shares of the wealth that remained in Nasir Jang's treasury, but more importantly, to apportion control of the Karnatak's resources amongst themselves. Muzaffar Jang, it was assumed, would claim the *sūbadārī* of the Deccan, while Chanda Sahib would take the Governorship of Arcot. Still at question was what the Afghan households and the French would receive, and how or if the victors might conciliate with the defeated Wala Jahi household, led by the fugitive Muhammad Ali Khan, and their allies, the English at Madras.

The Afghans opened the negotiations with a daring demand: control over all of the territories "between the Guischna [Krishna] River and the coast," essentially the entirety of the Karnatak.<sup>793</sup> These regions were to be shared equally between the households, and exempt from all future taxation by Hyderabad. They insisted that the past three years of tax, which they had not paid, should be forgiven. They also sought either the entirety of, or an equal share in, the proceeds of Nasir Jang's treasury.<sup>794</sup> Almost immediately, their ambitions were squelched. Despite the central part they had played in Muzaffar Jang's dramatic change of fortunes, Muzaffar Jang clearly perceived in the Afghans a dangerous ally, and found the French more trustworthy, and perhaps more pliable (or lucrative), prospective partner. Towards this end, Muzaffar Jang made extravagant public overtures to General Dupleix, hoping to use the French as a convenient wedge against the Afghans. At their first meeting on his arrival at Pondicherry, Muzaffar Jang embraced Dupleix and wept, purportedly begging Dupleix to "govern and rule him."<sup>795</sup> His melodramatic performance extended to an insistence that Dupleix take charge over important elements of the negotiations, including brokerage of a settlement with the Afghans.

By removing himself from the discussion, Muzaffar Jang deprived the Afghans of their only important point of leverage, even as he granted the ambitious Dupleix startling leeway towards

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<sup>792</sup> "Journal de ce qui s'est passé depuis la mort de Naserdjang, et pendant le séjour du seigneur Mosaferdjang dans la ville de Pondicherry depuis le 16 decembre 1750 a 15 janvier 1751" (n.d.), 76–77, Mss/Eur/Orme OV. 15, British Library. All references to and quotations from this source are based on a translation from the French, kindly provided by Alice Laskin.

<sup>793</sup> "Journal," 79.

<sup>794</sup> Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters (1742-1754)*, 275.

<sup>795</sup> "Journal," 78.

securing his own priorities. When Himmat (Bahadur) Khan Panni, Abdul Nabi Khan (Mocha Miyana) Miyana of Kadapa, and Abdul Karim Khan Miyana [Karimullah Khan in the text] of Savanur came before the Governor and stated their demands on December 28<sup>th</sup>, Dupleix responded that he felt that their claims were “not just,” and that he suspected that they aspired to “become independent and dispossess Muzaffar Jang.” Although he had “no desire to interfere in this matter,” he considered it his duty to speak up against such intolerable demands. Moreover, he added slyly, if the Afghans themselves made such extravagant claims, “what must he, the Governor, then claim? He, who had sacrificed his King’s subjects, his property and his health for the liberation of [Muzaffar Jang].” The Afghans were cornered. After a long silence punctuated by long, meaningful glances between members of their group, they submitted to the only option immediately available. The Afghans promised to “put their interests [...] in [Dupleix’s] hands,” and rely on his generosity.<sup>796</sup>

The next day, the Governor announced that Himmat Khan would be given the title of Rustam Jang, and would receive Raichur and Adoni in *jāgīr* (these two valuable territories had fallen out of Panni hands after the defeat at Shakar Khera in 1724; their retrieval was a significant boon). Abdul Nabi Khan of Kadapa would receive Ganjikota, Gutti, and Gurramkonda (these fortresses had all been in recent years under Miyana control; this order merely confirmed their status). Abdul Karim Khan received Sira, a fortress in the central Karnatak highlands that had formerly been under Nawaiyat control and had more recently fallen under Asaf Jahi sway. They were also promised half of the contents of Nasir Jang’s treasuries.<sup>797</sup> These territories were not without value, to be sure. But they were also a far cry from what the Afghans had initially sought. Helpless to demand anything further, the Afghans were obliged to sign paperwork accepting the terms and to pledge their allegiance to Muzaffar Jang while Dupleix oversaw the ceremony.

Over the days that followed, Governor Dupleix continued to act in this role, granting privileges and titles to a number of figures connected with Muzaffar Jang. He even performed a key role in the ceremony recognizing Muzaffar Jang as the *sūbadār* of the Deccan, presenting him with twenty-one gold rupees, embracing him and sitting alongside him under a canopy as celebratory cannons were fired.<sup>798</sup> Muzaffar Jang turned to Dupleix afterwards, and, stating that he himself was content to rule the territories of the central Deccan, suggested that the French Governor “accept the responsibility of General Commander of all the territory between the Guischna [Krishna] River and the coast.”<sup>799</sup>

Having just denied the Afghans this very prize, Dupleix could now claim preeminent authority over a territory nearly as large as France itself. Across this expansive arena, Dupleix demanded the French Company be granted sole authority to mint currency, an unmistakable sign regarding his ambitions for the South Indian economy. Above and beyond even this, Muzaffar Jang awarded the Governor a *mansabdārī* rank of seven thousand, the *māhī-marātīb*, a distinguished Mughal insignia, the *jāgīr* of Valadavur fort (in the Pondicherry hinterlands) and its territories, purportedly worth Rs. 100,000 annually, not to mention a full ceremonial ensemble, consisting of robe, belt, sabre, shield, dagger and other accoutrements, which had ostensibly once been Aurangzeb’s and had subsequently been granted to Nizam al-Mulk.

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<sup>796</sup> “Journal,” 79–80.

<sup>797</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1939, 63; “Journal,” 80.

<sup>798</sup> “Journal,” 83–84.

<sup>799</sup> “Journal,” 84, 88.

A few other arrangements still had to be made. Some of Nasir Jang's more powerful commanders, including the famed Shah Nawaz Khan, author of the *Ma'āsir al-Umarā*, were extended olive branches and convinced to return to service under the new Asaf Jahi Nizam. Less clear was the outcome of negotiations with Muhammad Ali Khan, still sheltering behind fortress walls in Tiruchirappalli. A contemporary observer in Pondicherry recorded that Muhammad Ali Khan agreed to make peace, promising that he would surrender the fortress to French control if he were not held liable for his deceased father's debts, if he were allowed to retain his formal title and rank, and if he were guaranteed continued possession of his personal properties. A signed agreement formalizing these terms was sent to Tiruchirappalli to be signed.<sup>800</sup> This account conflicts with the later, officially sanctioned account recorded in the *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, which indicates that Muhammad Ali Khan responded far more caustically to overtures of peace.

Although the Nazim of the Karnatak must obey the Governor of the Deccan, considering that your occupation of the Nizamat of the Deccan comes from trickery and wickedness, whereas my hereditary authority over the government of the Karnatak is by imperial command, my obedience is impossible unless an imperial order is received for your Governorship. In these circumstances, your entrusting the Nizamat of Arcot to [Chanda Sahib], and granting numerous regions in *jāgīr* to the French is really astonishing. Certainly it is a wellspring for difficulty and ugliness.<sup>801</sup>

If we must retain some doubt respecting negotiations between Muzaffar Jang and the beleaguered Muhammad Ali Khan, we are on firmer ground when it comes to Muzaffar Jang's policy towards the British. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1751, they received from him the following unfriendly missive.

It was highly requisite for you to treat me with Presents according to Custom, in order to gain my good Will, but You have not done it, which appears very strange to me considering your Sincerity and Obedience, and the Understanding you are [endowed] with, however I now expect that you deliver back all the Sea port Towns and other Places which you have been possess'd of, during the Time of the late Troubles, (there being no one then to take Notice of it) to the Moguls [*sic*] People, and send me a Satisfactory Answer as soon as possible, if not, I shall resolve upon a proper Method to recover them.<sup>802</sup>

Again, we see a clear divergence from earlier patterns. Whereas formerly Indian officials had sought to manage European groups by cultivating between them a balance of powers, the fallout from Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang's urgent hunt for alliances led to a situation, after Muzaffar Jang's unexpected success in concert with the French, wherein he felt comfortable dismissing the English entirely, even as he tied his own authority inextricably to the French. It is partially for this reason that Muzaffar Jang's legacy was subject to biting critique by no less an authority than the *Ma'āsir al-Umarā*.

Let it not remain hidden that up to this point the French and English Christians had remained in their ports, and did not step beyond their limits. Hidayat Muhi al-Din Khan took them as his companions and made them bold. The martyrdom of Nawab Nizam al-Daula (Nasir Jang) [...] transpired with the aid of the French.

<sup>800</sup> "Journal," 87.

<sup>801</sup> Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 206. *Agarche itā'at-i nāzim-i Karnātak bā rā'is-i Dakhan lābid, amā lahāz bar ānke tassaruf-i shumā bar nizāmat-i Dakan az taghallub wa bad-rāhī ast, wa ikhtiyār-i man bar riyāsāt-i Karnātak irsān az hukm-i shāhī, bidūn-i sudūr-i ihkām-i zilli subhānī i'timād-i nizāmat-i shumā, wa itā'at-i man az mubālāt ast. Wa bā in hāsiyat tafwīz-i nizāmat-i Arkāt be Hussain Dost Khān wa dādan-i jāgīr-i basā ta'alluqāt ba-Farāsīs az ta'ajjubāt wa bi 'l-yaqīn manshā'ī basā ta'arruz wa qabūhāt...*

<sup>802</sup> *Records of Fort St. George: Country Correspondence, Public Department, 1751* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1910), 1.

Afterwards the Christians became exceedingly proud and brave. When the English saw how bold the French had become, they also took up such conduct. Parts of the Arcot country were taken by the French and parts by the English. Likewise, the English quarreled with the Nizam of Bengal, and conquered Bengal after a fight. Similarly, they took the port of Surat and Cambay. Accordingly, the foundations of the dominion of the Christians [in India] are the work Hidayat Muhi al-Din Khan.<sup>803</sup>

For some indigenous observers, at least, the seed of European expansionary territorial ambition was first watered by Muzaffar Jang's recklessness in alliance-building. This diplomacy-centric theory of European conquest, whatever its other possible shortcomings, highlights the extent to which this moment marked a fundamental breakdown in long established patterns of economic and political life in the Karnatak, and directly foreshadowed the emerge of colonial rule in Bengal.

For a century at least, powerful households like the Miyanas and the Pannis, deeply rooted in the Karnatak's highland territories, had invested in and profited by trading networks both inland and extending outward through coastal ports across the Indian Ocean, using their access to those resources and marketplaces as leverage in their interactions with more northerly powers. European expansion along the coast severely disrupted these investments at the same moment that they faced an increasingly powerful, often hostile neighbor to their north in the form of the emerging Asaf Jahi state. As the ecology that had long sustained the Karnatak households was undermined, their authority was gradually hollowed out. By 1750, it was ready to collapse. The new political alliance between the Hyderabad Muzaffar Jang and General Dupleix signaled the practical irrelevance of the Karnatak households in a new era, when coastal powers and Deccan polities could, for the first time, negotiate mutually favorable arrangements over the heads of the formerly powerful Karnatak intermediaries.

### *The second assassination and the collapse of the Karnatak households*

A new era in Karnatak politics loomed, seemingly ordered around a Hyderabad alliance with the newly empowered French Company. But first, the Afghans would have their say one last time. In early January of 1751, Muzaffar Jang marched north out of Pondicherry at the head of an army that included the Afghan household leadership, outwardly resigned to the terms of the agreement brokered by General Dupleix. With the Hyderabad-bound army there also marched a contingent of French troops under the leadership of Monsieur Bussy.

Shortly after Muzaffar Jang's forces entered the Miyana-governed Kadapa territories near the settlement of Lakkireddipalle, groups of soldiers, including members of the French contingent,

<sup>803</sup> Aurangābādī and 'Abd al-Hayy ibn Shāhnavāz Khān, *Ma'asir al-Umara*, Vol. III: 852; Aurangabadi and Abd al-Hayy ibn Shahnawaz Khan, *Maathir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II: 401. *Makhfi namānad ke tā in waqt nasāra-i Farāsīs wa Angrez dar banādar būdand. Wa pā az hadd-i khwud bīrūn namī guzāshband. Hidāyat Muhi al-Dīn Khān inhā rā rafiq-i khwud karda jarī sākht. Shihādāt-i Nawāb Nizām al-Daula ham [...] ba-i'ānat-i Farāsīs wāqī' shud. Wa ba'd az in nisāra sakht gharūr wa jarā'at ba-ham rasānidand. Wa jarā'at-ha-yi Farāsīs dīda nisāra-i Angrez ham ba-harkat āmadand. Wa mulk-i Arkāt ba'ze rā Angrez girift. Wa nīz Angrez bā Nizām-i Bangāla purkhāsh bar angīkht. Wa jangīda Bangāla rā ba-tassaruf dar āward. Wa bandar-i Sūrat wa Kanbāyat rā girift. Pas binā'ī tasallut-i nisāra ibtida tarh karda Hidāyat Muhi al-Dīn Khān ast.* It is not entirely clear from the published editions which of the several men who made their mark on the *Ma'asir* penned these lines. The Beveridge translation does not include the account of Nasir Jang's life amongst the 569 'supplementary' biographies added by the original author Shah Nawaz Khan's son Abdul Hai Khan in 1780. Yet Shah Nawaz Khan was thought to have completed the original 261 biographies before the events in question had taken place. Perhaps they were added by Mir Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami when he was editing and completing his friend's first edition around 1759 (see the English edition, Vol. I: v-vi). Whether written in 1759 or in 1780, however, it offers a remarkable early perspective on the rise of European power in the subcontinent.

began to pillage the villages they traveled through. Miyana and Panni forces responded to this affront by attacking and capturing some of the French forces' bullock-carts [*chhakra*]. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, Muzaffar Jang, who had been "awaiting an opportunity for the punishment of these obstinate people" drew up in battle array alongside the French forces against the Afghans' troops. A battle broke out, in which the head of the Savanuri Miyanas, Abdul Karim Khan, was killed.<sup>804</sup> Muzaffar Jang and Himmat Khan then faced off. Himmat Khan, who had already taken the life of one Hyderabad Nizam, now claimed the life of another, but this time at the expense of his own. They fell simultaneously, each a victim of the other's blade.<sup>805</sup> In the furious battle that ensued, the remaining Afghan forces were routed and fled. Abdul Nabi Khan (Mocha Miyan) of Kadapa escaped, badly injured.

Suddenly, all of the carefully arranged negotiations of the past weeks were under threat. Hyderabad and French leaders in the camp hurriedly reached an agreement that they would raise a third Asaf Jahi heir, Nasir Jang's younger brother Salabat Jang, to the throne. Although this new round of discussions won the French an immediate boon in the form of fresh territorial concessions, their longer-term prospects were less rosy, for they had lost an enthusiastic ally in Muzaffar Jang. The British, seizing their opportunity, renewed their support for Muhammad Ali Khan and turned their energies to removing Chanda Sahib, who had remained in Arcot, from power. For another year and a half, war between allied French and Nawaiyat forces and English and Wala Jahi forces continued across the southern Karnatak. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 1752, Chanda Sahib was finally captured and killed. His death cleared the path for a re-establishment, backed by the British, of the Wala Jahi dynasty at Arcot. General Dupleix, who had so recently been awarded supreme command over the Karnatak, now found himself unable to collect upon its benefits without the inland allegiances on which had built his power. Dupleix fell increasingly into debt, and was recalled by the French Company's directors in 1754.

Following a hurried ceremony raising the young new Nizam, Salabat Jang, to the throne, the Hyderabad army again started northwards, guided by senior noblemen Raja Ramdas and Shah Nawaz Khan, as well as the French General Bussy. They marched first to Kadapa, where they ransacked the city and its environs until Abdul Majid Khan, one of Abdul Nabi Khan's brothers, scraped together Rs. 300,000 in tribute. The army then turned north to Hyderabad, where Himmat Khan's widow and children were taken hostage and carried away to Hyderabad.<sup>806</sup> The households' further fate are outlined in the Epilogue.

## Conclusion

Under both Deccan Sultanate and Mughal governments, the Karnatak households had built powerful autonomous claims along both the coast and points inland, which they sustained by leveraging their location and their access to military recruitment networks. Over the forty-year period following the departure of the Mughal army after Aurangzeb's death, they maintained these positions through their close investment in the region's vibrant and diverse economy. Yet even as South India continued to operate as a central hub in Indian Ocean economy, conditions on the

<sup>804</sup> Burhān ibn Hasan, *Tuzuk-i Wālā Jāhī*, 207. *Kamīn-dārī-i tadārūk-i khwud-sarī-i ānhā mī namūd.*

<sup>805</sup> Khān, "Tārīkh-i Fathiya," 284. *Har do sardār bā ham maqābla shuda radd wa badal-i shamshīr dar miyān āmad wa har do az dast-i yak dīgar jān ba jān-i āfrīn sipardand.*

<sup>806</sup> Burhan ibn Hasan, *Tuzak-i-Walajabi [English translation]*, 1934, 67–68.

ground were beginning to change, with disastrous consequences for the Miyanas, Pannis, and Nawaiyats.

One difference was the expanding role of European authorities along the Coromandel Coast. Their position along the coast did not lead, however, to a more just or a more business-friendly environment. In fact, indigenous merchants often sought to escape the constraints of European and especially British trading policies, or else to balance their investments at European-held ports with other interests elsewhere. Groups like the so-called Pathan merchants, who enjoyed connections with inland powers like the Karnatak households, were particularly disinclined to submit to European port policies, especially when they could simply travel a few miles further down the coast to ports where they could negotiate more favorable trade arrangements. These longer routes, however, no doubt took their toll in profit margins and in the accessibility of markets and goods. In the 1730s, crop failures led to several years of famine along the hinterlands of Madras and Pondicherry, even as the French East India Company enjoyed modest successes at the expense of the British East India Company in Madras. All of these events must have combined to make for profoundly challenging circumstances for the Panni and Miyana households' regional investments. And yet, they seemingly persevered in the face of them. The so-called 'Pathan merchants' continued to carry on with business in indigenously-held ports like San Thomé and Porto Novo. The households' tenuous efforts maintain their positions would not survive the aggressive expansion of Deccan-based interests beginning in 1740, however. First overrun by Maratha armies, the port city of Porto Novo received a direct attack that must have directly improved the standing of French and British-held ports in the neighborhood. Three years later, the Pannis and Miyanas likely had little choice but to join the Asaf Jahi army that next marched through their territories on their way to decapitate the Nawaiyat household and replace it with a Hyderabad-approved representative. By the time of Nizam al-Mulk's death in 1748 and the succession struggle that followed, what remained of the old Karnatak household regime was desperate for any opportunity that might have offered prospect for improving their position. They remained, as they always had been, light on their feet, shifting between prospective allegiances as they saw openings. In some ways, this strategy remained effective – they were able to leapfrog expertly between camps as various parties' fortunes rose or fell.

In other respects, however, it was clear to see that a major political vacuum was emerging in the Karnatak, and outside groups were converging to fill the void. For the first time, Deccan powers felt able to negotiate directly with the rising coastal powers, the European Company officials, leaving the old mediating Karnatak households at the margins of the conversation. This looming prospect of impending change seemed to invite those at the table to dream big. The fantastic visions that characterized negotiations between Muzaffar Jang and then his uncle, Nasir Jang, and their various European and South Asian allies, all proved eventually impracticable. Yet this shared sense of expectation, as a diverse array of allied groups scrambled to gamble on whatever arrangement would eventually take shape, indicates that all parties saw great promise in the prospect of control over the Karnatak economy.

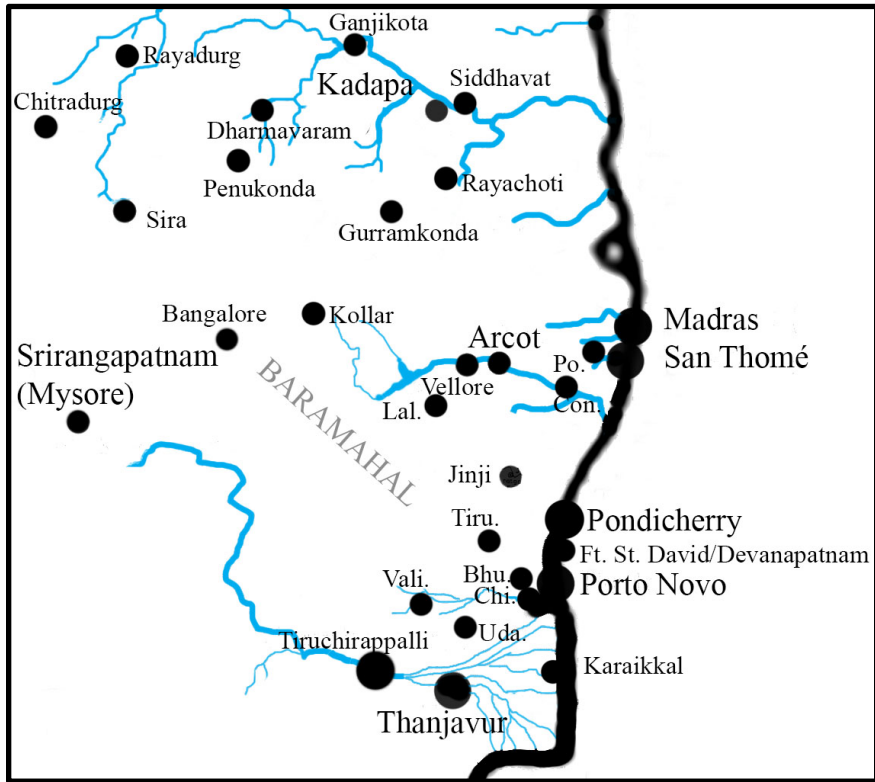
As groups like the military households faded away, others filled the void. One rising force, of course, was the British East India Company. Having almost by chance profited by the unexpected disintegration of the seemingly promising Hyderabad-French alliance, they seized the opportunity to secure their investments against future setbacks in fortune. Over the decade following the 1748-1751 succession war, they would push inland in an unequal partnership with the Wala Jahi household, who owed the British their revived fortunes. Two other beneficiaries were the Deccan-



based Maratha and Hyderabad Asaf Jahi polities. Beginning in the 1750s, these forces pushed decisively southwards into the eastern and western flanks of the Karnatak, establishing far more permanent claims on both territory and revenue in these regions than they had previously been able to manage. A third power was the Mysore Sultanate which, beginning around 1760, began an aggressive program of expansion under Hyder Ali (d. 1782). The new Sultanate government's successes were based on principles which, although they initially seemed to draw upon earlier patterns of administration under the old Wodeyar dynasty, soon began to take novel shape. The Sultanate, especially under Hyder Ali's son Tipu Sultan (d. 1799), would become a widely cited model for a more bureaucratic and financially centralized model of military administration.<sup>807</sup> Amongst other innovations, the rising Sultanate regime aggressively sought control over a variety of land-based revenue sources and inland markets, which were not directly tied to the Coromandel Coast. Towards this end, Hyder Ali waged a series of wars against what remained of the Miyana and Panni households, seizing much of their remaining territory along both eastern and western flanks, and forcing the Bankapur-based Miyanas into a marriage signifying the Miyanas' vassalage at the Mysore court. That Hyder Ali and his son acknowledged the ultimate necessity in South India for command over a major port, however, was evidenced first by Hyder Ali's efforts in 1780-81 to seize Porto Novo, Arcot and Cuddalore, and by Tipu Sultan's efforts at Travancore in 1789-1790.

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<sup>807</sup> Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered"; Irfan Habib, ed., *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan: Documents and Essays* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001); Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*; Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy*.



Map 7: Coromandel Coast detail.

- Lal. = Lalapettai
- Po. = Poonamallee
- Con. = Conjeevaram
- Tiru. = Tiruvaddi
- Bhu. = Bhuvanigiri
- Chi. = Chidambaram
- Uda. = Udaiyarpalaiyam
- Val. = Valikondapuram

## Epilogue

The final pages of this dissertation set out to describe the ‘afterlife,’ so to speak, of the Panni and Miyana households in the latter half of the eighteenth century. During these decades, the households fell rapidly under the shadow of neighboring states: the Mysore Sultanate, the Marathas, and to a lesser extent, Hyderabad. At the same time, the households became increasingly isolated from one another, shifting away from the close entanglements that had characterized the previous century. Household leadership’s efforts to enact reforms that might staunch the bleeding were largely ineffective.

The primary beneficiary of the households’ ill fortune was the Mysore Sultanate, who rose meteorically to power, controlling much of the inland Karnatak by the final decades of the eighteenth century. Mysore’s sudden emergence on the main stage is in and of itself the clearest evidence of changes under way. Whereas I have argued through the course of this dissertation that households, rather than states, were the primary unit of politics in southern India, Mysore began to break from this pattern (hesitantly under Hyder Ali (r. 1761-1782), and dramatically under Tipu Sultan (r. 1782-1799)). In ways ranging from Mysore’s embrace of royal symbol to the court’s disinterest in the kinds of power-sharing arrangements that had characterized household rule, Mysore Sultanate asserted a kind of political presence that was in important ways unlike what had come before.

I must underline, however that this novelty was not of the sort suggested in much of the earlier scholarship. Beginning with scholars in the mid-century, Tipu Sultan in particular was valorized for having mounted a proto-nationalist defense against European colonial aggression. In order to do so, Tipu Sultan and his father were supposed to have recognized the necessity of adopting superior European technologies and institutions, undertaking a ruthless bid for ‘modernizing’ administrative centralization along the way.<sup>808</sup> Others, as I have already gestured to in previous chapters, have more recently raised questions about the degree to which Mysore’s success was really built on novel policies (discussed below). My engagement with this debate here is necessarily superficial, addressed primarily in order to underscore my main argument here: namely that Mysore’s success could only have emerged in the context of a power vacuum left by the disintegration of the household system. The rise of Mysore Sultanate itself was a clear indication that the inland South Indian political landscape was changing in response to the growing European power along the Coromandel Coast.

Let us begin with a quick examination of the rise of the Mysore Sultanate. Through much of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as we have already seen, Wodeyar-ruled Mysore had sustained a continuous presence in the south, making occasional territorial gains but, as with the other Karnatak households, relying in large measure on delicately counterbalanced alliances and tribute agreements to sustain its position. Although Mysore was much more ‘state-like’ in its structure than the other Karnatak households, maintaining a relatively compact footprint and observing the dynastic rule of acknowledged kings [*rājās*], in other ways it looked much like other Karnatak powers. Its armed forces were made up of a diversity of soldiering communities, perhaps a bit more heavily reliant on foot soldiers than households like the Pannis, Miyanas, and Nawaiyats had been. The state’s great landed wealth and its southwards connection with the lowland trade and

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<sup>808</sup> Mohibbul Hasan, *History Of Tipu Sultan* (Calcutta: Bibliophile Ltd., 1951). Others have also emphasized the Sultanate’s reforms, see Stein, “State Formation and Economy Reconsidered.”

agricultural breadbaskets of Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli meant that it was a common target for tribute campaigns led by northerners, but as with other southern centers, Mysore had been able to habitually buy its way out of trouble – Deccan armies had no interest in sticking around longer than it took to collect payments.

After the opening decades of the eighteenth century, Mysore began to show signs of financial distress. Possibly it was struggling to contend with the constant demands for tribute from northern neighbors. Maybe they were struggling with some of the same kinds of challenges faced by their neighbors, the Karnatak households – increasing instability in economic networks that tied their inland markets to the Coromandel Coast. Regardless, sources offer glimpses of a rising number of salary-related soldiers' rebellions. Alongside these rebellions came new strategies for managing the court's financial affairs. In this same period, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has shown that the Wodeyar rulers were beginning to rely more closely on paper-based record-keeping. This is illustrated by a rising tide of court documentation dating from the 1720s onwards. Crucially, these early reforms disprove the common argument that Mysore state only began to reform its administrative practices after Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sultan rose to power.<sup>809</sup>

Other scholars have also raised questions about the extent to which the Mysore Sultanate's military policies were truly novel.<sup>810</sup> Hyder Ali Khan (*né* Hyder Nayak) rose through the ranks of Mysore's armed forces before seizing control over the state itself in 1761. Although his family origins are otherwise obscure, he was thoroughly a product of the southern military ecology, having served in both Wodeyar-affiliated and other armies alongside the numerous soldiering communities that have become so familiar in preceding chapters: Berads and Lingayats, Telugu and Kannada-speaking communities, Afghans, Nawaiyats, Siddis and others.<sup>811</sup> During his early years of service to the Wodeyars, Hyder Ali Khan established a popular reputation amongst these communities for his leadership during campaigns in the central Karnatak in the 1750s. His stature amongst these groups was an important factor in his successful usurpation of Wodeyar power.<sup>812</sup> His deep understanding of these groups meant that he was perfectly situated to benefit from the sudden fluidity of military labor markets when the old Karnatak military households collapsed. This collapse, providentially, took place at precisely the same moment at which Mysore's landlocked status, formerly something of a liability for the state, offered it new opportunity for stability in contrast with much of the rest of the Karnatak, roiled by the shifting sands of coastal markets.

Some of this can be glimpsed in two surviving late-eighteenth century genealogies that purport to account for Hyder Ali Khan's origins. One version imagines him as a secret descendent of the Adil Shahi dynasty, normally thought to have ended with the death of Sikandar Adil Shah in Mughal custody. A hither-to unreported Bijapuri prince was purportedly smuggled out of Bijapur and taken to Kadapa, where he and his mother found safe haven under Miyana rule. The lineage remained in Kadapa, where they found service under the Miyana Afghans and received from them the title of Nayak, continuing in this tradition for several generations until the wind of opportunity

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<sup>809</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 84–85.

<sup>810</sup> Kaushik Roy has offered the most thorough argument in this respect, demonstrating the extent to which Sultanate forces continued to rely on indigenous technologies and techniques. Kaushik Roy, *War, Culture, and Society in Early Modern South Asia, 1740-1849*, Asian States and Empires 3 (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>811</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, 73.

<sup>812</sup> Mesrob Vartavarian, "An Open Military Economy: The British Conquest of South India Reconsidered, 1780-1799," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57, no. 4 (September 26, 2014): 486–510.

eventually carried the lineage to Mysore.<sup>813</sup> The second account, more commonly accepted by modern historians and preferred by Mir Husain Ali Khan Kirmani (who also acknowledges having heard the other abovementioned version), is perhaps more plausible on its face but as with the other version suffers from an absence of supporting evidence. In this version, a certain Shaikh Wali Muhammad Quraishi came from Delhi south to the Deccan during Muhammad Adil Shah's reign and settled near the Chishti shrine of Banda Nawaz at Gulbarga. There his son Ali Sahib married a woman from one of the families in hereditary service to the shrine. Eventually this man and his wife moved to Bijapur, where they took up residence with another branch of his wife's family. Her seven brothers were all employed in service to the Deccani nobleman Shaikh Minhaj (see Chapter Two). When all seven died valiantly in battle against the Mughal army, she quit eating, vowing to follow her brothers into death. Afraid that he might lose his wife, and convinced a change of scenery would help, Ali Sahib suggested a move to the Karnatak, where they settled in Kollar, midway between Bangalore and the Baramahal region. The wife's condition apparently improved, for the couple proceeded to have several children, who in turn found service both with the Nawaiyats of Arcot and with the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore.<sup>814</sup>

Both sources, despite carving different paths through South India's political landscape, saw great value in connecting Hyder Ali Khan to the old Bijapur Sultanate regime and to the region's military households. At the same time as these genealogies underline Hyder Ali Khan's deep roots in such circles, however, the genealogies are structured so as to frame his eclipse of them. In light of such framings, it is not surprising to find that Hyder Ali Khan's policy *vis-à-vis* the older Karnatak households was based far more heavily on the households' forced incorporation – by imprisonment and marriage – than by pure military dominance. These policies, which I will describe more closely in a moment, were probably implemented with an eye to benefit by what remained of the old households' recruitment networks.

In other respects as well, Hyder Ali both drew upon and departed from precedent. While an explicit policy of “thrusting centralization” (to use Burton Stein's formulation) appears an over-simple explanation of his administrative policies,<sup>815</sup> it is nevertheless clear that he was not content with the old system of shared investments that had formerly undergirded regional politics. He aggressively intervened in revenue collection systems by auctioning off collection rights to the highest bidder and by enforced transfers of truculent populations from high-value regions.<sup>816</sup> Tipu Sultan later sought to entice revenue-paying cultivators by settling revenue obligations directly, an inspiration for Thomas Monroe's later ‘ryotwari’ revenue policy.<sup>817</sup> Hyder Ali Khan worked hard to ensure Mysore's place in the center of the Karnatak economy by developing his own position as the dominant purchaser of such high-value goods as horses, combining carrot-and-stick strategies to ensure that merchants brought their wares to his court first.<sup>818</sup> These merchants must have been only too happy after the collapse of military market centers in places like Kadapa, Savanur and Karnul to

<sup>813</sup> Anonymous, “Qissa-i Haidar ‘Ali Khān” (n.d.), I.O. Islamic 1978, British Library.

<sup>814</sup> Mir Husain Ali Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik: Otherwise Styled Shums Ul Moolk, Ameer Ud Dowla, Nawaub Hydur Ali Khan Bahadoor, Hydur Jung; Nawaub of the Karnatic Balaghaut*, trans. William Miles (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842), 1–10.

<sup>815</sup> Stein, “State Formation and Economy Reconsidered,” 391.

<sup>816</sup> Roy, *War, Culture, and Society in Early Modern South Asia, 1740-1849*, 73–75, 79.

<sup>817</sup> Prasanna Parthasarathi, *The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India, 1720-1800* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4–6.

<sup>818</sup> Anonymous, “Qissa-i Haidar ‘Ali Khān,” fols. 51b-52a.

find a ready buyer, but Tipu Sultan was not content to rely on this long-distance network for his equine supply. He later oversaw a sophisticated horse breeding program such that by the early nineteenth century, Mysore's bloodlines, known as 'Kollari horses,' were acknowledged the best in the South.<sup>819</sup> Other interventionist policies, including experiments with state monopolies on various products, appear to have had mixed results.<sup>820</sup> Surviving records of *in'ām* grants from Kadapa (which Mysore overran in the 1760s and 1770s) likewise point to a disruptive impetus. Large numbers of old grants, retained through the period of household rule, were revoked under Mysore's government, perhaps as part of an effort to dislodge deeply entrenched elites. These strategies, again, had mixed result, and by the latter years of Tipu Sultan's reign, Mysore had begun 're-endowing' many such claims.<sup>821</sup>

As such, the rise of Mysore Sultanate power must be understood as emerging in the wake of household rule, both drawing upon elements of the old system and, in other cases, diverging from it in ways that were only possible because the earlier system had already collapsed. Over the following pages, I outline the different (but all declining) trajectories that these houses followed over the latter part of the century. Although I have argued in Chapter Six that the Hyderabad succession war of 1748-1751 was a watershed moment for the Karnatak households, they did not simply wither away and disappear in the years that followed, even if now their powerlessness was on full display. It was in the final decades of the eighteenth century that the Pannis and the Miyanas finally adopted the form in which history has mostly chosen to remember them – as rulers of 'little kingdoms' perched in the marginal uplands of the Karnatak, whose limited authority was exercised at the pleasure of their more powerful neighbors – the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Marathas of Pune, the Sultan of Mysore, and finally, the British East India Company.

### *Kadapa*

Let us turn first to Kadapa, where we left off at the end of Chapter Six. Abdul Nabi Khan, also known in many of the sources as Mocha Miyan, was the sole survivor amongst the Miyana and Panni household leadership. He fled the scene of the battle, badly injured, and made his way back to the household's nearby capital. There, he appears to have been almost immediately displaced by his brother's son, Abdul Majid Khan, whose support base seems to have come from discontented soldiering groups whose salaries, owed by Mocha Miyan, were significantly in arrears. Despite Abdul Majid Khan's aggressive attempt at restoring the household to financial solvency, Kadapa was roiled both by intra-household strife and by the regular depredations of campaigning Maratha and Mysore armies. In 1777, the household lost their claim on Kadapa forever.

In the few sources that comment upon it, Abdul Majid Khan's tenure stands for his aggressiveness of vision. Abdul Majid Khan understood his first priority had to be the rebuilding of support amongst Kadapa's soldiering groups. This translated into a nearly constant campaign of tribute collection that broke radically with earlier precedent, treating even the household's closest and longest allies as legitimate targets where earlier policy would have been oriented towards building bridges with near neighbors by establishing alliances and 'forgiving' tribute. Something of this predatory singlemindedness carries through in his moniker, the "White Serpent" [*mar-i safid*], by which he was known to both friend and enemy. His campaigns were bankrolled by two of the

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<sup>819</sup> Sibghatullah, Murtazā, and Bahādur, "Sirāj al-tawārīkh," fol. 317a.

<sup>820</sup> Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, 198–99.

<sup>821</sup> "Cuddapah Inams"; Washbrook, "Merchants, Markets, and Commerce in Early Modern South India," 285.

city's most important moneylenders, Salim Khan and Bhakara Sahib.<sup>822</sup> Relying on their backing, he launched campaigns against Penukonda (where Murari Rao Ghorpade was based), Hoskote near Bangalore, Vemula (only a few miles from Kadapa), Raidurg, Panganur, Banganapalli, Madanapalli, Chitradurg, Awk, and others. He also launched campaigns not only against his longtime allies, the Panni household in Karnul, but also against his aunt, Medina Bibi (the wife of Mocha Miyan), who controlled the fortress of Ganjikota and remained openly unreconciled to her nephew's rise to power at her husband's expense. At the same time, seeking to seize control over what remained of the Miyana household's revenue streams to the south in the Baramahal districts, Abdul Majid Khan recalled all of the so-called *khānazāds* (lit. 'house-born' part-time military commanders or *jama'dārs* with family ties to the Miyanas) from the region and resettled them in Kadapa, offering them monthly salaries in place of whatever diverse incomes they had formerly cultivated. While our details on these Baramahal-based *khānazāds* has unfortunately remained sketchy, they seem to have traced their origins very far back indeed – possibly even as early as the mid-seventeenth century. In their place, he assigned a single governing figure named Asad Khan Mahkari Nawaiyat to serve as the regional governor (Asad Khan would later be successfully headhunted by Hyder Ali Khan).<sup>823</sup> It is almost certain that the Khanazads saw little of their promised monthly salaries. It is also unclear whether any Baramahal revenues were ever delivered to Kadapa under Asad Khan Nawaiyat's watch.

Despite these concerted efforts, Abdul Majid Khan was unable to escape from beneath the household's mountain of debt.<sup>824</sup> When his moneylenders learned that he could only repay half of what he owed at the end of several years, they reached for the levers of power themselves. A substantial proportion of the soldiers, well aware which side their bread was buttered on, promptly turned their sights upon Abdul Majid Khan. According to at least one source, Abdul Majid Khan turned at this point to what had to have been the ultimate risky strategy: he invited the Maratha armies, already campaigning in the Karnatak, into Kadapa to support his claims.<sup>825</sup> Maratha forces promptly obliged. They occupied the city and then promised to assist Abdul Majid Khan as soon as he had paid them tribute. When he did not, they turned against him instead, killing him in September 1757 in battle.<sup>826</sup>

From the portrait of Abdul Majid Khan's tenure, pieced together above, it appears that he had hoped to rescue the Miyanas' fortunes by moving away from the strategies that had formerly supported the household: the cultivation of dispersed, shared claims and investments built around the long distance connections tying coastal ports to inland market centers. Instead, Abdul Majid Khan sought to reorient household income inland towards tribute and land revenue sources, perhaps most drastically in the Baramahal region, where he tried to sweep away the old houseborn [*khānazād*] elites and replace them with a single individual who reported directly to him. Whatever

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<sup>822</sup> 'Kaifiyat of Gandikota.' T.V. Mahalingam, ed., *Mackenzie Manuscripts; Summaries of the Historical Manuscripts in the Mackenzie Collection* (Madras: University of Madras, 1972), Vol. II: 168-179.

<sup>823</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 59a-60a; See also *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w'al Hukkam*, 210-13; Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik*, 66-67.

<sup>824</sup> The anonymous and likely exaggerated account given in the 'Kaifiyat of Gandikota' suggests he owed Salim Khan and Bhakara Sahib as much as a crore of rupees. Mahalingam, *Mackenzie Manuscripts*, Vol. II: 177.

<sup>825</sup> Mahalingam, Vol. II: 177-178.

<sup>826</sup> Kirmani offers a lengthy, high-drama account of his death, lingering on Abdul Majid Khan's fearless embrace of martyrdom. The English translation is confusing in places. Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 60a-61b; Kirmani, *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w'al Hukkam*, 212-17. For a much briefer, Maratha-centered version of events, see Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas.*, Vol. II: 331.

he may have been attempting, however, his effort did not outlive him. Abdul Nabi Khan, alias Mocha Miyan, retook the leadership with the support of the occupying Maratha forces, but like his nephew, he could not escape the household's substantial debts. Once the Maratha forces had departed, the main body of Miyana *jama'dārs* began to cast around for an alternative to this leader whom they had already rejected once before. They finally threw their support behind Mocha Miyan's adoptive son, Sarwar Khan. Another faction, led by the unnamed wife of the deceased Abdul Majid Khan, supported her son, Abdul Halim Khan. Abdul Halim Khan and Abdul Majid Khan's widow eventually prevailed. In the years that followed, the household devolved into civil war, with Abdul Halim Khan falling increasingly into the orbit of Mysore as he sought material backing. The alliance was barely skin deep, however. The end came in 1777, when a rumor reached Kadapa that Hyder Ali Khan had died, at which news Abdul Halim Khan reportedly celebrated the demise of his unwanted benefactor by distributing sweets amongst his supporters. When news of this ingratitude filtered back to the still-very-much-alive Hyder Ali Khan, the Mysore-based leader launched a major invasion which culminated in the entire Miyana household, including Abdul Halim Khan, being taken captive and brought back to Srirangapatnam, while what remained of the Miyana-held territories around Kadapa and the Baramahal fell under Mysore rule.

Kirmani's account presents Mysore's conquest of Kadapa as a veritable orgy of cruelty in which captured Afghan soldiers, though few in number, fought heroically [*in afāghana ham chunān shamshīr āzmāy namūdand ke yādgār bāqī ast*]. After a few of the captured soldiers hatched a suicidal attempt on Hyder Ali Khan's life that nearly proved successful, he ordered that all of the prisoners' hands and feet be removed with a hatchet [*dast wa pā-yi afāghana-yi asīr az tabar shikasta*].<sup>827</sup> Abdul Halim Khan Miyanā died a prisoner in Srirangapatnam, and the Miyana family never regained power in Kadapa. In 1794, when the British scholar and military commander Colin Mackenzie undertook an exploratory journey through the mountainous passes east of Karnul, he encountered Afghan elites who told him "with a sigh of regret," that "none of the [Miyana] family now remained, the last of them being put to death at [Sriranga]patnam."<sup>828</sup> Kadapa remained under Mysore's rule for some years before being traded to Hyderabad as part of the Treaty of Srirangapatnam in 1794. Only two years later, in 1796, it was in turn granted to the East India Company as part of the so-called 'Ceded Districts.'

### *Savanur*

Let us turn now to Savanur, whose representative in the affairs of the Hyderabad succession, Abdul Karim Khan, died in the battle following Himmat Khan Panni and Muzaffar Jang Asaf Jahi's confrontation in the southern Kadapa territories (see Chapter Six). The Savanur-based Miyanas' politics had already been shaped for a long time by their comparative proximity to the Maratha-held western Deccan. Of all the Karnatak-based households, the Savanur-based Miyanas had already been directly affected by the Marathas' increasing aggression as early as the 1740s, before the fallout from the Hyderabad succession war. In 1747 after several years of regular Maratha-led campaigns across Miyana-held territories, the long-time ruler Abdul Majid Khan<sup>829</sup> signed a treaty with Pune in which

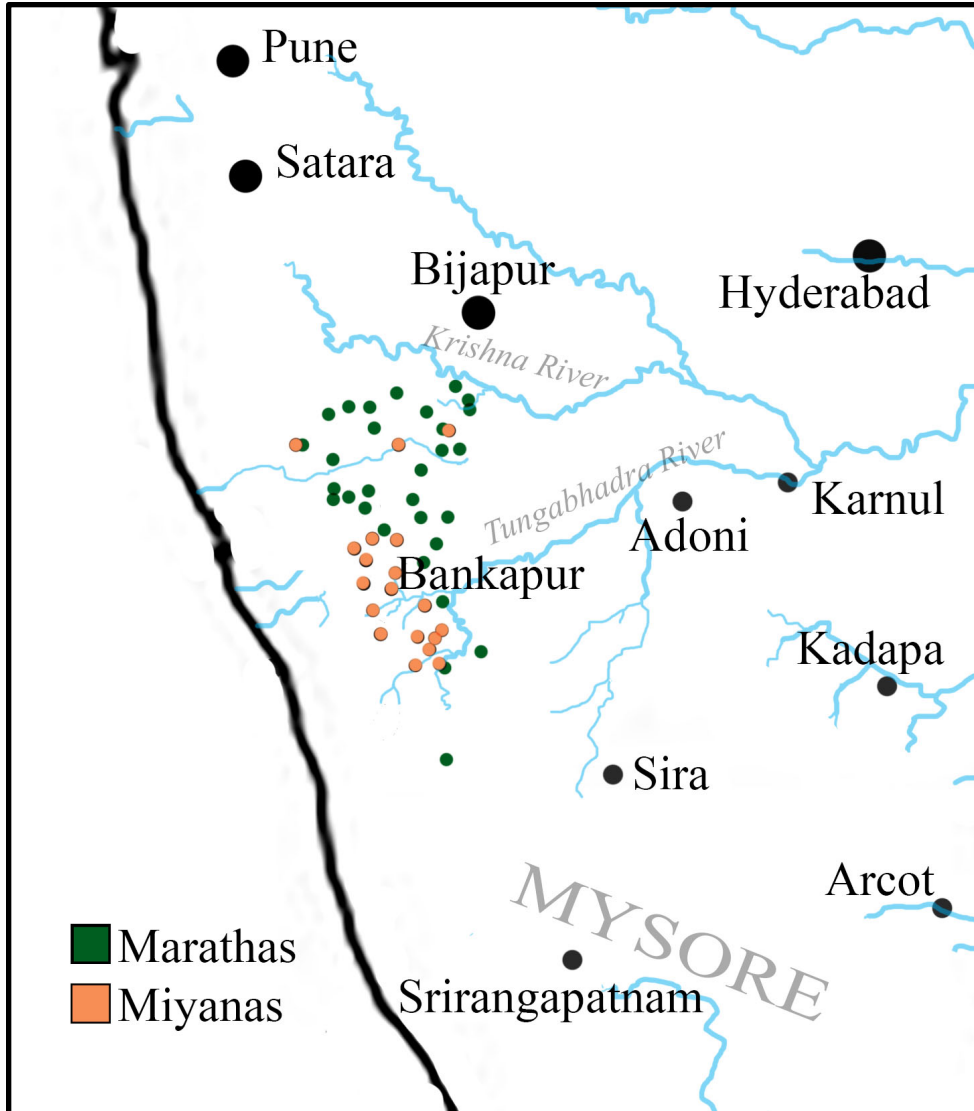
<sup>827</sup> Kirmānī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 64b-65a.

<sup>828</sup> Mackenzie, "Remarks on a Journey into the Countries of Cumum, Dupood, Purmuttum, Canoul," 37-38.

<sup>829</sup> It does not escape me that this dissertation is littered with confusing name and title repetitions. There were two Abdul Majid Khan Miyanas who ruled in the Karnatak in the middle decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – one in Savanur (r. ~1720s-1752), and one in Kadapa (r. ~1751-1760?).



he signed over the right of tax collection in some thirty-six districts south of the Krishna River to the Marathas [see figure 7]. This marked the Pune-based Maratha government's first major, permanent administrative expansion into the Karnatak. The long list of territories referenced in the treaty also offers some indication of the Miyanas' expansive footprint in the region up to that point.



Map 7: Result of a 1747 treaty between the Maratha government and the Miyanas, with population centers ceded to the Marathas marked in purple and remaining Miyana-held centers in black.

Things would very quickly get worse for the Savanur-based Miyanas in the 1750s. Within a few months of the young new Hyderabad Nizam Salabat Jang's return to the Deccan, his ministers organized an allied force, alongside the Maratha leaders Balaji Rao and Madhav Rao, to punish the Karnatak households for the death of Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang. The Deccan powers' combined forces poured south across the Krishna River in the first half of 1751, ransacking the Savanur region for several months. Between 1754-1757, Savanur again played unwilling host to an array of neighboring armies. This time, the conflict revolved around a renegade military leader variously titled Muzaffar Khan or Ibrahim Khan Gardi. Formerly a lieutenant of the French General Bussy

who had accompanied the young Nizam Salabat Jang north to Hyderabad, Gardi and his European-trained forces were quickly headhunted by the Marathas in exchange for Gardi's receipt of an astronomical 55,000 rupee salary per month.<sup>830</sup> Gardi was not content with this arrangement, however. After a short period he joined a long tradition of Deccan-based fortune seekers; he abandoned Maratha service and moved south, finding service in the army of the Wodeyar Raja of Mysore. After Gardi's arrival in the Karnatak, a new alliance emerged around him that included Abdul Hakim Khan Miyana (the new household leader at Savanur), the Penukonda-based Maratha commander Murari Rao Ghorpade, and the Raja of Mysore. As Maratha forces marched south in 1756 to retrieve the wayward Ibrahim Khan, these southern leaders came together in mutual defiance of the Marathas.

The clash, when it came, played out in the environs of the Miyanas' centrally located stronghold of Savanur. Ibrahim Khan Gardi took shelter behind Savanur's city walls, and a several months-long siege ensued. A handful of battles illustrated plainly for observers that, despite Gardi's specialized training in European techniques of war, his forces were nevertheless unable to withstand standard Maratha strategies. After the Marathas served up a humbling defeat to both Gardi's men and to Miyana-led forces, the poverty-stricken Miyanas were forced to cede the equivalent of Rs. 1,100,000 cash in territorial rights. Long-held districts including Bankapur, Misrikot, Kundgol and Hubli were all ceded to Maratha control, while several of the Miyanas' neighbors, amongst them the female ruler of Bidnur and the rulers of Chittradurg, Raidurg, and Harpanahalli, were similarly forced to pay expensive tributes. Ibrahim Khan Gardi fled in debt and disgrace. The following year, Maratha forces marched all the way to Mysore, where they occupied the Wodeyar-held city of Srirangapatnam and demanded Rs. 3,200,000 in tribute. As with their settlement with the Savanuris, the Wodeyars were too poor to pay in cash. Instead, they mortgaged many of their most valuable districts.

The western Karnatak had become a Maratha-dominated zone, but the tide was about to change after Hyder Ali Khan seized power in 1761. Over the next two decades, Maratha and Mysore forces would wage a series of bitter conflicts over the region, while Savanur, trapped in the middle, became a pawn to both. Whereas formerly the Savanur-based Miyanas had found common cause with the Wodeyars of Mysore, Hyder Ali's rise to power pushed the Miyanas into a novel position on the defensive against a southern, rather than a northern power. Their first encounter transpired during Hyder Ali's early campaign against the mountainous capital of Bidnur – wealthy, lightly defended, and on the path towards the Malabar Coast. The Rani of Bidnur turned for military aid to Abdul Hakim Khan Miyana, who sent several thousand troops to join her forces. Although unable to directly confront Hyder Ali's much larger army, Miyana-affiliated troops harried Mysore's army, blocking supply trains and nipping at their heels wherever opportunity afforded before melting back into the surrounding jungle.<sup>831</sup> Frustrated, Hyder Ali marched from his victory at Bidnur directly to Savanur where he defeated the Miyanas. Hyder Ali seized a number of cavalymen and their horses [*sawār wa asp hamdast-i khwud sākhtand*], and Abdul Hakim Khan Miyana agreed, in lieu of a cash settlement, to pay his debt mostly in material goods.

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<sup>830</sup> Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II: 326.

<sup>831</sup> Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik*, 135–40.

...Elephants, camels, large velvet tents and small, pole-less, embroidered tents, Burhanpuri robes and expensive armaments, etc., and as well as a little coinage which former rulers had gathered in payment for lakhs of gold, delicate wares and worldly trappings.<sup>832</sup>

This unhappy encounter convinced the Savanur-based Miyanas that, trapped between two powerful neighbors, the northern Marathas appeared a better bet. In 1766, when Maratha forces marched into the Karnatak to confront Mysore, Abdul Hakim Khan threw in his lot with the Marathas. The strategy backfired. Savanur served yet again as host to a major confrontation in which Maratha and Savanuri forces were soundly defeated.<sup>833</sup> The larger outcome of the campaign proved something of a draw. It was expensive on both sides and produced little long-term result.<sup>834</sup> Undeterred, Maratha forces on three other occasions in the late 1760s and early 1770s entered the Karnatak to tangle with Hyder Ali Khan's armies.<sup>835</sup> On each occasion, Savanur found itself caught in the middle.

By 1779, having already seen the fate of the other Miyana household in Kadapa two years before, the much weakened Abdul Hakim Khan would probably have been prepared to accept the wedding invitation that arrived at his doorstep, even if it had not been accompanied by an army at its heel. Hyder Ali Khan's well-armed ambassadors of peace proposed an alliance in which Hyder Ali Khan's son, Abdul Karim Khan, wed Abdul Hakim Khan's daughter. At the same time, Abdul Hakim Khan's son Abdul Khair Khan was married to Hyder Ali Khan's daughter. The marriage took place in Srirangapatnam, after which Abdul Hakim Khan was obliged to leave behind his son and daughter as 'guests' in the Sultanate's capital, in addition to a Miyana-organized cavalry force surrendered to Hyder Ali Khan's command. In exchange, Hyder Ali Khan promised the Miyana leader protection, and a cessation of tribute demands.<sup>836</sup> Notably, this was not the only marital alliance brokered between Hyder Ali Khan and the old Karnatak households. In 1771 he married his son Tipu Sultan to a daughter of the Nawaiyat household, whom he extracted from Wala Jahi custody and brought back from Arcot following the first Anglo-Mysore war (c. 1767-1769).<sup>837</sup> Such strategies of hostage-taking and marriage were of course nothing new to Karnatak politics, and point to the likelihood that Hyder Ali Khan saw substantial value in establishing control not only over the household's territories, but also over its recruitment networks.

The brief era of peace inaugurated by the joint marriage was broken in 1785 after Maratha and Hyderabad forces came south to seize a number of forts recently occupied by Mysore in the region bounded by the Tungabhadra and Krishna Rivers. In response, Tipu Sultan organized a force to confront the Deccan armies. The Nawab of Savanur, finding himself again caught in the middle, made a difficult decision. He walked away from his household's claims, well over a century old, in the Savanur-Bankapur region, leaving behind as well his son and daughter, still living as hostages in

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<sup>832</sup> Kirmānī, Mīr Husain 'Alī, *Nishān-i Haidarī* (Bombay: Fath al-Karīm, 1890), 77. ...*filān wa shitturān wa khayām-i makhmalī wa bīchūbhā-yi zardūzī wa khulā'-i Burhānpūrī wa silāh-i girānbahā wagheira bā chīzī naqad ke bukkām-i pīshīn ba-sarf-i lakūkhā zar-i ijnās nafīsa wa isbāb-i dūniyādārī firāham sākhṭa būdand.*

<sup>833</sup> Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik*, 167–77.

<sup>834</sup> Kirmani, 176; Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas.*, Vol. II: 485–490.

<sup>835</sup> Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*, 158–59.

<sup>836</sup> Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik*, 366–71.

<sup>837</sup> Kirmani, 303–4.

Mysore – and presented himself a refugee at the feet of the Maratha court in Pune.<sup>838</sup> Abdul Halim Khan’s decision (sort of) paid off many years later, after Tipu Sultan’s final defeat in 1799, when the Marathas reinstated Abdul Halim Khan’s son Khair Miyana in Savanur. They granted him a small *mahāl* or territory as an allowance for his personal expenses. When the British arrived on the scene a few years after that, they inherited from the Marathas responsibility for managing the various pensions of the impoverished remnants of the Miyana household, housed in both Savanur and in Pune.<sup>839</sup> The descendants of this much-reduced family would survive in Savanur until Indian independence in 1947, when the state was dissolved into the new republic.

### *Karnul*

Of all the households, Karnul was the closest to Hyderabad. As such, it had for some decades played a primary role in Karnatak-based groups’ negotiations with the Nizam’s government. It is perhaps not a coincidence that it was Himmat Khan Panni of Karnul at whose hands both Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang were killed. As with Kadapa and Savanur, however, in the late eighteenth century Karnul became a pawn in a three-way political confrontation between the Marathas, Hyderabad and Mysore. In the immediate aftermath of the succession war described in Chapter Six, Hyderabad’s armies marched north through Karnul, imprisoning leading members of the Panni household and installing in their stead a servant of the Nizam by the name of Sayyid Muhammad Alam. As with earlier attempts by Hyderabad to impose more direct authority in Karnul, their chosen man was soon forced from power. Munawwar Khan Panni, the deceased Nawab Himmat Khan’s brother, had some years previously fled Karnul after some family disagreement and settled in the Baramahal districts. Hearing of his brother’s death, he arrived in Karnul in the company of a charismatic Sufi known as Shah Miskin and a small body of soldiers,<sup>840</sup> seizing the region after some months of armed negotiation. Munawwar Khan’s hold on power was tenuous, however. In 1757, the territory was overrun by a Maratha force led by Vishaji Krishna, during which time Karnul was forced to cede a number of settlements along the Krishna River. In the years that followed, Munawwar Khan paid, at various points, tribute to all three major powers – Mysore, Hyderabad, and the Marathas. In 1776, in one of Mysore’s most far-ranging campaigns to the distant northeastern corner of the Karnatak, Hyder Ali Khan himself marched into Karnul, whereupon he was confronted by a bareheaded and bootless (perhaps naked?) Shah Miskin, seated atop an elephant [*sar wa pā barahna bar fil sawār shuda*].<sup>841</sup> According to Kirmani’s version of events, Hyder Ali Khan’s troops were initially thrown into doubt by this disconcerting visage, and a rumor spread amongst Hyder Ali Khan’s troops that Karnul was under the protection of a powerful saint. Hyder Ali Khan responded furiously to this, asserting that his army, too, enjoyed the protection of a great saint. Having said so, he drove his own elephant forward towards Shah Miskin until the latter lost

<sup>838</sup> Kirmani, true to form, memorializes the moment in a clever chronogram: “Hakim Khan abandoned everything and fled.” *Hakīm Khān Miyāna sab ko chor ke āp bhāgā* (1199AH/1784-1785CE). Kirmānī, “Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām,” fol. 52a.

<sup>839</sup> For a trove of documentation on the British government’s efforts to make sense of this pension, see: “Savanoorkur Nuwab” (1868 1828), Fehrist #6, List #9, Agent Daftar S-125, Maharashtra State Archives, Pune Daftar.

<sup>840</sup> Shah Miskin plays a key role in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Karnul history. His character and legacy are hotly debated. See references in Kirmani, *Tazkirath-ul-Bilad w’al Hukkām*; Mishkat al-Nubuwwat Qādrī, “Mishkat al-Nubuwwat” n.d., Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Telangana; Ma’mūr Khān Panni, “Inshā’i-i Fazā’il Khānī” 1249 AH/1834 CE, Library, 86, Telangana State Archives.

<sup>841</sup> Kirmānī, “Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām,” fol. 75b.

heart and fled back to the fort, where he urged Munawwar Khan to pay Hyder Ali Khan whatever he demanded. With this shameful defeat, whatever reputation or influence the Panni household had once maintained in the region seemed to dissipate, and its military power drained away entirely.

In the 1790s as the British expanded their reach even into the court at Hyderabad, the Resident there was baffled by the Hyderabad government's claims that Karnul had long been a dependency of the Nizam. This claim seemed unjustified, according to the Resident, given that so far as he could determine, Hyderabad held no *sanad* [supporting document] verifying this claim, nor had they received any tribute payments from the Pannis in recent years. The Pannis *had*, however, been paying Mysore tribute on a regular basis.<sup>842</sup> In 1792-1793, both Hyderabad and Mysore became embroiled in a proxy cold war of sorts centered around a succession dispute in Karnul after Munawwar Khan's death. The eventual victor, Alif Khan Panni, was seen as having enjoyed too much intimacy with Mysore, and was far from Hyderabad's first choice. When Tipu Sultan's government fell a few years later in 1799, Alif Khan Panni quickly turned and accepted Hyderabad's claim that Karnul was a dependent territory of the Nizam's.

Kirmanī finishes his account of the Panni household with a final, fascinating story. In August of 1800, the year the text was written, Alif Khan Panni, suspicious about the intentions of the British army (led by Thomas Monroe) in the region, purportedly took a bold decision in order to preserve his title and claim to Karnul. He convened a gathering of all the women of the household, along with his brothers and other intimates [*zanān-i 'ilāqa-yi khwud rā ma'a barādarān wa 'azīzān*], all of them dressed in white. As prayers were recited, he instructed servants to bring forward everything that remained of the household treasury, passed down through generations [*az ābā wa ajdād-i khwud dasta dast wa basta basta mīrās yāfta būd*]. Gathering the wealth into bundles stamped with his own seal, he distributed them amongst the holy men and ascetics [*mushā'ikhīn-i wasli wa mujarradān-i dil āgāh*]. What remained of the gold and weaponry [*zar wa silāh*] was distributed amongst the soldiers. Finally, satisfied that he had retained nothing of material value [*asbāb-i dūniyādārī juz-i hasanāt hīch na dāsht*], he kept possession of his title by dint of his good character alone [*tā ba husn nīyat wa darust 'aqīdat mulk bar o ba-hāl mānd*]. Amongst this community [*qaum*], Kirmanī noted sadly, the era of bravery and manliness had come to a close after Daud Khan and Himmat Bahadur Khan.<sup>843</sup>

This remarkable portrait, whatever its literal truth, must be read as commentary on the fate of the Panni and Miyana households and the changing political landscape that Kirmanī himself lived through. During the Karnatak households' heyday they had not only played dominant roles in South India's politics, but had coordinated networks that bridged northern and southern economic zones for the first time. Their central role in the integration of the subcontinent during this period was a reflection of their command over strategically important trade routes in the inland Karnatak. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the Miyanas and Pannis had retreated to the margins where, impoverished and increasingly irrelevant, they sought to retain their political title by dint of their perceived harmlessness. Even in this, the Panni family would eventually prove unsuccessful. In 1839, the Nawab of Karnul, Ghulam Rasul Khan Panni, was removed from power and Karnul itself

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<sup>842</sup> Sir Kennaway and James Kirkpatrick, "Papers of Sir John Kennaway, Major J. A. Kirkpatrick, Etc., Respecting the Affairs of Kurnoul, 1792-1796," 1792, 15a, Add MS 13676, British Library, Western Manuscripts.

<sup>843</sup> Kirmanī, "Tazkira al-bilād wa al-hukkām," fols. 76b-77a.

brought under East India Company authority by British forces who suspected him of playing a leading role in an imagined ‘Wahhabi’ plot to overthrow the colonial government.<sup>844</sup>

### *Final thoughts*

Through the late eighteenth century, facets of the old household system did survive. Certainly, Hyder Ali Khan’s military successes were at least partially thanks to his inheritance of recruitment networks formerly tied to the Karnatak households. Evidence for this can be found in figures like Asad Khan Mahkari Nawayyat, who eventually left Miyana service in the Baramahal districts to join Hyder Ali Khan’s forces, or Siddi Bilal Khan, who likewise left Kadapa for service in Mysore. Hyder Ali Khan valued Siddi Bilal [or Hilal] Khan highly, deploying him as a major commander in battles against both Britain and Arcot.<sup>845</sup> At the same time, merchant networks centered around places like Porto Novo, which had formerly enjoyed connections with the Miyanas and Pannis, were increasingly drawn into Mysore’s orbit. Hyder Ali Khan made a concerted bid to seize Porto Novo, demonstrating a particular interest in two trades that the Miyanas had formerly been connected with: elephants from Sri Lanka and horses from Southeast Asia.<sup>846</sup> This effort was ultimately unsuccessful, as Porto Novo was finally lost during the second Anglo-Mysore war. In the years that followed, we find continued reference to Afghan merchants specializing in the elephant trade who still moved routinely between Porto Novo and Wala Jah-ruled Arcot in the 1780s.<sup>847</sup> Yet the delinking of coastal markets from inland politics forced these networks to take new forms.

In Dilip Menon’s study of Malabar politics in the late eighteenth century, he argued that Mappila Muslims along the southwestern Malabar coast only began to experiment with statebuilding in the aftermath of the Mysore Sultanate’s incursions along the coast. This external disruption, he argues, forced local elites into a defensive posture that provoked novel political forms.<sup>848</sup> Menon’s portrait arguably offers inadequate acknowledgement that Malabar had been subject to disruptions, both internal and external, long before the arrival of Mysore’s armies. Nevertheless his emphasis on the suitability of decentralized, power-sharing households to the wealthy southern coast is an important one. It offers relevance not only to Malabar, but to the Karnatak more broadly, and helps us to make sense of the eventual emergence of Mysore Sultanate itself. It is not a coincidence that the political ecosystem of the Karnatak dating back to the Vijayanagara-era *nāyaka* households had retained a stubbornly multi-polar form, and that Mysore’s dramatic expansion after the middle of the century coincided with the dismantlement of household networks that oversaw movement between coastal marketplaces and inland political centers.

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Through the early and middle decades of the seventeenth century, Bijapur Sultanate’s courtly politics were deeply etched by the growing power of the Karnatak-based Sultanate nobility, who used their access to South India’s wealthy marketplaces to reorient Deccan politics to their own benefit. Mughal rule in the later decades of the century was similarly shaped by household interests

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<sup>844</sup> For more on this fascinating episode, see Chandra Mallampalli, *A Muslim Conspiracy in British India? Politics and Paranoia in the Early Nineteenth-Century Deccan* (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>845</sup> Kirmani, *The History of Hydur Naik*, 388.

<sup>846</sup> Kirmani, 382–83.

<sup>847</sup> T. Chandrasekharan, ed., *Ruqa’āt-i Wālā Jāhī* (Government of Madras, 1958), 61–62, 422, 431.

<sup>848</sup> Menon, “Houses by the Sea.”

and orientations, as powerful and connected members of the nobility turned imperial systems of administration to their own purposes. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, these Karnatak-based households had carved out an increasingly autonomous political culture based on shared conventions: the legitimacy of multiple remembered sovereignties, joint investments in 'shares' of regional resources, and an evolving regional language of negotiated friendship, alliance, and conflict. This regional political culture benefited as much from the households' shared taproots in the Indian Ocean economy as it did from natural boundaries like the Krishna River, which posed a significant challenge to Deccan-based armies that crossed in to the Karnatak. Northern leaders dallied in the region at their own risk, as commanders and rank-and-file soldiers chafed to return north before the monsoons threatened to cut them off from their home territories. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, however, the Karnatak households were under increasing pressure as they found themselves sandwiched between two urgent and interrelated threats. To the north, increasingly confident Deccan states began to turn their attention back towards the wealthy Karnatak. To the south, European expansion along the Coromandel Coast began to cut the households off from resources that formerly allowed them to redirect northern politics to their own purposes. Finally, the rapid collapse of the household system after the middle of the century appears to have been as important in explaining Mysore Sultanate's novel form and explosive growth in the late eighteenth century as the state's innovative leadership under Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sultan, which has hitherto been more commonly subject to scholarly attention.

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